

talking about **setting** and mood

The setting for a story is the **location** where it takes place.

Look together at a picture book to encourage children to talk confidently about setting in simple terms:

- Where does the story take place? Is it inside or outside?
At the shops or in the park?
By water or in a wood?
- If it is inside a house, what rooms can you see?
- If it is outside, what is the weather like? What time of year do you think it might be?

The setting is often used by an author or illustrator to create the atmosphere or **mood** of the story.

To get children talking about a mood indicated by a picture will probably involve more support.

The four picture books used as examples in this project are:

- *A Balloon for Grandad* by Nigel Gray and Jane Ray (Orchard Books)
- *Farmer Duck* by Martin Waddell and Helen Oxenbury (Walker Books)
- *Pumpkin Soup* by Helen Cooper (Picture Corgi)
- *My Two Grannies* by Floella Benjamin and Margaret Chamberlain (Frances Lincoln)

Try this:

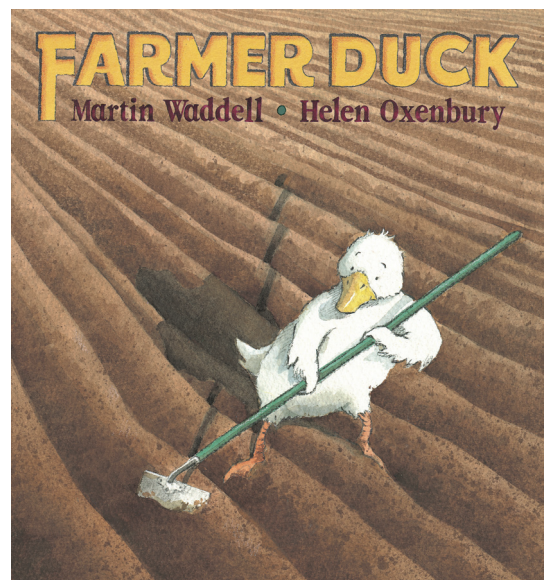
Look together at the end papers of *Farmer Duck*.

At the front of the book, there is a picture of fields and trees. The colours are dull, the trees are bare and the sky looks threateningly cold.

Ask children to tell you what they can see on these pages. How does this picture make them feel?

On the end paper at the back of the book, the same scene looks completely different. Ask children the same questions: what can you see? How does it make you feel?

If an adult talks through the interpretation of the first scene, children will pick up and use the same technique very quickly.



Farmer Duck

Look for clues to the farmyard setting of the story, eg. trees, woods, hedges, fields, farm buildings, straw, a tractor, farm animals.

Look together at how mood is created by the weather and the use of shape and colour. The illustrations are dark and shadowy until the lazy farmer is chased away; then the colours brighten and the sun comes out.

A Balloon for Grandad

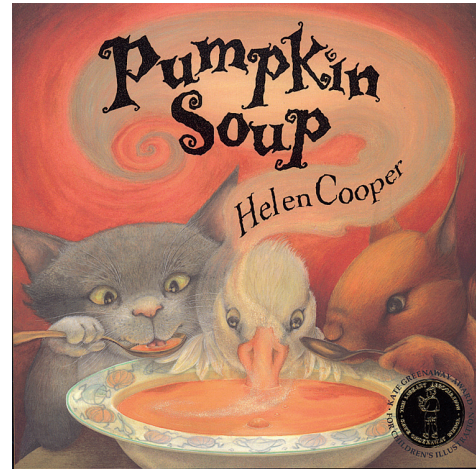
The story starts inside a home. Talk about which rooms you can see. Are they upstairs or downstairs?

Look together at how our eyes are directed to look outside - through doors and windows at a garden, a street and up into the air where the balloon is escaping.

As the story progresses, look out for clues to a whole variety of imaginary landscapes: mountains, deserts, rivers and seas, buildings, plants and animals.

Can you spot different times of day and night? Can you spot different types of weather?

For more recommended books, plus ideas, activities and tips for sharing picture books, visit
www.booktrustchildrensbooks.org.uk



Pumpkin Soup

Look together at the differences between the pictures of the inside and the outside of the pumpkin-shaped house at the start of the story. Outside, it is pale and cold in the moonlight, but inside the warm glow of the stove and the bubbling soup looks inviting and friendly.

What time of year is it? Look together for any clues that show that the story takes place during autumn.

My Two Grannies

What different places can you see? As well as the townscape that opens the story, there are everyday settings such as bedrooms, kitchens and gardens, as well as a park and a zoo.

Look together at how the atmosphere changes through the changing use of colour. Can children see the differences between the Trinidadian elements of the story, with their intense and vibrant colours, and the English elements, with more muted shades?