

L.I. Can I analyse settings descriptions?

It is important to remember that when writing settings descriptions, we have to focus on more than just what we can see. We need to think of all our senses – this would mean that we could describe the smell in the air, the weather, how it makes us feel...

Look at and read this setting description and answer the questions about it.



Howling through the streets like a banshee, the invisible enemy pummels the windows and shrieks down the chimneys. Rolling dustbins clatter down the cobbled streets, leaving a trail of whirling, debris in their wake, while the squat houses crouch against the cliff side, bracing themselves against the onslaught of the gale, their doors and windows firmly locked.

Far below, the angry sea explodes against the cliffs, the water boiling and heaving; swelling and surging, whipped up by the force of the storm. Down in the harbour, the fishing boats tug angrily at their moorings, the ropes on their masts chattering angrily. Over the noise of the wind, the sound of the church bell can be heard tolling erratically as the gale gusts through the bell tower.

1. What do you **think** a banshee might be? What makes you think this?
2. What kind of noise do you think the banshee might make? Give reasons for your choice.
3. What is 'the invisible enemy'? Why has the author used this phrase?
4. How is a contrast made between the dustbins and the houses?
5. What words are used to describe the sea? Why have these words been chosen?
6. Can you find examples of personification in the text?

Now read these extracts from some books. Choose 2/3 of the extracts and using a key, identify these different aspects:

Feature/aspect of writing	Colour
Using a sense to describe – see, smell, taste, touch, hear	
Figurative language – simile, metaphor, alliteration, personification, imagery...	
Describing a place	
Describing the time of day	
Prepositional phrases	
Noun phrases	

Excerpt from *My Swordhand is Singing* by Marcus Sedgewick.

The hut stood in a strange position. The river Chust, from which the village took its name forked in two here, as it snaked through the woods. With deep banks, the rivers had spent ten thousand years eating its way gently down into the thick soft dark forest soil. Its verges were moss laden blankets that dripped leaf mould into the slow brown water. But at a certain point, in its ancient history, the river had met some solid rock hidden in the soil, and had split in two. It was in the head of this fork that the hut stood.

Excerpt from *Howl's Moving Castle* by Diana Wynne Jones

It was quite a small room, with heavy black beams in the ceiling. By daylight it was amazingly dirty. The stones of the floor were stained and greasy, ash was piled within the fender, and the cobwebs hung in dusty droops from the beams. There was a layer of dust on the skull. Sophie absently wiped it off as she went to peer into the sink beside the workbench. She shuddered at the pink and grey slime in it and the white slime dripping from the pump above it. Howl obviously did not care what squalor his servants lived in.

Excerpt from *The Graveyard Book* by Neil Gaiman

The boy walked back down the south-west side of the hill, avoiding the old chapel; he did not want to see the place the Silas wasn't. Bod stopped beside a grave that looked the way he felt; it was beneath an oak that had once been struck by lightning, and now was just a black trunk, like a sharp talon coming out of the hill; the grave itself was water-stained and cracked, and above it was a memorial stone on which a headless angel hung, its robes looking like a huge and ugly tree-fungus.

Excerpt from *Over Sea, Under Stone* by Susan Cooper

Trewissick seemed to be sleeping beneath its grey, slate-tiled roofs, along the narrow winding streets down the hill. Silent behind their lace-curtained windows, the little square houses let the roar of the car bounce back from their whitewashed walls. Then Great Uncle Merry swung the wheel round, and suddenly they were driving along the edge of the harbour, past water rippling and flashing golden in the afternoon sun.