

L.O. Use expanded noun phrases and powerful verbs to show (not tell)

Threat appeared and described in some detail.
MC used cunning to escape (not strength or skill)

Now that we have introduced (but not revealed) our threat, we need to finally unveil it. At this point, the suspense should be already high and the reader will expect the worst.

Our writer's toolkit for suspense contains just the devices to help us do this - look at the one in your books and discuss with a partner which you could use now.

- slow the action by using sentences of three and drop in clauses.
- use powerful description to highlight significant details

Powerful descriptive writing contains '**expanded noun phrases**' - these are phrases that develop a single noun into a whole descriptive phrase.

e.g. In the sentence 'Watch out for the **dog**', the noun 'dog' can be expanded to 'the **flea-bitten dog that is baring its teeth and running towards us**', which gives us a lot more information about the dog (and why we need to watch out for it).

Let's look at an example of how we could use expanded noun phrases effectively.

This short clip is taken from the TV series 'Merlin', and demonstrates how the sudden introduction of a threat increases the suspense in a scene.



Use this link

- [Gathering idea planning sheet](#) (.doc)
- **Narrative Writing: Merlin (Y5/Y6)**
- [Narrative Scheme of Work](#) (video)
- [Scheme of Work](#) (.doc)
- [1.1 Story-builders](#) (.ppt)

Watch the scene from **1:20 until 2:45**, which shows the dramatic entrance of the Black Knight into the court of King Uther.

What impression do you get of him? Why?

<https://player.vimeo.com/video/64057302>

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Now read this extract from 'Arthur, high king of Britain' by Michael Morpurgo, which tells of a similar event. Look out for the sentences that use the 'power of three'.

At that moment, from outside in the courtyard, came the clatter of horses' hooves on the cobbles. The doors of the hall flew open, and before I had time to call for them to be closed, a giant of a man rode in on a towering warhorse that pawed the ground, sides lathered up, tossing its fine head, snorting its fury. The man swept the hall with terrible eyes, wolfish eyes that froze the courage in a man's veins, eyes you could not hold with your own.

Can you identify a noun phrase in the first sentence that describes the horse's arrival?

At that moment, from outside in the courtyard, came *the clatter of horses' hooves on the cobbles*. The doors of the hall flew open, and before I had time to call for them to be closed, *a giant of a man* rode in on *a towering warhorse that pawed the ground, sides lathered up, tossing its fine head, snorting its fury*. The man swept the hall with *terrible eyes, wolfish eyes that froze the courage in a man's veins, eyes you could not hold with your own*.

The author **shows** us something about the knight's entrance into the courtyard by using the noun 'clatter'. How would this change if he had used 'tapping', 'rattling' or 'gentle drumming' instead?

Underline all the **noun phrases** in your copy that describe the knight and his horse. Circle the nouns themselves in a different colour.

At that moment, from outside in the courtyard, came *the clatter of horses' hooves on the cobbles*. The doors of the hall flew open, and before I had time to call for them to be closed, *a giant of a man* rode in on *a towering warhorse that pawed the ground, sides lathered up, tossing its fine head, snorting its fury*. The man swept the hall with *terrible eyes, wolfish eyes that froze the courage in a man's veins, eyes you could not hold with your own*.

How much less powerful is the paragraph if we re-read it without any expansion of the nouns? Try reading it with just the red nouns, and none of the purple expanded phrases.

What **clues** about the character do these noun phrases give us?

... *the **clatter** of horses' hooves on the cobbles*

He allows his horse to make a lot of noise, so he probably has no respect for the king

... *a towering **warhorse** that pawed the ground, sides lathered up, tossing its fine head, snorting its fury.*

His horse is *towering*, it is a *warhorse* and *acts like it is angry*, so he must be a fighting man

... *a **giant** of a man...*

He is *a giant of a man* – so he is likely to be strong, possibly fierce

... *terrible **eyes**, wolfish eyes that froze the courage in a man's veins, eyes you could not hold with your own...*

The man has *terrible* eyes, like a wolf's (*wolfish*), and it makes the other knights frightened (*froze the courage in a man's veins*) so he might be evil or nasty

Morpurgo also chooses his **verbs** very carefully. Go back to the passage and put box around all the verbs that show us what the knight and his horse are like.

At that moment, from outside in the courtyard, came the clatter of horses' hooves on the cobbles. The doors of the hall **flew** open, and before I had time to call for them to be closed, a giant of a man **rode** in on a towering warhorse that **pawed** the ground, sides lathered up, **tossing** its fine head, **snorting** its fury. The man **swept** the hall with terrible eyes, wolfish eyes that **froze** the courage in a man's veins, eyes you could not hold with your own.

Michael Morpurgo shows us through his verb choices that:

- The man's actions are fast and decisive (*flew; rode; swept*) so he seems a powerful, confident man
- The horse seems aggressive (*pawed; tossing; snorting*) and ready to fight

Now it's time for you continue your suspense story and finally reveal the threat in all its horrible glory.

- Use **expanded noun phrases** to add extra detail
- Use **powerful verbs** to show what the threat is like