

Paranoid Park: No way out for Alex?

Popular TV series such as America's *CSI: Miami* or Germany's *Tatort* give the viewer an impression of what working in a crime-scene investigation (CSI) unit might be like.

Portland, Oregon: Imagine somebody drives by the train yard in Blake Nelson's *Paranoid Park* and finds the maimed body of the security guard. Being a good citizen, the person immediately gets out their cell phone and calls the police. Because there is a death involved, this is a job for a CSI unit, and not just the 'normal' police. This **creative-writing task** gives you the chance to put yourself in the shoes of the CSI at the train yard.



1 First reactions

Take a close look at the photo from the TV series *CSI* and describe the crime scene investigators' facial expressions. What do you think they feel when finding a dead body? Imagine it's the security guard's body.

2 Pre-writing

Find adjectives, phrases and stylistic devices Blake Nelson uses in lines 92–125 and 165–191 of the text in order to create atmosphere. Pay particular attention to how he works with sentence style and length, placement of pronouns, and the use of climactic sentence structures. If you are not familiar with what stylistic devices are, take a look at the stylistic devices worksheet on page 3.



3 Creative writing – At the crime scene

a) The CSI unit arrives at the train yard to gather evidence. A police car is already there. Continue the story as you think it will unfold. Before you start writing, think about these questions:

- What clues might the CSI find in the train yard?
- What is going through their heads during an investigation like this?
- Will they think that what happened was an accident or cold-blooded murder?
- What will the CSI investigators say at the scene of the crime (to themselves; to each other)?
- What kind of ‘criminal’ do you think the investigators would have in mind?
- Whom will they talk to and based on what evidence?
- Will Alex ‘get away’, or will he be caught?

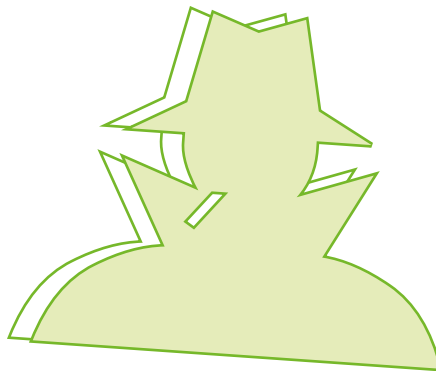
b) Now write the story from the CSI point of view. While writing, go back to your notes from exercise 1 and find similar ways to create atmosphere in your writing. You may also want to use words/phrases from the Word bank to make your writing sound like an authentic crime novel. (Look up anything you aren't already familiar with.)



An interrogation scene from CSI

WORD BANK

greatness • self-defence • fingerprints • victim
 • trace • lead • homicide • suspect • to gather
 evidence • to be sentenced to • denial of assistance
 • witness • assault • to charge sb with sth • (to
 be under) investigation • violent • fracture • skull
 • to be maimed by sb/sth • “I’ve been around
 the block a few times, but this takes the cake.” •
 “What a mess!” • “Whoa, someone turned that guy
 into spam.” • “Maybe it was just an accident.” • “I
 wonder what the poor fellow did to deserve this.”
 • “Geez, what the hell happened here?” • “Looks
 like this guy made one too many enemies.” • “I’m
 getting too old for this.” • “Well, Frank, looks like
 we’ve got a new case.”



4 Peer feedback

Discuss in class whose story was best. What details made that story a good read? Where can you incorporate similar details into your writing to make it more interesting?

Stylistic devices worksheet

Stylistic devices are also called *figures of speech* and belong to the field of *rhetoric*. They are used for adding a certain tone or emphasis to a piece of writing or a speech delivered before an audience, and they often increase clarity or enhance freshness of expression. The Greek philosopher Plato stated that “rhetoric is the art of enchanting the soul.”

Now that you have an idea of why rhetoric is important in writing, look at these examples of stylistic devices. Then find at least 6 different stylistic devices in lines 92–125 and 165–191 of *Paranoid Park*.

Stylistic device	Phonetic spelling	German	Example
alliteration	[əˈlɪtəˈreɪʃn]	Alliteration, Stabreim (<i>gleicher Anlaut von Wörtern</i>)	<i>thirty three thousand things</i>
anaphora	[əˈnæfrə]	Anapher (<i>Wiederholung eines Wortes oder Satzteils zu Beginn aufeinanderfolgender Sätze</i>)	<i>He sneezed. He coughed. He stayed home.</i>
assonance	[ˈæsnəns]	Assonanzreim (<i>gleiche Vokale benachbarter Wörter</i>)	Hear the mellow wedding bells
apposition	[ˌæpəˈzɪʃn]	Apposition, Beifügung	<i>Amy, my friend, is a dancer.</i>
climax	[ˈklaɪmæks]	Klimax, Steigerung	<i>I came, I saw, I conquered.</i>
emphasis	[ˈemfəsɪs]	Emphase	<i>Oh my God!</i>
metaphor	[ˈmetəfə]	Metapher	They say he's got a <i>heart of stone</i> .
onomatopoeia	[ˌɒnəˌmætəˈpiːə]	Lautmalerei	<i>tick-tock; boom; ribbit; meow</i>
parallelism	[ˈpærələɪzəm]	Parallelismus (<i>Gleichbau mehrerer Sätze/Satzteile</i>)	<i>It was a mess. My father was in Paris, and my sister was in London.</i>
personification	[pəˌsɒnɪfɪˈkeɪʃn]	Vermenschlichung	<i>Heaven was crying.</i>
rhetorical question	[rɪˈtɔrɪkl ˈkwɛstʃən]	rhetorische Frage, Scheinfrage	Smoking causes cancer. <i>Who would have thought?</i>
simile	[ˈsɪmɪli]	Gleichnis	He <i>fought like a lion</i> .
tautology	[təˈtɒlədʒi]	Tautologie (<i>inhaltliche Wiederholung gleichbedeutender Wörter</i>)	It is a <i>free gift</i> .

Stylistic device	Example	Line

- Zeitrahmen** Ca. 90 Min.
- Methodisches Vorgehen** Dieser Worksheet ist dazu gedacht, den Schülerinnen und Schülern (S) die Möglichkeit zu geben, selbst kreativ tätig zu werden und dabei ihre eigene Schreibkompetenz zu schulen, indem sie zuerst am Beispiel lernen (Auszüge aus *Paranoid Park*) und dann in einem nächsten Schritt das Gelernte dann selbst zur Anwendung bringen. In einem letzten Schritt wird dann eine konstruktive *Peer evaluation* vorgenommen. → **Mehrfach gestufte Bewusstwerdung von Abläufen beim Schreibprozess**
- Einleitendes Gespräch** Zur Einführung kann die Lehrerin / der Lehrer (L) zunächst eine/n S bitten, das große Foto auf S. 1 der Kopiervorlage kurz zu beschreiben. *CSI* ist sicher den meisten S bekannt, es handelt sich um die weltweit erfolgreichste amerikanische Krimiserie der letzten Jahre.
- GA** [🗣️] Dann wird in einer Gruppenarbeitsphase die **pre-writing activity** bearbeitet. Dazu bietet es sich an, die Gruppen so einzuteilen, dass je eine Hälfte Textabschnitt 1, die andere Hälfte Textabschnitt 2 bearbeitet. Weitere Gruppen lassen sich ggf. den einzelnen Aufgabenteilen zuordnen, so kann sich z.B. eine Gruppe komplett mit *stylistic devices*, eine andere nur mit *adjectives and phrases*, eine dritte nur mit *sentence length and structure* beschäftigen. Ebenso besteht die Möglichkeit zur Binnendifferenzierung, so dass S, denen die *stylistic devices* nicht geläufig sind, diese anhand des zweiten Arbeitsblatts erfassen können.
- Ergebnissicherung** Es bietet sich an, den S vor der GA-Phase verschiedenfarbige Kärtchen und Marker auszuteilen. Die S beschriften die Kärtchen gut lesbar mit den von ihnen gefundenen Textelementen und ordnen dann an einer von L vorbereiteten *mindmap*-Stellwand am Ende der GA ihre Ergebnisse dem entsprechenden *mindmap*-Ast zu. Doppelnennungen werden übereinander geheftet. Die Ergebnisse werden im Klassenverband kurz besprochen. Die Wand bleibt für den gesamten restlichen Zeitraum in der Klasse stehen, so dass sich die S beim eigenen Schreiben an ihr orientieren können.
- EA** In Einzelarbeit bearbeiten die S dann die *creative writing*-Aufgabe (ex. 3).
- Klassengespräch** In einem letzten Schritt werden nun im Klassenverband verschiedene S-Arbeiten vorgelesen und es wird konstruktiv diskutiert, was besonders gut gelungen ist und wie man solch besonders gelungene Elemente auch in den eigenen Text einbinden könnte.

Lösungsvorschlag **Creative writing worksheet:**

- 1** *People* in the photo from left to right and their possible reactions:*
- Catherine Willows: stone-faced: "I won't let this one get to me. Not again."*
 - Captain Jim Brass: disgusted: "I feel like vomiting. I've been doing this for too long."*
 - Dr. Ray Langston: inquisitive: "Hmm, I wonder where he's got that mark from. And where's his other leg?"*

*Die angegebenen Namen sind Charaktere aus der Serie 'CSI', was einige S evtl. wissen werden.

2 **Sentence structure:**

short staccato of sentences = to show the emphatic mood Alex is in ll. 92–101.

Rhetorical questions:

109f. → *Alex feels on top of the world.*

Descriptive adjectives:

93 → *psyched*, 96 → *awesome*, 113 → *vicious*, 119 → *vulnerable*

Adverbial:

169 → *to crackle with bad energy*

More descriptions:

187–192 → *shook violently, freaking out, in chaos, total panic*

Rhetorical questions 2:

181ff. → *Alex is scared and doubts the police will believe him*

Alliteration, anaphora, assonance, etc. → see 3b

3b *The night was so dark it could almost be called black. Catherine, the night-shift assistant supervisor, turned to her colleagues as they ducked under the yellow tape.*
"Warrick, why don't you and I take the perimeter and work our way in?"
"All right. Greg, you're with us." The young CSI's response was completely at ease.
"Roger. I'll start the scans."
In the meantime, Grissom made his way across the tracks to where the police cruiser was parked. Annoyed, he saw one of the officers approach him and trip over something – a skateboard? "Watch where you're going, man, this is a crime scene!" The fellow was pale as death – this one wouldn't be pretty.
"Sorry 'bout that, Sir. The dead guy is b-back over there," he stuttered, pointing toward the darkness. But Grissom was not listening to the man, for he had seen a movement in the shadows and silently motioned for Nick to get out his gun ...

Stylistic devices worksheet:

Stylistic device	Example
alliteration	93 → so <u>psyched</u> ; 94 → <u>secured</u> my <u>skateboard</u>
anaphora	93 → I was so <u>psyched</u> . I couldn't believe I was riding a train. I imagined... 171 → I couldn't breathe. I had to call the police. I had to call someone.
assonance	113 → he took a <u>vicious swing</u> with <u>his nightstick</u> .
climax	190/191 → I walked at first, then I walked faster, then I started to run...
emphasis	116 → The train was still moving, <u>thank God</u> .
metaphor	168 → I tripped over something and fell. <u>That broke the spell</u> .
onomatopoeia	169 / 170 → Suddenly the air around me seemed to <u>crackle</u> with bad energy.
parallelism	190 → My brain was in chaos, and my body was in total panic.
rhetorical question	110 / 111 → What could he do to us? Yell at us? Call our parents? There was nothing he could do.
simile	170 / 171 → I felt like every molecule on earth had turned against me.
apposition, personification, tautology = not featured in the selected text passages	