Setting is the time and place in which a story occurs. Sometimes the setting of a story plays only a small role in a story. At other times, however, setting plays a major role—that is, the setting is so important to the plot that the story would not be the same if the setting were changed. For example, a story about a man who tries to climb the highest mountain in the world would not be the same story if the mountain, which is part of the setting, is taken away. A story set in ancient Rome would be very different from a story that takes place in our own day.

Following are summaries of three stories, some famous, some not. Read the summaries. Then decide whether you think the setting in each story plays a major role or a minor role. On the line below each summary, write the words "major role" if you think the setting plays a major role. Write the words "minor role" if you think the setting plays a minor role. Then, next to your answer, explain why you chose the answer. Hint: To test whether the setting plays a major role, ask yourself whether the story would remain the same if the time and place were changed. If the answer is no, then the setting plays a major role.

1. A boy grows up in colonial America just before the Revolutionary War breaks out. At first, he is not interested in the struggle for freedom. But once the Revolution begins, he enlists as a soldier.

2. A dog lives a peaceful life in California. One day he is kidnapped by a man who transports him to the north country because sled dogs are in demand there. During the course of the story, the dog is transferred from one owner to another. Most of the owners treat him badly. The wild north awakens the dog's primitive instincts, and gradually he feels the need to abandon civilized ways and become wild again, like his ancestors. By the end of the story, he has become wild.

3. Depressed by his empty life in the city, a life in which few people know him or care about him, a man goes to a mysterious travel agency. This travel agency, according to a rumor he has heard, can make arrangements to have people taken to another world, a world of joy and peace and friendship. The people at the travel agency give him a chance to go to this special world, on condition that he pass a test designed to show whether he is the kind of person who would be happy in this world. The man fails the test.