

DESCRIBING SPRING: LEVEL 1: BASIC SENTENCES

1. The fields were **parsley-green**. **COLOUR**
2. Lonely calves were **lowing** in the fields. **SOUND**
3. The moon was **like a ghostly-silver disc** in the sky. **SIMILES FOR THE MOON**
4. A carnival of **scents blew** in the air. **THE MOVEMENT OF SCENTS**
5. A **host of daisies** scattered the meadow. **SPRING FLOWERS**
6. **Strands of thin light** came from the sky. **METAPHORS FOR LIGHT**
7. The **milk-splashed calves** brayed for company. **OTHER IMAGES**
8. The scene was **spirit-lifting**. **SENSATION**
9. There was a **cream fresh** smell. **SMELL**
10. The spring foods had a **candy floss sweet** taste. **TASTE**

LEVEL 2: A BASIC PARAGRAPH

The fields were **glade-green**. The sound of **chirping chicks** filled the air. The moon was **like a phantom-silver orb**. A pageant of **smells floated** in the spring air and a horde of **dandelions** littered the meadow. **Staffs of slim light** spilled from the sky. **Proud-breasted pigeons** strutted across the meadow. The scene was **spirit-refreshing** and pastoral. The meadow smelled **pear fresh**. There was a **blossom sweet** taste to the food we ate.

LEVEL 3: CREATIVE PARAGRAPHS

The **malachite-green** fields seemed to be covered in a bright sheen under the dawn moon. We could hear **yipping fox cubs** breaking the quiet of the world. Clouds shaped like tufty pillows glided slowly across the sky. They carried an airy, warm, drizzling rain with them. It cleansed the land and banished the strangling coldness and stunned silence of winter. Plinking and pattering off the leaves, then fading into memory, the rain energized the flora. It left behind a world baptized and rebirthed by its liquid grace. Song thrushes trilled as the

spectre-silver moon began to wane and the fog of flowers in the meadow slowly revealed itself. We could smell their **aromas hovering** in the air.

Versace-purple crocuses seemed to glow before our eyes. Jewel-green grasshoppers bounced atop the grass like leggy trampolines. In the stony verges, Rafael-red valerian sprouted from between coral-black cracks. **Spears of dawn light** suddenly drenched the farthest corners with their golden magic. A pair of **misty-eyed cubs** yelped as they saw us and darted to safety. A murmuration of starlings wheeled and banked overhead like wind-tossed gunpowder. The rustic scene was **spirit-renewing** and we let the menu of **melon fresh scents** wash over us. We ate our hamper of food under the leafy umbrella of a great oak and it tasted **molasses sweet**.

LEVEL 4: ADVANCED PARAGRAPHS

The dawn chorus is the herald of spring. It starts with a lonely, serenading minstrel, usually a blackbird. He is clear and melodious, as fresh and sweet as the gardens he will later raid. In the neighbouring tree, his future ex-wife trumpets a fluty duet. Her saucy fanfare dares others to match their salsa song of the canopy. The competition rouses from their slumber, opening their beaks to the heavens. The avian aria slowly becomes a fugue, bouncing through bough and bower. The lilting majesty of their song cascades into open spaces, through glassy windows, and onto the smiling lips of the dreamers within. Spring is here.

What are the triggers for the comforting cannon of tree music? Is it the lace of morning fog slowly receding as the months roll by? Is it the gently unfurling flowers, velour soft and receptive to warmth? Is it the baked oven smell of grass as the sun purges it of water? It is this and more. It is the world moving from iron-grey to fairyland –green. It is the spools of lambs' wool hanging from straggly bushes, a wedding card to the nesters. It is the mist of smells, the frill of flowers and the scent of magic in the air. Shoals of honeysuckle, primroses and bluebells sway and weave a rich mosaic in the meadows. Harp strings of golden light touch steaming shadows and soften the frozen earth for the wildflowers. Turtle-slow lawnmowers pedicure the grass, while leaving their clippings behind for the fussy nesters. Gnarled hands with snipping shears scalp the hedges. The world is young, lush and bountiful again. It is a spirit-enriching, pastoral scene. Under the wraith-silver moon, an alchemy of

balsamic scents swirl around the meadow. Human foods become peach sweet to the taste after the scavenging fangs of winter turned them tasteless.

What of the dreamers? The same, easy smile plays on their lips. They are listening to the theatre of the trees while they sleep. To them, it is a song woven from lilting lullaby and brazen beak. They do not know that it is an ode older than the span of man's dreams. They may never see the beauty of the brood-mance of the bower. Neither the finest pane of daylight nor the most cunning tint of moonlight shall match the opus of the dawn chorus. Spring is here.

LEVEL 5: COMPLEX WRITING: SPRINKLING STARDUST

Spring is glee. It's a fizzy tonic, like a slowly overflowing bottle of bubbling joy. It tattoos its colours onto the land, banishing the clay-cold claws of winter. The blessed dew is bespangled on the frosty ground. Like wizard dust, it burns the snow into oblivion. Buds blossom, trees thaw and grass grows. Spring cauterizes, with a surgical precision, the gaping wounds winter leaves on the land. When it's finished, it infuses its own mojo into the endless opera of the seasons.

One fine morning, the world wakes up to a rapture-blue sky. It is high and bright, a continuum of delight that salves both spirit and soul. The grass becomes wonderland-green as if some magical jujitsu chop has banished the frost overnight. Squillions of glint-silver dewdrops are sprinkled in the meadow like stardust. They are shimmering Eden pills that signal to the grass it's time to revive. Like slinky escapologists, the seeds below slip through the iron shackles of the earth. Finally, flowers begin to wave at the ecstasy-blue sky again. Within days, cherry blossoms are manicured with bliss-pink petals.

Splay-legged lambs, acolyte-white in colour, wobble on their knobbly joints before going a-gambol in the fields. Waves of coruscating light immerse the meadows in sheets of golden flame. Bluebells and daffodils add to the stained-glass perfection of the forest's colours. Tufty thickets burst forth as everything is a-tangle in the branches for birdy kiss-and-tells. Little feathers mysteriously appear under conker-brown trees.

Spring is here. It is the time of the ‘lings; nestlings, seedlings and ding-a-lings. In finely woven nests, tiny hearts tap with joy. Under the ground, shoots shaped like tadpoles replace crusty bulbs. The first bike-racers appear, zinging down country lanes, terrorizing baby hedgehogs. Overhead, an exodus of banished birds appears as if out of a Celtic fairytale. Honking geese and whooping swans are joined by the sinister cuckoo. To-whom-do-you-brood-with is his sorrowful call and the answer will doom some of the nestlings.

In the distance, the world’s greatest sound is coming out of hibernation. It is the mellifluous hum of a distant lawnmower, signalling that the land is warm again. Its distant drone is a sort of surrogate wind music, flowing into winter-battered ears. Whittling and shearing the grass to perfection, it provides symmetry to winter’s jumble sale of chaos. The air smells like baked sugar cakes after the grass is shorn. Snowmelt makes the rivers pulse like wondrous veins. They surge to collect winter’s clutter, rumbling through rocky channels.

Thumb-plump bumblebees, wings a-thrum, loot from honeypots of mustard-yellow flowers. They sound like mini tumble dryers, plunging syringe-like to extract their booty. Nickered foals prance and cavort in carnival-green fields. The pumping heart of nature is beating again.

Spring is nature’s defibrillator, a high voltage pacemaker that jump starts life into the land. It throbs and thumps to its own high octane rhythm and composes its own symphony of sound. It has a life, a fragrance and a lilting synergy unique to itself. If it were a perfume, it would be called eau-de-Glee.

*Type ‘**Describing a garden in spring**’ into Google for another post relevant to this genre. It will come up on the ‘**Best Descriptive Websites**’ blog post at:

www.descriptivewriting.wordpress.com.

DESCRIBING SUMMER: LEVEL 1: BASIC SENTENCES

1. The night sky was **heather-purple**. **COLOUR**
2. **Humming bees** darted through the air. **BEE MUSIC**
3. The stars were **glittering like scattered space dust**. **METAPHORS FOR THE SUN**
4. The **beaked chorus** of birds filled the air. **THE DAWN CHORUS**

5. The edible **ceps** looked like shiny penny buns. **EDIBLE FOODS**
6. Clouds were latched to the **unending sky**. **THE SWEEP OF SKY**
7. The afternoon sky was **cocktail-blue**. **THE BRIGHTEST BLUES**
8. The grass was **downy soft**. **SENSATION**
9. **A stew of smells** filled the air. **SMELL**
10. The summer food was **gelatin sweet**. **TASTE**

LEVEL 2: A BASIC PARAGRAPH

The night sky was **juniper-purple**. The sound of **intoning bees** filled the air. The **stars were glowing like beacons** for the lost souls of the world. A **feathered medley** echoed through the trees. The garlic smell of **ramsons** drifted through the air. The clouds were bracketed to the **eternal, summer** sky. It was like a dome of **solar blue**. The grass was **silk soft**. **A broth of smells** swirled around me. The food we ate was **honeysuckle sweet**.

LEVEL 3: CREATIVE PARAGRAPHS

An **amethyst-purple** tint invades the late summer skies. The world is changing and autumn is approaching. Soon the land will be a-fire in the warm glow of tree-flame. Pagan rituals such as Hallowe'en will bring back long dead memories of trolls, spooks and hobgoblins.

For now, however, the fields are still Elysium-green. Bees are still murmuring in that strange **cult hum** exclusive to them. They flit from flower to flower, surfing the short spaces as they go. The stars are summer stars, **flickering like pulsing lodestars**. A sol-fa of song erupts as they fade away, the **ancient alchemy of the dawn chorus**.

Bilberries and chanterelles adorn the forest floor, questing for sunlight. **The perpetual skies of summer** are buckled with clouds and they flare up in a luminous, **neon-blue** when the mood takes them. Summer is nature's treasure trove. The fields are laden with goldenrod-yellow flowers and silver-washed fritillaries carry their bushels of pollen carefully. **A**

goulash of scents twirls above the **satin soft petals** and the **pear sweet taste** of the air is a blessed joy.

But summer brings with it a bitter twist. The nights are closing in on each other and the long days are faltering. Enjoy the beaches, the barbecues and the birds. In a few short months, all will be cold.

LEVEL 4: ADVANCED PARAGRAPHS

Water, water, everywhere and not a drop to drink. I am doomed.

The wooden planks of flotsam I have cobbled together after the shipwreck are coming loose. I am sitting on a floating coffin with makeshift oars. It's like Satan's sauna out here in this big, blue tomb. The emptiness in my soul matches the spiritless sky and the featureless waterscape around me.

The days are the worst. The remorseless sun bends his full will against my survival and he is winning. I feel like I have been stabbed by a million sun spears. My blood simmers, my brain stews, and even my bones seem to smoulder in their meaty carcass. Dead man drifting. That's who I am. I am floundering in a sea of divine-blue quicklime and there's no escape. My tongue feels like a slab of lead, cloven to the roof of my mouth. My throat is parched and my lips are chapped and flaky. Only a god could save me now.

Below the surface, huge shapes glide. Their fins break the surface like steel triangles, leaving barely a ripple. They circle and circle, constantly searching for weakness. They have followed me for three days and nights, cruel and cunning as they are. The knife fixed to the end of the oar can only keep them at bay for so long.

The tides are the mistress of the sea. They dictate the level of wind necessary for my forward movement. No tides, no wind, no survive. That's why I hate the nights. A vast shroud of Barabbas –black fills the abyss of sky above. The wind dies down as the eerie, spectral moon appears. It casts down splinters of Solomon-gold, making the sea crests sparkle like elf-light. It is merely an illusion of beauty. I can see the full glitter of their beady eyes and the flash of their scalpel sharp teeth as they grin at me. The only sounds to keep me company are the sigh of wind, the slap of oar and the slosh of wave. The leavening sea is my enemy. It is as cold as a ghoulish soul and my teeth are rattling and chattering. The haunting cheep-cheep of a

passing tern reminds me how powerless I really am. Even he can go home. The stink of a thousand seas surrounds me. It is a mix of rotting kelp and dying fish. It assaults my nostrils and steals my hope.

But lo! There's a huge magma-red light in the distance. I am rocked by a huge wave which pushes me towards the light. All the gods are with me. My name is Lucius Andropedus. I am a fisherman from Pompeii and I am lost at sea. It is The Year of Our Lord 79 A.D, somewhere off the coast of Italy, and I am saved.

LEVEL 5: COMPLEX WRITING: SEA MUSIC

The cliff we stood on seemed as old as Abraham. Far below, the hungry sea gnawed at its ankle.

Someone once said that paradise is where seagulls are flying beneath your feet. They were arcing and wheeling between the witchcraft of the morning light. An occasional scream would echo from the cliffs, eerie and resonating. The immense vista leading to the horizon was jaw dropping. The Prussian-blue vault of velvet above seemed to solder into the liquid blanket of silver beneath. Far out to sea, a solitary cormorant, sleek wings a-flurry, streaked out to the place where sea and sky melt into each other and was lost from sight.

The slurpy slapping of the sea was muted, a metronomic murmur. The waves were merely snoozing, sluggish and slumbering in their liquid robes. They dribbled up to the beach of the sheltered cove, then shuddered and drizzled their sea spray onto its surface, whisking the stones before releasing. A current of cold electricity passed through the air. We shivered. The wind whipped up. The sea simmered.

Sloshing, swollen to its confined depths, its cavernous bowels stirred, a growling from the fathoms. Suddenly, stone dashed sand teemed as the sea hissed, washed, polished, and lashed the pebbles before sloshing back. It hissed, slipped, dashed the sand and released; fizzed, spit, seethed the beach and released: sizzed, slapped, swished the stones and released.

The mesmeric beauty of its beat was heart-swelling. We realized then that the sea was its own master, kindling its own symphony. It hadn't finished its song yet, however. The wind, the midwife of the seas, served a different master and whipped it into a frenzy.

The echo of a raspy rumbling from the enraged sea came to us, a tremulousness to fear. The waves were really sloshing, slurping and slobbering with their salty lips. They pounded into the cliff of the sheltered cove, then paused and pounced with malice onto its ankle, slamming the rock before releasing. A rumour of its malevolence passed through our legs. We shivered. The wind died down. The sea bubbled. Trembling, throbbing to its rotten beat, its malicious soul stirred, a warning from the ages. Suddenly, rip-tide rolls heaved as the sea foamed, crashed, pounded and bashed the cliff-foot before sloshing back. It foamed and frothed, plunged down hard and pummelled the hated cliffs; it lathered and lacerated, bucked waves and buckled itself; it smacked and smashed, surging waves and expunging its awful rage. Its hissy fit over, it swelled once more, juddered and was still.

DESCRIBING AUTUMN: LEVEL 1: BASIC SENTENCES

1. The **ember-red leaves** of autumn burn slowly. **COLOUR**
2. The **huffing wind** was too lazy to scatter the leaves. **UNUSUAL WIND VERBS**
3. Clouds form like **puffy plates**. **METAPHORS FOR THE CLOUDS**
4. The **leaves are a-flame** in a quilt of colour. **ARCHAIC WORDS FOR AUTUMN**
5. We enjoy **chomping** on blackcurrants. **AN AUTUMN FEAST**
6. The **fiery-reds** cast a rich hue on the forest. **COLOURS USING HEAT**
7. The **ghost-grey skies** of autumn change the mood. **OTHER IMAGES FOR AUTUMN**
8. Autumn is a time to be **afraid**. **SENSATION**
9. **A larder of aromas** drizzled from the trees. **SMELL**
10. The wild berries had **a savoury taste**. **TASTE**

LEVEL 2: A BASIC PARAGRAPH

The **leaves were molten-red**. The **yawning wind** made them shiver slightly. **Fluffy fleeces of cloud** passed over the forest. The **trees were a-flicker** like night lights. A group of

children were **gulping** on wild gooseberries. The **blazing-brown** dome of leaves gave off a nice glow. **Owls haunted** and hunted through moon-splashed trees. We were **spooked** by their swivelling heads and lamp round eyes. **A perfumery of scents** hazed through the forest. The **ravishing taste** of freshly baked bread stayed in our memories.

LEVEL 3: CREATIVE PARAGRAPHS

The **barbecue-red leaves** hang silently on the trees. **Muffling winds** deaden all sound in the forest and slow the **billowy bells of cloud**. The oak **leaves are still a-light**, but barely. Dainty noses, sniffing and snuffing, glow the same mercury-red as the trees. They replace the sound of children **slobbering** over elderberries.

Fog-tinted fairy trees stand alone in fields, noosed by coils of dragon breath. A weak pitter-patter is heard, but it is not the sound of children's feet. It is the centuries-old, hissing drip of raindrops in caves. Spiders flood the forest, clutching their snare strings tightly, their eyes aglitter with hatred. Owl-light replaces daylight as autumn comes to a close. The seething energy of the forest becomes vow-silent as promises to nature are kept. The burnt-red leaves turn a **smouldering-gold** as the first of the heavy rains fall.

The **rain drenches** everyone. They are not the soft, sodden, swollen raindrops of summer. They are not the light, aerated mizzling of spring showers. They are plump, pregnant with moisture, ploppy and destructive. The long, straight streaks of cloud we call mare's tails do not carry them. The skies are damnation-black and churning with anger. There is a cataclysm coming. It is time for **daunting** winter to display his wares.

The **hotchpotch of aromas** that graced the air is gone. The **delectable, marchpane** taste of the autumn harvest has faded from the palate. When the first snowfall comes, the world will be mummified in a powdery silence. It is time to be afraid again.

LEVEL 4: COMPLEX SENTENCES

Autumn is alien. The season of bumper harvests and swaying hay is soon replaced by Hallowe'en and horror. It is a portal to a time of dread, when winter's suffocating skies throttle the land. At its most glorious, autumn is spectacular. The world is a-blaze in its fiery cloak of colours, from incandescent-red to lightning-gold. Then both leaf-flame and field-

light burn bright one last time, 'ere fading into the dying embers of their memory. The pyrotechnic show is over. The lifeless smell of monotoned winter invades the air.

Autumn starts with edibles exploding from the crackly mattress of the floor. Above them, the leaves become **conflagration-red**. It is the signal for ripened berries to fall from weary bushes. They make a phut-phut-phut sound as they hit the ground. Bronzed nuts, unhinged by **the wheezing wind**, go thunk-thunk-thunk as they fall like scattered gunshot.

The forest becomes an Abraham's bosom for a few brief months. As the nights turn chill, the urge for food is rekindled. The sound of animals **masticating** on nuts and slurping on berries fills the forest one last time. Then they delve, dig and disappear in order to escape the coming onslaught. Clouds fill up the sky like **vaporous veils**, intent on causing mischief. The canopy of the trees is still **a-smoulder**, but it won't last long. The **sweltering-oranges**, riot-reds and burning-yellows will soon fade. The waxing moon and the waning sun vie for supremacy. The sun, Gods daystar, is as luminous as his left eye. The moon, his night star, is as phosphorescent as his right.

Eventually, the moon wins the timeless battle of the ages. The molten-gold sheets of summer light turn into despairing fingers of moonlight. They poke through the trees rather than drown the forest's floor. **The straining light of the autumn moon** creates a dome of soft glow above the trees. This lends an eerie glamour to their death sleep. The wind dies with the tree-fire on occasion, creating a terrible silence. There is no insect-hum, no leaf-rustle, no wind-music. The winged symphony of birdsong no longer rings out. In the rivers, the spawning salmon starve and die. The last dragonfly whirrup and flutters, his wings a-glirr in that magical space between river and mist. He too must die. It is the tragedy and the glory of the cycle of life.

Hallowe'en creeps up with sinister intent. Scallions still grow in the forest, but rapsallions come out at night. Jack-o'-lanterns leer at passers-by like fiery poltergeists. Visions of bogeymen and doom-witches steal into dreams. Accursed sounds lacerate the night sky and strange shapes enter the realm of the forest. Creaking trees become wailing banshees and screeching ghouls spill out of windy bottles. Phantom-eyed owls hoot and haunt the night, ghosting through moon-stained trees. Deadly nightshade, lethal larkspur and poison hemlock burgle through the forest's floor. There's sorcery afoot, an alien and arcane hex that prowls and poisons the land. It is easy to become **unmanned** by it all. The mackerel skies of autumn,

fringed with halogen-green and laced with lagoon-blue, give way to the claustrophobic skies of winter.

The **smorgasbords of scents** that have whirled around the forest are all gone. The **toothsome treats** of autumn are locked up in larders so mankind can survive the winter. Sly shadows return to the land. Wizen faces peep nervously from condensation-veiled windows. Doors are locked, kettles hiss, and fires splutter and cackle in cold grates once more. Parchment-faded faces puff on their pipes and mutter about the coldest winter in aeons approaching. The fading sunlight gasps its last, moulded-gold breath and turns pale until the first daffodils bloom again.

All living things seem to shrink into themselves, shrivelling and withering. There is a Reckoning coming of Dante-esque proportions. Winter's frigid fist is clenching and the last dragonfly seems but a flitting memory...

LEVEL 5: COMPLEX SENTENCES: THE END IS NIGH

A swirl of mist, a whirl of snow, a robe of shadow. It is the last day of autumn. The sere and yellow leaf is crumbling. A lesion of black light is churning in the sky. It bulges and swells, like a cauldron of doomsday-black. When it clears, it leaves a moon as bright and vile as the drop from a blood oath. Under a starless sky, Investigator Corbie, the king's monster hunter, is quarrying after the flesh-eaters. He has been hunting them for a long time.

When he started out on his quest, the rivers were kingfisher-blue and trickling. Now they are brandy-brown and make the land tremble. Instead of sowing fertility, they wreak havoc as they rumble and thunder through hidden valleys. Over the water, swirls of creamy mist steam in their own malice, as foul as any witches' soup.

The mountain range has been purged of its pristine-white majesty. It is unwelcoming and hazardous, draped in a fog of direness. Goblin-shrieks and wolf-howls carry down on the wind. It is a cold house for a monster hunter.

He has passed beaches where the sea buckles and creaks to the mercy of the heaving tide. The earthshine-gold aurora of summer has faded, leaving a storm-tossed seascape and a tempest of wind. He saw the sea stewing in its bruised-blue hatred and wisely took the route overland. He left it to carve its age-old carnage into the cliffs.

He saw the sensuous and sylph-like waterfalls of yore turn in to raging harridans. Now they are bullwhip-brown and lash the naked rock instead of caressing it. Neither are they inlaid with silver seams. Their brows are knitted with rage and edged with anger.

Whirls of snow ghost down over the forest. He was there to reap the early harvest of its nut-brown goodness. No more does it provide a culinary bounty for men of the bow; horsetails of moss hang like a spectre's entrails, the boughs are like the despairing limbs of the damned and only pools of shadow haunt the open spaces. It is abandoned and forlorn.

Sinews of fey-grey fog writhe over the pulsing lakes. The rain falls like the devil's spit, hot and hissing. No longer becalmed and glassy, they have a hazy, phantasmal aspect to them. Boiling with the incessant rain, they slowly swell in the bosom of the valley.

A tremulous purring begins in the sky above him. It's a barely suppressed rage, a growling from the gods. The carnal-black clouds begin to coalesce together like immense raven wings. A great clanking is heard. It is akin to some massive body of metal being dragged against its will across the sky. Heaven's forge gives out a last clanging gong, its final warning. It resonates and reverberates in a concussion of sound, a deafening convocation of hatred. The world falls crypt-still, waiting for the jarring collision of hot and cold air. The clouds converge into one mass, like a vast shield of vaporous hatred. It seems to steam like ichor, the black blood of the gods. There's a bellow, then a boom like a volcano erupting.

A great scar of seething light appears in the clouds' centre. The sound of humming, like a straining dam, trembles in the air. The lacerations of light seem to whine as great forks of flame-gold burst forth. Wriggling and writhing, they branch out like a wizard's whip. They zigzag through the agonized air, blazing like crippled capillaries. The lightning flashes once more, illuminating itself like the crawling cracks on stained glass. Then it sizzles itself to silence, its searing stilled, its anger quieted.

He has seen the bedewed spring and the bedizened summer come and go. He has hunted blood-besmeared trolls and dread vampyres. He longs for home but he must forge ahead. He is so close. He drops the human thigh bone back in to the midden heap. He doesn't have the words to describe the horror he feels. He needs help with that. In two days, he will catch them. The last three leaves of autumn are splashed on the trees like an afterthought in the easel of the gods. With the rumour of his passing, they slowly twirl to the ground, Van Gogh-red and tragic. Autumn is over.

He steps into the penumbra of shadow between two trees and into the next chapter of his life.

DESCRIBING WINTER: LEVEL 1: BASIC SENTENCES

1. The snow was **whalebone-white**. **SNOW COLOUR**
2. The **battering** gusts were awful. **SOUND**
3. The **screeching** winds were dreadful. **STORMS**
4. A **gentle hush** cloaked the land. **SILENCE**
5. The **gravel-grey** skies were bare. **SKY COLOUR**
6. The **empty** skies were silent. **BARREN SKIES**
7. Winter **squeezes** everything to death. **CHOKING WINTER**
8. **Peppery scents** filled the room. **SMELL**
9. Our **quivering bodies** were cold. **SENSATION**
10. The **seasoned** vegetables were delicious. **TASTE**

LEVEL 2: A BASIC PARAGRAPH

The snow was **polar-white**. The **flogging squalls** of winter blew loudly. **Screeching winds** occasionally rose up. When they died, a **tomb-like silence** haunted the land. **Flint-grey skies** oversaw the land. The **bleak skies** were depressing. Winter **smothered the land** with its vice-like grip. **Malt liqueurs**, taken to warm up chilled bodies, were a poor substitute for the sun. **Sore joints** creaked and groaned like rusty hinges. The scent of **creamy, mushroom vol-au-vents** floating through the house cheered us up.

LEVEL 3: CREATIVE PARAGRAPHS

The snow was **zombie-white**. Winter's **lacerating hurricanes** and **whining winds** had come and gone, leaving a **terrible calmness**. The skies above were an unholy mixture of **shale-grey** clouds and **pasty** streaks. Callous winter was **stifling** the world with its icy breath.

I could see a group of kidults playing on a frozen pond. They stamped their frozen feet and thumped their chilly bodies to warm up. Their ears caught fire and turned an icy-blue where their scarves couldn't reach. Nose-icicles dripped from their frozen faces. Their wheezy, wind-filled lungs were belching out steam as they itched and scratched at their raw skin. They started skating. They slipped, slid and slithered on the polished ice. Hissing and swishing with their skates, they swooped and whooped across the ice. Then they screamed as the ice broke. It must have felt like lances of fire lighting up their skin as they fell in to the perishing cold water.

Their teeth were chattering when they crawled back out. They followed the **oaken oven smells** home to warm up. I hoped that the **yeasty beer** would warm their hearts as their bodies were frozen.

LEVEL 4: ADVANCED PARAGRAPHS

I stared into the fire. It crackled and spat before hissing into life. Its lambent light stole away the velvet-black shadows dancing on the wall. Flames of rainbow-orange licked hungrily at the chimney as they clambered as higher and higher. The fire's hypnotic jig of joy was as much a celebration as ours. It wanted to be alive on Christmas Day also. A pageant of smells filled the house. Thyme-filled turkeys sizzled on the oven foil. They battled to take over from the lavender-scented candles and the sulfurous smell of crackers. I could hear them snapping and exploding in another room. The scrumptious smell of goose grease wafted into the room, sifting out the other smells. The children had been up early, hoping that the greatest illusionist of them all had visited.

Swag-bellied Santa used sleigh-in-hand rather than sleight-of-hand, but his brand of escapism beat Houdini every time. This jolly, whiskey-nosed character has conjured up more delight from souls than the rest of humanity combined. His marmot-cheeked magic is indeed a joy to the world. I heard the welcome sound of the kettle boiling. It was bubbling and hissing in the background. Warmth flooded the room as the fire came alive. The sound of chuckling and chortling floated to my ears. The Christmas tree flashed and flickered with its dazzling lights.

An angel was perched on the top, glittering with its flash-silver lustre. A single candle twinkled merrily in the window. The jingling of the dinner bell rang. It's the greatest sound that winter could offer. I sighed with happiness and followed the smells and laughter to my chair.

LEVEL 5: COMPLEX WRITING: WINTER WONDERLAND

My boots crunched through the powdered snow. They detonated like Christmas crackers every time my feet hit the ground. The world around me was imprisoned in a glair-white silence. Nothing sounded, nothing stirred, nothing sang. Winters slavering fangs had come and gone. Its lacerating winds had stripped the last leaves from the trees, leaving them naked and brooding in a harsh world. They were wrapped in their surgical coats now, groaning under the weight of the snow. Occasionally, a great limb would creak, crack and collapse. It sounded like an explosion going through the forest. Other than that, an alien serenity garbed the forest. There was no dawn chorus, no symphony of sound, no avian orchestra. The world was entombed in a dome of silence. Winter's deadly clutch had strangled and stifled all life from the land.

A week ago, a great storm had come screeching through. It had snarled and mewled with its deadly voice, sounding like a wailing spectre. It had ripped slates from roofs and its slavering fangs had sent the last of the squirrels into hibernation. Its scavenging skies had compressed down upon the land, surveying it with a deadly malice. The rain it had brought with it was bitter, like ice-silver bullets of spite. It had gashed and gouged at every living thing, sparing no one. Doom-laden clouds, bloated with hatred, had roiled in the sky before unleashing their vengeful wares. Now the blaring of the wind and blasting of the rain was over. This was the aftershock. The world was becalmed. The furious winter tempests had given too much of themselves. They were spent.

High above me, the last of the morning stars were winking out sadly. They flashed their last, like bling-silver grains of sand in the dawn sky. Their bejewelled brilliance fading into nothingness was a wonder to behold. A ghostly, orb-white, winter moon hung there, imitating a pale strobe light. A corona of shimmering yellow ringed its dying glory. The sky around it was a wide sheet of grate-grey, hemmed in the horizon with a plum-purple tinge. It was a snow sky, Gods perfect gift for Christmas. Fluttery snowflakes puffed down on me, sylph-

like in their airy silence. They created a mantle of Lapland-white. When they landed, they glinted like pulverized diamond dust. It was as if I was walking through an outdoor version of the mines of Solomon, a sparkling winterscape of white and silver.

Far below me, coils of smoke drifted up from sleepy hamlets. The cocoon of silence was ruptured by the sound of squealing. Some children were up early, playing on the duck-pond. From my height, it looked like a frozen salver of polished glass. The zero temperatures had encased the water in a prison of silver. In the distance, the peaks of the mountains were wreathed in a necklace of snow. The sun was coming up behind one of them, looking like a glowing torc as its full majesty was blocked by the mountains enormity. It threw down its watery shards of sunlight in vain. Its power was muted by nature's iron-clad laws. Nothing it could do could banish the wonderland of white beneath it. Its only effect was to smash the flint-grey sky into wonderful striations of yellow, pink and orange. It was enough. The ornamental beauty of the land returned. All around me, the snow flashed and glittered like angel-fire. As my walk ended, I marvelled at the might of nature. Its awe inspiring majesty made my soul rejoice.

