Improving Locational Writing through Pathetic Fallacy!

**Learning objectives**

- Use characters, action and narratives to convey a story, a theme and emotions
- Portray characters, settings and events in detail based on inference and facts drawn from the text
- Express individual ideas while building on the ideas of others through discussion
- Demonstrate the correct use of English grammar when writing and speaking
- Improve the use of adjectives and descriptive language
- Choose words, phrases, dialects, and punctuation that add expression and effect
- Describe how a person's point of view can influence reactions, events, comprehension, and narrative
- Describe a character, setting, or event in depth, drawing on specific details in the text
- Investigate how character and actions convey emotions

Pathetic fallacy is an effective technique used to make locations in writing come alive, and it’s a lot simpler to do than it sounds!

To use pathetic fallacy, first of all we need to know what it means. It is a type of personification (that’s when you give human qualities and emotions to things that aren’t human!) and it is usually linked to nature. So, you might have sad, weeping clouds, or a happy, dancing wind. The other thing about pathetic fallacy is, whatever is being described, it is usually linked to the character’s emotions. Use the following questions as an easy way to explain and explore this idea with students:

**Think of every Disney film you have seen. If the main character is sad, what is the weather like when they leave their house?**
- Grey
- Cloudy
- Raining

**What colour is the sky?**
- Black and grey
- Full of dark clouds

**What does the house look like?**
- Droopy
- Dark
- Dishevelled
- Murky
- Leaking

In the same way, if the main character is happy, what is the weather like then?
- Sunny
- Warm

**What colour is the sky?**
- Bright blue
- Wispy white clouds

**What does the house look like?**
- Bright (yellow)
- Covered in flowers
- Clean and tidy

These scenarios are both examples of pathetic fallacy, where the mood of the location reflects the mood of the character, and is instantly recognisable to students in films, cartoons and books!

Once the concept is recognised, challenge students to decide on a mood for their own Lego character (the mood spinner could be used initially, although more complex emotions should be aimed for as soon as possible) then use StoryStarter to build a location that most clearly conveys that target mood. Encourage initial discussion of things like colour palette:

- Red could represent anger/peril/passion
- Grey could represent lifeless/desolate
- Green could represent energetic/lively
- Blue could represent calm/cold
- Yellow could represent happiness/positivity

...as well as appropriate props and bricks that could be brought to life through personification. Once completed, place the character in the setting and challenge students to describe the scene using pathetic fallacy, bringing it alive and linking to the mood of the character.

**Writing Reminders!**

**Simile:** Describing something by saying it is like something else

*The furious lava clawed at the prison bars like a vicious tiger.*

**Metaphor:** Describing something by saying it is something else

*The flowers were happy dancers, shuffling in the breeze.*
Example 1: The escape of the vengeful wizard  
Mood: Anger

Colours:  
Red = anger/peril/ force  
Orange = heat  
Yellow = energy  
Grey = lifeless/desolate/imposing

Props and bricks:  
Sloping bricks, fire and translucent pieces form a lava lake.  
Grey bricks make a formidable cell, along with strong chains to hold the captive.  
Flags, weapons and military equipment hint at the nature of the imprisoners.

Example:

The lava lake was as red and as lethal as a dragon’s tongue: it was bubbling with anger; ready to chew up and spit out anything that even went near it. The chains clanged and screeched as if they were in pain. Aggressively, the fire stomped about on the ground, covering anything it could see. Suddenly it all stopped, everything stared in silence as the evil wizard broke out of the prison cell...

Megan, aged 10
Example 2: The most cheerful house that ever was!
Mood: Happiness

Colours:
Yellow = warmth/energy/positivity
Blue = calm/clarity
White = peaceful
Green = liveliness/movement
Pink = admiration

Props and bricks:
Patterned blue bricks with white brick clouds form a peaceful sky.
Bright yellow bricks make a shining sun.
Apple trees, hedges, hanging baskets and lanterns fill the garden.
Pastel bricks are used to form a cheery home.
An energetic water fountain sits in the middle of the garden, admired by a friendly cat.

Example:
The girl skipped into her garden, which was festooned with flowers and hanging baskets. The fountain flowed like a river and spurted at the top. The clouds were flying candy floss, and the sun was like a fireplace: warm and light. A small white cat lay on the arch, its legs outstretched, yawning wearily although it was morning. A high, green hedge towered over the garden.
The girl smiled to herself while she looked around. “How beautiful”, she thought.
Kingkar, aged 11

Top Tips
Act out!

Use drama to help you identify actions that go with the mood you are trying to create!

What happens to our bodies and faces when we are happy?

- Fingers spread and wiggle
- Shoulders relax
- Feet skip
- Eyes widen
- Arms wave
- Mouth smiles
- Body dances

Pretend you are the happiest you have ever been, and try to show the emotion with your body in as many ways as you can. Take these actions and give them to items in your location to bring the scene to life:

“Petals of colourful flowers danced and skipped merrily in the warm breeze.”

“The glorious, happy sun smiled down on the garden, and all the living things looked up, waving in reply.”

“Lively bushes shook off the last of the morning dew, relaxing and stretching in the warmth.”
Example 3: Dare you enter?
Mood: Fear

Colours:
Grey = cold/lifeless/harsh
Blue = freezing/emotionless
Brown = earthy/dirty
Black = darkness/unknown

Props and bricks:
Grey bricks form jagged rocks with cold blue icicles hanging from them. Spiky cacti surround the entrance to the cave. Poisonous animals: snakes, frogs and spiders, inhabit the cavern. Bats keep watch in the darkness.

Example:

Oozing with rage, sweating with anger, the treacherous cave opened its mouth, ready to devour its next victim. Jagged rocks clung desperately to the cave wall. Darkness engulfed the cave and enveloped it with its murderous hands, choking it until there was not a single breath left. Bats fluttered about recklessly and clung to every nook and cranny. Spiders and creepy crawlies scuttled to and fro, hoping to find an empty carcass to nest in.

Brume, aged 11

Top Tips

Go tiny!

Focus on the small details (called the 'minutiae') in your location and use them to expand your descriptions. This adds to the mood of the scene and really makes your reader feel like they are there:

“The lifeless, black eyes of the guardian bats darted across the cave at the sound of the intruder. Black pools of darkness, they seemed to suck the light from cavern, making it darker still.”

“Cold, foreboding icicles hung down from the cavern walls, their tips sharp and menacing, like the pointed arrows of some stony archer.”

“Spiders' webs hung from every crack and crevice. So intricate, and beautiful in a strange way. Layer upon layer of woven thread hung to make a trap for unsuspecting prey.”
Example 4: The forgotten man

Mood: Loneliness

Colours:
Green = liveliness/energy/fun
Sand = warmth/happiness
Grey = bleak/loneliness
Blue = cold/damp

Props and bricks:
Above:
Green trees, plants and flowers combine with green bricks to form a lovely park.
Two football teams play a fun game together.
A lady with a dog eats an ice lolly while talking to a man who is relaxing in the sun.

Below:
A lonely, forgotten man fishes in the grey and stone brick sewer
A tiny fire lights the chamber.
All the man’s belongings are scattered around.

Example:

It was dark and lonely, sad and quiet, except the sound of the party going on above, and the sound of the water passing by for hours on end. The stone-cold bricks shivered and huddled close together to get warm, and the small fire tried as hard as it could to stretch out, but it was just no use. The lonely man sat there on what he called a bed as the room frowned in misery. This was just a normal day for Tom, the forgotten man.

Megan, aged 10

Top Tips

Stimulate the senses!

Locational writing shouldn’t be all about what the place looks like. We have five senses, so challenge students to imagine themselves in the location they are describing, and ask them:

- What does it smell like?
- What sounds can you hear?
- Reach out and touch something – how does it feel?
- Is there anything to eat, or is there even a taste in the air?

Use the answers to these questions as the basis for multisensory descriptions that help your reader to imagine themselves in the location:

“*The enchanting smell of a troop of beautiful dancing flowers drifted over the warm summer breeze.*”

“*As the cheerful laughter filtered through the drains it was drowned out by the monotonous sound of the filthy water that flowed through the alcoves.*”

“*Mouldy bread, rotting apples and week old fish. The taste of the air was enough to put anyone off their dinner.*"