



WALK ABOUT

Writers must develop their story's setting for several reasons. We set the scene by describing it so vividly our readers want to journey with us. We're the camera they see through. Details also bring the world we're creating to life. Miss defining a scent or sound and that world seems flat. Our words give it dimension.

All that said, it isn't easy putting things in motion. Simple descriptions record the obvious: a tree here, a building there. You need to give readers more. Find the nuances in your scene by including all the senses. Don't forget temperature, lights as well as shadows, vibrations, textures, colours and smells.

Recognize that every setting is fluid - it moves as you move. When readers walk with you, what will they encounter? Turn discoveries into moments of enlightenment. Is there a metaphor in a sound? A personality in a scent? A memory in a shard of colour?

Be warned: share your observations prudently. The details you include must mean something to the story and its characters. Otherwise, you're wasting words and risk leaving your readers far behind.

WORDS' WORTH PROJECT #4: OBSERVATIONS

Materials Needed: comfortable clothing and walking shoes; digital camera; digital recorder (optional); writing paper & pen.

- 🔗 Find a place you've never visited before. Plan a walking route through the area that will last one hour.
- 🔗 If you have a recorder, turn it on. Use it to record sounds you encounter- feel free to verbalize your observations.
- 🔗 Start your journey by taking a photograph of the scene before you. Repeat this every 20 minutes; by the end of the hour you should have 4 photos.
- 🔗 Before you leave write down your impressions, either in point form or clusters of phrases.
- 🔗 Let some time pass before you continue this project (as a way of testing your powers of observation). Study your photos, audio recording and notes. Compose an account of your journey, including details from all your senses.
- 🔗 Can you incorporate this scene into a short story?