

Narrative and Descriptive Writing

Viewpoint – shaping a story



The Basic Story

Ingrid, a three-and-a-half year-old girl growing up in Norway, wanted to go outside to play in the snow.

While her mother was in the kitchen making lunch, Ingrid put on her boots and coat, got her two year-old sister into *her* boots and coat, got her chair and put it by the door, climbed up and opened the latch, put the chair back and went outside with her sister, closing the door behind her.

The two of them walked into town together. When they got to the shopping centre, they walked around, looking in shop windows. After only a few minutes, their mother found them, hugged them and took them home.



Viewpoint is everything

- How would Ingrid see the world outside? What would she be thinking and feeling about the snow?
- What would be running through her mother's mind when she looked out at the snow and saw the footprints leading away across the frozen garden?
- How would their viewpoints be different?



Shaping the story

- Tell parts of the story from different characters' points of view
- Consider how the character would use similes and metaphors – these need to fit the character's experiences and world view. What would the character see and use regularly?
e.g. 'His face was as round and featureless as a frying pan.'



Viewpoint through language choices

- Create a metaphor and/or a simile to describe what the character can see

What would be the objects in Ingrid's life that she might compare the snow to in order to show her excitement?

What would the mother compare the snow to in order to convey her fears?
How is her life experience reflected in her language?

Snow: soft, fluffy,
white, cold,
crystalline, crunchy,
powdery, glittering,
smooth



From the point of view of the three-year-old

It was hot and stuffy in the living room and I could feel my woolly tights scratching and starting to fall down. My dress felt tight around the arms, too. Outside, though, the whole world was white and sparkly with snow scattered and piled everywhere, **just like the time mummy was making cakes and dropped the flour bag all over the kitchen.** I wanted to be out there. Feeling the cold air from the edges of the window frame just made it seem even more inviting.



From the point of view of the mother

I rushed out into a white wilderness. The powdered snow from the yard clogged my thin slippers and made my feet feel heavy and clumsy but I slogged on, feet wet and frozen. My hands and face burned as the wind hurled specks of ice at me like a thousand tiny bullets. The thin, sharp smell of the pine trees and the almost sweet smell of the cold air made my head sing as if I were drunk with it. At the edge of the yard I stopped dead, frantically whipping my eyes from side to side, trying to see which way the girls had gone but hardly seeing anything. **Then, like a rose, like a berry, like a drop of blood, I saw it: Ingrid's red mitten, abandoned on the snow.**



Activity

- Agree a straightforward framework of a story that can be experienced in different ways by different characters
- Write the story from different viewpoints, focusing on description through each character's eyes
- Build in similes and/or metaphors that fit within the character's frame of reference and reflect the character's thoughts and feelings
- Alternatively, explore a first person text and identify how the author has shaped their viewpoint through language choices. Re-tell the story from a different point of view, re-shaping the language to give a different effect.

