



# Suspense toolkit

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To create suspense to build tension, scare the reader and keep the reader wanting to find out what will happen you might want to:

N/R	Y1/2 As in N/R plus:	Y3/4 As in Y1/2 plus:	Y5/6 As in Y3/4 plus:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>put the main character into a scary setting – <i>forest, old bridge, empty house</i></li> <li>make the main character hear or see something</li> <li>describe the threat</li> <li>make the main character escape!</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>isolate your character/s               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>in darkness/cold</li> <li>in a derelict setting</li> </ul> </li> <li>use scary sound effects, e.g. <i>something hissed</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>or show a glimpse, e.g. <i>a hand appeared ...</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>show your character's reaction, e.g. <i>she shivered</i></li> <li>use exclamations to show impact</li> <li>use dramatic connectives to introduce suspense and drama – <i>at that moment, suddenly, unfortunately</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>let the threat get closer and closer</li> <li>show the character's feelings by reactions, e.g. <i>she froze</i></li> <li>include short punchy sentences for drama</li> <li>use rhetorical questions to make the reader worried – <i>Who had turned out the light?</i></li> <li>use empty words to hide the threat – <i>something, somebody, it, a silhouette</i></li> <li>select powerful verbs – <i>crept, grabbed, smothered</i></li> <li>use dramatic connectives – <i>in an instant, without warning, out of the blue</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>hide the threat;</li> <li>use an abandoned setting or lull the reader with a cosy setting</li> <li>personify the setting to make it sound dangerous – use the weather and/or time of day to create atmosphere</li> <li>make your character hear, see, touch, smell or sense something ominous</li> <li>surprise the reader with the unexpected</li> <li>suggest something is about to happen</li> <li>reveal the character's thoughts, e.g. <i>She wondered if she would ever escape the darkness.</i></li> <li>slow the action by using sentences of three and drop in clauses.</li> </ul>

## Useful ideas for teaching suspense – always co-construct the toolkit with the class

Model all aspects of the toolkit and display word banks, sentences and ideas on prompt cards, washing lines or learning walls

N/R	Y1/2 As in N/R plus:	Y3/4 As in Y1/2 plus:	Y5/6 As in Y3/4 plus:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collect, display and use images of scary settings, e.g. <i>castle, bridge, forest, lake, old house</i></li> <li>Raid picture books &amp; fairy tales for scary settings and notice descriptions</li> <li>Use pictures and photos of scary places and describe these</li> <li>Imagine a story happening with a scary moment</li> <li>Compose simple descriptive captions and sentences</li> <li>Dramatise and imagine being in a scary setting, showing reactions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read stories with suspense – innovate on sentences</li> <li>Dramatise stories where main character hears or sees something scary</li> <li>Show main character's reactions</li> <li>Collect words to describe a character's reaction and use in sentences, e.g. <i>froze, hid, ducked down, trembled, shivered</i></li> <li>Rehearse sentences using dramatic connectives to introduce a sound effect or glimpse, e.g. <i>At that moment, she heard ... / At that moment, she saw</i></li> <li>Show images of scary places and list what might happen</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collect language banks for scary settings, ominous weather, cold and darkness – sort by mood</li> <li>Raid novels for scary scenes, descriptive passages and write 'in the style of'</li> <li>Compare suspense sections and analyse effect created</li> <li>Use drama to recreate suspense, mime how a character reacts and hot seat</li> <li>Use 'in a dark, dark house' to build suspense</li> <li>Collect verbs, dramatic connectives, empty words, descriptive phrases to use when building suspense</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>From novels, collect and compare different suspense paragraphs and innovate</li> <li>Use film clips to discuss how to manipulate the reader; write short suspense scenes</li> <li>Use drama to create a suspense scene</li> <li>Use sound effects, music and voices to create suspense</li> <li>Hot seat characters from drama and a novel to explore feelings and thoughts at moments of suspense – turn into writing</li> <li>Gather word banks for suspense using the senses</li> <li>Rehearse suspense sentences using sentences of three to build tension and drop in clauses; contrast with rhetorical questions and short sentences</li> </ul>