**Varying Sentence Length**

Sentence length can affect the mood of a piece of writing – a series of short, fast-paced sentences can build up a sense of excitement or urgency, while long, slow, descriptive sentences can create a more relaxed atmosphere.

**Activity 1.**

Look at the picture on the right and make a brief spider diagram of everything that is going on.

Using the image to the right, and the notes from your spider diagram, write a short descriptive piece called ‘In the Exam’, using mainly **short** sentences to build up the stressful atmosphere.



**Activity 2.**

Now look at the picture on the left and make a brief spider diagram of everything that is going on in this picture.

Using the image to the left, and the notes from your spider diagram, write a short descriptive piece called ‘Time to relax’, using mainly **long** sentences to build up the calm, peaceful atmosphere.

Using only one type or one length of sentence can become very repetitive and boring to read. Make sure that you try to use a variety of longer and shorter sentences in your writing, selecting to focus on one length of sentence only when the mood of your writing is really building up or slowing down.

**Activity 3.**

Rewrite the paragraph below, making some of the sentences longer, so that the writing isn’t so repetitive:

 I stopped. I could see him coming. He was getting nearer. I crouched down even lower. He was going to find me. My breathing sounded really loud. My legs were shaking. I was sure that he could hear me. Any minute now. I prayed not to be found. But it was no good.

**Activity 4.**

Rewrite the paragraph below, making some of the longer sentences shorter, to add more variety:

Lazing in the garden, the sun warming my skin, the birds singing in the trees and the soft hum of my music, I breathed a sigh of relief. The exams were over and I now had two months of relaxation ahead of me, before I even had to think about college. Life was perfect, even more so because of the gorgeous creature walking towards me over the luscious green lawn. His eyes, a deep chocolate colour, were so captivating that I could easily drown in them. He saw me watching him, and smiled his crooked smile, making my heart melt and my knees quiver, so it was a good job that I was sitting down, otherwise I would have literally fallen at his feet. Blushing, I felt my heart begin to race, trying desperately to escape the cage of my ribs, to burst in a frenzy of happiness.

ANSWERS

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Using the image to the left, and the notes from your spider diagram, write a short descriptive piece called ‘Time to relax’, using mainly **long** sentences to build up the calm, peaceful atmosphere.

**Activity 3.**

Rewrite the paragraph below, making some of the sentences longer, so that the writing isn’t so repetitive:

Possible answer:

 I stopped**. I could see him coming, getting nearer all the time.** I crouched down even lower. He was going to find me**. My breathing sounded really loud and my legs were shaking so much that I was sure that he could hear me.** Any minute now. I prayed not to be found. But it was no good.

**Activity 4.**

Rewrite the paragraph below, making some of the longer sentences shorter, to add more variety:

Possible answer:

Lazing in the garden, the sun warming my skin, the birds singing in the trees and the soft hum of my music, I breathed a sigh of relief. **The exams were over!** Now had two months of relaxation ahead of me, before I even had to think about college. **Life was perfect.** Even more so because of the gorgeous creature walking towards me over the luscious green lawn. His eyes, a deep chocolate colour, were so captivating that I could easily drown in them. **He saw me watching him.** Smiling his crooked smile, he made my heart melt and my knees quiver, so it was a good job that I was sitting down, otherwise I would have literally fallen at his feet. **Blushing, I felt my heart begin to race.** It felt like it was trying desperately to escape the cage of my ribs, to burst in a frenzy of happiness.