

6 Grammar Rainbow – Explaining ‘A’

Grammar. Now, if you’re not careful, grammar can really tie you up in knots. And so there needs to be a sense of how we’re working with word classes and types of words to really have an impact on children’s writing.

Think about grammar in four parts. Let’s have a look at the grammar rainbow and how it can help us be better teachers of grammar.

We’ve got the A, B, C, D of grammar, and I’m going to zoom into each area of grammar and talk very closely about how it can make a difference to our practice on the front line.

So, first of all, the A of grammar. When I talk about the A of grammar, I’m referring to adverbs and adverbial phrases. Now, you’ll notice on the grammar rainbow, these are green. They’re green for a reason, because adverbs and adverbial phrases are highly flexible within a sentence. They are green, they are on the go, and they have a lot of movement.

Now as teachers, we need to really show children how these component parts have movement. So what is an adverb or an adverbial phrase? Well, essentially an adverb or an adverbial phrase will answer How, Where or When.

So let’s think about How. Now, Stephen King says dump all Hows. He doesn’t like “ly” words, he doesn’t like Carefully, cautiously, slowly, He says there’s always a better word, a better verb you can use to put some power behind your writing.

But let’s not be too sweeping in our writing style. We could say “he ran quickly.” We might say “quickly” is weak there, and if we wanted to make the running quicker, we could put, “he sprinted.” And in that regard I would agree with Stephen King.

However, there is more to life than just ‘ly’ Hows. There are many ways we can capture a How.

And then we’re getting to adverbial phrases: with bated breath, with trepidation, with a heavy heart. And we’ve got to think about not just ly words, but any component parts of a sentence that answer How.

So let’s take a sentence like:

Harry crept into the forest with a heavy heart.

If you look up here and if we turn it green, we can now see it has high mobility, because now we can put it at the front of a sentence:

With a heavy heart, Harry crept into the forest.

Or perhaps we could have:

Into the forest, with a heavy heart, Harry crept.

And once you know the movable parts of a sentence, you have so much more control as a writer.