

Starting a Novel

When a writer starts a novel he or she gives the reader clues about what the story will be about. They do this because they have to grab a reader's attention. They can do this in different ways. They can:

- Use language in an interesting and unusual way.
- Mention people who will play a major part in the story without explaining everything about them (withholding information).
- Mention events without explaining everything about them (withholding information).

Highlight on the text all the words and phrases that help you predict what the story will be about.

I found him in the garage on a Sunday afternoon. It was the day after we moved into Falconer Road. The winter was ending. Mum had said we'd be moving just in time for the spring. Nobody else was there. Just me. The others were inside the house with Doctor Death, worrying about the baby.

He was lying there in the darkness behind the tea chests, in the dust and dirt. It was as if he'd been there forever. He was filthy and pale and dried out and I thought he was dead. I couldn't have been more wrong. I'd soon begin to see the truth about him, that there'd never been another creature like him in the world.

We called it the garage because that's what the estate agent, Mr Stone, called it. It was more like demolition site or a rubbish dump or like one of those ancient warehouses they keep pulling down at the quay. Stone led us down the garden, tugged the door open and shone his little torch into the gloom. We shoved our heads in at the doorway with him.

"You have to see it with your mind's eye," he said. "See it cleaned, with new doors and the roof repaired. See it as a wonderful two-car garage."

He looked at me with a stupid grin on his face.

"Or something for you, lad – a hideaway for you and your mates. What about that, eh?"

I looked away. I didn't want anything to do with him. All the way round the house it had been the same. Just see it in your mind's eye. Just imagine what could be done. All the way round I kept thinking of the old man, Ernie Myers, that had lived here on his own for years. He'd been dead nearly a week before they found him under the table in the kitchen. That's what I saw when Stone told us about seeing with the mind's eye. He even said it when we got to the dining room and there was an old cracked toilet sitting there in the corner behind a plywood screen. I just wanted him to shut up, but he whispered that towards the end Ernie couldn't manage the stairs. His bed was brought in here and a toilet was put in so everything was easy for him. Stone looked at me like he didn't think I should know about such things. I wanted to get out, to get back to our old house again, but Mum and Dad took it all in. They went on like it was going to be some big adventure. They bought the house. They started cleaning it and scrubbing it and painting it. Then the baby came too early. And here we were.

I predict that this story will be about....