

Rainbow editing for sensory detail

For this exercise, I assigned a colour to each of my narrator's senses. I'm using **PINK** for touch, **BLUE** for sight, **GREEN** for hearing, **ORANGE** for smell, and **PURPLE** for taste. See which senses I relied on the most?

Extract from *Harrow Lake* by Kat Ellis:

I grope **blindly** for the door handle and **catch one of the shelves behind me with my elbow**. **Pain lances up my arm**. One of the nutshells now lies open on its side where I've knocked it. **The little bug legs waggle in distress**, making that **skittering sound** again. I snap the lid shut, but **I can still hear it**. If anything, **it's louder**. Covering the shell with my hand doesn't stifle it. I don't know what else to do.

The **chattering doesn't stop**; instead, it takes on an **irregular extra rhythm**, like a quarter-beat filling in the gaps, and then another. The **noise is swelling**. It can't be, but it is. It *is*.

I back away from the shelf until **I bump against the door**. It's not just coming from that one jitterbug. It's all of them now. **They're all making that same chattering sound** through their closed shells. **It builds like rain beating against a window, like a hundred sets of teeth rattling**. It's as if all those **stick figures on the walls** have woken up, their jerky, staccato footsteps dancing across the paper . . .

Tap-tap-tap-tap-TAP!

'Stop it!'

Covering my ears, I stumble out onto the landing. But the moment the door closes the **sound stops**. I wait a moment, watching **dust motes winnow in the last rays of sun** coming in through the window in the stairwell. Still nothing. I press my ear against the wooden door.

I try to conjure Nolan's voice telling me to calm down, that it was nothing – it wasn't real. For once, **he's silent**. **I can't even picture his face** for a second, and that's almost as terrifying as the sound I just heard.

Slowly, my hand shaking, I turn the doorknob.

The jitterbugs are quiet. Everything is normal.

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Not much purple or orange, is there? Would adding smell and taste to this scene have made it better?

ACTIVITY: Choose your own colours, and apply them to a scene in your own story. Are you relying heavily on one sense? Could the scene be more effectively scary with additional senses used more? How could you use the senses differently to create terror?