

Cultural experience is reflected in story elements of world literature.

- ▶ **Setting** may reflect the culture in location and time period.
- ▶ **Plot** may reflect the culture in actions or events.
- ▶ **Characters** may reflect the culture in their beliefs and values.

The Good Earth by Pearl S. Buck, 1931, about life in China in early 1900s

The kitchen was made of **earthen bricks** as the house was, great squares of earth **dug from their own fields**, and **thatched with straw from their own wheat**.

This was the **last morning** he would have **to light the fire**. ... There was **a woman coming** to the house... He could **lie in his bed and wait**, and he also would have a bowl of **water brought to him**...

He **did not look at the woman** as he spoke. It **would not have been seemly**.

The **setting** shows that the Chinese people at this time were farmers and relied on the soil for homes and food.

The **plot** shows that men in the Chinese culture at this time expected a woman to light the fire and bring food to them.

The **character** shows that men in Chinese culture at that time did not look directly at a woman. This shows the beliefs of Chinese men and women at that time.

CFU

Which shows culture reflected in the setting? Explain.

A In the heart of the village, the marketplace buzzed with activity. Women in colorful saris bartered for spices and fresh vegetables, their bangles clinking with each movement.

B The small town lay nestled in a valley surrounded by rolling hills. Neat rows of houses lined the cobblestone streets, their red-brick chimneys puffing out wisps of smoke.

Which shows culture reflected in the plot? Explain.

A As the harvest festival approached, the entire village prepared for the grand celebration. Families gathered to weave intricate garlands of marigolds, a symbol of prosperity.

B Sarah received a mysterious letter one morning, written in an unfamiliar hand. The letter instructed her to meet at an old, abandoned house on the outskirts of town. Intrigued, she decided to go, despite her reservations.

Which shows culture reflected in the character? Explain.

A Emma was a petite woman with curly blonde hair that framed her face in soft waves. She had sharp blue eyes that always seemed to be observing the world around her with keen interest.

B Li Wei began his day with a walk through the streets of his neighborhood, stopping by the corner tea shop where the owner, Mr. Chen, knew his order by heart. As he sipped his jasmine tea, Li Wei exchanged pleasantries with the other regulars,

- 1 Read the passage.
- 2 Identify elements of setting, plot, or character. (**bolded words**)
- 3 Analyze how cultural experience is reflected in these elements. (write)

Great Expectations by Charles Dickens (1861)

BACKGROUND: about life in England in the 1830s told by Pip, an orphan boy, raised by his sister who had married Joe, the blacksmith.

We were to have a superb dinner, consisting of a **leg of pickled pork** and **greens**, and a **pair of roast stuffed fowls**. A handsome **mince-pie** had been made yesterday morning (which accounted for the mincemeat not being missed), and the **pudding** was already on the boil...

So, we had our **slices served out [by the sister]**, as if we were two thousand troops on a forced march instead of a man and boy at home...

My sister, having so much to do, was going to church **vicariously**, that is to say, Joe and I were going. In his working-clothes, Joe was a well-knit characteristic-looking blacksmith; in **his holiday clothes**, he was more like a **scarecrow in good circumstances**, than anything else...

1. Analysis of Setting (what it shows about the culture):

2. Analysis of Plot (what it shows about the culture):

3. Analysis of Characters: (what it shows about the culture):

Skill Closure

- 1 Read the passage.
- 2 Identify elements of setting, plot, or character. (**bolded words**)
- 3 Analyze how cultural experience is reflected in these elements. (write)

Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe (1958)

BACKGROUND: describes life in a Nigerian Igbo village during the late 1800s when European colonialism began to impact traditional African societies

Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine **villages** and even beyond. His fame rested on solid personal achievements. As a young man of eighteen he had brought honor to his **clan** by throwing Amalinze the Cat. Amalinze was the great wrestler who for seven years was unbeaten, from Umuofia to Mbaino. He was called the Cat because his back would never touch the earth. It was this man that Okonkwo threw in a **wrestling match** which the old men agreed was one of the fiercest since the founder of their town engaged a spirit of the wild for seven days and seven nights.

1. Analysis of Setting (what it shows about the culture):

Concept Closure

Write an explanation.

Ellen said the character of Okonkwo in the text about "Things Fall Apart" reflects his Igbo culture. Do you agree or not and why?

Summary Closure

What did you learn today about analyzing how cultural experience is reflected in world literature?

Word Bank

cultural experience
setting
plot
characters
world literature

Read the passage. Identify elements of culture (bolded words). Then, analyze how culture experience is reflected in the elements.

A Passage to India by E. M. Forster (1924)

BACKGROUND: about life in India when the British ruled the country (1858-1947). It focuses on the differences between East and West cultures, and whether there is something universal they share.

He had always liked this mosque. ...The covered part of the mosque was deeper than is usual; **its effect was that of an English parish church whose side has been taken out.** Where he sat, he looked into three arcades whose **darkness** was illuminated by a small hanging **lamp** and by the **moon**. The front—in full moonlight—had the appearance of marble, and the ninety-nine names of God on the frieze stood out **black**, as the frieze stood out **white** against the sky. The contest between this **dualism** and the contention of **shadows** within pleased Aziz,

"I want to see the real India," she said... Then Aziz, the Indian doctor, said, "I **shall arrange an expedition.** We will go to the **Marabar Caves.**" The British officials exchanged glances. "The Collector **wouldn't approve**" but Aziz continued, "We shall arrange for **elephants...**"

He had always liked this mosque. ...This pleased Aziz, ... A mosque by **winning his approval** let loose his imagination. The temple of another creed, Hindu, Christian, or Greek, would have bored him and failed to awaken his sense of beauty. Here was Islam, his own country, more than a Faith, more than a battle-cry, more, much more. ... **Islam, an attitude towards life both exquisite and durable, where his body and his thoughts found their home.**

1. **Analysis of Setting** (what it shows about the culture):

2. **Analysis of Plot** (what it shows about the culture):

3. **Analysis of Characters:** (what it shows about the culture):



Listening

Listen to the passage read aloud.

Analyze how the setting and characters reflect the culture.

Kim by Rudyard Kipling (1901)

Background: about a white orphan boy in India who gets involved in spiritual and political activities.

1. Analysis of Setting (what it shows about the culture):

2. Analysis of Character (what it shows about the culture):



Reading

Read the passage. Then, analyze the culture using the setting and the plot.

The Rider on the White Horse by Theodor Storm (1888)

Background: The story of a young German man who wants to improve the dikes that keep out the North Sea from their lands.

I rode through a mighty storm along a **North Frisian dike**. For over an hour I had on my left the dreary marshland; on my right, unpleasantly near me, the swamping waters of the **North Sea**. I saw nothing, however, but the yellowish-grey waves that **beat against the dike** unceasingly, as if they were roaring with rage; ... behind them I could see only **chaotic dusk which did not let me tell sky and earth apart**, ...

I tied my horse ... and left him to the servant who met me as I entered the hall.

"Is a meeting going on here?" I asked, for now voices and clicking glasses rose clearly from the room beyond the door.

"Aye, something of the sort," the servant replied in **Plattdeutsch**, and later I learned that this **dialect**, had been in full swing here, as well as the **Frisian**, for over a hundred years; "the dikemaster and the other landholders! That's on account of **the high water!**"

1. Analysis of Setting (what it shows about the culture):

2. Analysis of Plot (what it shows about the culture):



Writing

Write an analysis. Read the text. Then analyze how the plot and the characters reflect ancient Greek culture.

The Odyssey by Homer, (800 B.C.E.)

Background: The story of Greek hero Ulysses' return from the Trojan War and his many adventures.

Tell me, O **muse**, of that **ingenious hero** who travelled far and wide after he had sacked the famous town of Troy. Many cities did he visit; moreover he suffered much by sea while trying to save his own life and bring his men safely home; but he could not save his men, for they died by their own sheer folly in eating the cattle of the Sun-god Hyperion; so **the god prevented them** from ever reaching home.

Ulysses was longing to return to his wife and country but was **detained by the goddess Calypso**, who had got him into a large cave and wanted to marry him. But as years went by, there came a time when **the gods settled that he should go back home**.

1. Analysis of Plot (what it shows about the culture):

2. Analysis of Characters (what it shows about the culture):