

Into the Forest

Today, we're going to be writing a short descriptive piece, that would belong at the start of a suspense story, in which a traveller enters an unfamiliar setting and is guided (or chased) through a forest by a goblin or faery. First, we need to explore the setting...

Look closely at this picture; look *into* it. What can you see ahead? To the left ... to the right? What might be around the corner, out of sight, and what might be behind? What sounds might echo through the trees? What woodland smells might surround someone here?



Activity 1. Use a **senses grid** to explore this setting. It might look like this, but you can record your notes in any way you want:

Sights:	Sounds:
Smells:	Feelings:

Try to use more than just one-word responses; expand your nouns with **descriptive language**, e.g.

feathered ferns/ meandering path/ harsh cackle of a bird

The 'feelings' section could be used to explore what emotions (positive or negative) a traveller in the setting might be experiencing. Try to show these, not tell.

Activity 2. Now we can use some of our noun phrases from the senses grid to form descriptive sentences that take the reader on a journey through different parts of the setting. For this, we can use **adverbial phrases of place**, to show the reader where to 'look'. E.g.

Feathered ferns dangled *from twisted branches overhead*.

Try experimenting with where you put the adverbial phrase in your sentences – where do they sound most effective? For example,

In the distance, a single bird cackled, its harsh cry echoing *through the forest*.

Could be written as:

A single bird cackled *in the distance*, its harsh cry echoing *through the forest*.

The first sentence forces the reader to 'look' into the distance, before hearing the bird, whereas the second sentences makes the reader 'hear' the sound first.

Have a go at using the ideas in your senses grid to write about different parts of the setting. Remember that if you use an adverbial phrase at the start of a sentence (a **fronted adverbial**), you need to use a **comma** after it.

Activity 3. Now it's time to introduce a character or two into your setting.

The first will be a traveller, who is experiencing the forest for the first time. All you have to do is use the sentences you wrote in today's activity 2 to describe the forest from the point of view of the character. You could write in the first person (as if it were you entering the setting), or it could be third person (he/she/a named person). Your writing could start like this:

The forest stood before me – what seemed like an impenetrable emerald wall. It was now or never; I took a deep breath and stepped into the unknown.

Remember, you could also write this in third person (he or she) or give your character a name. Guide the reader around the setting, pointing your author's 'camera' in different directions as your character moves deeper into the forest. Try to have fun with this and use your imagination to create as real a setting as possible.

Activity 4. At some point, your main character will meet a forest faery or goblin; the work you did on Tuesday will really help here. When we last looked at **suspense** writing, we learnt that introducing a threat *gradually* was much more effective than describing it all at once.



So, you could introduce a sound that gets nearer or a smell that gets stronger, until the character is finally revealed. Now you can use all the descriptive work you did on the goblins and faeries. Again, have fun bringing your character to life.

Don't forget that this is just the start of a story, so it doesn't have to be a very long piece of writing; once your character has been introduced, you could end your piece by hinting at what might happen next. E.g.

Without a second thought, I turned and fled, my heart thumping to the rhythm of my feet.

Or: Desperately, I ran to catch up – this was my only chance to find the gold...

You can, of course, continue the story if you want - it's up to you. It would be great to see your writing on Seesaw. Good luck, Mr S and Mrs McK.