

Nelson English Usage

Digital resources for the Australian Curriculum

Write the first paragraph to your own favourite novel

Part Four

Task 7: Rewriting your favourite novel

In this task, you will choose your favourite of the three novels you assessed in Part Three and rewrite the opening paragraph.

You will begin by answering questions about your chosen novel.

- 1 How old do you think the narrator is? How can you tell?
- 2 What tense does the novel use?
- 3 What point of view does the novel use?
- 4 Is the novel based on past, present or future events? How can you tell?
- 5 Is the narrator male or female? How can you tell?
- 6 Is the language in the novel formal, casual or standard? How can you tell?
- 7 Is there anything special or unique about the language in the novel? For example, does it have made-up words? Does it rhyme? Is repetition used? Do the characters make grammatical mistakes when they talk? Are characters and places named inventively? List examples.

8 Is the opening paragraph action-based, where something is happening, or is it exposition, where something is being described? Which do you think is more effective or interesting?

9 Is the novel a romance, a comedy or a tragedy? How can you tell?

10 Is the novel realistic or fantastic?

11 Is there a sense of suspense or a particular mood in the paragraph?

12 Does the opening paragraph tell you anything about the place in which the novel is set?

13 Summarise what you like about the opening paragraph.

Considering the elements in the questions above – tense, point of view, narrator’s gender and age, the language patterns and so on – rewrite the opening paragraph.

Make sure that you do not just copy and paste the original paragraph and edit it. Rewrite it from scratch.

Is your rewrite better, in your opinion? Why/why not?	
Describe why you wrote the paragraph as you did.	
Would your ideal rewrite change anything in the novel overall? For example, would some of the characters have different fates in your version?	

Task 8: Assess a specific paragraph

The pool

Late November.

I sat by the pool, framed and protected from view by the tall surrounding forest of stringybarks, grey gums and slender tree-ferns. I leant back on my hands with my legs outstretched before me, one foot crossed neatly on top of the other. Tristan swam laps. We were alone. In a 1950s Marilyn Monroe-style bathing suit, I channelled the past, feeling glamorous, and basked in the warmth of the low red sun. Everything was quiet, apart from the light, rhythmic splashes of water as Tristan swam. His perfect posture lent itself beautifully to swimming, his arms rotating as if his body were a skewer. With my chin tilted up toward the sky, I shut my eyes and allowed the mellowness of the moment to soothe me. It had been a long year. And then, I felt that I was being watched. I opened my eyes. On the balcony, darkly covered on one side by determined ivy, Giovanni was staring down at me, his body half-obscured by plant shadow. I met his eyes. Like an animal sensing ill-intentions, I felt the hairs on the back of my neck stand on end. He did not drop his gaze.

Questions to consider

- 1 Is the narrator of *The pool* male or female? How can you tell?
- 2 How old do you think the narrator is?

- 3 Where do you think *The pool* is set?
- 4 Does *The pool* evoke a particular feeling in you? Explain.
- 5 Do you think *The pool* is a romance, a comedy or a tragedy? How can you tell?
- 6 In what time period do you think *The pool* is set? How can you tell?
- 7 How do you think the narrator feels at the end of the paragraph; for example scared, happy, sad, worried or angry?
- 8 Is the language of *The pool* formal, casual or standard? How can you tell?
- 9 What do you think Giovanni's intentions are?
- 10 Why do you think the hairs on the back of the narrator's neck stand on end?
- 11 What do you think *The pool* is about?
- 12 Do you think the effect of the paragraph would be different if Giovanni was staring openly at the narrator, rather than looking down from a balcony, partially hidden? Explain your reasons.
- 13 Do you think the effect of the paragraph would be different if Tristan noticed Giovanni staring, rather than being oblivious to it? Explain your reasons. Why might the author have chosen to have Tristan not notice?

14 Is the language of *The pool* descriptive, poetic, realistic or a combination? How can you tell? List examples.

15 What time of day is it in *The pool*?

16 What colours are used?

17 What textures are used?

18 What sounds are used?

19 Are any literary devices used, such as metaphors, similes, alliteration, rhyme, cadences and anaphora? List examples.

20 Comment on the length of the sentences throughout the paragraph. Does this have a particular effect on the paragraph as a whole?