



Painting pictures with words

Read the following passage, taken from Chapter 9 of *DOTTY and the Calendar House Key*:

- a. *The chimney breast was emitting an awkward crunching grinding sound, slow and heavy, like huge blocks of stone creaking and moving with great force. Dotty watched, breathless and unmoving. The chimney breast bulged as if it were straining with the effort of expelling its cargo onto the hearth. Something big was coming; and that something had feet – four feet to be precise! Dotty stood transfixed as the fireplace spewed out its contents.*

Slowly Dotty’s eyes began to make sense of the huge globular form as it settled on her bedroom hearth. Dotty now realised that what she was witnessing was the appearance of not one person, but two. It was like watching a pair of giant slugs oozing from the fireplace. So large and amorphous was their shape that it was at first difficult to tell one from the other, or to separate their features. But she knew at once that this pair needed no introduction. There was no doubt in her mind that the bulging mass now occupying her fireside rug was the twin forms of the dreaded rogue sweeps themselves: Porguss and Poachling.

1. Do you consider this scene from the book to be a dramatic one? If so, why?
2. What writing tools does the author use to make the passage exciting? What other devices could she use to create interest?
3. Find and underline three phrases in the passage that you find interesting. How do these phrases help to create a vivid picture in the reader’s mind?
4. Use your own words to replace the phrases you have chosen from the passage, firstly to make it exciting and then to make it dull.

Now read the second passage from the book:

- b. *Presently, one of the pair spoke. “Greetings, Sister,” she simpered, her smile showing two rows of sharp, jagged little teeth, their pointed edges surprising within such a round exterior. “We see that you know us already,” she oozed, “so perhaps a formal introduction is unnecessary. But in any case I am Mistress Porguss and my companion here is Master Poachling.”*

Poachling surveyed Dotty with piggy little eyes, his fat sausage fingers resting on his great waistcoated belly. His look was one of displeasure. He clearly considered the meeting an inconvenience. Porguss continued, elbowing Poachling as she did so, as if to nudge him into a smile as similarly insincere as her own. Remembering himself, Poachling smiled at Dotty. Dotty wished he hadn't.

"Sister," the woman continued breathily. "It has come to our attention that you may be in receipt of something we want. Something we have need of. A trinket, if you like."

Porguss spread out towards her. "Tell me good Sister, have you seen such a thing?" The smile widened. Dotty thought Porguss looked as if she might eat her. Dotty had never been more scared.

"No," she replied in a small voice. "I don't have anything like that."

5. Who do you think the characters are? What visual image of them is evoked by the passage of writing?

6. The two passages paint a vivid picture of the villains, Porguss and Poachling. But what information do they actually tell you about them and how much is suggestion? You may be surprised. Answer the following statements 'true', 'false' or 'need more information':

I. Porguss and Poachling are sisters;

II. Porguss and Poachling are fat;

III. Porguss and Poachling are twins;

IV. Porguss and Poachling are human;

V. Porguss and Poachling are slugs.

7. Working in pairs, take it in turns to each draw a picture of an everyday object. Describe what you have drawn to your partner, so that they can draw the object too.

Now compare your drawings. Are they identical?

8. How do you imagine Porguss and Poachling to look? Draw your own interpretation of the two characters described in the passage, using both the descriptive information given in the passage and the picture you have painted in your mind of the pair.

I would love to see your pictures of Porguss and Poachling! For a place in Dotty's online gallery and a chance to win a copy of the next story in the DOTTY series, please send them to Emma Warner-Reed at: info@thedottyseries.com