How Settings Create Atmosphere

UNIT 8

Into the Forest

Frodo, Merry and Pippin are hobbits. They are on a long and dangerous journey. They come to the beginning of a huge, dark forest. There is no way around it. They have to go through it!

Looking ahead, they could see only tree-trunks of innumerable sizes and shapes: straight or bent, twisted, leaning, squat or slender, smooth or gnarled and branched. All the stems were green or grey with moss and slimy, shaggy growths.

Merry alone seemed fairly cheerful. ‘You had better lead on and find a path,’ Frodo said to him. ‘Don’t let us lose one another…’

They picked a way among the trees, and their ponies plodded along, carefully avoiding the many writhing and interlacing roots. There was no undergrowth. The ground was rising steadily, and as they went forward it seemed that the trees became taller, darker, and thicker. There was no sound, except an occasional drip of moisture falling through the still leaves. For the moment, there was no whispering or movement among the branches; but they all got an uncomfortable feeling that they were being watched with disapproval… The feeling steadily grew, until they found themselves looking up quickly, or glancing back over their shoulders, as if they expected a sudden blow.

There was not, as yet, any sign of a path, and the trees seemed constantly to bar their way…

Frodo began to wonder if it were possible to find a way through, and if he had been right to make the others come into this abominable wood.

The Lord of the Rings, J.R.R. Tolkien

Understanding the text

1. What are the names of the three hobbits?
2. How were the hobbits travelling?
3. What was the only sound in the forest?
4. What was there no sign of?
5. What did Frodo begin to think?

Looking at language

6. Explain the meaning of these words as they are used in the story. Use a dictionary to help you.
   - innumerable
   - squat
   - gnarled
   - interlacing
   - disapproval
   - abominable

7. Find a word in the story that means the same as these.
   - keeping away from
   - going up
   - taking a quick look

8. Find adverbs in the story that tell you:
   - how the ponies plodded.
   - how the uncomfortable feeling grew.
   - how they looked up.
   - how the trees seemed to bar their way.

Exploring the story

9. Where is this part of the story set?
10. Why do you think ‘there was no undergrowth’?
11. What do you think might have happened if the hobbits had lost one another?
12. Who do you think is the leader of the group? Explain your reasons.
13. Why do you think Frodo told Merry to go ahead and ‘find a path’?
14. What do you think happens next? Do the hobbits find their way out of the wood? Do they get lost? What happens?

Taking it further

15. Imagine you were with the hobbits on their journey. Write about your thoughts and feelings:
   - before you go into the forest.
   - in the forest.
   - when you come out of the forest.