

Prose

Lecture 5

SPACE: SPACE IN STORY AND DISCOURSE, THE SPACE MEANING IN STORY AND DISCOURSE, THE FICTIONAL SPACE AND REAL SPACE.

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CONTENTS

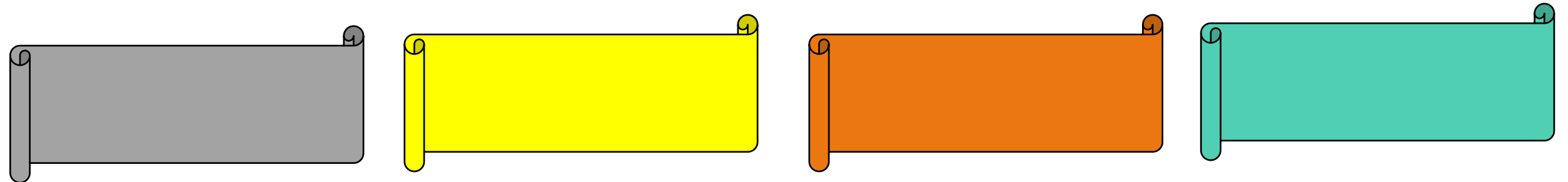
1. Space
2. Setting
3. Atmosphere
4. Space and character
5. Milieu
6. Space and plot
7. Symbolic space




Space in Discourse and Story

- The category of space in discourse refers to the physical dimensions of the medium being used, such as the length of a book, the size of its pages, and the amount of empty space on each page. These factors play a role in shaping the overall structure and layout of the content.

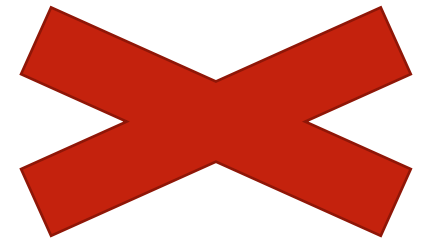
(Lethbridge, S., & Mildorf, J., 2003, p.47-48)





Traditional literary analysis often overlooks the importance of spatial and material conditions in understanding a text. However, recent criticism has highlighted the impact of these factors on the reading experience. The physical environment in which a text is situated can shape the interpretation and meaning of the text. By considering the spatial and material aspects, we gain a deeper understanding of how these elements influence our understanding and engagement with literature.

(McGann 1991 as cited in Lethbridge, S., & Mildorf, J., 2003, p.47-48)



Setting

- In creating and communicating meaning, the category of space or **setting** at the story level is an important component

(Lethbridge, S., & Mildorf, J., 2003, p.47-48)





What do you see?




What about this?

SETTINGS

- **Memorable** aspects
- **Engaging**
- Have a **link** with characters

(Gill, R., 2006, p.55-56).





“They can also **reveal the situation** of a character and, by working **symbolically**, they can **express personality.**”

(Gill, R., 1995, p. 149)

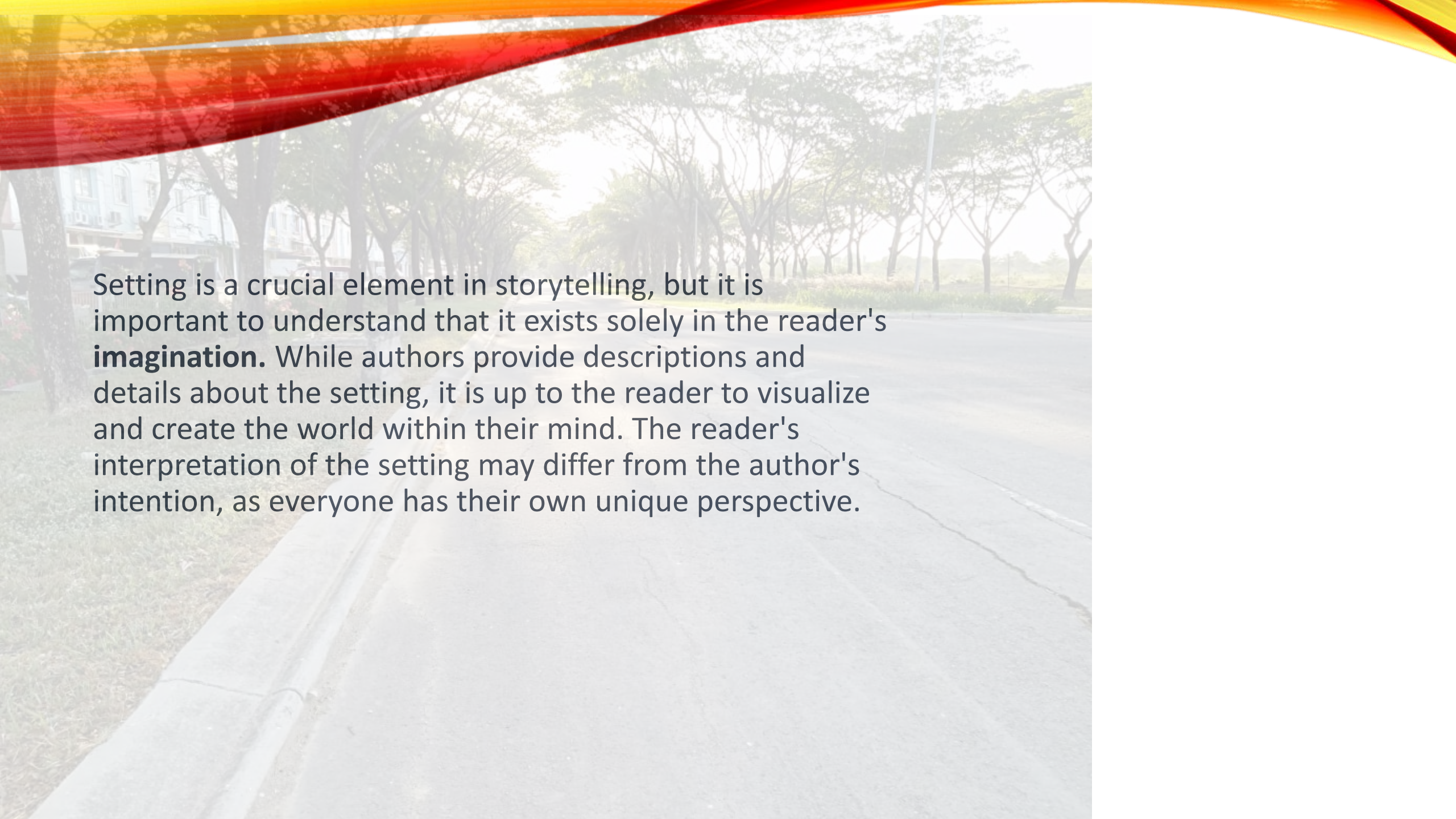
Fictional Space and Real Space

- In narrative storytelling, the depiction of space is primarily done through **words**, unlike in drama, film, or picture stories where **visuals play** a more prominent role. The challenge for narrative writers lies in effectively **describing and conveying** the spatial elements of a story using only written language. By skillfully using language, narrative writers can **transport** readers to different locations and **immerse** them in the story's world.



In the quiet path, with an uncertain end, where tall trees no longer wear their green, this solitude, it wearies the soul, in the depths of silence, a heavy toll. But fear not, dear traveler, for within this plight, lies a beauty, hidden in the darkest night, for in solitude, clarity is found, and strength emerges, from the depths profound.





Setting is a crucial element in storytelling, but it is important to understand that it exists solely in the reader's **imagination**. While authors provide descriptions and details about the setting, it is up to the reader to visualize and create the world within their mind. The reader's interpretation of the setting may differ from the author's intention, as everyone has their own unique perspective.

Unlike other mediums that can rely on visuals to show the audience the **physical setting**, narrative writers must rely on their **descriptive abilities** to paint a **vivid picture in the reader's mind**. This requires using carefully chosen **words** and vivid **imagery** to create a sense of space and atmosphere




In a place so cold, with a view so grand, Atop a hill,
a tiny eatery stands. With each bite, warmth fills the
air, As flavors dance, a sensory affair.

Readers often rely on their **personal experiences** to shape their **understanding** and interpretation of fictional settings. By drawing on their own encounters with various environments, readers can connect with the fictional world and make it more **relatable**. This process allows readers to **engage** with the story on a deeper level, as they bring their own perspectives and emotions into the interpretation of these imagined spaces. Ultimately, the reader's ability to relate the fictional setting to their real-world experiences enhances their overall understanding and **enjoyment of the narrative**.

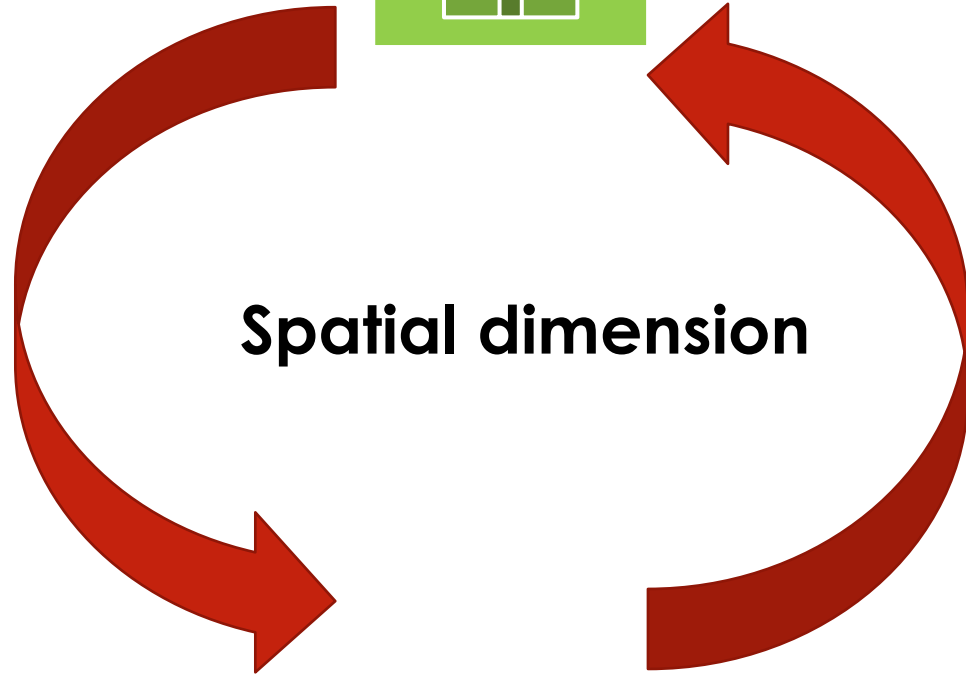


Our real life experiences largely determine how we view our homes, gardens, parks and streets. The way we view and understand these places is greatly influenced by our **personal encounters** with them. What is presented by the author will be received **differently** by each reader.





A narrative's authenticity can be enhanced by providing a thorough portrayal of the spatial dimension within it.



Spatial dimension

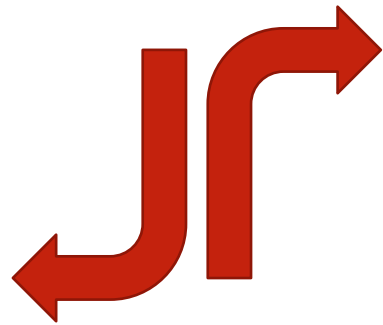
Real Life


The space characters
occupy is not just a physical
location, but also a
reflection of their **inner**
emotions and **experiences**.



Space and Meaning

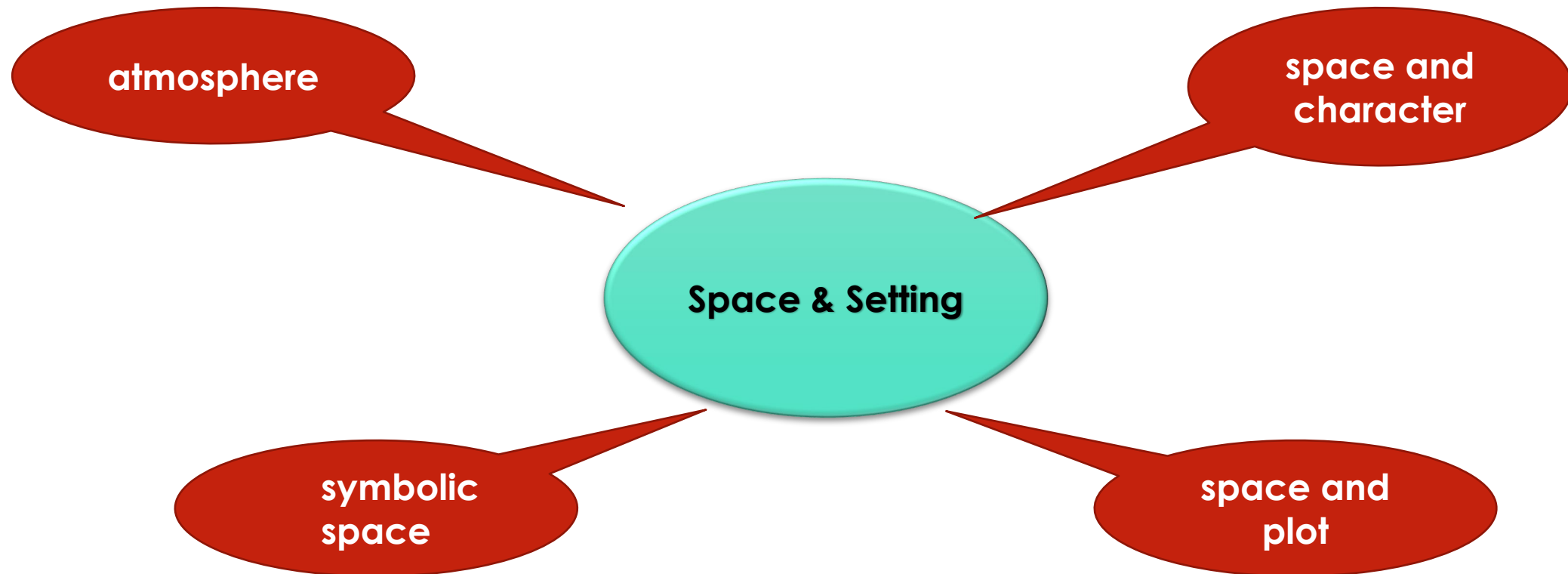
In narrative storytelling, space and setting play a **crucial role** beyond being a **backdrop** for characters to navigate. Characters exist within a specific space and setting, and this environment affects their **actions**, **motivations**, and **interactions**.





By carefully arranging space and setting, writers can increase the depth and realism of their characters and create a more **immersive** and **interesting** narrative by providing **correspondence** or **contrast** to the plot or characters.

Space and meaning



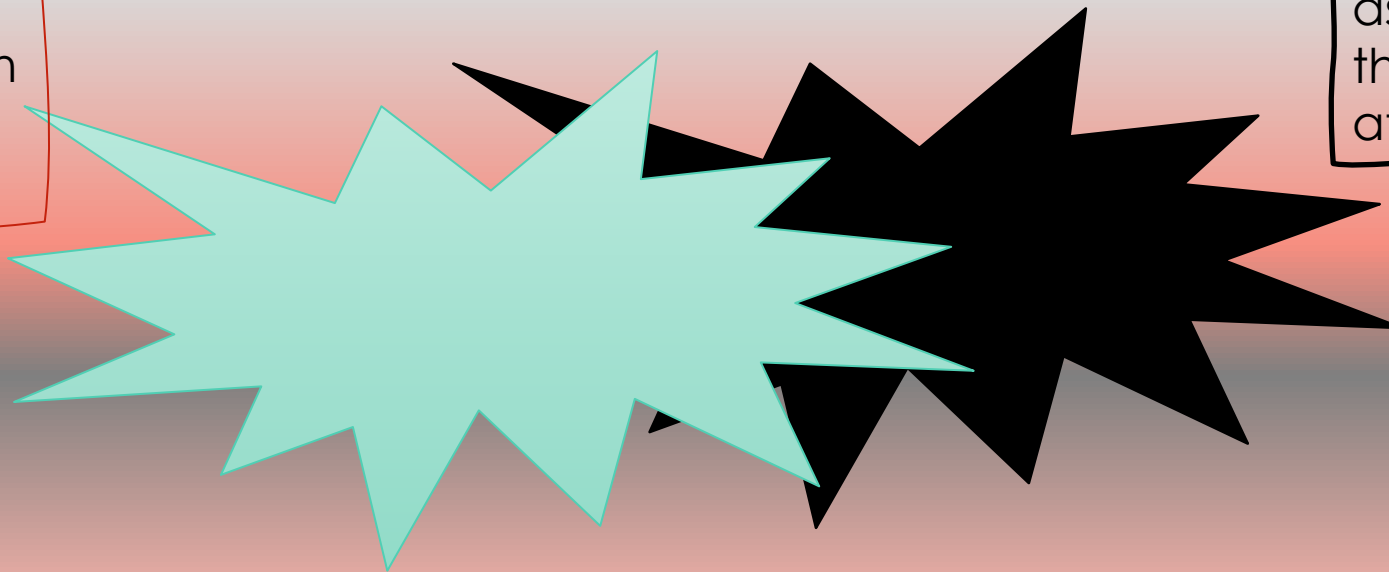
(Lethbridge, S., & Mildorf, J., 2003, p.47-48)

Atmosphere

Setting can provide a certain atmosphere.

Wide open and bright or sunlit spaces are generally associated with an atmosphere of freedom.

Darkness and confined spaces, generally associated with a threatening or restrictive atmosphere.





Character

By carefully crafting atmospheres, authors can effectively enhance the portrayal of a character's traits, emotions, and motivations.

Atmospheres can mirror a character's personality traits, revealing their inner thoughts and emotions.

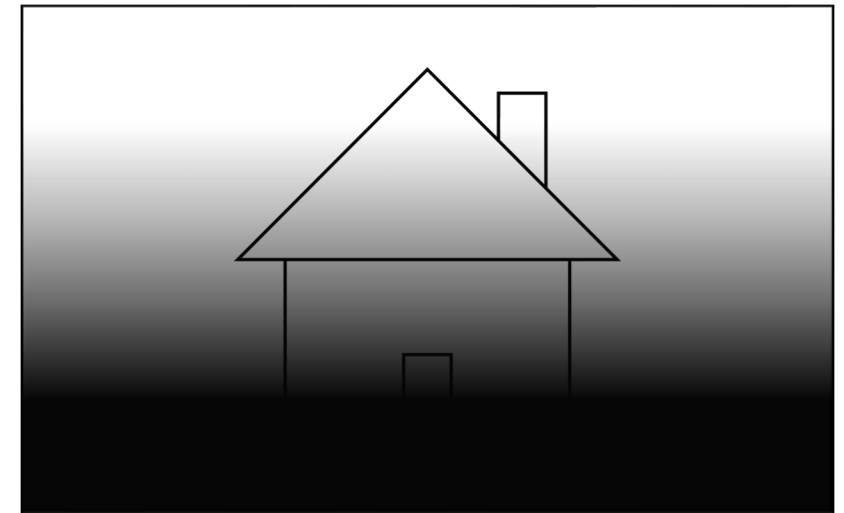
Atmospheres play a crucial role in setting the stage and providing a distinct background for the characters



Atmospheres serve as a powerful tool in character development, enabling authors to convey a character's personality, emotions, and motivations through the portrayal of **their surroundings**

Like as he is to look at, so is his apartment in the dusk of the present afternoon. Rusty, out of date, withdrawing from attention, able to afford it. Heavy broad-backed old-fashioned mahogany and horsehair chairs, not easily lifted, obsolete tables with spindle-legs and dusty baize covers, presentation prints of the holders of great titles in the last generation, or the last but one, environ him. A thick and dingy Turkey-carpet muffles the floor where he sits, attended by two candles in old-fashioned silver candlesticks, that give a very insufficient light to his large room. The titles on the backs of his books have retired into the binding; everything that can have a lock has got one; no key is visible. (Dickens, *Bleak House*, ch. 10).

(Lethbridge, S., & Mildorf, J., 2003, p.47-48)




Milieu

Who do you sit with?



A person's character is closely related to his **social background**. This is certainly proof of the role of society in shaping individual personality and behavior.



Factors such as social class, family structure, education, and cultural environment all play a significant role in shaping who we are as individuals.

Plot-lines

Apart from being a reflection on character formation, authors also often instill the intention that setting is used to determine **the plot** of the story. Each **subplot** can be a means of orientation for the reader.

- In *Bleak House* by Charles Dickens, the Dedlock-plot develops at the **country house** Chesney Wold and in the **Dedlock's town house** in London, the plot of the **street-sweep** Joe is set mainly in the poorer streets of London. These two plot-lines merge when Lady Dedlock **asks Joe to show** her the grave of her former lover. It is the **first indication** the reader gets that Lady Dedlock will eventually lose her status (she literally loses her 'place'); she dies, having fled from her town house, at Joe's crossing where her lover is buried.

(Lethbridge, S., & Mildorf, J., 2003, p.47-48)

Symbol.

Space serves
as a **symbol**.

The poor streets of
London are a
symbolic space
indicating a lower
social status

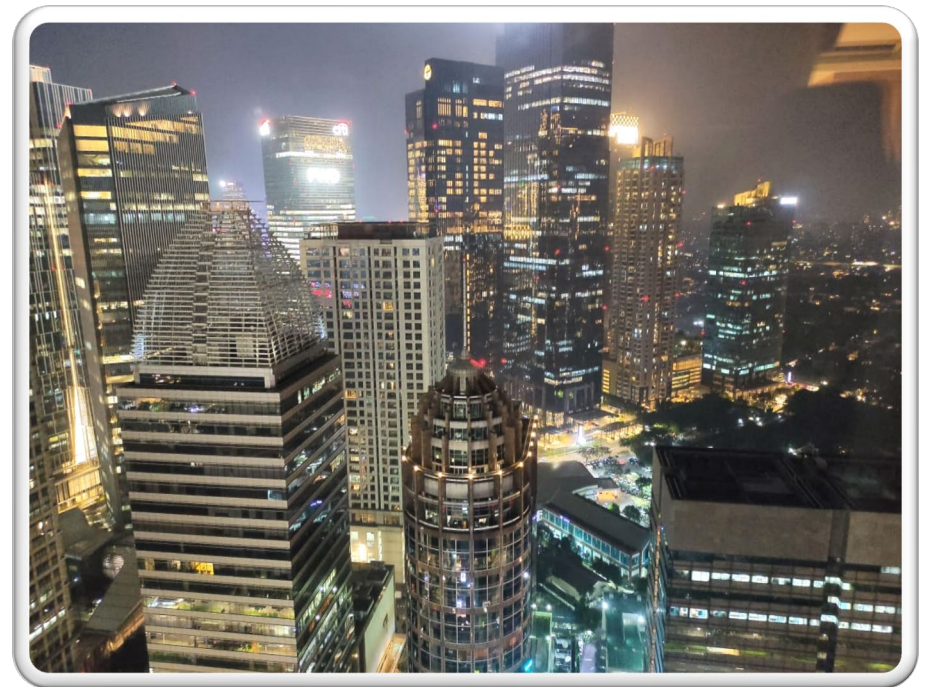
(Lethbridge, S., & Mildorf, J., 2003, p.47-48)





**The symbolic meaning
of space is largely
influenced by culture.**

A stereotypical
association with
cities





How do you stereotypically
associate...?

Happiness
Death
Occupations
Poverty
Beliefs
Characters



So, what have we learnt?



References

1. Gill, R. (1995). *Mastering English literature (2nd edition)*. Palgrave.
2. Gill, R. (2006). *Mastering English literature (3rd edition)*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
3. Lethbridge, S., & Mildorf, J. (2003). Basics of English Studies: An introductory course for students of literary studies in English. *Freiburg University, Freiburg im Breisgau*.

A WARM
THANK YOU
TO ALL OF YOU!

