



Characterization and Sensory Detail

Mary Buckham

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Readers usually remember the plot and characters of a story, but setting is every bit as important in creating a memorable world. Discover the difference between Ordinary Setting that bogs down your story, and Active Setting that empowers your story — creating a compelling story world, regardless of what you write.

- * See how to spin boring descriptions into engaging prose.
- * Learn to deepen the reader's experience of your story world through sensory details.
- * Notice how changing characters' POV can change your setting.
- * Explore ways to maximize the setting possibilities in your story.

WRITING ACTIVE SETTING is a powerful combination of fresh insights, practical examples, and how-to advice on the often overlooked but critical element of Setting ... written in a quick-to-read and easy-to-understand style, and packed with useful application exercises. ~ Kelly L. Stone, author of THINKING WRITE: The Secret to Freeing Your Creative Mind

Characterization and Sensory Detail Details

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From Reader Review Characterization and Sensory Detail for online ebook

Anna Serra i Vidal says

Up to the point and very helpful, Mary Buckham handles setting as an important part of characterization and as a way to give texture to your stories.

Helpful both to the novice and to the seasoned writer, everyone will find a piece of information that will be a great treasure for them.

Looking forward to more of Mary's books!

Mignon Supnet says

Very good!

Straight forward and to the point. I especially liked the examples between what blah writing looks like and what a great anchoring sentence is like. Lots of useful and easy to understand explanations.

ChaChanna Simpson says

There were a plethora of examples which may be annoying to some but for me I need many examples in order for the lesson to sink through. I thought the author did a stellar job of showing what she meant when writing active setting and sharing different ways to accomplish that goal.

Nicki Ivey says

A good resource, made me think about where I can enhance my own work.

Nathan Sinclair says

An excellent guide that puts into words a basic aspect of writing that can be difficult to summarise. Lots of practical examples from published books are provided to illustrate the points being made. All in all, reading this felt like a great investment of time (especially given how short it was), and I'll definitely be checking out the other entries in this series in the near future.

Taryn Bashford says

Setting can be a tricky thing for new writers. Even experienced writers can get it wrong. This guide is hugely helpful in ensuring setting is an important character in your book - serving to enrich writing, draw the reader more deeply into the story and to make the novel more memorable using techniques that are not too difficult to master with Mary's tips and exercises. Well worth a read.

Mary Ellen Woods says

Well organized. Generally good advice for the author. Some what redundant in a few places but worth a read. She does make you think about your setting.

Allan Walsh says

Characterization and Sensory Detail by Mary Buckham is a book for help writers improve their skills, focusing on... you guessed it, characterization and sensory detail.

The bad stuff - I found there were a lot of examples in the book, and some I did not find to be great examples of what the author was trying to convey. I think this book would have been a better read with fewer examples. I do understand however, that different people may relate to different things and therefore may find multiple examples help them to better pick up on the techniques used.

The good stuff - I picked up a couple of things from this book which have made it a worth while read to me. How much each individual gains will depend on their skill level and experience as a writer. If you are a new writer, this book will give you some good advice.

Overall, for me, this is not a bad book, but the benefits will be relative to the readers experience. I'm giving it 3 out of 5 Golden book marks.

Sean Cameron says

Short with clear direction. Just what I want from a how to book.

Sieran says

This was a very helpful book, especially when Mary gives examples and analyzes them. Having these examples is great because I can read them and observe my own reactions to the passages. I tend to be one of those readers who just skim or even skip setting descriptions, but I can see what Mary means by how more detailed descriptions (rather than the short and simple ones) can convey character and other things.

But I find that setting descriptions with emotion in them are a lot more engaging to me as a reader. Sometimes I read a setting passage, and later remember nothing about it except for the mood! I know a lot of writers would hate me for that, but at least I found a way to motivate readers like me to read setting descriptions, lol, by creating a clear emotion or emotions in the passage.

I must confess that a lot of the time, I prefer the really short and straightforward descriptions that briefly state where the character traveled to and when. That's because I prefer as a reader to get "just enough information" and then continue on reading the story.

But it was good to read this book, because it shows that some OTHER readers DO care about setting descriptions and are more patient in reading them. With these latter readers, it would be good to develop our setting descriptions. What would be the fun challenge, is to write setting passages that both satisfy readers who care about setting, AND don't bore readers who are super impatient with setting descriptions. I'm sometimes bored by even one or two sentences of description. So again, emotion seems to be key in engaging even the impatient reader's attention.

The sensory surround section of the book was helpful too, because I'm one of those readers who don't *really* care about being able to sensually experience the scene, so I'm happy when authors use a very simple and minimal description. Yet, seeing the examples of sensory surround here let me appreciate how good being immersed in that world can feel.

Yes, I admit that I am still very impatient with setting descriptions and will probably just skim or skip such sensual descriptions the next time I see them in books, but I think I have a better appreciation now of what readers who ARE patient with setting enjoy in these sensory descriptions. :)

Particularly pleasant or particularly unpleasant sensory details tend to catch my attention more too. Again, I love how Mary's many examples let me watch and analyze my own reactions to the setting passages, and learn a lot from the experience!

Marion says

I've received stellar advice during my writing education over the past five years. Bits and pieces hover and wave at each other in my brain, but had not collected into a solid tapestry of writing craft. Learning a while back that the first draft does not necessarily measure my writing skill but only provides a framework for revision, has comforted me. But I hoped Mary Buckham's latest book "Writing Active Setting Book 1 Characterization and Sensory Detail" would help.

While reading her book, I felt my brain ring out "Ka-ching!" The understanding of the relationship between setting, deep character development and pulling the reader into the story—falling into place at last.

Proof? A local writers group requested we read aloud the first page of our manuscripts. Prior to the meeting, I blocked out 4 hours and rewrote the first page applying the principles of Mary Buckham's book—yes, 4 hours—making every word count. Something interesting happened while I deleted, added, and changed the words. My right brain kicked in and imagination soared. This was huge for me.

A friend and valid judge read my first page last week at ECWC and said, 'Whine, whine whine!' She heard the revised page at the meeting last evening, and her response was "Wow!" So thank you, Mary Buckham for this gentle easy read, power packed with some of the best writing teaching ever! I'm stoked

Wanda says

I have written a couple of short fan fiction stories..

I was pleased to learn from this book, that I did a few things right, but probably not consistently or as effectively as I could have. I enjoyed reading this and noting tips for improving my stories. I don't plan to become a writer for general publication. but this was still helpful.

Stephen says

A very useful and practical guide. I was writing notes all throughout reading it. In fact, I had to stop reading it on my Android phone at work because I kept having to switch back and forth between the Kindle app and my note-taking app. I just waited until I got home so I could type notes directly into the Scrivener document for my writing process.

As I was reading, I kept thinking that I knew most of the concepts but I just hadn't put conscious effort into implementing them yet. Thankfully, I was able to quiet the voice in my head that kept saying, "I know this stuff", and really pay attention. The fact is, I knew these concepts intuitively, but I had not brought them into my higher level of awareness. I had plans to study short stories and novels for sentence level skills. I'm glad this book gave me a better sense of direction and what to look for before I got started.

Buckham provides useful study and practice exercises. It was so helpful to have the excerpts of well executed description and have Buckham show us line by line the techniques the author used. In doing so, she shows us precisely how we can design our own study exercises to examine description in other works. This means that the value of this book isn't just as a source of knowledge; Buckham gives us a learning tool to use for further study. In using this tool, our perceptions will advance as we begin to consciously recognize things in fiction that were previously limited to our unconscious observations. I love expanding my mind in this way.

I would recommend this book as essential for most untrained writers. It teaches a lot of the prose skills that take a long time to pick up on, since we mostly do it intuitively and often don't know what we're intuiting if it's never been pointed out to us. Having them pointed out will allow you to learn these skills more quickly. For those who have attended an official writing program or have had an experienced mentor, you may have been introduced to the concepts in this book already. Still, I felt this book was more concise and practical than re-reading the chapter on setting in my old copy of Writing Fiction by Janet Burroway from my bachelor's program. Those who have not received formal training in fiction writing and are not planning to any time soon can benefit from this book. From my observations reading reviews on GoodReads and Amazon, great prose can be so engrossing as to help—maybe trick?—readers into overlooking weaknesses in plot. While I hold myself to a higher standard than taking advantage of this observation, the important thing to note is the power of prose. Study up.

Sally Kilpatrick says

Great examples of how to make your setting really work for you, and a quick, easy read at that. Buckham also includes exercises to guide you through draft stages to take basic sentences and improve them at the

revision stage. I really liked the variety of examples, too--there's something there for everyone. Can't wait for the next one!

Lori Watson says

Excellent. Loved the exercises at the end of the chapters. They were practical and helped put the chapter concepts into practice. Recommended.
