

L.O. Identify the features that help to create suspense

Work with your partner to identify features of the Ice Forest text that you think create suspense - discuss and then share your ideas with the class. Have a **reason** for your thinking: what **effect** on the reader does each feature have?

Use the next page to work as a class to highlight the features and their effects, recording them on your copy of the text.



It was late when Torak came to the ice forest. Tall trees loomed over him, jagged with icicles that hung down like strange, sharp teeth. The last thin rays of winter sunlight slipped through the bare

branches, casting a maze of ebony shadows on the forest pathway.

The boy sat down under a tree and waited. A bitter wind shivered through the forest, gripping his body in an icy fist. Torak sensed something moving in the dark; something watching him. He gripped a thin flake of flint and waited. A squirrel ran down a tree trunk, its beady eyes picking him out. Then it scurried back up and was lost into the treetops.

Far away, Wolf ran between the trees following the scent. In the distance, he could hear his brother's lonely call. A sharp, plaintive cry that drew him closer.

Darkness settled onto the forest but Wolf loved the dark: everything stilled and the scent track seemed cleaner and easier to follow. Stars glittered above and the moon hung like a bear's claw. He ran on.

Torak stared into the night so hard that his eyes ached. Something moved between the trees, pacing in his direction. Shivering, he tried to keep as still as rock, to become one with the tree. To be tree. A scuffle of leaves. The flicker of a branch. Torak longed for Wolf, whose night sight would soon seek out whatever was stalking him. The yellow eye had long gone. Now it was a world of shadows and shapes.

Suddenly, a snow-covered boulder seemed to rise out of the darkness. The ice bear stood on its hind legs. Its great face turned slowly, sensing the bitter stillness. Torak flicked the flint to one side and as the bear moved towards the sound, he ran in the opposite direction.

Images whirled in Torak's mind: the ice bear's swollen eyes; the ice storm. Then he paused. Silence. Nothing. It was as if the forest had swallowed the bear. Then something warm brushed by his leg. Wolf licked his hand, waiting to see what Torak would do next.

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Our toolkit for suspense should look something like this:

- hide the threat
- use an abandoned/unwelcoming setting or lull the reader with a cosy setting
- personify the setting to make it sound dangerous – use the weather and/or time of day to create atmosphere
- make your character hear, see, touch, smell or sense something ominous
- surprise the reader with the unexpected
- suggest something is about to happen
- reveal the character's thoughts
- slow the action by using sentences of three and drop-in clauses.
- use powerful description to highlight significant details
- hide other details from the reader and use 'empty' words e.g. *something*
- use short punchy sentences to heighten drama
- use powerful adverbials to shift the time suddenly e.g. *without warning,*

Look at your **writer's toolkit for suspense** and work with your partner to find examples in these texts. When you both agree on which part of the toolkit the sentence/phrase/paragraph illustrates, copy it into your book, with a heading to say which 'tool' it represents. If you find more than one example, write them under the same heading.

L.O. Identify ways in which an author creates suspense

Off in the distance, Stanley could see two more flashlights bobbing toward them in the darkness. He felt helpless in the hole.

"You boys arrived just in the nick—," the Warden started to say. She stopped talking and she stopped walking. Then she slowly backed away.

A lizard had crawled up on top of the suitcase. Its big red eyes glowed in the beam of the flashlight. Its mouth was open, and Stanley could see its white tongue moving in and out between its black teeth.

Zero sat as still as a statue.

A second lizard crawled up over the side of the suitcase and stopped less than an inch away from Zero's little finger.

Stanley was afraid to look, and afraid not to. He wondered if he should try to scramble out of the hole before the lizards turned on him, but he didn't want to cause any commotion.

The second lizard crawled across Zero's fingers and halfway up his arm.

It occurred to Stanley that the lizards were probably on the suitcase when he handed it to Zero.

"There's another one!" gasped Mr. Pendanski. He shined the flashlight on the box of Frosted Flakes, which lay on its side beside Stanley's hole. A lizard was crawling out of it.

The light also illuminated Stanley's hole. He glanced downward and had to force himself to suppress a scream. He was standing in a lizard nest. He felt the scream explode inside him.

He could see six lizards. There were three on the ground, two on his left leg, and one on his right sneaker.

He tried to remain very still. Something was crawling up the back of his neck.

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A couple of thrushes squabbled overhead. The fat, happy cub kept close to his side, his bushy silver tail held high.

Fat, happy and carefree.

Torak heard a twig snap behind him just as a large hand grabbed him by the jacket and yanked him off his feet.

Three hunters, three lethal flint weapons. All aimed at him.

Torak's mind whirled. He couldn't move. Couldn't see Wolf.

The man gripping his jacket was enormous. His russet beard was a bird's nest tangled; one cheek was pushed downwards by an ugly scar, and whatever had bitten him had taken off one ear. In his free hand he held a flint-edged knife, its point jabbed under Torak's jaw.