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Active Reading SkillBuilder

Noting Details
To create suspense in a story, a writer usually includes details that are intended to arouse the reader's curiosity about what will happen next. A reader's enjoyment and understanding of any story can be broadened by paying attention to details. When reading "The Sniper," record some of the details about the setting, the characters, and the action that help create suspense.

Suspense in "The Sniper"

Setting

Characters

Action
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Literary Analysis SkillBuilder

Suspense and Surprise Ending

Suspense is the excitement or tension that readers feel as they get involved in a story and become eager to know the outcome. A writer builds suspense by purposely leaving readers uncertain about what will happen. On the graph below, place a dot for each event to show your level of suspense at that point in the story, with 1 being the least suspenseful and 5 the most suspenseful. Then draw a line to connect the dots.

Suspense in “The Sniper”

- Sniper eats sandwich.
- Sniper shoots informer.
- Sniper is wounded.
- Sniper kills enemy.
- Sniper identifies body.
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Words to Know SkillBuilder

Words to Know
ascetic  
enveloped  
beleaguered  
fanatic  
identity  
lodge  
reel  
remorse  
ruse  
spasmodically

A. Think about the meaning of each underlined word. Then fill in each blank with the letter of the correct definition.

1. A small figure was completely  **enveloped**  in a long, hooded cloak.  _____________

2. His unsmil ing face had an  **ascetic**  quality.  _____________

3. He could have been a  **fanatic**, intent on a cause, but he was not.  _____________

4. He did not know why he was  **beleaguered**  by the crowds below.  _____________

5. He might feel  **remorse**  for his situation, but he was not a criminal.  _____________

6. Peering down from the ledge, he saw a woman  **reel**  and almost fall.  _____________

7. Then he became the victim of a clever  **ruse**.  _____________

8. He reacted,  **spasmodically**  turning his head.  _____________

9. A bullet had  **lodged**  itself in his heart.  _____________

10. When they found him, no one knew his  **identity**.  _____________

Definitions

A. bitter regret
B. at regular intervals; intermittently
C. covered; wrapped
D. a person who supports a cause with extreme enthusiasm
E. the quality of being a unique person; individuality
F. severe; stern
G. surrounded; besieged
H. to fall off-balance; lurch
I. a trick
J. to become embedded or stuck

B. Write an editorial expressing your opinion about events in “The Sniper.” Use at least  **four**  Words to Know in your editorial.
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Grammar SkillBuilder: Adverb Placement

Key Concept: By carefully choosing where to place adverbs, writers can emphasize certain words and change the meaning of sentences.

Adverb Placement

An adverb usually modifies a verb; it can also modify an adjective or another adverb. Varying the placement of adverbs can change the emphasis or the meaning of a sentence.

Example: “Crawling quickly to the left, he peered up at the corner of the roof.”

Rewritten, changing emphasis: Crawling to the left, he peered quickly up at the corner of the roof.

Example: He was aware of his enemy’s identity and was not intent on killing him.

Rewritten, changing meaning: He was not aware of his enemy’s identity and was intent on killing him.

Activity

Rewrite each sentence, changing the placement of the underlined adverb. Notice whether the change mainly affects the emphasis of the sentence or whether it changes the meaning.

Example: Suddenly hearing the sound of gunfire, the sniper lay very still.

Rewritten: Hearing the sound of gunfire, the sniper suddenly lay very still.

1. Listening for suspicious sounds, the sniper carefully considered lighting his cigarette.

2. He decided to risk it and boldly lit the cigarette.

3. A shot rang out, and then he dropped his rifle.

4. Surprisingly, he had been shot in his arm, but he felt no pain.

5. He dropped to the roof and immediately crawled behind a chimney.

6. While he hid silently behind the chimney, his enemy watched from the opposite roof.

7. The sniper cleverly placed his cap over the muzzle of his rifle, fooling his enemy.

8. After he was wounded, the sniper awkwardly lifted his revolver and fired.

9. Soon the gunfire was over, and three people were dead.

10. In a civil war, there is always the danger of killing a brother or friend.
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Selection Quiz

Recall the events in the short story. Then answer each question in phrases or sentences.

1. What is happening in Dublin at the time of the story, and on which side is the sniper?

2. What does the sniper do that makes him a target?

3. What happens to the sniper after he shoots the man in the armored car and the woman who had been talking to him?

4. What mistake does the other gunman make that leads to his death?

5. Who is the other gunman?
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Selection Test

A. Think about how the level of suspense in this story increases from the beginning to the end. In the chart below, describe six events from the story, in order, that help to create a mounting sense of suspense. (5 points each)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The sniper eats a sandwich.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The sniper looks at the face of the man he has killed.

B. Write the letter of the best answer. This exercise is continued on the next page. (5 points each)

1. As the story opens, the sniper’s mood is one of
   a. dread.        c. excitement.
   b. exhaustion.   d. anger.

2. The sniper shot a woman on the street because
   a. she supported his enemies.
   b. he was eager to kill someone.
   c. she was armed and dangerous.
   d. he knew and disliked her.

3. The sniper needed to kill the man on the opposite roof in order to
   a. overcome his sense of shame.
   b. win the war for the IRA.
   c. find out if the woman was dead.
   d. make his own escape.
4. The sniper threw down his revolver after shooting his enemy because he
   a. no longer needed it.
   b. was upset by what he had done.
   c. was too weak to hold it.
   d. was celebrating his success.

C. Words to Know. Write the letter of the best answer. (4 points each)

1. An ascetic man most often looks
   a. comforting.  b. puzzled.  c. stern.

2. Which person would most likely use a ruse?
   a. a magician  b. a sailor  c. a musician

3. A feeling of remorse is one of
   a. forgiveness.  b. regret.  c. enthusiasm.

4. A person who is reeling is
   a. off balance.  b. graceful.  c. quick.

5. A city is most likely to be enveloped by
   a. streets.  b. fog.  c. people.

D. Answer one of the following questions based on your understanding of the selection.
   Write your answer on a separate sheet of paper. (15 points)

1. At the beginning of the story, the sniper’s eyes have “the cold gleam of the fanatic.”
   How do you think the sniper will feel about the war and his role in it on the day
   following the events of this story? Use evidence from the story to support your
   answer.

2. What message do you think the author was trying to convey by the surprise ending
   of this story? How does the ending lend new meaning to other events in the story?

E. Linking Literature to Life. Answer the following question based on your own
   experience and knowledge. Write your answer on a separate sheet of paper. (15 points)

   What kinds of political causes, if any, can justify the sort of violence portrayed in this
   story? What causes have been used to justify this sort of violence in the past? Do you
   think this kind of violence could happen today?