

CREATING MOOD THROUGH LANDSCAPE AND WEATHER

Most of you will know that one of the Golden Rules of Writing is 'show don't tell'. One of the techniques that can be useful in this respect is using descriptions of the landscape and weather to set a mood or tone.

You won't get away with that famous example: 'It was a dark and stormy night' (!), you will have to be more subtle than that, but you can definitely use words skilfully to create the kind of atmosphere you want.

Here are two examples of a writer creating mood this way:

1. Martha sat alone on the terrace in the chill early morning, wrapped in a thick woollen coat. The last of the pears hung stubbornly to the old fruit tree: ripe and worm-riddled but reluctant to fall. She studied the backs of her hands, whose veins stood out like the spines on a sycamore leaf. How oddly unexpected it was; this arrival of old age. -----
2. At last, green shoots were pushing upwards into the light. The days were growing longer; the birds calling insistently for a mate; and a gentle sun was beginning to penetrate the dense undergrowth of the garden in the mornings. May opened the shutters of the Green Room and let the light into its dusty interior. It was time to begin. The next few times you are reading a novel, watch out for where the writer is doing this and use the following exercises to practice the technique.

We want you to create an atmosphere/mood by describing the setting. You have two choice:

- a) A menacing/dark atmosphere. Decide on a landscape (rural), and write three or four sentences describing the landscape and the weather. Ideas for landscapes: a wood on a hill/ open moorland/a mountainous valley / A seascape/ the Fens/ a river valley / farmland – or anywhere of your choice.
- b) A calm/tranquil atmosphere. Using the same landscape, write three or four sentences describing the scene and the weather evoking this sense of peaceful calm.

When describing, try to use expanded noun phrases and figurative language, i.e. similes, metaphors and personification