

HIAS HOME LEARNING RESOURCE

***Danger!* Creative writing unit**

Help notes for parents and carers supporting students working through the *Danger!* creative writing unit

HIAS English team
Spring 2020
Final version

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***Danger!* Explanatory Notes**

For anyone supporting students working through the *Danger!* writing unit, a little extra help is available here.

The Impossible

When watching the clip from the film and considering the prompt questions, it is worth considering the way that the director and cinematographer have deliberately used bright colours and images of nature (eg flowers, leaves, birds) to bring out the mood of holiday happiness and relaxation as a contrast to the darkness and danger of the wave. Draw attention to the way that the wave is hidden but hinted at in the moments before it hits – we see the skies darken, the wind pick up and the way the earth trembles before the wave hits. The director also brings out the power of the wave by showing its effects in a mysterious way – we see the palm trees fall down but we don't see what is causing it. Finally, the director makes us see the wave itself for the first time in a reflection in the glass where it is not completely clear, which helps us to share the confusion of the characters as they try to make sense of what they are seeing.

The way that the danger is hidden until the moment of impact is similar to the way the shark is hidden from the human characters in the *Jaws* extract. However, it is not hidden from the viewer/reader and we know much more than the characters do about what is coming, which builds up the tension as we wait for disaster to strike.

Building knowledge and vocabulary

Students do not need a huge amount of in-depth knowledge in order to be able to write an effective narrative about the tsunami, but the material is interesting in itself. In the paragraphs of the *Jaws* extract about the shark, the writer shows that he knows quite a bit about sharks but is only including the information needed that builds up the tension. The vocabulary used in these paragraphs is not particularly technical but gives a similar tone to the voice-over to a nature programme. The sort of vocabulary that would be well worth collecting from the websites linked would include words such as seismic, tectonic plates, seabed, tremors etc. as well as words to do with the movement of water.

***Jaws* extract**

This extract is fairly easy to read, but students may well need to re-adjust their thinking as they realise that the 'great fish' is a shark (if they do not recognise the moment from the film or from the title of the text). If your child needs a little extra help to keep track of what is happening, get them to draw out an image of the beach, the surface of the water and the seabed sloping away from the shore. Draw the shark in position in the first paragraph and then draw in the boy on the lilo. With each paragraph, update the drawing. Another technique for keeping track is to write one or two key words or a quick phrase or sentence to summarise each paragraph in the margin.

Noticing the way the text is structured #1

The writer sets the reader up to be quite detached and unemotional – you are positioned as if you are a watcher of what is happening, rather than emotionally involved. The writing style is very plain and the writer does not vary his sentence

structures very much. The plainness of the writing is deliberate so that it feels factual, as if the writer is reporting something true. The difference between the paragraph about the shark and the paragraph about the boy is that in the 'boy' paragraph, we get some insight into what the boy is thinking, which makes us sympathise more with him.

Noticing the way the text is structured #2

The writer alternates between writing about the shark and the boy and writes about each one in almost exactly the same amount of detail. The turning point in the passage comes where both the boy and the shark are included in the same paragraph as the shark notices the boy and starts homing in on him. The scene from the film of *Jaws* replicates the passage almost exactly – you see in the film what is described in the text using the same technique of alternating between the shark's point of view and the boy on the surface.

Noticing the way the text is structured #4

The verbs gain in intensity throughout the text, from very slow and casual movement to faster movement and much greater violence. There is a point in the middle of the extract where the movement reduces momentarily, which almost brings a moment of relief but then the intensity builds up again. In the final paragraph, there is a huge amount of violent movement.

Mapping the text

In planning out their own version of the story of the wave from *The Impossible*, the most challenging thing to do is to work out how to deal with the wave itself. As a wave is not a creature, it could be difficult to write about it without trying to turn it into some kind of monster. If students need a starting line, suggest 'Deep in the heart of the Indian Ocean, far beneath the surface, the seabed shifted violently.'

Using sentence structure to reflect meaning

This is the most challenging element of the whole unit. When exploring the sentences, draw attention to the way the writer uses lists of actions by the same person/thing separated by commas, and the use of repetition at the beginning of phrases.

- *spin him – topple him – force him*
- *forces...to kick – forces...to heave – to at least get – to try and grasp*
- *unable to – unable to*
- *the game – the cruel game – that game*

Edit and improve

The most useful help at this point is to read aloud what has actually been written (not what the student *thinks* they have written). This helps to notice any words that are missing or accidentally repeated and any parts that don't make good sense. Reading the punctuation as it is written (eg not pausing if there are no punctuation marks to allow for a pause) is also useful as it makes it clear where a sentence is overly long.

HIAS English team

The HIAS English team offer a wide range of high-quality services to support schools in improving outcomes for learners, including courses, bespoke consultancy and in-house training.

During the current school closures, we are still offering school support in a variety of ways such as video conferencing, phone calls and bespoke creation of resources remotely. Coming soon will be teacher training via virtual classrooms. We would be happy to discuss your needs.

For further details referring to English, please contact either of the team leads:

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