

L.O. Use character reactions to show emotions (not tell).

MC unable to use some senses in setting. Main threat hinted at - 'empty' words used. Short sentences for effect. MC longed for 2<sup>nd</sup> C to help. All appeared to be hopeless – vague descriptions add unease

At this point in the story, our MC is really feeling quite helpless, lost and alone in a setting that holds no comfort. As if that wasn't bad enough, we're now going to hint at an approaching threat.

Remember that the toolkit technique for an approaching threat, is to suggest something is about to happen, but to hide specific details with 'empty' words. Short sentences and adverbials also work well here.

*Suddenly, somewhere beyond the fast-flowing river, came the strangled cry of a terrified creature. He skidded to a stop. Strained to hear. Nothing.*

An approaching threat would surely get a good reaction from your main character, but is it enough to write 'He was terrified and had a shocked look on his face'?

*Show not tell* is important in describing a main character's reactions, as it helps the reader really **feel** the same emotions.

As your threat gets closer and closer, and as you drop in more and more frightening details, your main character will need to **react** in more and more extreme ways.

Let's look at a familiar character - watch how Buzz Lightyear reacts when he realises that he is not a real space hero, but actually a just toy. Look carefully at his facial and body language.



As you watch the clip, jot down on scrap paper how Buzz shows his emotions. Some of the clues are obvious, but some are very subtle.

Look on the next page and compare your ideas.

- shook his head in disbelief
- arms hung limp
- shoulders slumped
- head hung down
- dragged his feet
- shuffled slowly
- stared at the ground
- leaned dejectedly against the stair rail

How might these look in a paragraph? Can you and your partner think of any sentences that link some of them? Share your ideas on the flipchart. The next page shows what an author could have written about Buzz in this scene.

*He blinked back the stinging tears and shook his head in disbelief, as the truth, terrible and final, dawned on him. His shoulders, once broad and proud, slumped forwards, letting his arms hang limp. How could this be?*

*Buzz turned and shuffled out of the room, no longer looking to the stars, no longer walking tall. Staring at the bird soaring effortlessly past in the blue sky, he realised that it had all been a stupid, childish delusion. He heaved a great sigh and let his head rest against the cold stair rail.*

Now think about how your character might react as your threat gets closer.

With your partner, role-play what could happen and make notes about what body language you use to show his/her emotions; pay particular attention to facial expressions and what happens to arms and hands.

Now use your notes to write the next paragraph(s) that shows (not tells) what happens to your character as the unknown threat draws ever closer.

- Use 'empty' words and adverbials to suggest something is approaching
- Use short, punchy sentences to increase tension
- Show, not tell, how your main character reacts each time to the threat