The Whispering Woods: Crafting Atmospheric Descriptions

Learning objective: To write descriptive passages using expanded noun phrases, personification, and evocative vocabulary to create a specific atmosphere.

Read the passage below about Nova the owl's discovery in the Whispering Woods. Then, complete the activities to hone your descriptive writing skills. Remember to use 'show, don't tell' techniques to immerse your reader.

Nova glided silently over the canopy of the Whispering Woods. Below, the trees stood like ancient sentinels, their gnarled branches reaching towards the silver moon like skeletal fingers. The air was thick with the scent of damp moss and pine needles. A soft, rhythmic rustling emerged from the undergrowth, where shadows performed a slow, elegant dance across the forest floor. The moonlight pierced through the thick leaves, creating pools of liquid light that flickered whenever a gentle breeze disturbed the silence. It was a place where stories seemed to wait patiently in the hollows of every trunk.

Word bank: dappled · shimmering · ancient · gossamer · hushed · labyrinthine · melancholy · resplendent

1. Identify one example of personification in the passage and explain why the author chose to describe the trees in this way. (2 marks)

2. Select two adjectives from the word bank and write a new sentence about the forest using both. How do these words change the mood of the description? (2 marks)

3. Explain why the author uses the phrase 'liquid light' to describe the moonlight. What does this tell the reader about the appearance of the forest floor? (2 marks)

4. Compare and contrast the atmosphere of the Whispering Woods with a bustling city street. Use at least two pieces of evidence from the text to justify your comparison. (3 marks)

5. If Nova were to find a hidden treasure inside a hollow trunk, how would you describe the object using a metaphor to make it sound magical? (2 marks)

Draw: Draw the scene described in the passage, focusing on the way the light interacts with the trees. Label your drawing with three 'sensory' adjectives (e.g., cold, crisp, silent) to describe the environment.

Extension challenge: Write a short paragraph (50-80 words) describing the same forest during the daytime. Your challenge is to shift the atmosphere from mysterious and quiet to vibrant and energetic, using at least two examples of alliteration and one fronted adverbial.