

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 example shows culture reflected in the setting? Explain.

A Here in the city, there was food everywhere. The streets of the fish market were lined with baskets of big silver fish...

B Sometimes, ... he was ashamed of his own curiosity about her. She was, after all, only a woman.

Which example shows culture reflected in the plot? Explain.

A But there came a day when there was no rice left and no wheat left, and the ox lowed with its hunger and the old man said: 'We will eat the ox, next.'

B The ox was his companion in the fields, and he had walked behind and praised it. And he said: 'How can we eat the ox?'

Which example shows culture reflected in the character? Explain.

A She pressed her hand to her belly, and the men were ashamed and went out, for they were not evil men except when they starved.

B Now, we will go out together and hunt for grass to eat, you for your children, and we for our three children.'

- 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**₄ 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. (underline)
- 3 Analyze how cultural experience is reflected in these elements. (write)

The Squatter and the Don by Maria Amparo Ruiz de Burton (1885),

Background: Describing the struggles of Mexican-American families in Southern California when the land was first transferred to the U.S.

Don Mariano Alamar was silently walking up and down the front **piazza** of his house at the **rancho**. He had pushed away to one side the many armchairs. He wanted a long space to walk.... Sounds of laughter, music, and dancing came from the parlor, ... Don Mariano, though already 50, was as fond of dancing as his sons and daughters, and not to see him come in and join the **quadrille** was so singular that his wife asked him...

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

Concept Closure

Write an explanation.

Ellen said the character in the text about Don Mariano Alamar reflects his Mexican-American 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 frieze₂ 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,

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.**

... so one of the pillars of the mosque seemed to quiver. It swayed in the gloom and detached itself. **Another pillar moved, a third, and then an Englishwoman stepped out into the moonlight.**

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**₁ 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):
