


First/Second Level

Objective: To write a short story focussing on description and atmosphere

Session One (This could be done over a number of days or in one sitting.)	
<p>1. Introduce the theme. Discuss what the phrase means. Talk about how this phrase is like a snapshot in time. The word THEN will feature and THEN everything may change. Talk about what changes may take place.</p>	"Everything was very quiet and still"
<p>2. In small groups ask pupils to brain storm times when everything was quiet and still.</p>	<p>When something has gone wrong. When everyone is sleeping. When there is no wind and no one about. Just before an explosion.</p>
<p>3. Get feedback from the groups. As they feedback remember to thank them for their contribution and: Repeat Recast Extend their ideas.</p>	<p><i>When something has gone wrong.</i> Sometimes, when something has gone wrong, everything goes very quiet and still as people are waiting to see what is going to happen next.</p>
<p>4. Give pupils cards for a semantic gradient activity. Through discussion they should organise the cards into shades of meaning. Explain to them that the semantic gradients goes from synonyms to antonyms and in your story, you will begin with everything being quiet and still, but by the end you may have moved on to action and noise.</p>	See Appendix A
<p>5. Choose one picture and show it to the class. In their small groups ask them to tell you what are the important things that they see in the picture</p>	 <p>Man Trapeze Dark Spot lights trampoline</p>

<p>6. Once you have agreed on the main aspects of the picture, ask pupils in their groups to think of as many words as they can which describe each of these things. These ideas of words and phrases should be kept and put onto charts on the wall and added to during the writing process.</p>	<div style="display: flex; flex-wrap: wrap; gap: 10px;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 30%;"> <p>Man, Still Poised, concentrating, Breathing, focused, heart Hammering in his chest</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 30%;"> <p>Trapeze, still, lifeless, shining</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 30%;"> <p>Dark, nothing else exists, blanket of darkness</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 30%;"> <p>The invisible people. Waiting, watching, worried</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 30%;"> <p>Spot lights, ribbons of light, shimmering pathways, picking out its prey, illuminating, shining</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 30%;"> <p>Trampoline Still, ready, tight</p> </div> </div>
<p>7. Choose one of the aspects of the picture. Ask the groups to think of a sentence using that word in the context of the picture. Choose one of the sentences given.</p> <p>Ask a question to promote greater detail.</p> <p>Each time they extend the sentence, repeat it, recast it if necessary and ask the pupils to repeat the sentence too. (This is helping to reinforce what a good sentence sounds like)</p>	<p>The man stood waiting to jump.</p> <p>How was he feeling? The man tried to calm his beating heart as he stood waiting to jump.</p> <p>Where was he standing? The man tried to calm his beating heart as he stood on the trampoline waiting to jump.</p>
<p>8. Write the sentence on the board.</p>	<p>The man tried to calm his beating heart as he stood on the trampoline waiting to jump.</p>
<p>9. Now choose another aspect of the picture. Again ask the groups to think of a sentence using that word in the context of the picture.</p> <p>Remember to repeat the sentence each time it is extended and ask the pupils to repeat it too.</p>	<p>The lights shone on the man.</p> <p>How? The light shone like shimmering paths leading to the man.</p> <p>Why? The light shone like shimmering paths leading our eyes to the man and blocking out everything else.</p>
<p>10. Write the sentence on the board. Ask the class to read the story as it is built up. (This gives good reading and fluency experience as well as keeping what has been read fresh in their minds). Highlight great words and phrases. Talk about what figure of speech they may be.</p>	<p>The man tried to calm his beating heart as he stood on the trampoline waiting to jump.</p> <p>The light shone like shimmering paths leading our eyes to the man and blocking out everything else.</p>

<p>11. Continue on like this until you have finished each of the elements that you have chosen to write about.</p>	<p>The man tried to calm his beating heart as he stood on the trampoline waiting to jump. The light shone like shimmering paths leading our eyes to the man and blocking out everything else. Nothing beyond the man seemed to exist. The trapeze hung still and silent almost daring the man to grab him. Beneath his feet was the trampoline with all its energy stored in every fibre, waiting to be released.</p>
<p>12. Let's move on from this snap shot. Ask the class to decide in their groups what may happen next. Ask them to order their thoughts using just a word or phrase. XXX →XXX→XXX</p>	<p>He jumped →he missed the trapeze →he fell →he bounced →grabbed the trapeze →thought it was part of the act.</p>
<p>13. Choose the planning from one group. Begin with the first word/phrase and ask them to put it into a sentence. Before you write it on the board, remind them that they are writing about something that has moved on in time, so they must take a new paragraph.</p>	<p>He jumped up to grab the trapeze. How was he feeling? Focused, but with his heart pounding, he jumped up to grab the trapeze. How did he jump? Focused, but with his heart pounding, he crouched low then with all his might, he jumped up to grab the trapeze.</p>
<p>14. Continue to work through each step of the plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think of a sentence • Ask yourself questions to grow the detail in the sentence. • Rehearse the sentence orally before writing it. • Using a pink highlighter, highlight great words and phrases. • Repeat and rehearse the sentence. • Write the sentence. • Read over the passage or paragraph. 	<p>The man tried to calm his beating heart as he stood on the trampoline waiting to jump. The light shone like shimmering paths leading our eyes to the man and blocking out everything else. Nothing beyond the man seemed to exist. The trapeze hung still and silent almost daring the man to grab him. Beneath his feet was the trampoline with all its energy stored in every fibre, waiting to be released.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Focused, but with his heart pounding, he crouched low then with all his might, he jumped up to grab the trapeze.</p>
<p>15. Show them the success criteria check list. Assess the story you have written together using it.</p>	<p>See appendix B (or use your own)</p>
<p>Session Two (This could be done over a number of days or in one sitting.)</p>	
<p>1. As a warm up activity give groups another semantic gradient pack to work on, putting them in order of their shades of meaning.</p>	
<p>2. Remind the pupils, of what you did</p>	<p>Appendix C (or use your own)</p>

<p>during the first session.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrote down all of the main elements of the picture. • For each element we brainstormed vocabulary. • We choose one element of the picture and wrote a sentence. We asked ourselves questions to help us to grow an interesting sentence. We did this for some of the other elements of the picture. • We wrote a brief plan, highlighting what happens next. • We took each next step and wrote about it always saying a sentence then growing it and rehearsing it before writing it. • We read over the story that we wrote together. 	
<p>3. Show them a variety of pictures. Ask each group to choose one.</p>	<p>See Appendix D (or use your own)</p>
<p>4. Talk to them about the success criteria. Remind them of the elements in it and show them how that looking in your collaborative writing.</p>	<p>See Appendix B (or use your own)</p>
<p>5. Guide them through the process. This time each group will work on a different picture. Work around the groups, listening to their plans, sentences etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeat • Recast • Extend as necessary 	
<p>6. As pupils are writing, circulate. Highlight super words and phrases in pink (I'm tickled pink) and things that need attention in green (green for growth).</p>	<p><i>Once upon a time, there was a squirrel called George, who was high up in a tree with his brothers and sisters eating his breakfast of nuts. Everything was very cwite and still. All that George could hear was sound of his brothers and sisters cracking away at the nuts. Soon their tummies were beginning to feel stuffed!</i></p>
<p>7. Encourage groups to read out their stories</p>	

Appendix B – Success Criteria

	Me	My friend	My teacher
Have I used correct punctuation? . ! ? , “ ” ‘ and capital letters			
Have I used a new paragraph when time, topic or talking has changed?			
Have I used good descriptive words and phrases?			
Have I used connectives when growing my sentences?			
Have I checked my spelling?			

Pupils can cut out the arrows and stick them on their story to show that they have met success criteria.

I have used correct punctuation: . ! ? , “ ” ‘

I have used capital letters to start a sentence.

I have taken a new para graph to show something new

I have used good connectives: and, but, then, because

I have used good descriptive words and phrases

I have checked my spelling

Appendix A – Semantic Gradients (empty boxes for pupils to write their own ideas)

quiet	silent	whisper
yell	scream	hushed
noisy	inaudible	loud
shout	noiseless	deafening
ear splitting		volume

calm	still	busy
agitate	worry	anxious
peaceful	soft	frenetic
raging	activity	
tempestuous		

Descriptive writing structure

1. Choose your inspiration: picture, song, memory.
↓
2. Write down the main elements of it.
↓
3. Brainstorm good words and phrases for each element.
↓
4. Begin with one of the elements. Compose a sentence (don't write it, just say it).
Ask yourself questions to help you grow the sentence)
Repeat and practice the sentences then write it.
↓
5. Repeat step 4 for each elements.
↓
6. Think about what happens next. Draw a short story track. (each step in the track should be written as a new paragraph)
↓
7. For each sentence, practice it and grow it before writing it down.
↓
8. Regularly read what you have written.
↓
9. Check that you have fulfilled your writing criteria.

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7. For each sentence, practice it and grow it before writing it down.
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8. Regularly read what you have written.
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9. Check that you have fulfilled your writing criteria.

Appendix D – Picture inspirations]



