Turning up the Tension

Texts discussed during the presentation

Excerpt from The Girl in the Red Coat by Kate Hamer

Set-up: On Carmel’s 8th birthday, her and her mother visit a maze. Carmel is the first to enter the maze. This is from when Carmel first enters the maze: This is how the chapter ends

*I run on ahead down the path in the middle where the grass is squashed into a brown strip and Mum’s far behind me now. But it doesn’t matter because I know how mazes work and that even if I lose her, we’ll find each other sooner or later.*

This is how the chapter ends:

*And I hear my mother calling me but she sounds just like the rustling and the birds and I know I should answer her but I don’t.*

Excerpt from Kira Kira by Cynthia Kadohata

Set-up: Katie’s older sister, Lynn, is ill. The three children share a room and her parents tell Katie and her younger brother to sleep in the living room so they don’t catch Lynn’s illness.

*I took a bath in Sam’s old water and laid out some blankets on the living-room floor. When I was a little girl, sleeping on the floor always seemed a treat. We used to beg our mother to let us sleep on the floor. It was like camping. Now that I was older, the floor felt hard. In a few minutes my mother came in looking annoyed. I knew it was because I hadn’t wiped the ring around the bathtub, but I didn’t say anything. I was in a bad mood because the floor was hard.*

*My mother seemed exasperated. She was kind of crazy about cleanliness. “How many times do I have to tell you?” she said. My father came up behind her. Even he seemed annoyed with me, and he almost never got annoyed.*

*“Katie,” he said. “How many times does your mother have to tell you to wipe the ring in the bathtub?”*

*“I don’t see why I have to sleep on the floor,” I said.*

*My father’s face darkened. I felt a little scared. He never got truly mad at us, ever. That was my mother’s job.*

*My mother looked as if she was going to cry. But I was famous for being hardheaded. Maybe it was because Lynn always let me have my way. So now I pulled the covers over my head. I was shocked when my mother pulled the covers off and yanked me up by my arm. My father rested a hand on her to restrain her. She started crying. I didn’t know what was going on: It was just a bathtub ring. My father looked at me sternly. “I want you to clean the bathtub now,” he said very quietly.*

Resources

Craft Books

Steering the Craft by Ursula K. Le Guin

Ron Carlson Writes a Story by Ron Carlson

Attack of the Copula Spiders by Douglas Glover

Relationships, Mindset and Behavior

The Arbinger Institute [www.arbinger.com](http://www.arbinger.com)

Arbinger’s Books:

The Anatomy of Peace -fictional depiction of relationship changes that occur from developing a change in mindset.

Leadership and Self-Deception – fictional application of Arbinger concepts in a work environment. Group dynamics presented can be applied to group dynamics in fiction (families / group of friends.)

Personalities and Temperament

Spectrum Temperament Development Inc [www.spectrumdevelopment.com](http://www.spectrumdevelopment.com)

Dr. Marla Sanchez approaches the four temperaments in a new way ---encouraging each person to fully develop all temperaments. Spectrum also presents a deeper understanding of introvert / extrovert; it’s not just how a person is comfortable and gets energy, it greatly impacts thinking style, problem solving and communication.

Developing Healthy Relationships

Circle of Security <http://circleofsecurity.net/>

Decades of research into creating healthy parent-child relationships. Insights can be applied to any relationship.

One of the best sources: Your own reading. Study how relationships are presented and how they grow and change over the course of the novel. Analyze, even calculate, the percentage of impact words in a sentence. Examine sentences, paragraphs, chapters and entire novels for image patterns. Recognize when change happens and determine if it is gradual and / or believable.

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Revision Techniques

CREATING A CONFIDENT VOICE

1. Study how each character is introduced.
2. Do you use the same method for each one (i.e. color of hair or eyes, describe clothes or mention the way they move)?
3. Actually pull these sentences out of your manuscript. The first sentence (or several sentences) when a character is introduced or described. Pull these sentences out on a new document.
4. Study them. Improve and edit these sentences in isolation. Make every word about your character, suit that character.
5. What is the first thing each character does?
6. Again, pull these sentences out – you may want a column for each character
7. Study – are they all nodding, pointing, looking (gazing), coughing or shrugging
8. Revise!
9. Even if you’ve made actions specific to characters (i.e. Zasha nods, Berlyn wrinkles her nose) or created something interesting about a character (Gaylon fiddles with a toothpick or caresses a heart tattoo) Find a balance.
10. Consistent (believable) without being one-dimensional –Find the Balance
11. Obviously your character must be consistent. No shift in personality midway through the novel. Slow growth or foreshadow new strength / skill / mindset.
12. Hero characters can have flaws and faults
13. Villain characters can have redeeming qualities
14. Human behavior – We can love something or someone we once hated & we often hurt that which we love the most.
15. The opposite of The Boy Who Cried Wolf – Overusing adjectives
16. Do you action sentences depend on adjectives?
17. Do all of your sentences?
18. If everything is “the worst” do you have any adjectives, believable adjectives, for despair?
19. If everything is “amazing” do you have adjectives, believable adjectives, for joy?
20. Example young child learning to play an instrument…the instrument squeaks and burps and grunts. Each day you tell him it’s lovely, beautiful, perfect, couldn’t be better. When he really does create a melody, what will you say? The same thing you said before when he couldn’t play a scale?
21. Think about your adjectives. Make them accurate. Build suspense with them the same way you do with plot and character growth. Treat them like they are valuable and finite. Save the right adjectives for the best time.
22. If you find your adjectives out of balance, look at your verbs. Strengthen the verbs.
23. Remember to look for words, word patterns and image patterns
24. This gives readers confidence in the world of the novel
25. Repetition should matter – should carry emotion – should relate to the plot (character’s desire) rather than simple description. See Douglas Glover’s essay on loading image patterns.
26. If a scene or a section of text feels forced or flat, stop looking at what has to happen next (plot outline) and instead focus on your character’s desires and ask her what she will DO next.
27. Every word must be a blow,” William Hazlitt
28. “Every verb is an opportunity to picture an action,” Douglas Glover

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