

Techniques Continued (2), Mini-lesson

All text quotes from *Stargirl*, by Jerry Spinelli © 2000

Full-Circle Ending

At the beginning: *Several days later, coming home from school, I found a plastic bag on our front step. Inside was a gift-wrapped package tied with yellow ribbon. The tag said “Happy Birthday!” I opened the package. It was a porcupine necktie.*

At the end: *Last month, one day before my birthday, I received a gift-wrapped package in the mail. It was a porcupine necktie.*

Scene Change

She was elusive. She was today. She was tomorrow. She was the faintest scent of a cactus flower, the flitting shadow of an elf owl. We did not know what to make of her. In our minds we tried to pin her to a corkboard like a butterfly, but the pin merely went through and away she flew.

* * *

Kevin wasn't the only one. Other kids pestered me: “put her on the Hot Seat!”

I lied. I said that she was only a tenth-grader and you had to be at least a junior to be on *Hot Seat*.

At home thinking
The next day, at school

Scene Change Fact—not all authors use some symbol to denote a change. Some use a large space between the two scenes. Given that the book is single spaced, the large space stands out.

Comma for “and”

It was a dark and stormy night. (Has the “and”. Sentence is typical. Simple.)
 It was a dark, stormy night. (Does not have the “and”. Adds poetic style. Complex.)

Caution: you cannot just replace any “and” in a sentence with a comma. For example, in the following sentence, it is a severe NO-NO

It was a long day and I was glad to go home. (Two complete sentences joined by the “and”)
 It was a long day, I was glad to go home. (Take out the “and” and you have a comma SPLICE!
 Complete sentences cannot be joined with a comma no matter how cool the pause sounds.)

Adj.

and

Adj.

cold
long

and
and

dark = It was a cold, dark night.
tiring = It was a long, tiring drive.

Repetition For Effect (the act of repeating a **phrase** several times, within several sentences)

*****THIS ONE IS A TECHNIQUE FROM LAST STORY. NOT REQUIRED.
USED HERE FOR COMPARISON ONLY*****

She was trying to get herself discovered for the movies.

She was sniffing fumes.

She was homeschooling gone amok.

She was an alien.

Repetition (THESAURUS) For Effect (same as RFE, except a phrase is not repeated, but a **synonym** of the original word).

We *hated* them because they were trying to spoil our perfect season.

We *resented* every point scored against US.

We *loathed* everything about them. Even their school colors.

Repetition (RFE and RTFE both have a poetic sound to them. In Repetition, it is simple that--repetition. The purpose of this may be to emphasize, but not poetically. Just emphasis. It may be someone saying something, or a noise, or a sound. Use sparingly as it does not readily provide style.)

We *hated* their uniforms. *Hated, hated, hated.*

Changed Margins

None of this was publicly acknowledge. There were no PA announcements, no TV coverage, no headlines in the Mica Times:

**MAHS STUDENTS ASTIR
INDIVIDUALITY ERUPTS**

This colon can also be a
dash or a comma

The five-column photo in the Times showed Danny on his father's shoulders, surrounded by a mob of neighbors. In the foreground was a new bike, and a big sign that read:

WELCOME HOME, DANNY

...Stargirl went over to the visitors' section and gave them a cheer. She began with an exaggerated ball-bouncing motion:

Dribble, Dribble!
Sis Boom Bibble!
We done bite!
We don't nibble!
We just say--
(sweeping wave)
"Howwww-dee, friends!"
(two thumbs pointing to her chest)
"We're the Electrons!"
(points to them)
"Who--are--YYYYYYOU!"
(turns head to side, cups ear)

Interjection (a word/phrase set apart from the sentence by a comma or exclamation point)

“**Hey**, what is your problem?” he gestured rudely.

“**Ouch!** That hurts!”

Either a comma or an exclamation mark is needed. Comma for normal, exclamation mark for excitement!

Slang/Di’lect (dialect) (gives your characters that “real life” sound)

An apostrophe is often used to denote the omission of letters in a word

“I’m invisible,” I said to Kevin at lunch. “Nobody hears me. Nobody sees me. I’m the friggin’ invisible man.”

“Yeah.”

“Well?” She was hopping beside me, punching my shoulder. “Wha’d you think?”

Whaddathink?

War’shington.

Bold (Grab attention, emphasize, title, sign, note, et al)

It was scary in the cave. **Scary**. I went inside regardless.

We drove down the highway, getting closer every minute to Grandpa’s. I was excited. I have not seen Grandpa since I was 7 years old. There it was. The exit sign, **Exit 37 Tupelo Road**. Dad signaled and we slowly pulled off, kicking gravel into the air.

Underline (emphasize, grab attention, title if writing by hand, sign, note, et al)

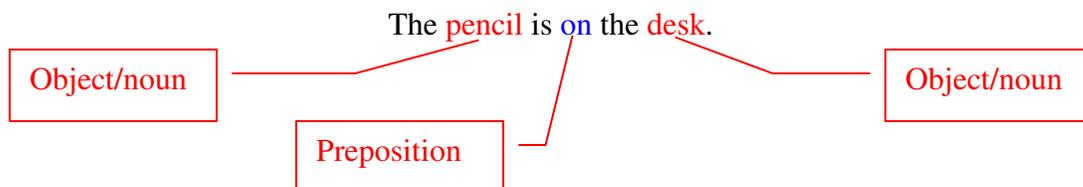
Not used to underline titles much anymore. Italics are used for that when word processing. You will likely use it for emphasis in your story. Likely when a character says something.

I did not want to go home that night.

The teacher made Jimmy write sentences on the blackboard thirty-seven times, I will not eat in class, I will not eat in class, I will not eat in class....

STARTING a sentence with a Preposition (a word that describes location between two nouns)
<http://englishplus.com/grammar/00000360.htm>

Aboard	beyond	on account of
about	<u>but</u>	Onto
above	by means of	on top of
According to	Concerning	Opposite
across from	Considering	Out
<u>across</u>	despite	out of
after	Down	<u>outside</u>
Against	during	owing to
ahead of	<u>except</u> ¹	Over
along	for	Past
Alongside	From	Per
along with	in	prior to
amid	in addition to	Regarding
<u>among</u>	in back of	round
Apart from	in front of	Since
Around	in lieu of	Through
Aside from	in place of	Throughout
as of	in regard to ²	Till
<u>at</u>	<u>inside</u>	<u>to</u>
<u>atop</u>	in spite of	together with
Barring	instead of	toward(s)
<u>because of</u>	into	Under
Before	in view of	Underneath
behind	<u>like</u>	until
below	near	unto
beneath	nearby	up
<u>beside</u>	next to	Upon
<u>besides</u>	<u>of</u>	with
<u>between</u>	<u>off</u>	Within
By	on	Without



On your story expectations, the trick is to start a sentence with a preposition so it would look like this:

In the middle of the night, a scream rang out like a siren.

On the wall was posted the grades from the test. With a knot in my stomach, I checked the list, looking for my student ID number. 102389...there it was. My grade.

Font Change (Change the size or style of font. This is the 7th trait of the 6 Traits—formatting.)

Bold and Italics do not count for this one as they are typical font changes.

You need to change the way the font looks in order to give the reader a better feel.

It was the best, best, best, **best** burrito ever! (best increases with excitement)

Suzu whispered in my ear, “Hey, what is up with Ms. Cruchfield?” (the whisper is small; it’s a whisper.)

The wall across the yard was **TALL**. (“tall” is ... TALL.)

The leaves *crunched* on the cold, hard pavement. (“crunched” is a new font style)

I heard this weird ≧ ≧ noise ≦ ≦ as I got closer to the glowing, yellow door.
(a symbol is added to provide a visual to emphasize the word)

Expanded Moment (Where you take a fraction of time, a few seconds, and turn it into an expanded moment by describing everything. To do this you need a moment that is a fraction of time and then you expand it by increasing the paragraphs and amount of writing through description)

In movies, this is where the camera slows down the action and shows the expression on each character’s face, a couple of close-up shots of important objects, maybe does a flashback of the character’s life of how they got to this point, and then BOOM! Starts again.

Eliza closed her eyes and sighed, a blank expression upon her face. Every birthday she chose the same wish. Every birthday she wished for just one desire. Each time the candles burned before her, Eliza closed her eyes tight and thought deep and hard.

Family.

Eliza wanted a family. Oh, how she loved the St. Mary’s clan—the little cuties, the big brothers, the one and only Deanna, the counselors and helpers, the cooks, the volunteers...this home couldn’t be any more filled with sincere love.

Yet no matter how wonderful Eliza lived at St. Mary’s, she always wanted a mom...a caring mom who would walk with her and laugh with her, who would cry with her and comfort her, who would be there always and forever. Eliza longed for a mom who was searching for a sweet, spunky girl to care for. And a dad. Eliza always wished to be “daddy’s little girl,” to have a fearless father to protect her.

Eliza opened her eyes and peered around the room. Everyone was waiting patiently, anxiously, so she took a deep breath, and *whoosh!* She blew out the candles. Applause and cheering replaced the silence.

Between the closing and opening of the eyes it is a fraction of time. However, in reading this section the reader feels like it is more. It slows down the pace and adds description, a back story, a past, a future, the look of the other characters. THERE MUST BE A CLEAR START and STOP SIGNAL to show that it is actually an extended moment and not just description.

Thanks to Savannah for allowing me to use this *wonderful* excerpt!

Onomatopoeia (Turning sound into words. Italicize sounds. They do not go in quotes because they are not said by a person/character. Onomatopoeia are the visual representation/textual representation of sounds.)

Bark, bark, bark...

Bzzzzzzzzzz

Mooo, Ba, cluck

Frrpppt, the candle went out.

Italicize onomatopoeia

Do not put in quotes; it is not dialogue

Be careful, some words look like onomatopoeia but are not. For example, The ball smacked against the wall. “Smacked” is not onomatopoeia. It is a verb. Screeched is a verb. Verbs tell you about the action. Onomatopoeia describe the sound of the sound.

Also—if a person (or character) says the word, it is not a sound. It is only a sound if the sound is made as a sound. If someone says it, it is now dialogue.

Vivid Verbs (verbs that have punch! Avoid “run”, “talk”, “see”, or “walk” as they are boring. Use those verbs that have more power, that paint a stronger picture in the reader’s head, that show more action!)



Alliteration (A large poetic category with two subcategories “assonance” and “consonance”. However, we will use it to mean the repetition of the **starting sound** in several words. Usually three or greater words. Three is “normal” and greater than that gets on the “silly” side.)

The candle’s **l**ight **l**ightly **l**eaving behind a trail of smoke.

The **s**mooth, **s**oft, **s**ound of the **s**ultry music drifted into the hall.

Specific Details for Effect (Instead of giving vague, lame, useless details when describing a scene in your story, use SPECIFIC DETAILS that help the reader to see it or experience it.)

To use this technique effectively, you need more than just a few details. It should be an onslaught of details. So specific. Don’t say there is a refrigerator. Mention the magnets, the stains, the style and size. However, don’t make it a police sketch. It is a fine balance. CAUTION: YOU NEED MORE THAN JUST A FEW DETAILS. YOU NEED MANY, AND THEY NEED TO BE SPECIFIC!

Old: We walked into a room and saw a refrigerator.

New: The five panel door in the old house swung open slowly, leaving behind a mark in the dust on the floor. A look around told me that this place has not been touched in decades. The refrigerator stood like a soldier in the corner. Scraps of paper, news clippings, and various receipts hung on the side, forced down by magnets taken from speakers. Each piece of paper was tinged by age, bleached by the sun. Where the papers overlapped, a line of age could be seen. I hesitated in opening the refrigerator door, not knowing what was inside. However, I was also compelled. I grabbed the rusted chrome handle, noticing the model—*Frigidaire*.

Start: jumping off the play structure (Kael= character 1)

Thought: was scared

Setting: warm, sunny, weekend, backyard

Character 2: Soren

Character 3: Asa

More Thought: Soren broken collar bone

Setting/close up (always a great technique)– shoe

Senses: feeling of stomach, blur

Stop: landing in the bark chips

This all happens between the start and stop. You want quite a bit of camera movement and action and character involvement.

The time between the start and stop should be only a few seconds during a crucial part in the story

I climbed my way to the top, paying special attention to get to the highest part—the beam that holds the swings. I paused and then leaned forward to jump. Crouch...**jump**. It was a scary feeling to jump from so high. I had always wondered if I could and had spent the better part of the whole summer planning this moment. And here it was. Why today? Today was a warm and sunny day, not unlike yesterday, but today was different somehow. Somehow I followed through on jumping. Soren swung happily, singing to himself. Back and forth, back and forth. Asa was in his swing as well, but he was not moving because I am not there to push him. Will I break a bone in this jump? I thought of Soren's broken clavicle and how he broke it just tripping down steps. Here I am jumping off of a ten foot beam. I could see the ground approaching, my stomach tightening, the blur of the world around me although my shoelaces were in striking detail, flapping slowly in the wind, the tips frayed and dirty from months of use. The **ground impacted** with my shoes a moment later, bark chips spreading aside.