

CHANGING THE MOOD OF A 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY EXTRACT

Read the following extract which is taken from a novel called *The Picture of Dorian Grey* by Oscar Wilde, published in 1890. In this part of the story, the narrator is travelling by horse and carriage to an unpleasant part of London.

The highlighted words are explained in a glossary at the end of the extract.

The way seemed **interminable**, and the streets like the black web of some sprawling spider. The **monotony** became unbearable, and as the mist thickened, he felt afraid.

Then they passed by lonely **brickfields**. The fog was lighter here, and he could see the strange, bottle-shaped **kilns** with their orange, fanlike tongues of fire. A dog barked as they went by, and far away in the darkness some wandering sea-gull screamed. The horse stumbled in a rut, then swerved aside and broke into a gallop.

After some time they left the clay road and rattled again over rough-**paven** streets. Most of the windows were dark, but now and then fantastic shadows were silhouetted against some lamplit blind. He watched them curiously. They moved like monstrous **marionettes** and made gestures like live things. He hated them. A dull rage was in his heart. As they turned a corner, a woman yelled something at them from an open door, and two men ran after the **hansom** for about a hundred yards. The driver beat at them with his whip.

### Glossary

**interminable** - never-ending

**monotony** - boredom

**brickfields** - a place where bricks were made

**kilns** - huge industrial ovens used to make pottery and bricks

**paven** - paved

**marionettes** - puppets

**hansom** - a type of small horse-drawn carriage

### Understanding and exploring the text

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1. What is the weather like as the narrator travels through the city?
2. List four things the narrator sees and hears from the carriage.
3. How does the narrator seem to be feeling?
4. The writer uses imagery to describe what the narrator sees. Select two examples and comment on their effect. Use the following example to help you:

*The writer describes the streets as 'like the black web of some sprawling spider'. This suggests that they form a threatening place where he could get lost or trapped. The word 'black' implies that the 'web' is dark and menacing.*

5. After considering all these details, what do you think is the overall mood of this extract?



#### From reading to writing

Rewrite this extract, so that this part of the story has a mood of excitement and joy rather than apprehension and fear.

6. Start by rewriting the first paragraph with the words or phrases provided in the box.

pleasant	anticipation	thrilled
sunlight broke through the clouds	intricate threads of embroidery	

*The way seemed ..... and the streets like ..... . The .....  
became unbearable, and as the ..... , he felt .....*

7. Rewrite the second paragraph, replacing the industrial landscape with features of beauty. For example, you might decide that the traveller is looking at a magnificent monument  
8. or a beautiful park. Replace the barking dog and the screaming seagull with sounds that are soothing or uplifting. If you can, include imagery as the writer has done in his text.

9. Think carefully about what you will change in the third and fourth paragraphs. Underline words or phrases which suggest anything threatening or unpleasant. Complete the grid with these phrases and ideas about what you could replace these with. Remember to include the narrator's feelings.

Original word or phrase	Ideas for a new version
'dark'	light-filled
'monstrous marionettes'	fairy-tale characters/enthralling puppets

10. Now rewrite these paragraphs, adding them to your existing text.

11. Which version do you prefer and why?

#### Extension task

Write your own description of a journey in which you describe what the narrator sees and feels. You might choose to make this a frightening or enjoyable journey. You could use one of the images below for inspiration.

