

Brandon Cupp
January 1, 1997
English 113

The Effects of Setting on Character

"The Masque of Red Death" and "The Shawl" are quite similar yet very unlike. The way the authors described the setting set the traits of the characters' personalities. In "The Masque of Red Death," by Edgar Allan Poe, Prince Prospero was the main character. In "The Shawl," by Cynthia Ozick, Stella was a supporting character. Both were greatly affected by the settings and the details to describe it.

The way the settings affected the characters were different in some ways. First the way both characters acted and the setting. Prospero lived a full life of luxuries which was evident from him being a prince and owning a magnificent castle. This castle is where he ran to hide from the Red Death. He was scared of dying. He figured if he isolated himself and his closest friends he would be safe. Stella on the other hand was a persecuted Jew in and on her way to a Nazi concentration camp. Death was everywhere. She had no fear of it but she did not want it to come. She just lived her life trying everything to survive. She had nowhere to hide as Prospero did. Yet in the end Prospero had to face death while Stella did not, even though she was in the camp. The attitudes of the two characters and the setting probably are what kept them alive.

In comparison of the way the setting affected character, we see they were quite alike also. Prospero's morbid lifestyle was quite unusual. His room of black with scarlet panes of glass, his ebony clock with a low dull monotonous chime and the bizarre masquerade party all show he was unusual and fascinated with the bizarre. Stella's description of ravenous black hair, the cold weather, and her unfeeling for others made her out to be quite unusual as well. Also both characters were seen to be selfish but in different ways. Yet it is quite similar. Prospero had a kingdom yet he separated himself from them. He isolated himself and his closet friends so that they may escape the Red Death. He was selfish in a way that he would let everyone else die but he would hide until it was all over. Stella's selfishness was brought out when she took the life out of the child. She took her shawl to keep herself warm. She felt her life was more important than someone else's. The adjectives used to describe the characters and setting were alike. All were negative, sometimes deathly descriptions of the clock, the black room, Prospero, Stella, her thoughts and her environment.

To conclude, the setting in "The Masque of Red Death" and "The Shawl" has morbid and deathly details that are similar but they set the characters Stella and Prospero apart in some ways.

