

Setting

The **setting** of a story is the time and place in which the events occur. The place can be real or imaginary, and the time can be a particular time of day, a season, a period of history, or even the future. Setting plays an important part in some stories, having a major effect on what happens to the characters. In other stories, the settings are only backdrops. In "The Interlopers," the setting serves as the scene of a key conflict between man and nature.

Theme

A **theme** is a central idea or message in a work of literature. It is not the work's subject but a perception about life or human nature that the writer wants to communicate. Themes are seldom stated directly; usually they must be inferred. A theme can be revealed by the ways characters change during a story and the conflicts they experience, statements in which the narrator or a character says something important about life, or by a work's title.

YOUR TURN From the passage at the right, what can you infer about a possible theme of the story?

Point of View

The term **point of view** refers to the relationship between a narrator and the events he or she describes. When a story's narrator is a character participating in the story's action, the story is said to be written from a **first-person point of view**. In a story told from a **third-person point of view**, on the other hand, a narrator outside the action describes the events and characters. This point of view can be subdivided into **third-person omniscient**, in which the narrator is "all-knowing," able to see into the minds of all the characters, and **third-person limited**, in which the narrator perceives events only as an observer or only through the eyes of one character. A narrator whose viewpoint is limited to that of a single character will describe only that character's feelings and only the events that the character witnesses.

YOUR TURN What clues in this passage can help you identify the point of view from which the story is told?

THEME

"We have quarreled like devils all our lives over this stupid strip of forest, where the trees can't even stand upright in a breath of wind. Lying here tonight, thinking, I've come to think we've been rather fools; there are better things in life than getting the better of a boundary dispute."

POINT OF VIEW

Ulrich was silent for a few minutes and lay listening to the weary screeching of the wind. An idea was slowly forming and growing in his brain, an idea that gained strength every time that he looked across at the man who was fighting so grimly against pain and exhaustion.