

## Narrative Writing: What makes vivid storytelling?

In Lesson 2, you have learnt how to plan your story on a plot curve and familiarised yourself with the features of a narrative, including **enhancing description using sensory details, dialogue and thoughts**. This post will illustrate how to use these descriptive techniques to make your story more engaging.

Question: Write about a time when you caused great disappointment to another person. What did you do about the situation?

Let's analyse this question:

- This question requires you to establish the **strong relationship** you have with the person, such that the disappointment you cause to him/her can be considered "great".
- Think about what a **heavy disappointment** could be, instead of a petty disagreement. For example, standing the person up because you overslept would be insignificant compared to spreading rumours about the person in order to get yourself out of trouble.
- The **climax** of the story would necessarily be the point at which the person is crushed with disappointment. You need to dwell on those few moments and show how "great" it is in vivid detail.

Have a look at the two writing samples about the **climax**, A and B.

*Context: Joey and the narrator are avid online gamers, but Joey is the more competent one. After the narrator encouraged Joey to join a gaming competition, he is asked by his teacher to join as well – to which he agrees, not knowing that this meant taking Joey's place to represent the school.*

A	B	Remarks (see corresponding colours)
<p>When he found out that he had not been chosen for the competition, Joey was <b>utterly</b> disappointed. I could see that he was <b>fuming</b> at me when he stepped into class. At that moment, I was filled with guilt for having agreed to join the competition. What had I done?</p> <p>I was so ashamed and did not know how to face my best friend. I wanted to ask for his forgiveness but was at a loss for words. I really did not want to lose this precious friendship.</p>	<p>The <b>devastating</b> disappointment on Joey's face as he walked into class was <b>palpable</b>. He <b>winc</b>ed at me with an anger that <b>terrified</b> me. At that moment, it struck me that I had disappointed and hurt him deeply because I had 'stolen' his place at the competition.</p> <p>"Floor, just swallow me whole," I muttered under my breath. I had betrayed my best friend. This was not just a matter of a forgotten birthday or a broken pencil – I had broken a cardinal* rule of friendship: to respect each other's wishes over our personal gain. My feeble attempts to explain my behaviour were futile as he was not in the frame of mind to listen to anything I had to say.</p>	<p>While the content is similar, B's description has more <b>sensory details</b>, and the reader can almost feel Joey's anger in their bones, as the narrator does. Choose strong adjectives like 'devastating' and 'palpable', and precise verbs like 'winc'ed'.</p> <p><b>Dialogue</b> is used in B to <b>show</b> how ashamed the narrator is, instead of telling it to the reader as A does.</p> <p>While A contains some of the narrator's <b>thoughts</b> (eg. "I wanted to ask...", "I really did not want..."), B makes them more striking by showing how great the disappointment is due to</p>

	<i>*cardinal: core, foundational</i>	him defying a hallmark of friendship – not putting the other’s interest first. This perspective lends depth to the betrayal.
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I hope you can see from this comparison how your descriptions can be enhanced. There are no *best* descriptions; only better descriptions. Can you come up with something better than B? Try writing your own climax using the 3 types of descriptive techniques!