

Writing workshop 1

Word power

Your writing improvement focus for this workshop will be:

- **communication:** improving your vocabulary
- **communication:** choosing words that have maximum impact on the reader.

One of the most important choices any writer makes is which words to use in their writing – especially their choice of **nouns**, **adjectives**, **verbs** and **adverbs**. These words are the key to successfully communicating to the reader the picture that the writer has in their own mind.

DISCUSSING

- 1 Work with another student. Describe to each other the picture that comes to mind when you read this sentence:

The dog barked outside.

- 2 Write out the sentence, adding the extra words you used in your own description to give a more detailed picture of your barking dog. You may have described the type of dog, its colour and where it is, among other things. You will almost certainly have used more words than the original sentence.
- 3 How many different words to describe emotions or moods can you think of?
- 4 In one of his songs, Bob Dylan described a dog barking:

Way out in the wilderness, a cold coyote calls.

- a What sort of mood or emotion do you think he wanted people to feel when hearing that line?
- b What are the most important words used to conjure up that feeling?
- c What might a song that included those lyrics be about?



DRAFTING

When words conjure up a particular image in a reader's mind, it is called **connotation**. This is an important idea to understand, because connotation is crucial to the impact your writing has on your reader.

- 5 Write three more sentences about dogs barking. In each one, try to make your reader feel a different emotion. For example you could try to convey loneliness, love for the animal, terror, annoyance.

DISCUSSING

Look at the names on the paint chart in Source A. The colours are not just called 'dark green' or 'creamy yellow' – the names have been chosen for their connotations.

- 6 Choose three or four of the names and discuss what connotations these words have for you. For example 'Whisper' might make you think of something secret and mysterious.
- 7 Look for ways to group some of the names and their connotations. Then discuss what type of person you think the designers of the paint chart had in mind when coming up with these names.

DRAFTING

- 8 Imagine you work in the marketing department of a paint manufacturer. Look at the paint colours on the chart in Source B. Choose three of them, then come up with a name for each one. You should try to target three different **audiences**:
- Young men (aged 17–24) interested in sport.
 - Women aged 45–60 in professional jobs (doctors, solicitors, and so on).
 - Men or women aged 30–45 working in advertising or media.

Source A



Source B



Watch Lemn Sissay talk about the power of words on Cambridge Elevate.

GCSE English Language: Writing workshops

WRITING

It is not only words that have connotations. Visual images may mean different things to different people, because pictures can trigger personal memories.

Look at the photograph in Source C. For someone who has just had a wonderful holiday, the connotations will be good ones – recalling sunny beaches and delicious food, for example. For someone returning from a bad holiday, with dirty, noisy accommodation and whose money had been stolen, the image will have very different connotations.

Source C



- 9 Work with another student. Choose one of the images in Source D. Write two sentences that capture the mood or **tone** of the picture. One should be a short sentence. The other should be a sentence that is rich in detail.

Think very carefully about the individual words you have chosen. Do not be content to go with the first ideas you have: look in a thesaurus for other words that might be more powerful.

- 10 When you have finished your writing, swap with another pair of students who have written about the same image. Discuss the word choices you have made.
- Are there differences in the way you responded to the images?
 - What words make this most obvious?

Source D

