

THE ALEX RIDER SERIES | ANTHONY HOROWITZ

NOTES FOR KS2/3 TEACHERS

CELEBRATE THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE NUMBER ONE BESTSELLING SERIES!

Encourage pupils to become **READING SPIES** and to take their writing to the next level with the *Alex Rider* series by Anthony Horowitz – suitable for children ages 9+.

The lesson ideas in this Teachers' Pack include [free extracts](#) that have been taken directly from the books, corresponding [discussion questions](#) and [cross-curricular activities](#) that stimulate ideas around important themes in the series.

The material included is aimed at developing descriptive and creative writing at KS2/3, including exploring different genres, writing strong lead characters, devising mission files, developing settings, and creating pacey stories.

ABOUT THE BOOK: *STORMBREAKER 20th ANNIVERSARY EDITION*

The first action-packed adventure that started the number one bestselling Alex Rider series.

In the first book in the number one bestselling Alex Rider series by Anthony Horowitz, fourteen-year-old Alex is forcibly recruited into MI6. Armed with secret gadgets, he is sent to investigate Herod Sayle, a man who is offering state-of-the-art Stormbreaker computers to every school in the country. But the teenage spy soon finds himself in mortal danger.

****It's time for your first assignment . . . Are you ready for your secret mission? ****

LESSON IDEA ONE | INTRODUCING THE SERIES

OBJECTIVE: To understand and be able to list the features of different genres in fiction.

LEAD-IN QUESTIONS: Let's find out . . .

- What do you know about the Alex Rider series? What genre of story do you think they fall into?
- What does the cover of *Stormbreaker* make you think about? What sort of story do you think this might be?

TASK 1:

In pairs, read out the opening sentence of *Stormbreaker*.

"When the doorbell rings at three in the morning, it's never good news."

1. How does the sentence draw the reader in?
2. Does it create a feeling of mystery or adventure? How?
3. Can you pick out effective words and phrases that create atmosphere in the sentence?
4. Does the opening sentence make you feel that something important might happen next? How?

TASK 2:

Predict what might happen after this sentence. Share your ideas with a partner!

TASK 3:

Cut out the genre cards below. For each of them, think of an example of a book that fits into that particular genre. One of the cards has been left blank for you to come up with your own! Is it possible for a book to fit into more than one genre?

ADVENTURE	COMEDY	SPY
FANTASY	ROMANCE	

TASK 4:

The Alex Rider series that we will be using in this resource pack fits into both the “adventure” and “spy” genres. Can you predict why? Working in pairs, create a list of six features of the adventure and spy genres. Give reasons for your choices. Use the example below to get you started!

- A mystery to be solved
-
-
-

TASK 5:

Finally, choose one of the Alex Rider books listed below. Using the title and your knowledge of genre, create an exciting book cover to represent what you think the story is about. Remember the following success criteria when creating a book cover: a bold design, strong colours, and a clear title.

STORMBREAKER

POINT BLANC

SKELETON KEY

EAGLE STRIKE

SCORPIA

ARK ANGEL

SNAKEHEAD

CROCODILE TEARS

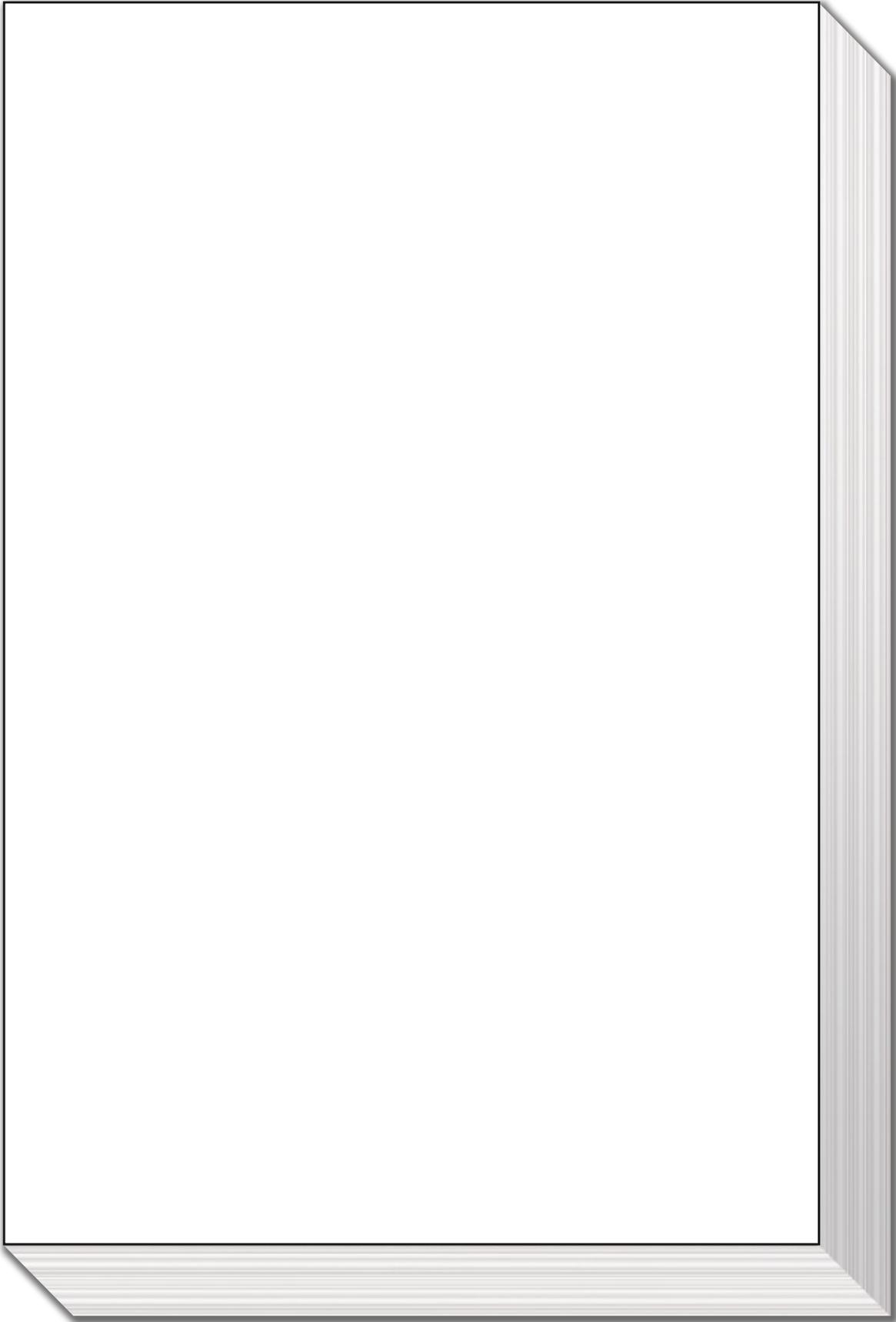
SCORPIA RISING

RUSSIAN ROULETTE

NEVER SAY DIE

SECRET WEAPON

TOP SECRET:
MY ALEX RIDER BOOK COVER



LESSON IDEA TWO | A COURAGEOUS CHARACTER

OBJECTIVE: To create a character profile for a fictional character.

LEAD-IN TASK: Let's read!

Read the following extract from *Stormbreaker*:

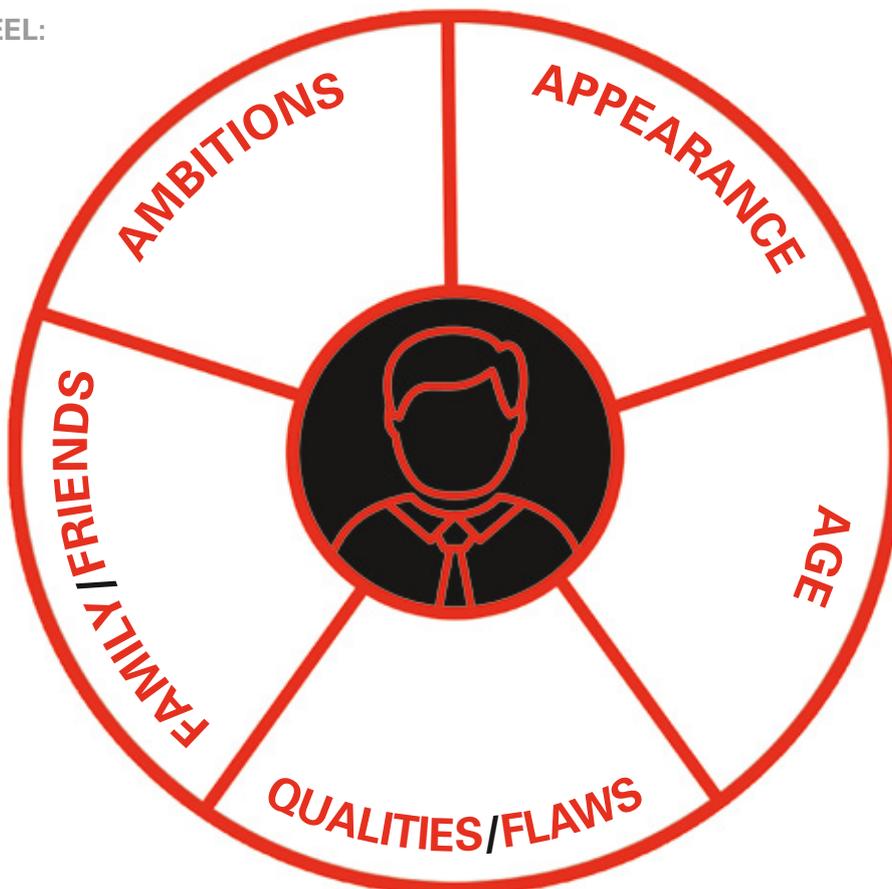
He rolled out of bed and walked over to the open window, his bare feet pressing down the carpet pile. The moonlight spilled on to his chest and shoulders. Alex was fourteen, already well-built, with the body of an athlete. His hair, cut short apart from two thick strands hanging over his forehead, was fair. His eyes were brown and serious. For a moment he stood silently, half-hidden in the shadow, looking out. There was a police car parked outside. From his second-floor window Alex could see the black ID number on the roof and the caps of the two men who were standing in front of the door. The porch light went on and, at the same time, the door opened.

What can you tell about Alex's character from this extract? Discuss it with the person next to you and share your ideas with the class.

TASK 1:

Look at the character wheel below. Using the wheel, can you describe Alex as he is portrayed in the extract? Alternatively, can you describe yourself or an imagined character? Make notes in each segment of the wheel.

CHARACTER WHEEL:

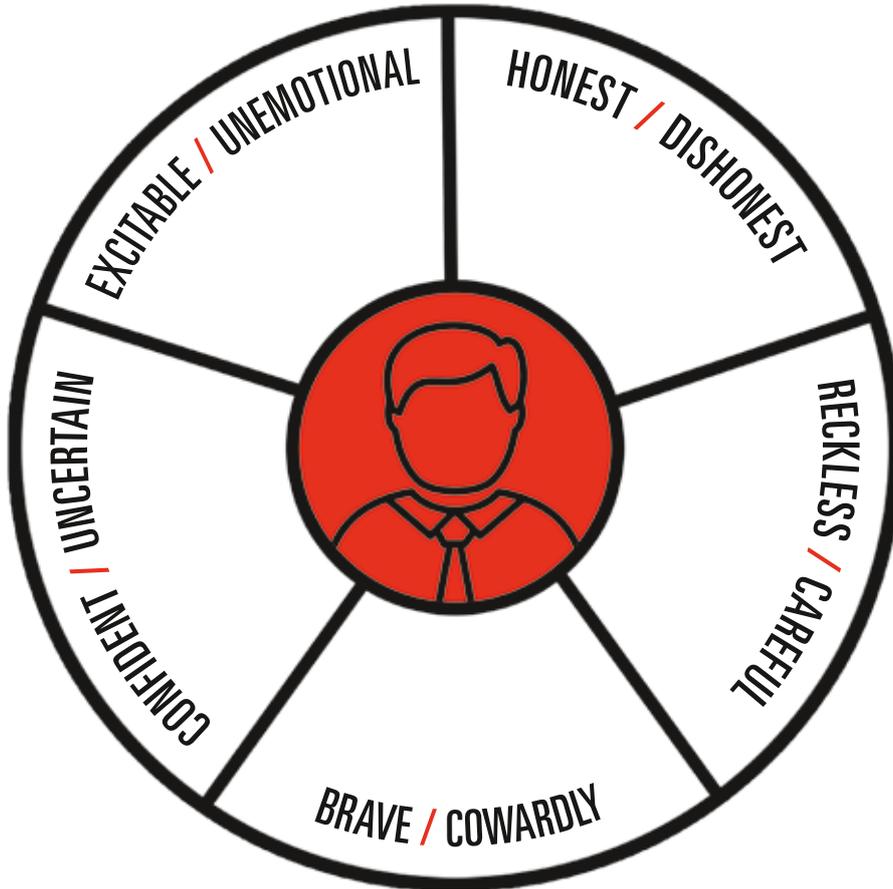


TASK 2:

When writers build characters, they have to make sure that all of the elements of the character wheel are covered in detail. In order to achieve this detail, it might be helpful to create further wheels for each of the categories. For example, look at the wheel below for 'Character Qualities/Flaws'. Can you use it to go into more detail when describing yourself or your imagined character?

CHARACTER WHEEL:

QUALITIES/FLAWS



TASK 3:

Add some segments to the Qualities/Flaws wheel. Alternatively, create a new wheel for one of the other categories from the first Character Wheel. Go into as much detail as possible about your character – the more the better! Once you've created a few wheels, use them to write a paragraph describing your character.

LESSON IDEA THREE | COURAGEOUS CHARACTER

OBJECTIVE: To create a storyboard for a new secret mission.

LEAD-IN TASK: Let's become story spies!

- First of all, push all the tables and chairs to the perimeter of the classroom – giving you space to move around. Transform each table into a different “station” or “checkpoint”.
- On each checkpoint, put a single, coloured sheet of paper, a “feeling card” with an emotion written on it, and a different classroom object (e.g. a rubber, a ruler, a whiteboard pen, an exercise book).
- When everything is set up, walk around the room and make creative connections between (even the most mundane) objects, colours and feelings. Do they spark any interesting ideas for a story?
- Once you have walked around the room, take 10–15 minutes to note down your ideas. Can you create a character for your new story, based on your own experiences during the task, or your observations of another classmate?

TASK 1:

Read the following extract from *Stormbreaker*.

“What we’re suggesting is that you come and work for us,” Mrs Jones said. “We have enough time to give you some basic training – not that you’ll need it, probably – and we can equip you with a few items that may help you with what we have in mind. Then we’ll arrange for you to take the place of this other boy. You’ll go to Sayle Enterprises on 29th March. That’s when this Lester boy is expected. You’ll stay there until 1st April, which is the day of the ceremony. The timing couldn’t be better. You’ll be able to meet Herod Sayle, keep an eye on him and tell us what you think. Perhaps you’ll also find out what it was your uncle discovered and why he had to die. You shouldn’t be in any danger. After all, who would suspect a fourteen-year-old boy of being a spy?”

1. What is Alex’s mission?
2. Who is Alex spying on?
3. Why does Mrs Jones think this is a good idea?
4. What has happened to Alex’s uncle?

TASK 2:

Create a Mission File for Alex. Note down all of the important information that he needs to remember into bullet points. Draw pictures of anyone he needs to look out for!

TASK 3:

Create your own Secret Mission for Alex or for the character that you created in the previous lesson. Make an original Mission Storyboard showing how the mission should progress.

For example, in the first box you might draw a character or scene at the beginning of the mission. Consider whether it includes a crime scene, or even a person wondering how to get revenge. Use words and illustrations to tell the story of your mission.

MY MISSION: STORYBOARD

LESSON IDEA FOUR | SETTING THE SCENE

OBJECTIVE: To describe a new setting using sensory description.

LEAD-IN QUESTIONS: Let's find out . . .

- What are your favourite settings to read about?
- Why is it important to have a strong setting?

TASK 1:

There are lots of brilliant settings in the Alex Rider series. For example, read the one below taken from *Stormbreaker*.

London appeared.

Suddenly the clouds rolled back and the midday sun brought the whole city, shining, into view. There was Battersea Power Station, standing proud with its four great chimneys still intact, even though much of its roof had long ago been eaten away. Behind it, Battersea Park appeared as a square of dense green bushes and trees that were making a last stand, fighting back the urban spread. In the far distance, the Millennium Wheel perched like a fabulous silver coin, balancing effortlessly on its rim. And all around it, London crouched; gas towers and apartment blocks, endless rows of shops and houses, roads, railways and bridges stretching away on both sides, separated only by the bright silver crack in the landscape that was the River Thames.

Alex saw all this with a clenched stomach, looking out through the open door of the aircraft. He'd had fifty minutes to think about what he had to do. Fifty minutes while the plane droned over Cornwall and Devon, then Somerset and the Salisbury Plains before reaching the North Downs and flying on towards Windsor and London.

For the extract:

1. Underline any powerful words that stand out to you.
2. Underline as many ADJECTIVES as you can.
3. Underline as many ADVERBS as you can.
4. Underline any SIMILES and METAPHORS.

TASK 2:

Write each of the five senses (sight, sound, smell, touch, taste) on five different sheets of paper. In pairs, make a list of key words/phrases or adjectives that appeal to the senses in the extract. Write down all of your key words/phrases on the corresponding sheet of paper.

Consider how each word or phrase that you have written down is effective. How does it make you feel? What does it make you think of? Can you draw London based on the description in the extract?

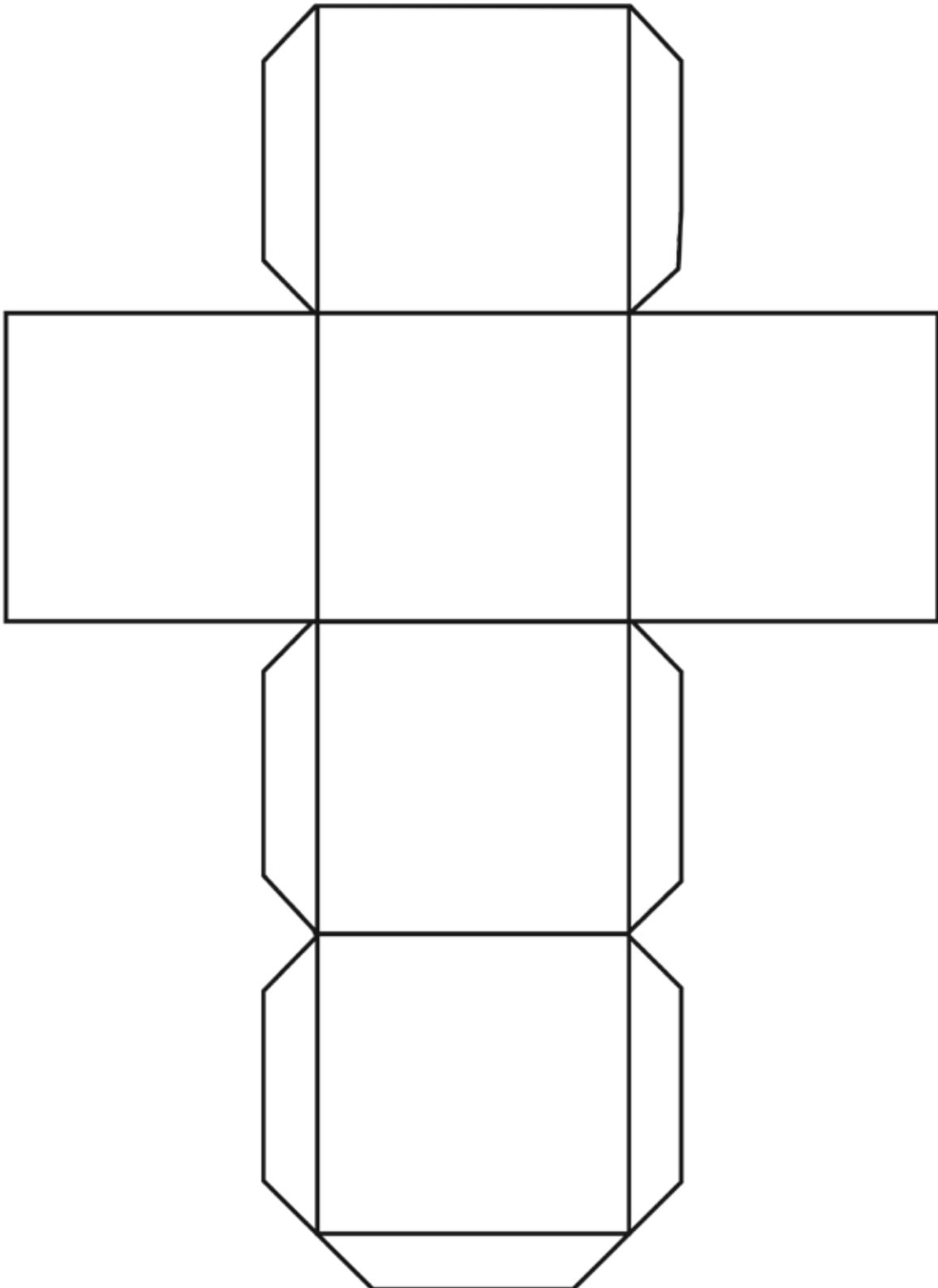
TASK 3:

Now, imagine a setting of your own. It can be a real place, a city just like in the extract, or somewhere in your imagination. How would you use sensory description to write about your chosen setting? Using five new sheets of paper, note down any key words or phrases that you would use to evoke each of the five senses.

TASK 4:

Use your notes to write five possible sentences that you might use to describe the setting that you are thinking of (one for each of the senses). Write down a sentence on each side of the story die template below, adding a sixth bonus sentence, and make the die!

Ask a partner to roll the die. Can they match each of your sentences to the correct sense? Share your favourite sentences and suggestions with the class!



LESSON IDEA FIVE | ACTION AND ADRENALINE

OBJECTIVE: To understand how to create pace and tension in writing.

LEAD-IN QUESTIONS: Let's find out . . .

- What is pace? Why is pace important in an adventure story?
- How does increasing pace in a story make the reader feel tense or "on the edge of their seat"?
- Can you think of a book that you've read which had a moment of tension? How did it make you feel?
- What is a cliffhanger?

TASK 1:

Read the following extract from *Stormbreaker*:

The plane had completed its pre-flight tests. It was facing down the runway. Its propellers were at full speed.

Alex slammed the gears into first, released the handbrake and gunned the Jeep forward, shooting over the drive and on to the grass, heading for the airstrip. At the same time there was a chatter of machine-gun fire. He yanked down on the steering-wheel and twisted away as his wing mirror exploded and a spray of bullets slammed into the windscreen and door. The two cars, speeding towards him, head-on, were getting closer and closer. Each of them had a guard in the back seat, leaning out of the window, firing at him. Alex swerved between them, and for a horrible second there was actually one on each side. He was sandwiched between the two cars, with guards firing at him left and right. But then he was through. The guards missed him and hit each other. He heard one of them yell out and drop his gun. One of the cars lost control and crashed into the front of the house, metalwork crumpling against brick. The other screeched to a halt, reversed, then came after him again.

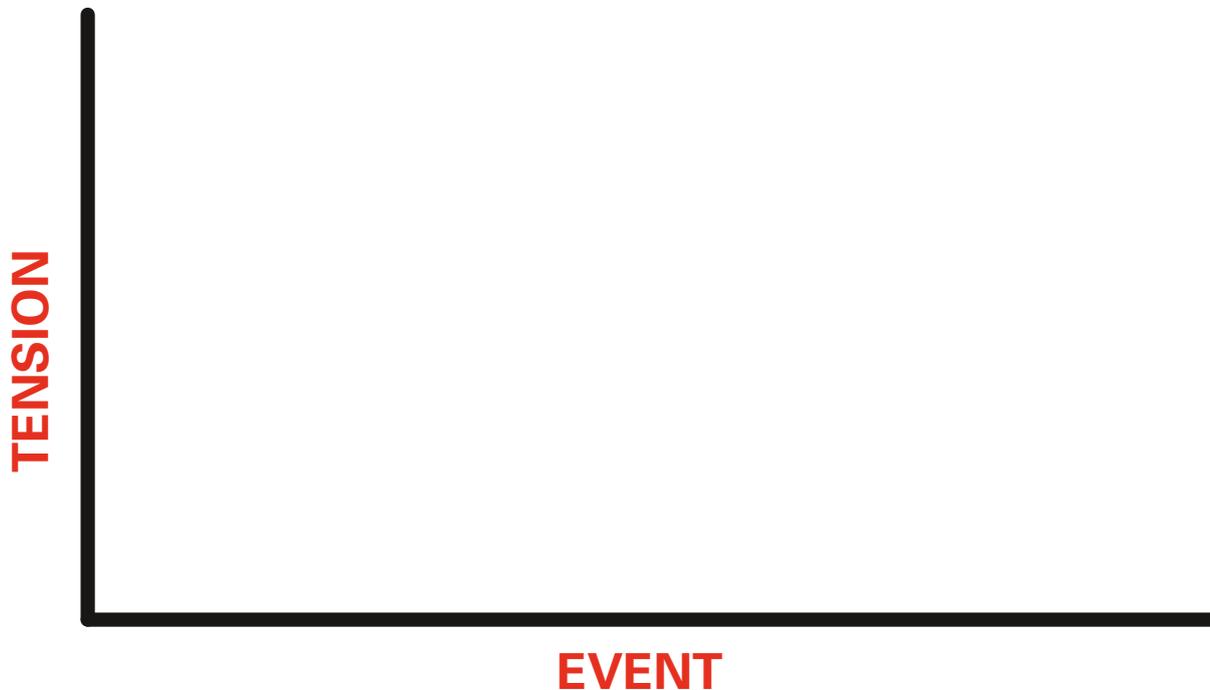
The plane had begun to move down the runway. Slowly at first, but rapidly picking up speed. Alex hit the tarmac and followed.

His foot was pressed down, the accelerator against the floor. The Jeep was doing about seventy – not fast enough. For just a few seconds Alex was parallel with the cargo plane, only a couple of metres from it. But already it was pulling ahead. At any moment it would be in the air.

And straight ahead of him, the way was blocked. Two more Jeeps had arrived on the runway. More guards with machine-guns balanced themselves, half-crouching, on the seats. Alex realized the only reason they weren't firing was that they were afraid of hitting the plane. But the plane had already left the ground. Ahead of him, and just to his left, Alex saw the front wheel separate itself from the runway. He glanced in his mirror. The car that had chased him from the house was right on his tail. He had nowhere left to go.

One car behind him. Two Jeeps ahead of him. The plane now in the air, the back wheels lifting off. Everything happening at once.

After reading the extract, plot the moments of tension on the graph below. Consider when the tension is at its highest and at its lowest. How does the author achieve this?



TASK 2:

Read the extract again. Can you find examples of the following techniques to create tension or excitement for the reader?

- A variation of short and long sentences to create pace.
- Vocabulary to evoke an ominous atmosphere.
- Strong emotions from the characters.
- Cliffhangers.

TASK 3:

Now it's your turn to plot your own scene using the same graph, but this time use a different coloured pen or pencil. Consider the following things:

- What events will occur?
- How will your characters feel?
- How will the pace increase or decrease?
- What will the highest/lowest moment of tension be?

TASK 4:

Now that you've plotted out your scene using the graph, it's time to write it down! Remember to use the success criteria from Task 2: varied sentence lengths; vocabulary to evoke atmosphere; strong emotions from characters – and away you go!

EXAMPLE OF PACE AND TENSION...

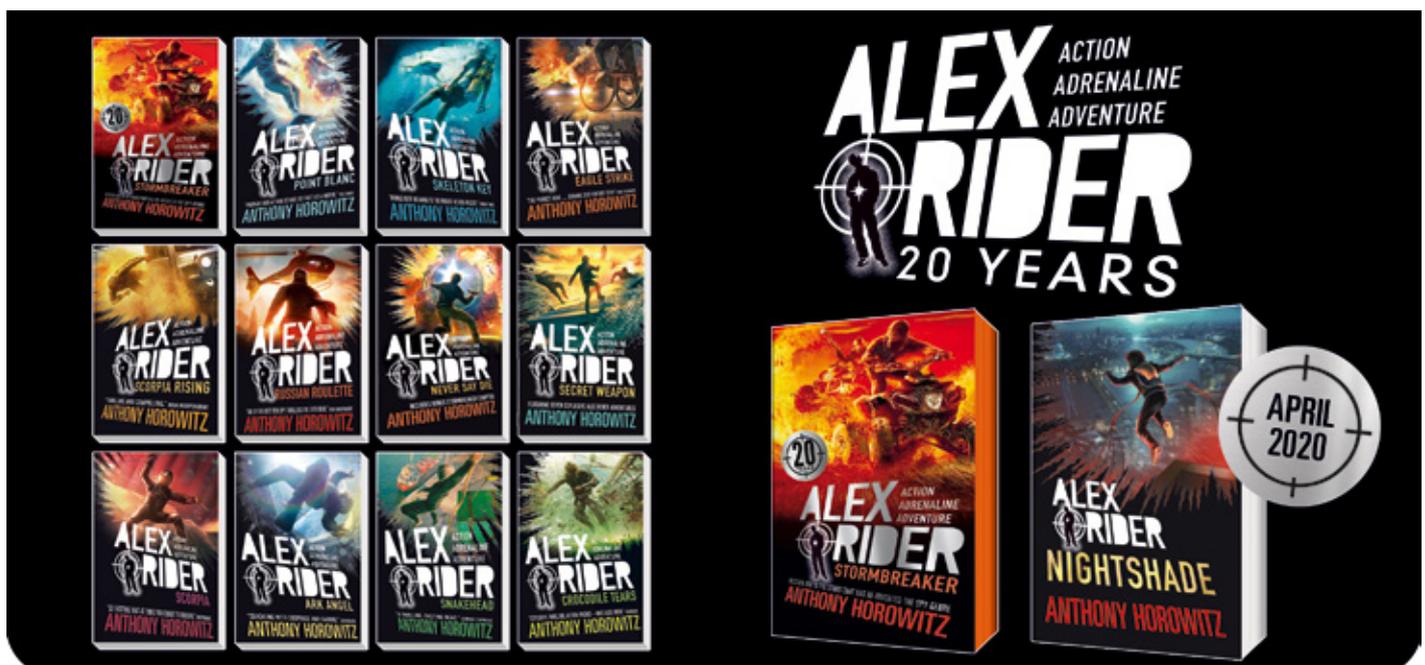


Use everything you have completed in these lessons to create your own Alex Rider adventure/spy short story!

With your partner, take turns to complete the following statements:

- I have most enjoyed.....
- I have learned.....
- I would like to read more Alex Rider books because.....
- The next Alex Rider book I want to read is.....

****MISSION COMPLETE****



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