

STEP BEYONDTM

Comprehension 4

read

write

publish

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Ben the Farmer

Narrator: Long ago, people hunted wild animals, caught fish and collected seeds and fruits wherever they could find them on the plains, in the rivers and in the forests.

Each year as winter approached, the trees lost their leaves, the rivers froze, the grasses died and the animals moved to warmer places where they could find grass to eat. So the people had to move with the animals and the seasons.

For shelter, the people made tents from poles and animal skins. The tents could be quickly assembled and pulled down. Once pulled down, they could be carried to the next place where the people chose to settle for a while. The people never stayed for too long in one place. They were always ready to move.

Humans have always been inventors. There have always been people who wondered about ways to make changes and improve their lives. Long, long ago, Ben the hunter was such a person.

Early one morning, as the sun rose like a golden disc above the mountains, a group of hunters was getting ready to find food for the day. Flaps opened at the sides of some tents and the people gathered at the remains of a fire from the night before. A thin trail of smoke snaked upwards from the warm ashes.

Ben (sighing): I'm tired of moving around all the time and living in a tent. Can't we make a place where we can stay?

Sten (surprised): But we've always moved.

Ben: I hate having to leave each time. It's hard to pack and carry all our things to the next place.

Hilda: But we have to keep up with the animals.

Ben: Why don't we train some animals to stay with us?

Sten (laughing): That's a crazy idea. Animals move with the seasons.

Ben: Why don't we plant seeds and grow food so we know where it will be?

Hilda: That's a silly idea, too! Plants just grow where they will. We can't make them do what we want!

Narrator: The others teased Ben and laughed at him. Then they picked up their spears, stone axes and digging tools ready to hunt and gather fruits for dinner.

Ben (mumbling to himself): I don't like hunting. I'll build a house, and fences to keep some deer. And I'll grow plants in a field. I'll be a farmer. I won't have to move on.

Sten & Hilda: It will never work. You will starve.

Narrator describes time and place. These are the **setting**.

Time is the past.
Place is natural world.

Special **character** (Ben)

Image: 'like a golden

Dialogue: what the characters say

Actions of characters (laughing)

Special character wants to change things.

Reading and Comprehension

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Exploring the text

Characters

1. Who are the hunters in the story?

Detail

2. What did the people make for shelter?

Setting

3. Why did Ben and his group have to move around? Why does Ben want to live in one place?

Compare

4. How is Ben different from the other hunters?

Opinion

5. What do you think was the most difficult part of living long ago?

Compare

6. Think of a famous person from history who is like Ben. Explain why they are similar.

Imagery

7. How does the author make you think that this scene is real? What do you think the author wanted the reader to feel?

Speculate

8. What do you think will happen to Ben? Pretend you are the narrator. Describe any changes in the setting and then tell what the characters say.

Beyond the text

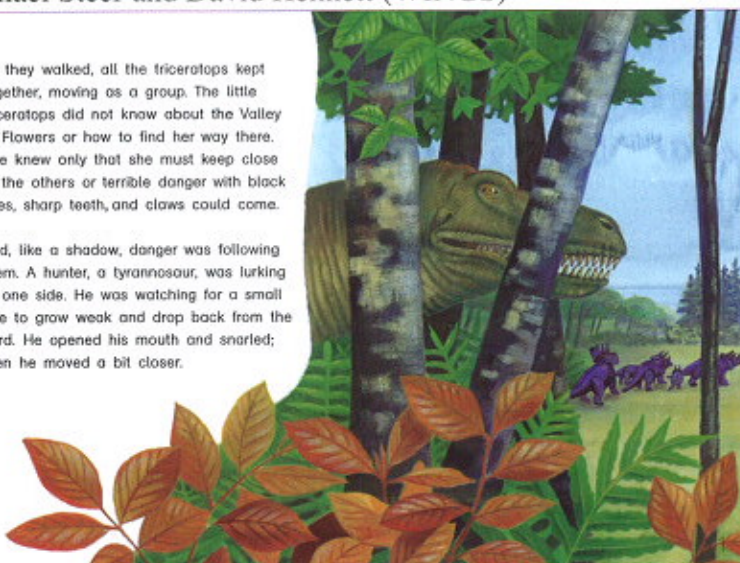
Here are some other stories in ancient settings.

Day of the Storm, Josephine Croser and Katharine Stafford (WINGS)

The Sun Chariot, Michael Steer and David Kennett (WINGS)

As they walked, all the triceratops kept together, moving as a group. The little triceratops did not know about the Valley of Flowers or how to find her way there. She knew only that she must keep close to the others or terrible danger with black eyes, sharp teeth, and claws could come.

And, like a shadow, danger was following them. A hunter, a tyrannosour, was lurking to one side. He was watching for a small one to grow weak and drop back from the herd. He opened his mouth and snarled; then he moved a bit closer.



Technique and style

Ben the Farmer is the beginning of a play script. The storyteller introduces the play by describing the **setting** – where and when the story happens – and the **characters**. Here are some hints about how you could describe the setting and characters for a story.

Time

Stories can happen in the past, the present or the future. The time setting for *Ben the Farmer* is a long time ago. Stories like this often begin with phrases such as:

Long ago... Once upon a time... In a time long past...

Place

The general setting is the ancient world, before cities, villages and farms existed. So the author describes plains, rivers, forests and mountains. This setting is also about where the people live and how they move to follow animals through the seasons.

The author also describes a particular part of the setting – the people's camp.

Characters

The author uses a storyteller called a **narrator** to describe the setting (long ago in the natural world). The narrator also introduces a special **character** (Ben) and how he and the others lived. In this story, the characters are affected by the setting. In the natural world, they must move all the time to survive. But the special character has ideas to change things.

Dialogue

Much of the story is told through **dialogue**. This is when the characters speak to each other. The **actions** of the characters are told by the narrator.

Images

The author uses descriptive language to create **images**, or word pictures. The author often does this by comparing things. The descriptions help the reader imagine the story setting.

...the sun rose like a golden disc above the mountains... (compares the sun to a disc)

A thin trail of smoke snaked upwards... (compares smoke to a snake)

Writing project

Describe a setting and characters for a stage play.

Ideas

Pretend that you are a narrator introducing a stage play before the actors come onto the stage. You need to explain the setting and the characters to the audience – the place where the story is happening. Here are some ideas or topics you could use.

- Your setting might be some local place you know. Describe the scene – the sights, the sounds, the smells, the colours and the weather.
- Imagine a setting for a story that happens in outer space. When would this happen – now or in the future? Where would it happen – on a spacecraft, a planet or a moon? What would the place be like? Are the characters human or alien or both?

Planning

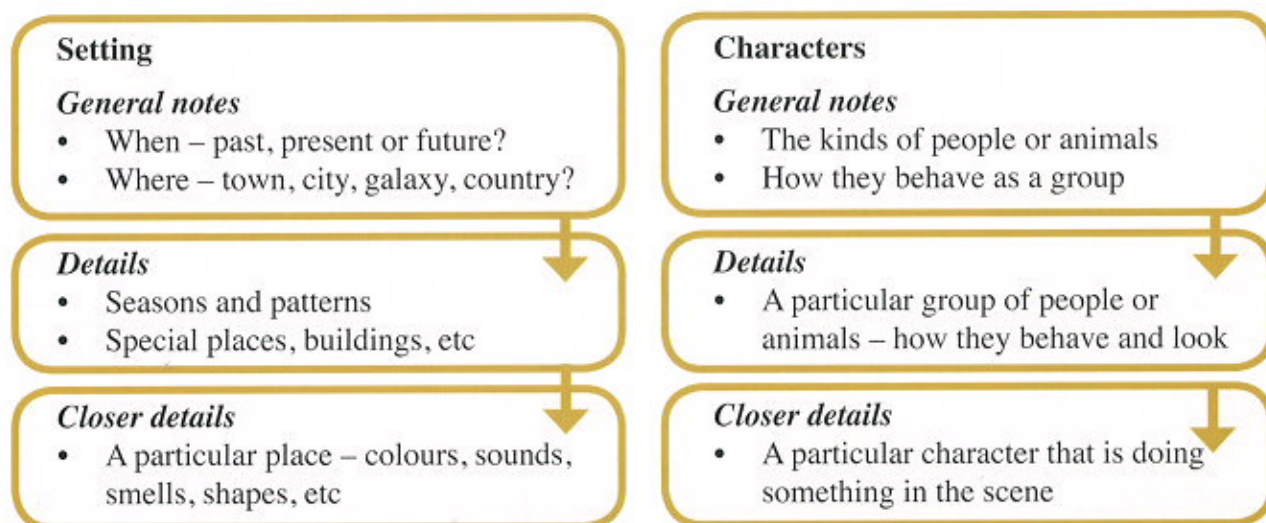
- In a small group, brainstorm ideas about the topic you have chosen.
- Search the Picture File Disk to find imaginary scenes you could use for outer space.

Picture File Disk reference: Places

- Photograph scenes near where you live if you are writing about your local area.

Organising

- Use a chart to list the different things you will describe about your setting and characters. Here is a chart you could use to organise your ideas.



- Notice that when you describe a scene in this way, you begin with general information. Then you can describe more details.

★ Editor's hint

The zoom lens

Imagine that you are viewing your scene and characters through a camera with a zoom lens.

- At first they are far away, so you can describe only general things about them.
- If you zoom in a little closer you can see and describe more details.
- When you zoom in close enough to be at the scene and next to the characters, you can describe many details so the reader understands more about them.

Word pictures

In word pictures, you can compare things so the reader understands them better. Here are some word pictures from the sample text:

...the sun rose **like a golden disc** above the mountains...

A thin **trail** of smoke **snaked upwards**...

You can say something is **like** something else (like a golden disc). This is called a *simile*.

You can say something **is** something else or **behaves** as if it is something else (A **trail** of smoke **snaked**...). Smoke is not a trail and it is not a snake, but the author compares it to these things. This is called a *metaphor*.

(Turn the page for more about word pictures.) →

Writing Workshop (continued)

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Word pictures (continued)

- Check to see if you have used word pictures to describe your character or scene.
 - ♦ What does your character look or act like?
 - ♦ What does your scene look or smell like?



Using references

Style guide

Dialogue

In a play, the actors talk to each other. This is called *dialogue*.

- Look up *play script* in your *Junior Writers Guide* and find out how words are written for an actor to perform.



Word knowledge

Vocabulary

Occupations (-or, -er)

The word endings **-or** and **-er** often mean 'someone who'. They are common in words that mean certain jobs or occupations. Here are some of these words from the text:

-or	-er
narrator	hunter
inventor	

- Use a dictionary to check whether you can add **-or** and **-er** to each word below to make a word that means a job.
- Write the words in your personal word book under the topic heading 'Occupations'.

build decorate farm garden visit sail travel lead act instruct

Grammar

Verbs (-ing)

The author used some words in brackets to tell the actors how to act when speaking their parts. These words are *verbs*. Here are some verbs the author used.

sighing laughing mumbling

Verbs ending with the letters **-ing** are called *participles*.

- Look up *participles* in your *Junior Writers Guide*. Find out the two kinds of participles.
- Change these verbs into participles by adding the ending **-ing**.

cry jump grumble puff smile run grin shake chat

- Discuss other **-ing** verbs you might use to tell your characters how to act in a play.