

Worksheet 2 - Writing to Explore, Imagine and Entertain

Opening sentences for imaginative stories

Have you ever tried to write an imaginative story, and just not known where to begin? Or stared at a blank piece of paper for ages, sucking the end of your pencil, lost for words? Even when you've made a plan for a story, I know just how hard it can be to simply jump in and WRITE.

The frustrating thing is that once you HAVE made a start, it can be equally hard to stop! It's also a well known fact that really gripping opening sentences can have the reader (or the examiner) thinking very highly of your work even before they have read your story.

So opening sentences are really important, and one way round the problem of thinking them up is to memorise a stock of them. They can be adapted to suit different sorts of stories. I'll give you an example. Let's take the opening sentences...

Was that a noise? Sleepily, I opened my eyes, and peered around the dark bedroom. I must have imagined it. It was the middle of the night. I turned over and went back to sleep.

Believe it or not, these sentences can be used as the opening of a comedy story, a horror story, a crime thriller or a sci-fi adventure. Look at what I do with them...

Comedy:



Was that a noise? Sleepily, I opened my eyes, and peered around the dark bedroom. I must have imagined it. It was the middle of the night. I turned over and went back to sleep.

But not for long. Suddenly I felt hot breath on my cheek and I opened my eyes to see my brother crouched next to me in a Darth Vader costume. 'April Fool,' he shouted.

It was time for revenge....

Horror Story:



Was that a noise? Sleepily, I opened my eyes, and peered around the dark bedroom. I must have imagined it. It was the middle of the night. I turned over and went back to sleep.

But then I heard it again. A scratching sound at the window. As though the branches of the old tree were scraping against it, or as though something with long fingernails had blown in from the moors; something that wanted to get inside...

Crime Thriller



Was that a noise? Sleepily, I opened my eyes, and peered around the dark bedroom. I must have imagined it. It was the middle of the night. I turned over and went back to sleep.

At least I thought I slept. But into my dream came another sound. The unmistakable sound of footsteps in the corridor. Who could be roaming the hotel at this time of night?

Sci-fi Story



Was that a noise? Sleepily, I opened my eyes, and peered around the dark bedroom. I must have imagined it. It was the middle of the night. I turned over and went back to sleep.

And as I slept I had the strangest dream. I was looking out of my bedroom window, up into the starlit sky, and noticing that one of the stars was brighter than the rest. Much brighter. And the brightness became more and more intense until I found myself opening my eyes and staring at the room. It had been dark a few minutes ago, and now it was full of an eerie pulsing light which seemed to be coming from outside.

Can you see how these opening sentences can be adapted to lead into a different sort of story?

Now it's your turn to think up some imaginative opening sentences. I've done a few more for you, but can you try to come up with four or five more? Then memorise them. I promise you, you'll find them very useful when you get to the exam!

Write your opening sentences in this box and keep it safe! I've suggested you try to think of 4 or 5 more but you might want to add to them over the coming months...

1. "OK," said dad. "You two get into the back of the car. And can you PLEASE be on your best behaviour. You know what happened last time!"
2. The path through the woods was over-grown with brambles, but eventually we came to a clearing which opened out onto a meadow through which ran a little stream...
3. I've often thought back to that day and wondered if it would have turned out differently if only I hadn't made those choices....
4. I'd never seen anyone quite like him before....