



Composing Under Pressure:

Imaginative writing The 'swoosh'
narrative

The 'swoosh' narrative

Rules:

- Your story has only four sections
- Your story has two or three characters
- Stick to Aristotle's 'three unities': explore just a single time, place and action
- Your protagonist must grow or change because of some catalyst (this catalyst can be a character or an event)
- You don't need a resolution, but one should be implied (the reader should be able to anticipate how the story will end)

- Inciting incident: start in media res, in the middle of action, to grip your reader's attention and engage them
- Backfill: with careful signposting, provide the back story as to how the characters arrived in this situation.
- Rising action: build tension, progress the plot towards the climax.
- Climactic resolution: finish at a high point of tension, but one where the reader can imagine how the rest of the story plays out



Good to know:

- Start at the point of change or action
- Use transition markers to ensure plot cohesion
- Use precise nouns and active verbs to create description, not adjectives and adverbs
- Use figurative language to add style – but sparingly
- You may have a twist in the tail of your tale for added drama, but there should be some subtle foreshadowing earlier on



Example 1

1. Open with the sound of approaching sirens and the stench of petrol in the air. John is cradling his wife Lucy by the side of the road after a car accident. She is begging him not to leave her.

2. Earlier, they were arguing in the car on their way home from a family dinner. They were speeding angrily along the dark or wet roads. Play with audience sympathies by considering who was driving, who was yelling and what the argument was over.

4. The other driver approaches. John stands up, enraged. The driver is shadowed by their car's rear lights, indistinct. They get closer. John steps forward towards the driver, fists clenched. They reach the light from the streetlamp....
Play around with who the driver might be.

3. Lucy starts greying out. John is shaking her, frantic. He reminds her of their life together, reminiscing over past joys, future plans they had made etc. Then she goes limp. A car door slams.

door and opens it to find soldiers in combat uniforms standing on the other side.

1. Open with the sound of gunfire and voices yelling military commands. Callum eyes an enemy soldier, getting him in his laser sights. He pulls the trigger and the soldier drops to the ground.

2. Callum calls out in excitement. A voice – his mother - asks him to turn it down. We realise he is playing a video game in the living room of his home.

3. Grumbling, Callum turns down the volume and returns to his game. A phone rings, snatches of one-sided conversation are heard. Mum's voice becomes increasingly concerned. Callum flicks her a couple of looks but continues playing. Mum puts down the phone and makes him turn off the game, switching on the TV instead. News flash: civil war (or some other conflict) has broken out.

Remember the purpose of your imaginative writing is to entertain, move, provoke, amuse, shock, or to make your audience think

Top tips:

- Use foreshadowing to create suspense.
- Consider the use of omissions to create mystery.
- Use 'show don't tell' - don't label emotions, show them instead
- To extend yourself you can use a circular structure or some other non-linear sequence.
- Use the 'show' don't 'tell' method.
- Use figurative language for a particular purpose (To construct a representation of individual characters or a place in a certain way, or to construct a particular mood/atmosphere).
- Focus on character growth and development as the main conflict.
- Use symbolism



Show Don't tell

- Mastering the act of 'showing' not 'telling' is one of your key goals as an author. This is best achieved by avoiding emotional qualifiers, and demonstrating character personality and emotions through their dialogue, actions, appearance, interactions with others, the setting, symbolic objects, and so on.
- **Telling:** Jeffrey Bolster had been a bully ever since I had known her.
- **Showing:** Jeffrey Bolster snorted at the sight of her blotchy, stained face. His snicker revealed his yellow, protruding teeth.

- **A final pointer:** Remember to give your imaginative text a title that makes the genre and form clear to your reader

