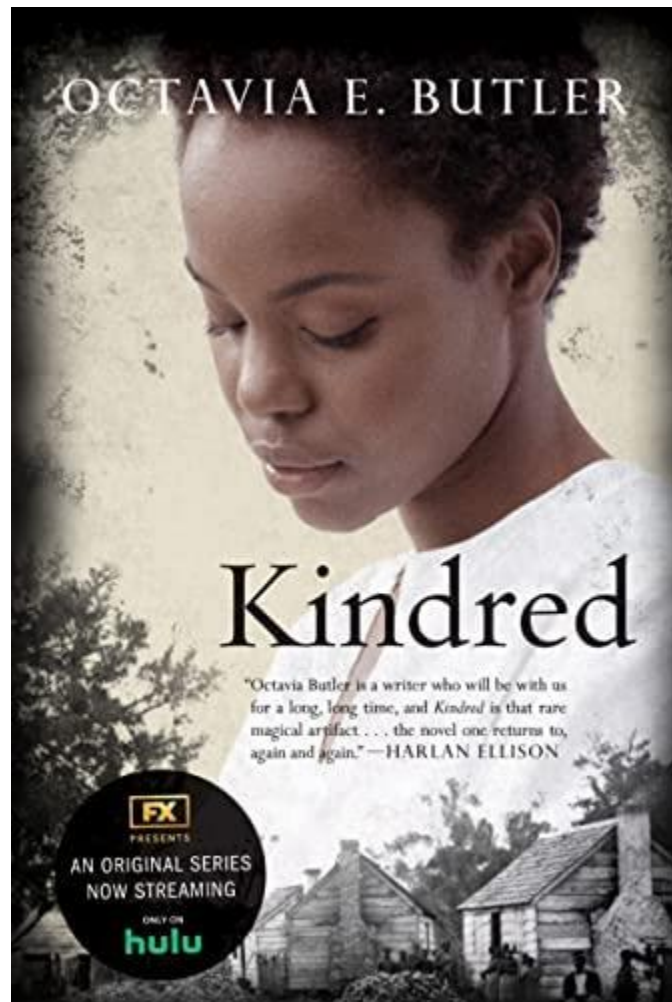# Setting

The events in any story happen in a particular place and environment as well as during a certain period in time (era or epoch). A writer can create a setting that seems realistic and relatable to readers, or one that is fabricated from his or her imagination.

The setting can change in a work of literature which influences the actions, emotions, and conflicts of a character. For example, in the fantasy novel, *Kindred* (1979) by Octavia Butler (1947 – 2006), the main character, Dana, is forcefully transported from 1976 (her present) back to the past during slavery and the antebellum period of the United States. As Dana is plucked in and out of eras, her

experiences change (mentally and physically). Thus, the settings strongly influence the characterization of Dana and other people in the story.

"The makeup and behavior of fictional characters often depend on their environment quite as much as on their personal characteristics. Setting is of great importance in Émile Zola's (1840 -1902) novels, for example, because he believed that environment determines character. In some cases, the entire action of a novel is determined by the locale in which it is set. Gustave Flaubert's (1821 -1880) *Madame Bovary* (1857) could hardly have been placed in Paris, because the tragic life and death of the heroine have a great deal to do with the circumscriptions of her provincial milieu. It sometimes happens that the main locale of a novel assumes an importance in the reader's imagination comparable to that of the characters. Wessex is a giant, brooding presence in Thomas Hardy's (1840 – 1928) novels. The popularity of Sir Walter Scott's (1771 – 1832) "Waverley" novels is due in part to their evocation of a romanticized Scotland. Setting may be the prime consideration of some readers, who can be drawn to Joseph Conrad (1857 – 1924) because he depicts life at sea or in the East Indies; they may be less interested in the complexity of human relationships that he presents.

The setting of a novel may be an actual city or region made greater than life, as in James Joyce's (1882 – 1941) characterization of Dublin. But settings may also be completely the work of an author's imagination: in Vladimir Nabokov's (1899 – 1977) *Ada* (1969), for example, there is an entirely new space-time continuum, and in *The Lord of the Rings* (1954–55) J.R.R. Tolkien (1892 – 1973) created an "alternative world" in his Middle Earth."

Reference: Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "setting".
Encyclopedia Britannica, 10 Apr. 2016,
https://www.britannica.com/art/setting. Accessed 15 January 2023.