

### Reading activity – Author's use of language

Complete [this lesson](#) on author's use of language. It will help develop the skills you will need to answer the questions below.

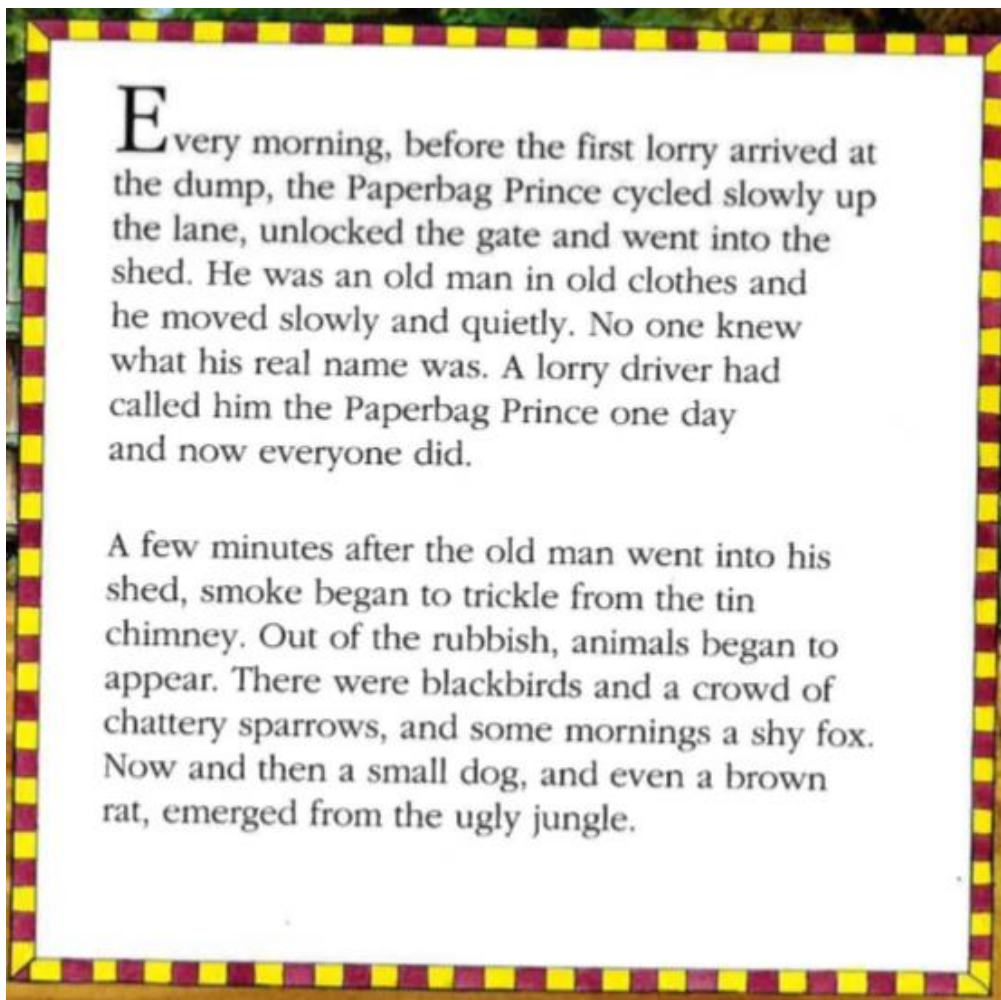
Watch the video on [this page](#), it describes why authors make the choices they do, and how each choice gives meaning.

For example:

Question: Why has the author used the word shy to describe the fox?

Answer: To tell the reader that the fox is probably quite nervous or timid around humans.

Explanation: Just one word has told us a lot about the fox's personality, and how we should expect him to act for the rest of the story.



Question One:

When the stove was alight, the old man came back out and sat down on a chair by the door. Out of a paperbag he brought food. The cats came straight over and rubbed round his legs. The birds hopped onto the back of his chair, where they could keep an eye on the cats. The fox crept up, crawling flat on the ground like a sheep-dog. The dog, which didn't come often, was the most nervous of all and kept well back.

"Come on, Princess," the old man said softly. The dog put her head on one side and stayed where she was. She was very thin, and when he threw her food she ate it as if she hadn't eaten for days, but no matter how he tried, she would never come any closer.

By the time the lorries began to arrive, the animals had vanished back into the rubbish.

The animals came straight over. What does this tell you about their relationship with the Paperbag Prince?

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Question two:

All day long lorries came, tipping black bags and broken bits of houses into untidy piles. Seagulls gathered to fight and flap over the mountains of new bags.

The old man poked through everything. He collected wood for his stove and old clothes to wear. He smoothed out old paperbags and piled them up inside wardrobes. Next to his shed there were twelve wardrobes all jammed tight with thousands of paperbags. That was how he got his name.

People seemed to throw stuff away for no reason at all. His carriage was full of last year's radios and beautiful coloured bottles. He had eighty-seven odd shoes, fourteen video recorders, and nineteen television sets, but he had no electricity nor any wish for it.

Why has the word mountains been used in this sentence? What does it tell you?

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### Question Three:

**A**t lunchtime someone shook him awake.

"Hello," said a young lady.

"What? Eh?" said the man, coming back to life. "Who are you?"

"I'm Sarah. I'm from the council."

"Where are the lorries?" asked the old man.

"That's why I'm here," said Sarah. She spoke loudly and slowly as if the old man was an idiot.

"There's no need to shout. I'm not an idiot."

"Of course you're not," Sarah shouted.

"The rubbish dump's been closed. We're going to burn all the rubbish in a new machine."

At last, thought the old man and said,  
"What about this place?"

"It's yours again," said Sarah, handing him some papers. "The council don't need it any more. You can have it back."

Why has the author chosen the phrase, coming back to life?

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### Challenge:

Using the page below, identify a word or phrase which you could write a question about.

Challenge someone in your house to answer the question. Do they know why the author has used the word or phrase you chose?

**A**s summer passed, the wild hedges around the dump got taller. Grass grew across the road until it was almost buried.

No one ever came up the lane. The Poison Pool kept them away. Yet two weeks after the lorries stopped coming, the first green leaf sprouted in the dark water. Nature was healing the gentle fields that Man nearly killed with his rubbish.

Autumn came, and buried the rubbish under a coat of soft brown leaves. Later, the snow came, and the old man sat snug in his train with his warm stove and his animals. Sometimes when the night air was filled with dark frost, the fox came into the carriage and lay down beneath the stove. Inside a large kettle a hedgehog slept away the winter. They were all warm and content, and the rest of the world was miles away.

### **Answers:**

1. This means that the animals like the Paperbag Prince and they feel safe around him. This must also mean that they have spent a lot of time together in the past.
2. 'Mountains' is used to give the reader an image of how much rubbish there is. It tells us that there are a lot of new bags and they are heaped on top of each other in a large pile.
3. The author is telling us that the man's life is starting again, the dump belongs to him once more. It is also significant for the animals who live at the dump as they can also now come back to life.