

# 'Stories of Life at Sydney Cove' by Susan E Boyer

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Worksheet # 3

## Writing Creatively

Good writing builds vivid pictures in a reader's mind. One way to create images is to take a basic thing (the noun) and expand it with descriptive words. 'Noun groups' can turn a plain scene into a vibrant one. For example, page 2 of 'Stories of Life at Sydney Cove' describes John Hudson's early life as a chimneysweep.

See how the author expands on a simple sentence:

(noun)  
↓  
He climbed up **chimneys**.

The noun 'chimneys' is made more interesting by adding descriptive words around the noun:

We can add detail showing what the chimneys looked and felt like.

He climbed up grime-encrusted **chimneys** barely wide enough for him.

This is the noun group.

We can add detail about the size.

1. Look at the following sentences about John Hudson's situation as a chimneysweep.

There were always younger, smaller, more nimble boys to take his job.  
Then he'd be out on the **streets**.

Rewrite the last sentence with a noun group around the word 'streets'.

A writer's choice of **verbs** can make a scene more vivid. Read the description of nine-year-old John's job. The underlined words have been used to bring his experience alive to readers:

During busy periods he climbed day and night up grime-encrusted chimneys barely wide enough for him. Wedged inside, with his eyes stinging and lungs wheezing, it was difficult to keep a foothold when the sides were caked with fat and soot.

Clambering up into the darkness John often scraped his knees, elbows and forehead on rough, jagged brickwork. But he learnt to ignore the blood trickling down his arms or running into his eyes, just as he learnt to ignore his aching muscles and weepy sores.

2. Write the underlined words in the text beside a word below with a similar meaning. Two have been done as examples.

eg. covered	<i>caked</i>	pouring	<i>running</i>
stuck		scratched	
hurting		climbing	
gasping		dripping	

Words with similar meaning are called 'synonyms'. See more activities on using synonyms on the next page.

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3. The underlined words in the text below are synonyms of words used in 'Stories of Life at Sydney Cove' to describe John Hudson's job (see pages 2-3).

Climbing up into the blackness John often rubbed his knees, elbows and forehead on rough, sharp brickwork. But he learnt to ignore the blood trickling down his arms or running into his eyes, just as he learnt to ignore his hurting muscles and oozing sores.

Rewrite the paragraph by replacing the underlined words with words from the box below. One has been done as an example:

scraped	weepy	darkness	
jagged	aching	<del>clambering</del>	uneven

Clambering up into the \_\_\_\_\_ he often \_\_\_\_\_ his knees, elbows and forehead on \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ brickwork. But he learnt to ignore the blood trickling down his arms or running into his eyes, just as he learnt to ignore his \_\_\_\_\_ muscles and \_\_\_\_\_ sores.

Check pages 2-3 of *Stories of Life at Sydney Cove* to see if you have written the same text as the author.

4. A writer can add interest to a story by using words and phrases from the time period of the story. Read the following paragraph about the convict boy, John Hudson:

Upon transferring to the transport vessel, his filthy stinking rags had been peeled from him and replaced by government 'slops', doled out to all the male convicts. To his amazement, this included a woollen jacket, trousers, a pair of woollen stockings, a pair of shoes, two shirts, a neckerchief and hat!

Can you guess or predict the meaning of the underlined words? Circle the correct meaning below.

'slops' was a word used on ships in 1788, to mean: a) food      b) clothes      c) a hot drink

'doled out' means: a) sold out      b) given out      c) beaten up

'stockings' were: a) boots      b) long socks      c) clothes worn only by women

'a neckerchief' was: a) a scarf worn around the neck      b) a badge showing the leader

5. Reread Chapter 1 of *Stories of Life at Sydney Cove*

How does the author build empathy for John Hudson?


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6. Read the following sections from page 56 - 58 of *Stories of Life at Sydney Cove*. The text describes two convicts' first impression of Sydney Cove. The descriptive words and phrases bring to life the sights, sounds, smells of the place. Underline the words and phrases that describe these features of the scene.

Elizabeth Hayward leaned on the ship's rail, taking in the strangeness of the place. The air was hot and humid. Unfamiliar smells tickled her nostrils; a sweet peppery aroma wafted from the woodland.

Looking to the shoreline, she saw the mish mash of tents dotting the clearing amid fallen trees, boxes, piles of provisions and equipment. Marines in their red jackets and black hats paraded around the place trying to look busy, as groups of male convicts were bullied and pressed to carry boxes or drag logs.

Her thoughts were interrupted by a weird cackling noise coming from somewhere among the trees. The strange chortling sound increased to a chorus of wild laughter...

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Esther Abrahams heard the sounds too as she stood nursing her baby girl, Rosanna. She was from the lively, bustling city of London. She wasn't used to wild, eerie, empty places. She looked to the forest, wondering what was lurking there, looking for signs of movement...

In the scene before Esther, there was not a single familiar sight. No roads, no fences, no buildings... just wilderness.

7. Write the words that describe what Elizabeth smelt: \_\_\_\_\_

8. Write the words that describe what Elizabeth heard:


9. Write the words and phrases that describe the scene for Esther Abrahams:


10. How does the descriptive language help to set the scene for the rest of the story?
