

Writing imaginative texts

RAF6: writer's purpose and its effect on the reader

WAF1: writing imaginative and interesting text

Read this description focusing on the way that the writer has built up mood and atmosphere.

The house was set back slightly from the road. What garden there was had been left to get overgrown and grass was matted across the slabbed pathway that led to the front door. There were a couple of steps up to a porch. They could not see the door itself, as it was in shadow. But the dim glow from the nearest street lamp glinted on the broken glass of the window above the door.

There were two large bay windows on each of the two floors of the house. All of them had at least one broken pane, and the window to the left of the door was boarded up with plywood. A small window above the porch was the only one that remained intact. With the steps leading up to the porch cracked across so they looked like teeth, the empty bay windows of the upper storey were like the dark eyes of a skull. Missing tiles on the roof gave texture to what looked like the remnants of hair.

The Invisible Detective: Ghost Soldiers by Justin Richards

Tasks

- Highlight or underline the words that you think are most effective in building up the description of the house.
- What overall mood is created in this extract? How do you know? Write three lines to explain your ideas.
- Pick out two similes from the text. Remember that similes use the words 'like' and 'as'.
- Can you transform one of the similes into a metaphor?
- What changes did you have to make to transform the simile? Which is most powerful, the simile or the metaphor? Explain why.
- In a crafted piece of writing writers always try to choose their language carefully. Match up sets of connected words from the box. What links can you make?

boarded up	broken	cracked	dark	empty
eyes	glinted	hair	matted	missing
overgrown	remnants	shadow	skull	teeth

- Draw your impressions of the house and gardens. Before you start, look carefully at the details that the writer has included.

Writing task

You are about to step into the house in the extract.

- Who are you and what are you doing there? Why do you want or *need* to go into the house?
- What time of day is it in your writing? What feeling is around as you walk up to the door?
- Describe the moments before walking up the path. How do your feet carry you up the 'slabbed pathway'?
- Describe what you see and what you think and feel. Exploring what is going on in your thoughts will help you to achieve the higher grades.

OR

Write your own description of a house that is decaying.

- Where is this house?
- Why is it decaying? What is its history?
- You should try to build up a similar mood as the text from 'The Invisible Detective.'
- You might make a list of linked words that work together to create a dark mood or atmosphere.
- Imagine that you are writing as if you are seeing through a camera lens, taking a snapshot of the house and describing every detail in the shot that you can see.

Writer's top tips

- Build up the mood and atmosphere by the careful choice of language, just as Justin Richards has in his novel 'The Invisible Detective'.
- Similes and metaphors can be effective in developing your ideas and making things come alive for the reader. Look to see where you can use some imagery and think about which one you want to use.
- Use a thesaurus to help you to extend your vocabulary and target the writing assessment focus to 'write imaginative and interesting text.'
- Before you finish, read over your writing and think about what you can add in or improve in your writing to add drama and tension.

Extension work

- Write a description of a house that is a contrast to the description that you read. Make the description and mood cheerful and bright. Try to use the same writer's techniques by linking words and phrases.
- Challenge, read a mystery or detective story or novel. You could try reading the *Invisible Detective* novels by Justin Rodgers. Perfect if you enjoy adventure and mystery novels.

London, 1936: Whatever your problem, the Invisible Detective can find the answer. Only four children know the truth about this mysterious private investigator ... because they created him. Now they solve crimes and mysteries in his name. Investigating a strange death and a haunted house, Art and his friends are drawn into a mysterious world where nothing is what it seems, and nobody can be trusted. There are monsters on the streets of London, dressed as soldiers and trained to kill. As a terrifying plan is put into action, only the Invisible Detective can stop the Ghost Soldiers ...