CRAFTING YOUR SETTING
Guidance sheet

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One of the joys of writing is transporting your readers to far away places. A well-crafted setting can bring your story to life, giving you the chance to immerse your audience in a world they've never experienced. A setting isn't just a random backdrop for your characters. It's made up of key elements like the landscape, weather, and climate, as well as the time of year, architectural features and the overall atmosphere. While you don't need to include every detail, these aspects can help your readers gain a better understanding of the environment your characters are placed in.

You might also want to delve into deeper layers of your setting. Consider the people who live there, the cultural or political influences at play, and also any historical events that have left their mark. These details can add richness, especially if they directly impact your characters or their journey. It's easy to feel overwhelmed by the possibilities, but the key is to be selective. Focus on the details that enhance your story. A few well-placed descriptions can paint a great picture and you can sprinkle in any extra details where needed to maintain the overall atmosphere.
Once your setting feels alive, let your characters engage with it. Their interactions with their surroundings will bring the story to life and make this world feel real for your readers.

Show, don't tell
One of the most important techniques in writing is the concept of 'showing' rather than 'telling.' Instead of simply informing the reader about the story, you engage them by illustrating the scene through action, dialogue and sensory details. This helps readers connect more deeply with the characters and their experiences.

Here's an example of telling:
 Jack felt nervous as he stood in front of the large crowd. He wasn't sure if he could go through with the speech.

Now, let's see how showing can bring this moment to life:
 Jack wiped his sweaty palms on his trousers, his heart thudding in his chest. He glanced out at the sea of faces staring back at him, the bright lights blinding him momentarily. His throat tightened as he cleared it. "I—uh—well, here goes nothing," he muttered, barely audible.

In the second example, the reader feels Jack's nerves through his actions and internal struggle, rather than just being told he's nervous. The imagery, sounds, and sensations help to immerse the reader in the moment.

While telling can be useful in certain situations, such as summarising events or condensing information, showing is so much more effective when you want to make an emotional impact.