

Grade 7 Playlist: Interaction of Story Elements

Aligns with *CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.3*:

- Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot).

Welcome

Books and plays tell stories in different ways. However, they both have the same story elements, including **characters**, **setting**, and **plot**. All of these elements **interact**, or affect each other, throughout the story. Sometimes, the setting changes what a character does. Characters also can change the setting by moving things around or traveling to new places. What a character does or says can affect another character or change the plot. Likewise, plot events also can change how characters act or what they believe.

In the play *Pygmalion* by George Bernard Shaw, the characters, setting, and plot all interact with each other to create unexpected changes in the story.

Objectives

In this playlist, students will learn and practice how to:

- analyze how the setting shapes characters and plot.
- analyze how one character's words and actions affect another character.
- analyze how plot events affect a character's choices.

Review

Key Terms

- When elements of a story **interact**, they have an effect on each other.
- The **characters** are the people who the story is about.
- The **setting** is when and where the story takes place.
- The **plot** is all of the events that happen in the story.

The **setting** can include the year, the culture, and the weather:

- Year and culture:
 - Does the story take place today or in 1850? If a play is set in the past, the characters will dress, act, and think differently than people do today. Their education, jobs, and technology also will be different.



- Weather:
 - Rain, sunshine, snow, and wind can all affect the characters' feelings or actions. A storm might destroy a character's property or prevent a character from traveling.

Watch!

This video explains settings using examples from popular movies:

- <https://www.opened.com/video/story-elements-setting-youtube/108422>

In *Pygmalion*, a professor named Henry Higgins tries to teach a lower-class flower girl named Eliza Doolittle to be a proper lady by making her speak with a proper English accent. The play is set in London around the turn of the 1800s during the Victorian Era. In this time period, there were many specific expectations about how people in different social classes should speak and behave. One important marker of social class was language. The way people spoke in the higher, educated classes was considered proper English while the accents of lower-class people were considered improper.

Major Characters in *Pygmalion*

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eliza Doolittle: A flower girl from a lower economic class who does not speak what is considered proper English.• Henry Higgins: A professor who studies languages and accents of people in different parts of the world. He teaches people how to speak proper English.• Colonel Pickering: A language scholar who wants to learn more about Higgins's work and persuades him to teach Eliza. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mrs. Higgins: Henry Higgins' mother.• Freddy Eynsford Hill: Falls in love with Eliza, writes letters to her, and becomes a marriage option for her by the end of the play. |
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Exploring the Standard

Many stories have settings that strongly shape the characters. For example, in the *Harry Potter* series by J.K. Rowling, Hogwarts, the magical school that Harry attends, shapes all of the characters because it is where they learn, make friends, and live for most of the year. It brings characters together who would not have met otherwise. This is just one way that settings can shape characters.



Teaching Notes: Interaction of Story Elements

The goal of RL.7.3 is for students to understand and be able to explain how **settings**, **plots**, and **characters** interact with and affect each other. The following information contains ideas that teachers can incorporate into their classrooms as well as additional resources to peruse and integrate into instruction as appropriate.

Activities

1. Discuss with students the different characters in *Pygmalion*. Make sure they understand the characters' personalities and what they want. Then, have students act out the scenes in this playlist. Students should think carefully about how the characters react to each other in each scene.
2. Have students complete a cause-and-effect chart to show how characters' actions affect the plot in *Pygmalion* or another grade-appropriate story. The following link provides a sample chart students can use:
<http://freeology.com/graphicorgs/cause-and-effect/>
3. Divide the class into groups and have them design backgrounds and props for the *Pygmalion* excerpts in this playlist. The goal is to make the setting as detailed as possible so students understand all of the elements that go into creating a strong setting (weather, buildings, furniture, etc.).

Writing Prompts

1. Ask students to think about a story they like (a book, movie, cartoon, comic, TV show, or web series) that has a setting which strongly affects the characters and the plot. Have them write an essay describing the setting, why it is important, and how it affects the characters.
2. Ask students to think about how *Pygmalion* would be different if it took place today. Have them write an essay explaining how the new setting would change the characters and why.

Additional Resources

Consider these additional resources when teaching RL.7.3:

Write an Alternate Ending: In this lesson, students imagine how a story's plot would change if a character made a different decision. They then rewrite the ending of the story based on their predictions. This lesson uses the story *Z for Zachariah*, but it may be adapted for other books or plays.

- <http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/writing-alternative-plots-robert-5.html?tab=4#tabs>

Setting in Historical Fiction: In this lesson, students read historical fiction and analyze how events from the past related to slavery shape the characters in the story. This lesson may be adapted for other historical time periods as well.

- <http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/traveling-road-freedom-through-864.html?tab=4#tabs>

