



## Writing Precision – The Effect of Small Changes

Writers not only choose what goes into their work, but also what gets missed out. This activity helps you to think about how important small details can be to a piece of writing. You will also get the chance to think about the impact of different word classes on a piece of writing.

- Below are two versions of a short extract from Marcus Sedgwick's novel, *Revolver*. One is the original, the other has been slightly adapted. With a partner, read version 1 and place the words into a word class chart like the one on page 20. Try to include as many words as you can, but do not worry if you can't work out which word class some belong to.
- In the chart, highlight the words that you think are most important in creating a sense of atmosphere in this short extract.
- Now read version 2. Identify any additional words and add them to the word class chart, using a different colour pen.
- Discuss with your partner how the additional words change the extract. Which do you think is the original? Which do you think is the best piece of writing? Why?

### An extract from *Revolver* by Marcus Sedgwick

Version 1	Version 2
<p>He tugged the latch and before he'd even stepped outside the cold had him, grasping him, squeezing his chest and biting his face. The wind clawed at his mouth and nose, but a hundred miles north of the Arctic Circle, Sig had learned the trick of holding his breath inside until he knew which way the wind was attacking. Still it stole up the backs of his legs and his face, finding a way in to drain him of his heat.</p>	<p>He tugged the latch and before he'd even stepped cautiously outside the cold had him, grasping him tightly, squeezing his chest and angrily biting his face. The wind clawed sharply at his mouth and nose, but a hundred miles north of the Arctic Circle, Sig had learned the trick of holding his breath inside until he knew which way the wind was attacking. Still it stole slowly up the backs of his legs and his face, finding a way in to slyly drain him of his heat.</p>

# KS3 LANGUAGE LABORATORY



## The effect of small changes – word class chart

Pronouns	Nouns	Adjectives	Verbs	Adverbs	Other (e.g. determiners, prepositions)
he			tugged	even	before
he'd			stepped		

## Making Small Changes of Your Own

- Working with the same partner, select a short extract no more than 100 words long from another novel. It can be one that you already know, or one that you select at random.
- Make 10 changes to the extract: you can add words, change words, or cut words out.
- Together, talk about the changes you have made and how they change your reading, even if in small ways. Explain which version you prefer and why.
- Write out the original extract and your new version. Exchange them with another pair.
- Try to work out which of the two extracts you have been given was the original. With your partner, jot down your thoughts, with reasons, along with your ideas about which of the versions is better and why.
- Join up as a four and discuss your thoughts.



## Making Choices in Your Own Writing

You are now going to think about the choices you make in your own writing, drawing on the ideas you have explored in this unit of work so far.

- Working with a partner, choose five interesting nouns that you have come across during the course of studying this unit of work (for example, wind, frost, guard, warehouse, truck).
- With your partner, turn the words into the start of a very basic story: 'First...; second...; then...' and so on. You should write this down.
- Next develop a plot around this basic story. You can do this by discussing 'how' and 'why' ideas about your basic story. You should annotate your basic story with your ideas.
- Now you should work on your own to turn your ideas into a short piece of narrative writing. To do this you will have to make choices about aspects of narrative such as point of view, the order you will tell things in, tone, language used, and so on. In other words, you are turning your initial ideas into a crafted story.
- Read your narratives to each other and discuss the different choices that you made.
- Reflect on your choices in a chart like the one on page 22.



## Reflecting on writing choices

Area of focus	Reflections
<p><b>Vocabulary</b> Think about the words you decided to use and their effect.</p>	
<p><b>Sentences</b> Think about the type and length of sentences you decided to use and their effects.</p>	
<p><b>Voice</b> Have you used a 1st or 3rd person voice? Why? What tone have you used?</p>	
<p><b>Style</b> Think about what is distinctive about the writing? For example, is it in a particular genre? What effect were you trying achieve?</p>	
<p><b>What I am most happy about</b></p>	
<p><b>What I might choose to change, why and how</b></p>	