

Sequence 6

Exploring the text

How has the author used prepositional phrases and adverbial phrases to enhance meaning?

(Using the excerpt from Chapter 2: Surgeon White)

Show the text excerpt from Chapter 2: Surgeon White on the board and discuss its meaning.

Highlight grammatical features such as noun groups (red), verb groups (green), and prepositional phrases (blue).

The Surgeon **made** **the convicts** **eat** **fresh food** **on the journey** ...

Use a table to help students think about 'chunks of meaning' and the form used to express this (adapted from Derewianka, *A New Grammar Companion for Teachers*, page 14).

Function	Participants (Who or what is involved?)	Processes (What is happening?)	Participants (Who or what is involved?)	Processes (What is happening?)	Participants (Who or what is involved?)	Circumstances
Phrase	The surgeon	made	the convicts	eat	fresh food	on the journey
Form	Noun/noun group	Verb/verb group	Noun/noun group	Verb/verb group	Noun/noun group	Prepositional phrase (indicating where)

The passage above has been adapted from the text but many of the circumstances (information such as time, place and manner) have been removed. Now look at the passage with this missing information included.

Show the excerpt from the novel to explore how the author has used additional language features to create a richer narrative and provide the reader with additional information.

Excerpt: 'As Chief Surgeon he had insisted that the convicts eat fresh food in England, at Tenerife in the Canary Islands, and at Cape Town on the Cape of Good Hope at the southern tip of Africa, the last port before the final seemingly endless voyage across the almost uncharted ocean. Convicts who refused to eat because the fruit juice stung their mouths were whipped.'

Function: Participants (Who or what is involved?) Form: Nouns/noun groups	Function: Processes (What is happening?) Form: Verbs/verb groups	Function: Circumstances (When, where, why, how, with whom?) Form: Prepositional/adverbial phrases
		As (role)
Chief Surgeon [he]	had insisted	
the convicts	eat	
fresh food		in England (place), at Tenerife (place) in the Canary Islands (place), at Cape Town (place) on the Cape of Good Hope (place), at the southern tip of Africa (place), the last port (place) before (place, time) the final seemingly endless voyage across (place) the almost uncharted ocean.
Convicts [who]	refused to eat	[because] (reason)
the fruit juice	stung	
their mouths	were whipped.	

Highlight the **prepositional phrases** and **adverbial phrases** that have been added to the text in the extract to enhance meaning through the addition of information about the circumstances (for example, time, manner, place, role). Derewianka (page 66) provides a table of different kinds of circumstances. Also draw attention to how additional information (in the form of adjectives and adverbs modifying adjectives) has been added to noun groups and the effect this has on building up meanings. Point out that noun groups form part of prepositional phrases.

Discuss how the inclusion of circumstances (prepositional phrases of place) has enhanced the meaning of the first sentence. That is, the author was able to provide more information about all the places the First Fleet stopped.

Noun groups/phrases

(Using excerpt from Chapter 2: Surgeon White)

Use the sentence below which has additional information about the participants and their activities removed.

The day after **they** **landed** **in the country** **he** **had** **tents** **put up** .

Participants (Who or what is involved?)	Processes (What is happening?)	Circumstances (When, where, why, how, with whom?)
		The day after (<i>point in time</i>)
they	landed	in the country (<i>place</i>)
he	had	
tents	put up	

Show the excerpt and explain how author has enriched the meaning of the sentence by extending noun groups/phrases.

Participants (Who or what is involved?)	Processes (What is happening?)	Circumstances (When, where, why, how, with whom?)
		The day after (<i>point in time</i>)
they	landed	in this poor excuse for a country (<i>place</i>)
he	had	
tents		for his laboratory and the sick (<i>purpose</i>)
	put up	

Discuss how the author has added more information before and after the noun (*poor excuse for* before 'a country' and; *for his laboratory* and the *sick* after 'tents'.)

Show another example from the remainder of the paragraph where additional information has been removed.

He 'd had a garden fenced off. The convicts needed fresh food and he would threaten beatings if they didn't eat .

Note: The words 'and' and 'if' are conjunctions.

Participants (Who or what is involved?)	Processes (What is happening?)	Circumstances (When, where, why, how, with whom?)
He	'd had	
a garden	fenced off.	
The convicts	needed	
fresh food		
he	would threaten	
beatings		
they	didn't eat.	

Now examine how the noun groups have been extended to provide much richer and detailed information.

Excerpt: 'He'd had a garden fenced off to grow fresh vegetables. The poor wretches, swollen with scurvy, their teeth falling out, too weak to stand after so long at sea, needed fresh food, not medicine. And again, he'd had to threaten beatings if they didn't eat.'

(You can find more about the noun group in Derewianka, B (2012) *A New Grammar Companion for Teachers*, PETAA, Sydney, page 41.)