

# Beginnings and endings: creative

The **beginning** and **ending** of a piece of **creative writing** are very important. Both need to have an **impact** on the reader.

## The beginning

This needs to:

- engage the reader immediately
- set the tone for the rest of your writing.
- You can do this with: a vivid description, dialogue, a mystery, or conflict or danger.

The beginning is sometimes called the 'exposition' or 'opening'.

## With a vivid description

Glistening and gleaming in the evening haze, the sea spread out before us like a silver carpet. Waves lapped gently at the sides of the boat as we sailed silently along in the cool, salty breeze.

A good way to start if the setting plays a big role in your writing.

Opportunities to show your skills with imaginative writing techniques like figurative language.

## With dialogue

"I'm scared. What do we do now?" Shadows flickered on Sarah's terrified face as she whispered her fears.

"Nothing," he hissed. "Keep quiet and just wait."

Gives the reader an immediate idea about one or more important characters.

## With a mystery

I know I shouldn't have taken it. But I did. I'll be sorry for the rest of my miserable little life. It was only a tiny thing – but it caused so much trouble.

An engaging way to start if you want to use flashbacks.

Go to page 66 for more about narrative structure and flashbacks

## The ending

The ending is the final impression the reader has of your writing. Follow these rules for a strong ending:

- **Plan** each stage of your writing in advance – you will be less likely to run out of time and rush at the end
- Spend time thinking about the **tone** of your ending – will it be happy, sad or funny?
- Craft your **final sentence** carefully – this is the last bit of your writing an examiner will read
- Avoid sudden mood changes – if the tone of your writing has been tense throughout, a happy ending is unlikely to work
- Avoid ending with a cliché like 'it was all a dream' – use your imagination!

## With conflict or danger

I froze. Someone was in the house. I couldn't see them. But I knew they were there.

An effective way to create a sense of tension from the start.

## Now try this

Look at this **Paper 1** exam-style question:

- 5 Your school is asking for examples of creative writing for its website. Describe an occasion when you were home alone. **(40 marks)**

- 1 Write four possible openings using the techniques above. Use a different technique for each opening.
- 2 Choose one of your openings and write the final paragraph.

# Common spelling errors 2

## Your and you're

Learn the difference between these two words:

- **your** means **belonging to you**
- **you're** is an abbreviation of **you are**.

**X** Your having the time of you're life.

**✓** ~~Your~~/<sup>you're</sup> having the time of ~~you're~~/<sup>your</sup> life.

Remember: a **lot** is two words. **Alot** of people love chocolate is wrong, but **A lot** of people love chocolate is correct.

## We're, wear, were and where

Make sure you are familiar with each of these:

- **we're** is an abbreviation of **we are**
- **wear** is a verb referring to clothing – e.g. **What are you wearing tonight?**
- **were** is the past tense of **are** – e.g. **they are, they were**
- **where** is a question word referring to place – e.g. **Where are we going?**

**X** Wear we're you? Were leaving now.

**✓** ~~Wear~~/<sup>we're</sup> ~~Where~~/<sup>were</sup> you? ~~Were~~/<sup>we're</sup> leaving now.

## Two, too, to

Getting these words wrong is quite a common error:

- **to** indicates place, direction or position – e.g. **I went to Spain.**
- **too** means **also** or an **excessive amount** – e.g. **I went too far.**
- **two** is a number.

**X** It's to difficult to get too the highest level.

**✓** It's ~~to~~/<sup>too</sup> difficult to get ~~too~~/<sup>to</sup> the highest level.

## Of, off

The easiest way to remember the difference is by listening to the sound of the word you want to use:

- **of** is pronounced **ov**
- **off** rhymes with **cough**.

**X** He jumped of the top off the wall.

**✓** He jumped ~~of~~/<sup>off</sup> the top ~~off~~/<sup>of</sup> the wall.

## Past, passed

Aim to get these two right:

- **passed** is the past tense of the verb to pass – e.g. **He passed all his GCSEs.**
- **past** refers to time that has gone by, or position – e.g. **That's all in the past; He ran past the school.**

**X** She past out at ten passed six.

**✓** She ~~past~~/<sup>passed</sup> out at ten ~~passed~~/<sup>past</sup> six.

## Who's and whose

**Whose** is a question word referring to belonging, e.g. **Whose book is this?**

**Who's** is an abbreviation of **who is**.

**X** Whose wearing who's coat?

**✓** ~~Whose~~/<sup>Who's</sup> wearing ~~who's~~/<sup>whose</sup> coat?

## Now try this

There are **nine** spelling errors in this student's writing. Copy and correct it.

I saw Annabel walk passed wearing you're shoes. She was carrying you're bag to. I don't know who's coat she had on but it had too stripes across the back. She stopped and took it of. I don't know were she was going or what she was up two. It was very strange.

# Explicit information and ideas

In **both papers**, you will be tested on whether you can identify and interpret **explicit** and **implicit** information and ideas.

**explicit** *adjective*

1. Stated clearly and in detail, leaving no room for confusion or doubt.

'the arrangement had not been made explicit'

*Synonyms:* clear, direct, plain, obvious, straightforward, clear-cut, crystal clear, clearly expressed, easily understandable, blunt

'Explicit' means you **don't** need to look for **hidden meanings** or **provide any explanations**. If you are asked to list examples from the source – as in **Paper 1, Question 1** – you just need to find **short quotations** or **paraphrase** (put into your own words) what is clearly there. Keep your answers as brief as possible – avoid writing in full sentences, exploring language or the impact on the reader.

This **Paper 1** exam-style question is about **source 4**, *The Help*, which is a fiction text from the 21st century.

## Worked example

1 Read the extract from **source 4**.

List **four** duties that the narrator describes doing in this part of the text. **(4 marks)**

cooking

cleaning

getting babies to sleep

getting babies to stop crying

21st

Extract from *The Help*. Full text on page 104. Lines 1–4.

Mae Mobley was born on a early Sunday morning in August, 1960. A church baby we like to call it. Taking care a white babies, that's what I do, along with all the cooking and the cleaning. I done raised seventeen kids in my lifetime. I know how to get them babies to sleep, stop crying, and go in the toilet bowl before they mamas even get out a bed in the morning.

Explicit information from the text is either listed as short quotations or is paraphrased. Full sentences and explanations have been avoided.

In the exam, use your highlighter to find the correct answers quickly.

## Now try this

Read the extract from **source 2** *To Kill a Mockingbird*, then answer this **Paper 1** exam-style question:

1 Read again the first part of the source, **lines 1 to 5**.

List **four** things from this part of the text about the effect of the heat in Maycomb. **(4 marks)**

20th

Extract from *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Full text on page 102. Lines 1–5.

Maycomb was an old town, but it was a tired old town when I first knew it. In rainy weather the streets turned to red slop; grass grew on the sidewalks, the courthouse sagged in the square. Somehow, it was hotter then: a black dog suffered on a summer's day; bony mules hitched to Hoover carts flicked flies in the sweltering shade of the live oaks on the square. Men's stiff collars wilted by nine in the morning. Ladies bathed before noon, after their three-o'clock naps, and by nightfall were like soft teacakes with frostings of sweat and sweet talcum.

# Putting it into practice

**Paper 1, Section B: Writing** tests your **creative writing** skills. Planning before you write will help you produce a stronger answer. Look at the exam-style question below and the two students' plans.

## Worked example

- 5** You are going to enter a creative writing competition run by a national newspaper. Your entry will be judged by people your own age. Write a short story about an unexpected visitor. **(40 marks)**

### Sample plan



## Planning for creative writing

To plan for a question like this you should:

- ✓ spend about **5 minutes planning** your answer – the more detailed your plan is, the stronger your answer will be
- ✓ quickly decide **which question** to answer
- ✓ **plan** the narrative voice and creative writing techniques you will use
- ✓ create a **full and detailed plan**.

- ✓ Clear use of narrative structure.
- ✗ Details too brief in places and lack notes on creative writing techniques.
- ✗ Ending happens too soon and feels sudden and an anti-climax.

### Improved sample plan

#### An unexpected visitor

**Crisis** – start with mystery – fear when door is opened and nobody there; create mysterious atmosphere with short sentence.

**Exposition** – flashback using description of setting before knock on door; use senses to show calm feelings.

**Complication** – knock on door; use metaphor for feelings.

**Crisis** – reveal who is at door; stranger who hands over a package and then leaves, package has 'do not open' written on front; use personification of package to create tension.

**Resolution** – describe examining the package and then finding, on the back 'until the morning'...

- ✓ Detailed use of narrative structure, using flashback to engage the reader.
- ✓ Detailed plan with notes about techniques to be used at each stage of the narrative.
- ✓ Resolution is planned to fully engage reader.

It is up to you to structure your plan in the way that works best for you. Note how this student has thought about both the structure and the techniques they will use.

## Now try this

Finish the 'improved' plan above by completing the 'resolution', including your ideas for **creative writing techniques**.

Then write the first **two paragraphs** of an answer using this plan. Use one or more of the techniques for beginnings and endings from page 67.

# Sentence variety 1

Using a range of **different sentence types** when you write to present a **viewpoint** and in your **creative writing** can help you convey your ideas clearly and effectively and keep your readers engaged.

## Engaging the reader

Writing for young children uses a limited range of sentence types:

Penny went out of the house.  
It was raining.  
Soon she was soaked.  
Penny turned around and went home again.



Effective writing for adults uses a variety of sentence types to hold the reader's interest.

## Sentence types

These are the basic types of sentence:

- Single-clause
- Multi-clause
- Minor

To remind yourself which is which, look back at page 31. You will probably want to use all these types in your writing.

## Multi-clause sentences

Multi-clause sentences can help you to keep your readers engaged with your ideas. These are the main types.

1

### Sentences using a subordinate clause

- This is additional information which is added to the main clause using conjunctions such as: because, although, if, since.
- The subordinate clause is dependent on the main clause because it doesn't make sense without it.

Subordinate clause

Main clause

• Before I went out, I locked all the doors.

You can often swap the main and subordinate clauses without changing the meaning of the sentence.

2

### Sentences using a coordinate clause

If neither clause is dependent on the other, then the clauses are coordinate. Coordinate clauses use conjunctions such as and, but, or.

Main clause

These clauses are an equal pair.

• I checked that the windows were shut and I locked the front door.

3

### Sentences using a relative clause

This is where additional information is introduced using a **relative pronoun**, such as: that, where, which, whose, who, when.

Main clause

Relative clause, separated from the main clause with commas

• The neighbour, who I've never liked, waved as I walked down the front path.

## Now try this

Write the opening paragraph of a response to this **Paper 1** exam-style question:

- 5 You are going to enter a national creative writing competition.  
Your entry will be judged by students your own age.  
Write a short story about moving house. **(40 marks)**

Aim to use at least **one** of each sentence type:

- A single-clause sentence
- A multi-clause sentence with
  - a subordinate clause
  - a coordinate clause
  - a relative clause
- A minor sentence

20th

## SOURCE 1

*This extract is from the opening of a novel by Daphne du Maurier. It was published in 1938. In this section the narrator is dreaming of a home she once lived in, Manderley.*

### Rebecca

Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again. It seemed to me I stood by the iron gate leading to the drive, and for a while I could not enter, for the way was barred to me. There was a padlock and chain upon the gate. I called in my dream to the lodge-keeper, and had no answer, and peering closer through the rusted spokes of the gate I saw that the lodge was uninhabited.

5 No smoke came from the chimney, and the little lattice<sup>1</sup> windows gaped forlorn. Then, like all dreamers, I was possessed of a sudden with supernatural powers and passed like a spirit through the barrier before me. The drive wound away in front of me, twisting and turning as it had always done, but as I advanced I was aware that a change had come upon it; it was narrow and unkempt, not the drive that we had known. At first I was puzzled and did not understand, and it was only when I bent my head to avoid the low swinging branch of a tree that I realized what had happened. Nature had come into her own again and, little by little, in her stealthy, insidious<sup>2</sup> way had encroached upon the drive with long, tenacious<sup>3</sup> fingers. The woods, always a menace even in the past, had triumphed in the end. They crowded, dark and uncontrolled, to the borders of the drive. The beeches with white, naked limbs leant close to one another, their branches intermingled in a strange embrace, making a vault above my head like the archway of a church. And there were other trees as well, trees that I did not recognize, squat oaks and tortured elms that straggled cheek by jowl<sup>4</sup> with the beeches, and had thrust themselves out of the quiet earth, along with monster shrubs and plants, none of which I remembered.

20 The drive was a ribbon now, a thread of its former self, with gravel surface gone, and choked with grass and moss. The trees had thrown out low branches, making an impediment to progress; the gnarled roots looked like skeleton claws. Scattered here and again amongst this jungle growth I would recognize shrubs that had been landmarks in our time, things of culture and grace, hydrangeas whose blue heads had been famous. No hand had checked their progress, and they had gone native now, rearing to monster height without a bloom, black and ugly as the nameless parasites that grew beside them.

25 On and on, now east now west, wound the poor thread that once had been our drive. Sometimes I thought it lost, but it appeared again, beneath a fallen tree perhaps, or struggling on the other side of a muddied ditch created by the winter rains. I had not thought the way so long. Surely the miles had multiplied, even as the trees had done, and this path led but to a labyrinth<sup>5</sup>, some choked wilderness, and not to the house at all. I came upon it suddenly; the approach masked by the unnatural growth of a vast shrub that spread in all directions, and I stood, my heart thumping in my breast, the strange prick of tears behind my eyes.

30 There was Manderley, our Manderley, secretive and silent as it had always been, the grey stone shining in the moonlight of my dream, the mullioned<sup>6</sup> windows reflecting the green lawns and the terrace. Time could not wreck the perfect symmetry of those walls, nor the site itself, a jewel in the hollow of a hand.

35 The terrace sloped to the lawns, and the lawns stretched to the sea, and turning I could see the sheet of silver placid under the moon, like a lake undisturbed by wind or storm. No waves would come to ruffle this dream water, and no bulk of cloud, wind-driven from the west, obscure the clarity of this pale sky. I turned again to the house, and though it stood inviolate<sup>7</sup>, untouched, as though we ourselves had left but yesterday, I saw that the garden had obeyed the jungle law, even as the woods had done. The rhododendrons stood fifty feet high, twisted and entwined with bracken, and they had entered into alien marriage with a host of nameless shrubs, poor, bastard things that clung about their roots as though conscious of their spurious<sup>8</sup> origin. A lilac had mated with a copper beech, and to bind them yet more closely to one another the malevolent ivy, always an enemy to grace, had thrown her tendrils<sup>9</sup> about the pair and made them prisoners. Ivy held prior place in this lost garden, the long strands crept across the lawns, and soon would encroach upon the house itself. There was another plant too, some half-breed from the woods, whose seed had been scattered long ago beneath the trees and then forgotten, and now, marching in unison with the ivy, thrust its ugly form like a giant rhubarb towards the soft grass where the daffodils had blown.

45 Nettles were everywhere, the vanguard of the army. They choked the terrace, they sprawled about the paths, they leant, vulgar and lanky, against the very windows of the house. They made indifferent sentinels<sup>10</sup>, for in many places their ranks had been broken by the rhubarb plant, and they lay with crumpled heads and listless stems, making a pathway for the rabbits. I left the drive and went on to the terrace, for the nettles were no barrier to me, a dreamer. I walked enchanted, and nothing held me back.

1: **Lattice:** a pattern of diamond shapes

2: **Insidious:** slow and harmful

3: **Tenacious:** keeping a tight hold

4: **Cheek by jowl:** close together

5: **Labyrinth:** maze

6: **Mullioned windows:** windows with vertical bars between the panes of glass

7: **Inviolable:** injury-free

8: **Spurious:** illegitimate, unlawful

9: **Tendrils:** thread-like parts of a climbing plant

10: **Sentinels:** guards