

Implicit meaning: setting

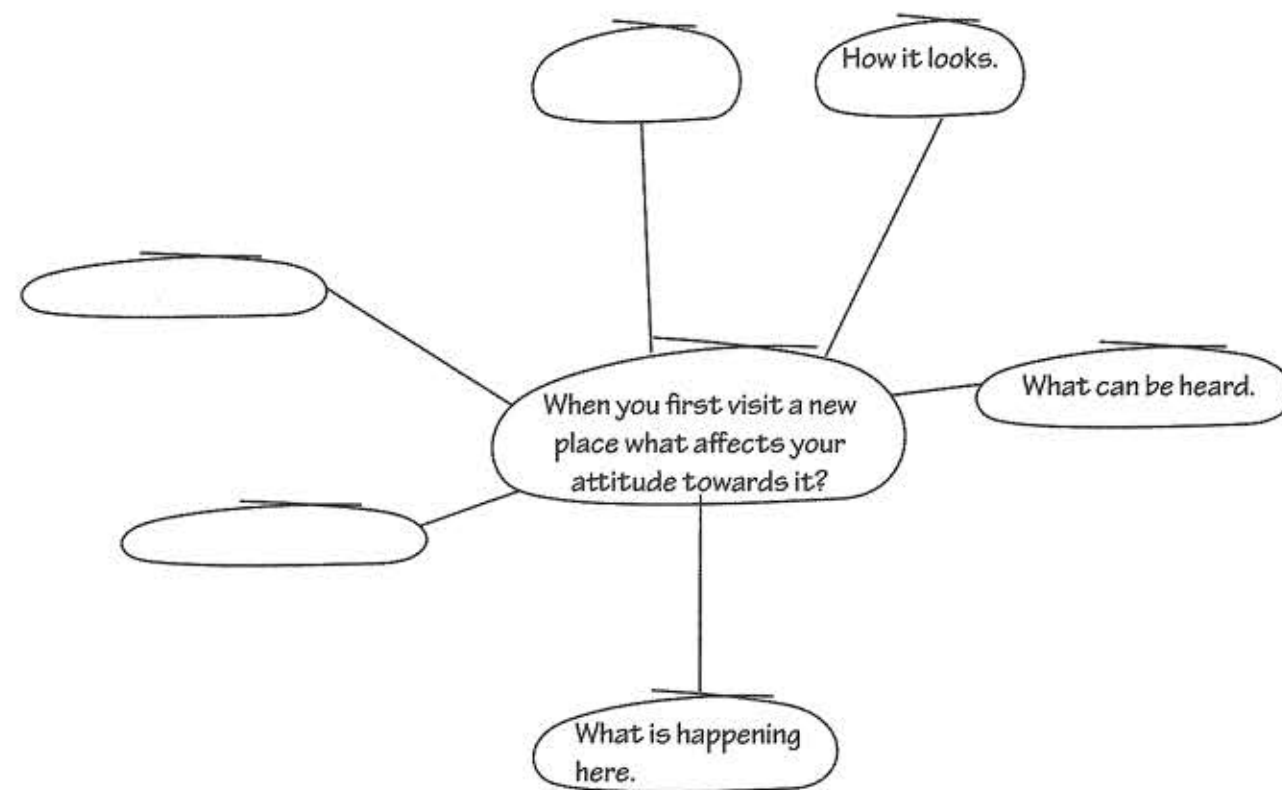
Characters are not the only feature of writing in which you need to search for implicit meanings. You may also be able to infer meaning from the setting.

Explore the skills

You probably use your skills of inference in daily life, whenever you visit a new place.

- 1 Look at the following question, then copy and complete the spider diagram below to record the clues that you use to reach your decisions.

When you first visit a new place what affects your attitude towards it?



Build the skills

Writers give us similar clues to guide a reader's responses to places. They imply meanings through the details they give about settings to create a mood or atmosphere.

Read the paragraph below. Consider the effect of word choices, such as *buzzed*. This literally suggests a bee, which is thought of as continuously busy and energetic.

The room buzzed with energy and everything appeared to be moving slightly as if to echo the frenetic hum of cheerful voices. Balloons gently swayed in the breeze, bunting swished above heads as couples danced or chatted with animation. Even the edges of the brightly patterned table cloths lifted as dresses swept by.

- 2 Think of three words you could use to sum up the atmosphere in the room. Consider the following:
 - How does the writer want you to feel about the event being described?
 - Why might the writer have this intention?

Sometimes a writer will use **pathetic fallacy** in describing a place.

- 3 Add two more examples of this technique by making small changes to the passage.
- 4 Some settings already have particular connotations. For example, readers tend to see a cave as a mysterious or threatening place – what could be lurking within? However, in some contexts, it could suggest shelter.
 - a) Place the word 'jungle' at the centre of a spider diagram or mind map. Use this to explore words and ideas that you associate with the word 'jungle'.
 - b) What kinds of story might have jungle settings?
- 5 What is implied by the word 'jungle' in these sentences?
 - a) Mrs Jones's back garden was a jungle.
 - b) Living in an inner-city jungle, I grew up fast.



Vocabulary

frenetic: busy in an excited, uncontrolled way



Key term

pathetic fallacy: when a writer reflects human emotions in natural features or objects: for example, *the balloons swayed happily* or *the leaden clouds hung heavy above the figure crouching on the moorland path*