



**TeachingLive | Season 5 | Brightstorm | Week 7 - TEACHING NOTES - Skyship Adventure 4 – Suspense - Monday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2022**

**It would be great for these narrative sessions, if you could read Vashti Hardy's book Brightstorm to the class or the follow up 'Darkwhispers'.**

## **Creative Game**

As usual, the show begins with a game for children to play. Make sure that they have their notebooks and pencils ready and listen carefully. The game does NOT involve using the padlet. Children at home either play with a sibling or parent or write ideas rapidly in their notebooks.

### **Today's Game – Unfortunately/ Luckily**

The challenge is to bounce a story back and forth with a partner, alternating between dilemma and resolution using 'unfortunately' and 'luckily'.

At halftime, swap roles. This could be played in solo, pairs or as a class together. The children will be given a set time limit to play the game. David and Pie will model the game first bouncing ideas back and forth.

*The Objective – to enjoy the creative challenge of inventing dilemma and resolution, practising using adverbs at the start of a sentence.*

**Padlet** –This activity is aimed at learning strategies to building suspense in narrative writing. To warm up, we begin by looking at an image of a scary setting. The children have to write sentences using common 'suspense' starters. **This image should be displayed or made available and the piece below.**

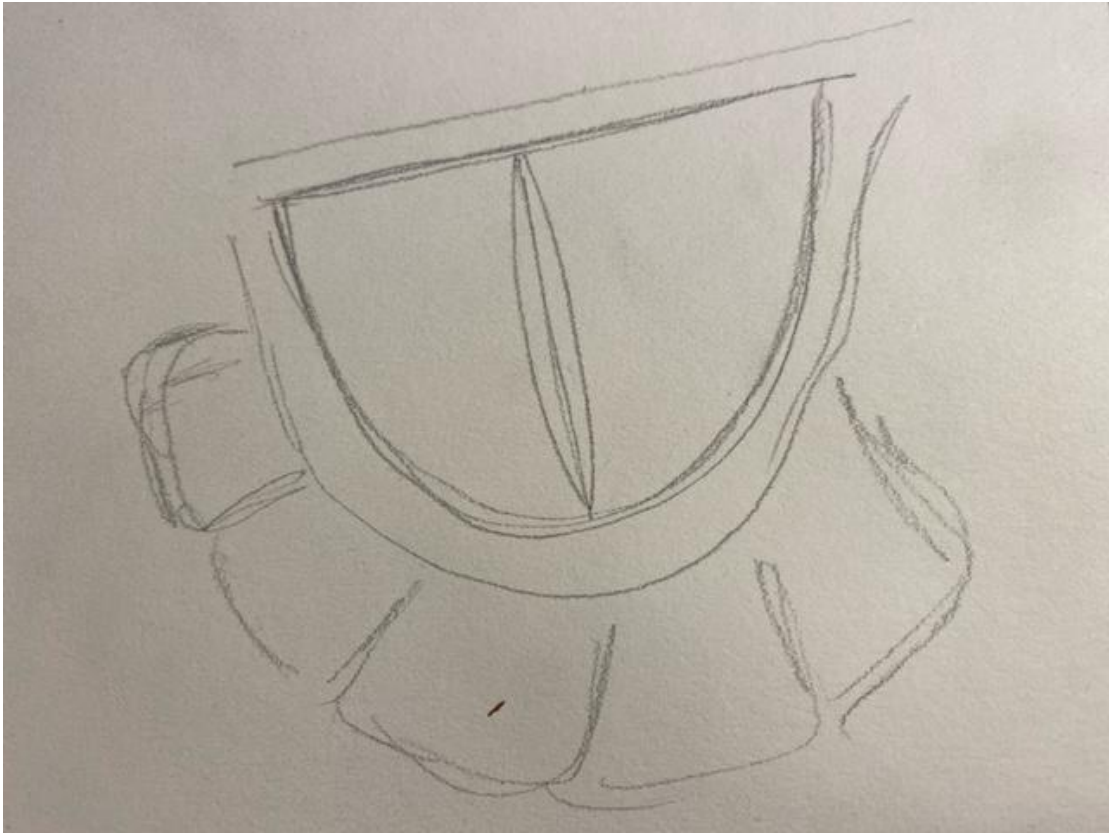


|                                                                    |                                                 |                                                   |                                                     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| At that moment,<br>Without warning,<br>In an instant,<br>Suddenly, | heard...<br>felt...<br>touched...<br>smelled... | saw...<br>noticed...<br>watched...<br>observed... | Carefully,<br>Cautiously,<br>Strangely,<br>Weirdly, |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|

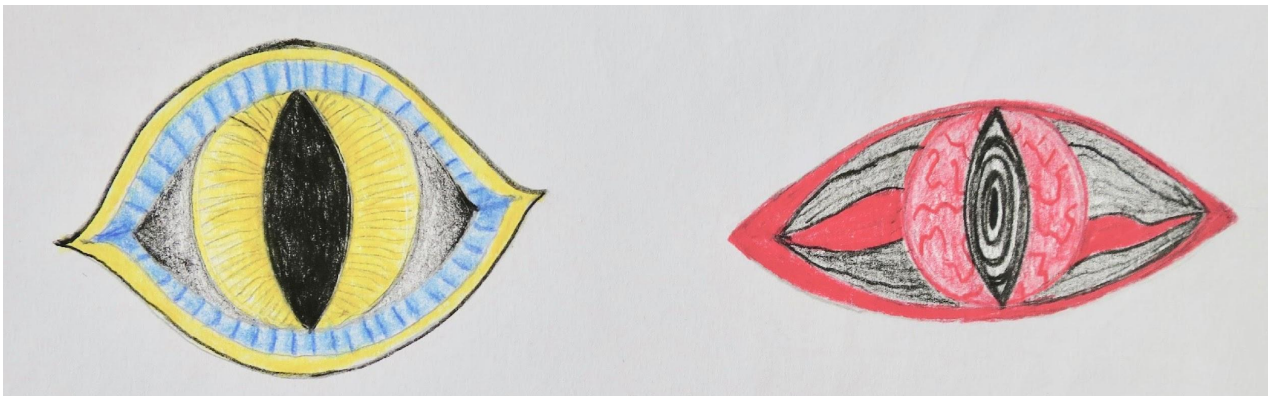
**Without thinking**, Ty stepped through the darkened doorway. **He saw** cobwebs hanging from the ceiling, broken glass scattered on the floor and paint peeling. **Without warning**, the door slammed behind him! He stood quite still and listened. **He heard** a scratch and a scrape. Something was moving towards him. What was it? **He watched** as an ebony shadow slunk by the far wall. **Cautiously**, he turned but the door was locked and he was trapped.

- *Objective – writing sentences to build suspense.*

**Gallery Challenge** – This week the challenge is to draw a dragon's eye. Use bold colours and strong design.







**Jotcast activity – Setting the scene-** This activity prepares the children for creating suspense in their blog post. [Display or provide a copy of the model paragraphs and grid below:](#)

All night, thunder growled overhead. Alone, Ty crouched in the darkness, staring. Wind lashed the sides of the skyship Aurora, buffeting her

sails. Ty shivered. Were they safe from the storm?

At that moment, Ty heard something crawling on the ship's rigging, hidden by shadows. Silently, a vague shape clung to the balloon and waited. A green eye flickered. Ty's skin prickled as he watched. What was it?

|                                                 |                                                                               |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| All night, ....                                 | All night, the blizzard swirled.                                              |
| Alone,                                          | Alone, Mariana clung to the ship's edge...                                    |
| Wind/ snow/ rain/ thunder/ lightning/ mist..... | Snow clung to the rigging, drifting onto the deck and smothering the balloon. |
| Name - reacted.                                 | Mariana shuddered.                                                            |
| Where/ how/ what/ when...                       | How much further could they fly?                                              |
|                                                 |                                                                               |
| At that moment,...                              | At that moment, Mariana heard a low rasping noise.                            |
| Silently,...                                    | Silently, a ragged silhouette appeared.                                       |
| A....                                           | A scale flickered in the torch light.                                         |
| Name....                                        | Mariana gasped!                                                               |
| What/ where/ how/ when...?                      | Was it a sky pirate?                                                          |

*Objective – writing sentences to build suspense.*

**Blogging Activity** – Write the section for your skyship adventure where the skyship has set sail again. The two main characters are alone on deck and they hear or see something ominous. Build the suspense. This is aimed at encouraging children to think about building suspense in their narrative

writing. Ideally, the children should have a copy of the next part of Pie's story so that they can see the way in which he builds the suspense. The text is below.

*Objective – continue their story, focusing on building suspense.*

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## **Stargrazer contd**

### **Episode 4 - 'Onward'**

Several hours later, the crew had returned, patched the skyship's air balloon and they were now sailing through the night with only the stars to guide them. Marianna had found a space in the hold for the baby dragon. It had eaten well and falling asleep almost immediately.

Ty stood alone on deck, wondering whether he would ever see home again. The moon cast a silvery light onto the clouds and the odd star shone through. Marianna came up to be with him. She thought that she would never tire of the wind in her hair and the great skyship moving silently just below the ragged, fluffy edges of the clouds.

It was then that they both heard something. Something or somebody was crawling up the side of the skyship's hull towards them. Not again! Mariana grabbed Ty's hand and pulled him down. Alone, they waited, hearts beating. What could it be? Ty crossed

his fingers, hoping it wasn't the dragonlet's mother! An angry dragon parent could be a terrifying sight!

Peering over the edge, Ty could just make out a strange shape, that appeared to be clinging to the wooden hull. Ty shuddered as he whispered to his sister, "I can't see what it is... but it looks huge." A huge, scarlet eye blinked up at him!

Captain O'Shea appeared, lent over the railings and chuckled, "That's the landing ship's light. A flying craft that we sometimes use if we don't want to dock the whole skyship. You two need to be in your bunks or you'll start to imagine all sorts of things."

Ten minutes later they were both asleep, dreaming of dragons and skyships and great adventures. The Stargrazer drifted on silently through the night towards dawn.

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| Sentence                                                                              | Technique                                                                               |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| All night, thunder growled overhead.                                                  | Scary weather + darkness                                                                |
| Alone, Ty crouched in the darkness, staring.                                          | MC on their own.<br>MC's reaction.                                                      |
| Wind lashed the sides of the skyship Aurora, buffeting her sails.                     | More scary weather.                                                                     |
| Ty shivered.                                                                          | MC's reaction.<br>Short sentence.                                                       |
| Were they safe from the storm?                                                        | Rhetorical question to show MC's thoughts.                                              |
| New paragraph                                                                         |                                                                                         |
| At that moment, Ty heard something crawling on the ship's rigging, hidden by shadows. | Dramatic opener.<br>MC hears something.<br>Empty word (something) – hide what is there. |
| Silently, a vague shape clung to the balloon and waited.                              | Empty word (shape)                                                                      |
| A green eye flickered.                                                                | MC glimpses threat.                                                                     |
| Ty's skin prickled as he watched.                                                     | MC's reaction.                                                                          |
| What was it?                                                                          | Rhetorical question.                                                                    |

**Below is a unit of work with notes built around a model text 'The Old Mill'. The main focus is on suspense. This is followed by further notes and ideas for teaching suspense.**

## The Old Mill

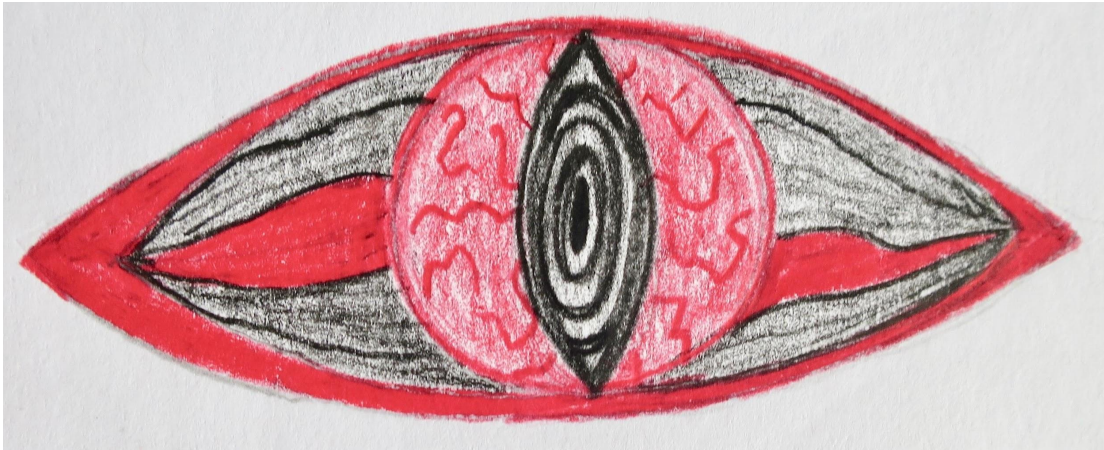
Stealthily, Jo crept down the stairs, dodging the fourth step in case it creaked. At the bottom, she paused but all that she could hear was a silence that filled the house with sleep. The cat wound its way round her legs, begging to be let out.

Twenty minutes later, she entered Deadman's Forest. Tall trees towered overhead and sunlight filtered through the branches, casting ebony shadows. It wasn't long before she came to the ruins of the old mill. The pond glittered in the sunlight. A few bees buzzed busily.

Jo sat down under the trees and watched as the dragonflies flitted across the mill pond's surface. It was here that she had first seen the unicorn. All morning she waited, till in the end her eyes closed and she slept, dreaming of crystal towers and goblins.

Later, she woke with a start. The sun had slipped behind the trees, casting charred shadows across the water's oily surface. A cold breeze whispered through the reeds. Jo shuddered. A twig broke, leaves rustled and something moved towards her! What was it?

Cautiously, Jo stared into the darkness between the trees where her imagination warned her that anything could exist. A vague silhouette darted! Again, Jo shivered but not from the cold for, at that moment, she heard a sudden hiss and a red eye flickered. Jo gasped.



With her dreams of unicorns left behind, Jo ran. Branches whipped at her face and brambles tore at her feet. She was sure that she could hear something behind her, feet thudding through the undergrowth. Something breathing....

It was only when she reached the road beyond the tree line that she stopped. She stood, listening but only her heart thudded. The trees were quite still. Nothing. Silence. It was as if the forest had swallowed its secret.

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## **The Old Mill – teaching notes**

### **Introduction**

This story is sufficiently dramatic to hold the attention of most children and has a simple pattern that can be re-used to create

new versions. When I was younger, we lived near a forest and the story is based upon my experiences of walking there as a child, my head full of unicorns and goblins! It is a simple suspense story with a main character escaping from a frightening encounter. A main focus could be using a setting to create atmosphere or building suspense. It could be used alongside 'The Snow-walker's Son' or 'Dead Man's Cove' in year 4 or 'The Iron man' or 'The Ice Palace' or 'Podkin One-ear' in year 3.

### **Hook**

You could kickstart the unit of work by showing images of old forests, trees with twisted roots and dark shadows. Look at photos of mill ponds so that the children can visualize the story. Show the title, '*The Old Mill*' and ask them what they think will happen in the story. Then reveal the opening line, '*Stealthily, Jo crept down the stairs, dodging the fourth step in case it creaked.*' Which words are suggesting that Jo does not want anyone to catch her? What might she be going to do? Should she be going out?

### **Oral retelling**

The story is an easy one for the children to map and learn orally. This could be 'word-by-word' or retold in the children's own words. One simple way into the story is to split the class into 7 small groups and give each group one of the paragraphs to learn orally. They should map their paragraph and, using actions, learn it orally. After 20 minutes or so, each group performs in turn so that the whole story is revealed. This should work as all the paragraphs are about the same length.

Keep retelling the story over a number of days so that everyone comes to know it intimately. Make sure that the children retell the story with expression. This is easy enough to achieve if you model reading expressively. Ask them to vary the pace, add in

dramatic pauses and vary the volume for effect, performing and rereading fluently.

### **Reading as a Reader**

Once everyone can retell the story well then read it through, pausing to discuss any vocabulary that might need further exploration, e.g. *stealthily, wound, filtered, cast, ebony, ruins, flitted, charred, shuddered, rustled, vague, silhouette, darted, brambles, flickered, thudded, etc.*

Deepening understanding: Use drama to hot-seat Jo before the event and afterwards to explore how she feels at different stages of the story. In role as Jo hold a phone call to a 'best friend' about what happened or write her diary entry, describing the events. Role-play the scene when Jo arrives home and meets her Mum or Dad. Discuss how Jo would be feeling and how a parent might react. Write the section of the story after Jo wakes up to show her feelings in first person.

There is an obvious invitation to write the prequel that tells how Jo had first seen the unicorn by the Old Mill. This need not be a whole story but might just be a few paragraphs. It could be written as a story or as a diary entry or letter to a friend. Put the children in pairs with one in role as Jo to tell the story of how she had stumbled across the unicorn as a precursor to any writing.

**Oral comprehension:** notice how the mood changes at the mill. Initially, it sounds quite pleasant but alters rapidly once Jo wakes. How does the writer achieve this change in mood, at first lulling the reader into a sense of security before building the tension?

| <u>Initial description</u> | <u>After sleeping</u>                   |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| <i>Sunlight filtered</i>   | <i>Sun had slipped behind the trees</i> |

|                                                                                          |                                                                                                               |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Pond glittered<br/>In the sunlight<br/>Bees buzzed busily<br/>Dragonflies flitted</i> | <i>Casting charred shadows<br/>The water's oily surface<br/>A cold breeze<br/>Whispered through the reeds</i> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Read through line-by-line, checking for clues to how Jo feels as well as inferring what she might be thinking. Locate and discuss clues within the text, e.g.

| <u>Quote from the original</u> | <u>Jo's feelings</u> | <u>Jo's thoughts</u>            |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|
| Stealthily Jo crept            | <i>Anxious</i>       | I hope I'm not caught.          |
| Dodging the fourth             | <i>Careful</i>       | I need to be quiet as possible. |
| She paused                     | <i>Uncertain</i>     | Have I been heard?              |
| Twenty minutes later           | <i>Relief</i>        | Thank goodness I'm here.        |
| The pond glittered             | <i>Happiness</i>     | This is so pretty.              |
| She... seen the unicorn        | <i>Anticipation</i>  | I might see the unicorn again.  |
| All morning she waited         | <i>Patience</i>      | It's worth waiting.             |

List any questions about the story that the children raise and select a few for discussion, e.g. *Did she really see a unicorn? Why has she not told anyone about such an amazing discovery? Should she have told someone? What might her reticence to tell anyone suggest about the others in the house? What chased her? What should she do next? What is the effect of the word "vague"? Why did the author use the word "whipped"? Give 3 examples of how the author has used sound to develop the suspense. Why has the author repeated the word "something"? How does the mood change throughout the text? How does the author achieve this? "Jo woke with a start..." What does this tell you? Why does the author ask a question? ("What was it?")*

**Further work:** try writing the 'blurb' for this story and limit the children to 50 or 100 words. Design a simple front cover for the book which starts with this story as the opening chapter. Write a newspaper report of 200 words, revealing why the mill is

deserted. Imagine that Jo finds the unicorn. Write a set of instructions to help Jo look after her new pet, '*How to care for a baby unicorn.*' Ideally, visit a local mill and use as stimulus for sketching, painting, etc.

### **Writing**

The better that the children know the story, the more likely they are to be able to use it successfully as an underlying pattern for their own versions. Spend time deciding where to set the class story and use photos to build the imagination and make the writing easier. I have used images of old warehouses, abandoned hospitals, wrecked airfields, an old farmhouse and even a dilapidated school.

**Grammar for Writing:** identify and discuss the following sentence structures in the final paragraph: *She stood, listening but only her heart thudded. The trees were quite still. Nothing. Silence.* Discuss the use of the comma to slow the sentence and how the sentences shorten to fragments. In the fourth paragraph, discuss the meaning and use of the rhetorical question. *What was it?* Sentence fragments are useful for drama as they leave the rest of the sentence implied but retain the point. The rhetorical question reveals what the character is thinking but also prompts the reader to think.

### **Boxing up the Story**

With the children, work out the underlying pattern in the story. Use this as a planner so that everyone uses the same sort of story pattern and idea but each story is unique. Remember that the boxes could be one paragraph for weaker writers but for more confident writers, each box is a section of the story that might last several paragraphs, if not more. The example below I created with a class in Croydon:

| <u>Underlying pattern</u> | <u>New ideas</u> |
|---------------------------|------------------|
|---------------------------|------------------|

|                                                                            |                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Main Character (MC) leaves the everyday setting.                           | <i>Jakub leaves the caravan where his family is having a holiday.</i>                                       |
| MC arrives at the new setting. It sounds safe.                             | <i>He goes down to the sandy beach where there is a cave.</i>                                               |
| MC waits for something magical but sleeps.                                 | <i>He is sure that he saw a merman there but falls asleep waiting.</i>                                      |
| MC wakes. The setting seems more ominous. MC hears/senses a hidden threat. | <i>He awakes and the waves have cut him off so he has to shelter in the cave where he senses something.</i> |
| MC hears/ glimpses something alarming. It gets closer.                     | <i>It gets closer and he has to go deeper into the cave.</i>                                                |
| MC flees and is chased.                                                    | <i>He finds a stone staircase and begins to climb higher.</i>                                               |
| MC escapes.                                                                | <i>Luckily, he finds a way out.</i>                                                                         |

### Create a writing toolkit

The ideal focus for this story is suspense as well as looking at how the atmosphere is manipulated through the setting. Work with the children to find out the techniques that the writer uses to build tension, e.g.

| <u>Technique</u>                                     | <u>How + example</u>                                                                                                 |
|------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Main Character (MC) on their own in unusual setting. | <i>Jo at Old Mill – use scary place name – Deadman’s Forest.</i>                                                     |
| Lull the reader into false sense of security.        | <i>Describe setting to make it sound nice – pond glittered, sunlight filtered, bees buzzed, dragonflies flutter.</i> |
| Make setting sound scary.                            | <i>Charred shadows, oily surface, cold wind whispered.</i>                                                           |
| MC hears or sees something.                          | <i>Twig broke, leaves rustled, red eye flickered.</i>                                                                |
| Keep it hidden.                                      | <i>Use empty words – something, moved, shadow, silhouette.</i>                                                       |
| Show how MC feels.                                   | <i>Jo gasped/ shivered/ shuddered.</i>                                                                               |
| Reveal MC’s thoughts                                 | <i>Her imagination warned her that....<br/>Use a rhetorical question – what was it?</i>                              |

**Shortburst Writing:**

Use images of scary settings such as abandoned buildings to create suspense paragraphs, drawing on the suspense toolkit. Have a main character on their own, in the setting, hearing something or catching a glimpse. Build the description of the setting to make it sound ominous by using negative adjectives so that it sounds as if it is ruined, dangerous and decaying. A simple idea is to show an image and ask the class to get their main character into the space, describe it and then use a sound or glimpse and end with a rhetorical question, e.g.

*Carter stepped into the attic. A weak light filtered through the grimy windows, dusty cobwebs hung from the ceiling and there was broken glass scattered on the rotten floorboards. Shadows lurked in the corners and his footsteps echoed as he walked to the table in the middle of the room. An old book lay open and Carter scanned the crumbling pages, searching for a clue. At that moment, he heard something move in the corner. What was it?*

**Write a class and independent versions**

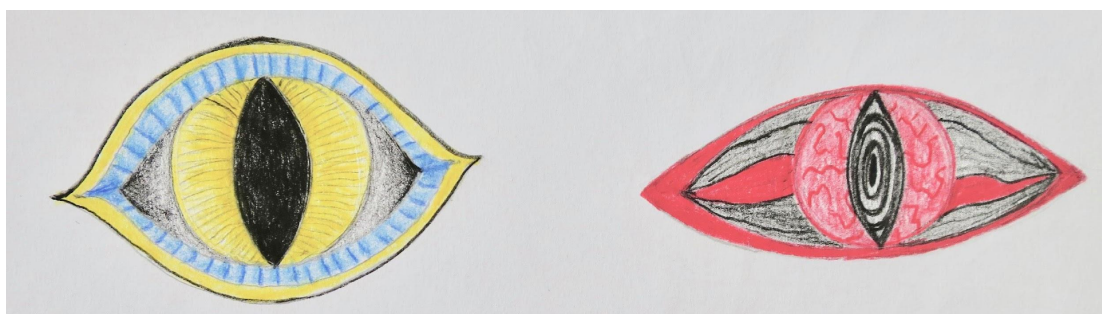
Use shared writing to create a class version of the story, followed by the children creating their own stories. Take this a section at a time so that the writing will take about a week, bit by bit. Less confident writers could rewrite the story making only a few simple adjustments whilst the more confident should move away from the original model, working directly from the basic story idea and structure.

If you compare these two openings, written by different children. One child hugs closely to the original, using the sentence patterns and ideas as support. The other version uses the basic idea of a main character sneaking out from somewhere but does not use the original model at all.

Remember that confident writers should extend themselves by writing at least several paragraphs for each section.

| <u>Less confident writer</u>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <u>More confident writer</u>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Cautiously, Hamid sneaked down the wooden staircase, dodging the bricks his brother had left out in case he tripped over. At the bottom, he stopped but all he could hear was the fridge making a humming noise. The dog wagged its tail because it wanted to go out. | Emily waited at the edge of the playground, tucked behind the gym while everyone else filed in after break. She stayed quite still as she could hear Miss Moynihan walking across to the school office. As soon as the playground was quiet, crows drifted. Emily was ready. |

Once children have completed their innovations, decide if you need to do any more teaching or reinforcing before providing an opportunity for the children to write independently. To aide their independent writing, it is worth providing them with a range of possible settings by using film clips, images or brainstorming lists of possibilities such as an old railway station, abandoned warehouse, old school, ruined house, etc.



## EXTRA NOTES ON SUSPENSE

Learning how to write suspense is an important part of key stage 2 writing narrative. Everyone wants to write an exciting story and so the ability to put a character into a dodgy situation matters.

One interesting approach that is used in *The Old Mill* (see below) is to lull the reader into a false sense of security! Then set the heart racing by introducing a suspense element. This could be:

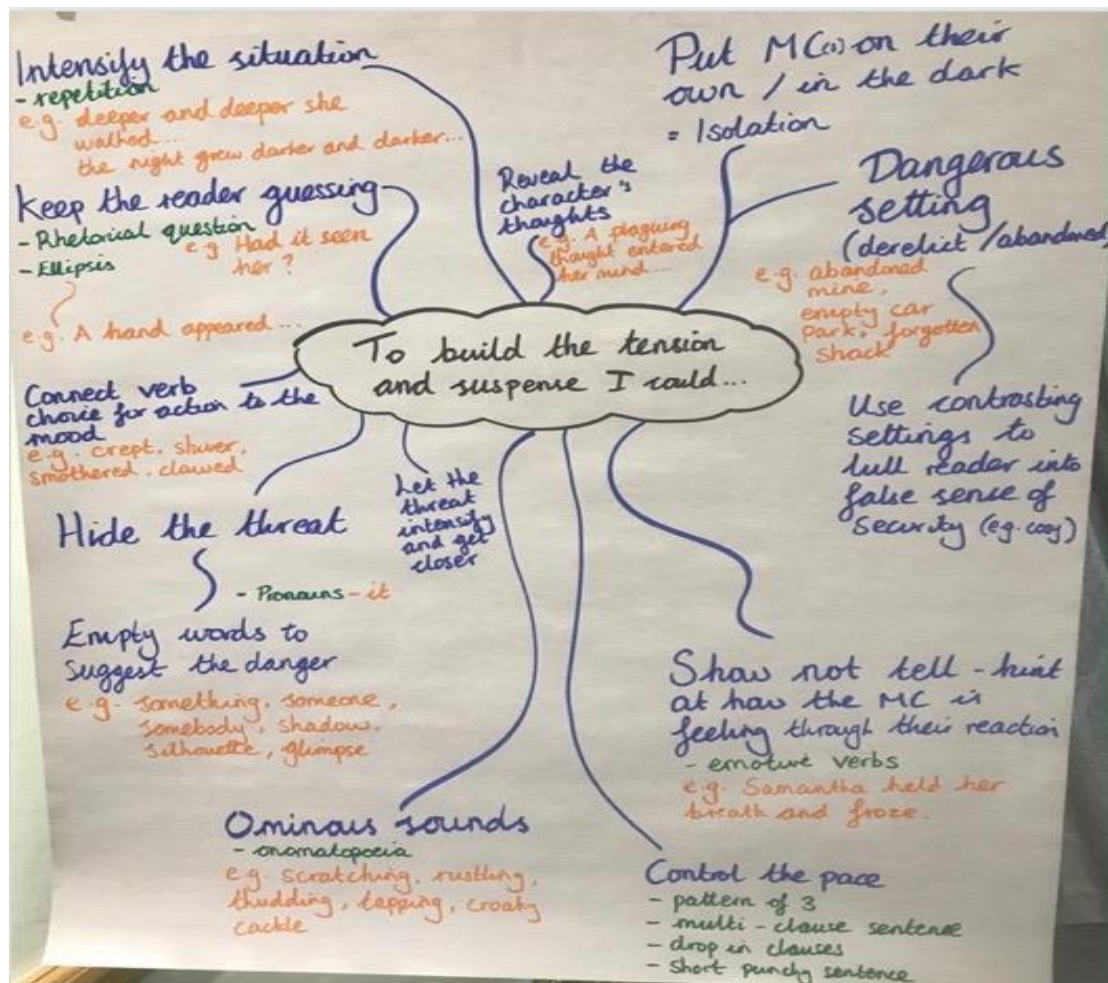
- The character hears something suspicious, for example: *a door opening, footsteps, a twig snapping, a scratching noise, a low moan, a scream...*
- The character sees something odd, for example: *an eye staring, a hand, a shadow moving, a distant light, a flickering flame...*

Encourage the children to add clues for the reader, suggesting that something frightening might happen at any moment. Of course, it is also a powerful strategy for starting a story by leaping in with suspense straight away as that grabs the reader's attention immediately.

To build up suspense, teach the children how to use the following suspense toolkit:

- Short sentences to create dramatic tension – *The door slammed.*
- Balancing shorter sentences with some longer ones to add in detail – *She saw a flame flickering but then it disappeared.*
- The main character 'hears' or 'sees' something that suggests danger.
- Not revealing what was seen or heard – keep it hidden so that the reader is kept guessing – *There was silence – the scratching had stopped...*

- Mentioning the darkness or cold – *The shadows lengthened. It was colder now...*
- Having the main character ask a question, wondering what is making the noise, or what has just been seen – *“What do you think that was?” hissed Jody...*
- Showing how characters feel by describing their reactions – *Jody clutched her bag tightly...*



## Cliffhangers

Ask: *Have you ever said about a book 'I just could not put it down.'*? Cliffhangers are useful for keeping the reader on the edge of their seats. Most thrillers use a cliffhanger at the end of each chapter so that the reader is desperate to read on.

In a cliff-hanger, the writer introduces a series of dilemmas from which the character has to escape. No sooner has the main character escaped from one perilous situation then there is a build up into another dilemma. Cliffhangers are usually used at the end of a chapter – or at the end of each episode of a TV programme. Cliffhangers might involve:

- Being grabbed by a hand
- Being captured by a gang
- Falling off a cliff
- Being chased by a shark
- Ten seconds till a bomb explodes
- Falling into space

In the cliff-hanger paragraph, the writer has to leave the main character on the edge of disaster.

*Tom took a step forwards and without warning the floorboards crumbled. A second later, he was falling, tumbling endlessly down, feeling only the rush of cold air. He was falling – to his doom for all he knew!*

Ask the children to look at their story plan to locate a point in the story where they could plan in a cliff-hangers. They could try writing this paragraph before writing the whole story. This will allow them to really craft their cliffhanger. The paragraphs can then be dropped in when they get to the relevant point.

### **Action paragraphs**

Many children want to write action. Avid readers of Anthony Horowitz's *Alex Rider* books, such as *Stormbreaker* (Walker), may well want to write in the same vein. But all too soon this can descend into an endless stream of exclamation marks and cartoon style writing – 'Kerpow! Kerplonk!'

Action writing often involves a fight. These are hard to write and it may be worth spending time looking at good examples. Begin by showing the class something that is rather poorly written and ask them what is wrong.

*He ran. They got him. He fought. He got away.*

Well, they're bound to be able to see that it is poor writing. The reader is told what happened but the writing does not bring it alive so that the reader cannot see what is happening in their imagination. Now compare it to this piece. What techniques has the writer used to create the action?

*Joe ran. But a second later, a hand snatched at his shirt and grabbed him. He spun round, lashing out with his arms and kicking as hard as he could. Someone seized his hair and tugged him back. He screamed, fell backwards and rolled on the ground. As he did so, his attackers smashed into each other. Joe leapt up and began to run. He had escaped!*

With the children, make a writer's toolkit of the sorts of features that are needed to create action, for example:

- Short sentence for impact and drama – *Imran ran.*
- 'but' starter for emphasis – *But a second later...*
- Sentence of three to speed up the pace, e.g. *He spun round, lashed out and ran.*
- Powerful action verbs – *snatched, grabbed, spun, lashing, kicking, seized, tugged, rolled, smashed, leaped, ran*
- Show the effect on the main character, e.g. *Joe shuddered.*
- Use sounds – *He screamed...*

Another type of action writing is 'the chase'. This is used to create a feeling of excitement. The same principles apply. Begin by showing a rather dull piece, for example:

*She heard them coming. She ran for it. She escaped.*

Now demonstrate how this could be made more exciting by using more powerful verbs, as well as varying the short and long sentences, for example:

*Tassita could hear them behind her, thudding down the alley. She ran for the bridge, jumped over the fence and dashed across the lane. A moment later, she was hidden behind the trees. She peeked out. They were standing on the bridge, staring up and down the road, unsure where she had gone.*

The following writing tools help to create a sense of action here:

- Short sentences – *She peeked out...*
- Actions using powerful verbs – *thudding, ran, jumped, dashed*
- A sound – *thudding*
- Fronted adverbial to show time passing rapidly – *A second later*
- Suggest how the character feels by their reaction – *she peeked out*
- A sentence with three events to make an impact – *She ran for the bridge, jumped over the fence and dashed across the lane.*

One of the difficulties children face when writing action is that what they imagine is usually based on what they have seen on the TV. This is not helpful, as the action scenes are usually too complex and far too long. It does help to imagine what is happening and describe what you see – but they should keep the scene short – just a brief tussle will do! Use the following piece about a ‘capture’ for demonstration or for the children to analyse and create a writer’s toolkit.

*Without thinking, Tassita leaped forwards and grabbed the guard's hand. He screamed as she twisted it backwards and the lantern clattered to the ground. Gasping for breath, she raced up the passageway. But the door was locked. Strong hands grabbed her from behind. Tassita knew then that it was over. A harsh light shone into her eyes and a voice barked out an order. She was captured!*

Notice how in this passage I have applied the same techniques – carried sentence length, powerful action verbs, using sounds, imagining what is happening. You will also notice that ending on a short sentence helps to create a punchy sense of drama to the events. Also, I have tried to vary the openings of the sentences as well:

- 'Without' opener – *Without thinking...*
- 'ing' starter – *Gasping for breath...*
- 'But' starter – *But the door was locked...*

One final tip is to collect possible paragraph starters that lead into action or suspense, for example: *Suddenly - Without warning - At that moment – Quickly – Silently - In terror - A scream broke the silence - Out of the blue.*

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