

A closer look



I could feel the perspiration on my forehead; tension in my shoulders; a hard gnawing feeling of panic in my stomach. I had to get this right. One wrong move and... No - failure was not an option.

At precisely 08: 00 he arrived to open the doors, punctual as ever. Even from a top floor flat three blocks away, I could see him clearer than if I was just three metres from him, as I carefully adjusted the lens on my binoculars. Casually he stepped out of his silver Mercedes-Benz, A-class. Wearing a smart, linen three piece, he was tall, clean-shaven and business-like. He made his way from the car park to unlock the front entrance to the bank.

I put down my binoculars and turned my attention to the television screen sat next to me. I could now see him on the camera I had installed inside the bank earlier that week. It had not been easy.

Three days before, having closely observed the comings and goings of the security guards and scheduled a timetable of their everyday movements, I knew precisely when the opportunity would present itself. And when it did, I was ready. Having gained access to the bank, a dark hooded jacket and a scarf disguised my appearance perfectly. I took a great deal of care in installing the camera, but I had to move quickly since the bank's own security cameras allowed for a window of only seventeen seconds to utilise their blind spot.

Now, three days later, the man moved purposefully towards the vault's large and securely structured doors, unaware that he was being watched. Upon reaching it, he paused for a moment. He glanced cautiously over his

shoulder. At this point during the operation, I felt somewhat edgy; somewhat sceptical.

Having checked behind him, he reached out his right hand for the keypad. This was my "in". I zoomed the camera in on his hand as he tapped in the code which would open the vault. There it was, right before my eyes. Now I had exactly what I needed; months of planning was about to pay off. I knew there would only be one chance to get this right, but it had to be done that day. The flight was booked for 04: 00 the next morning.

As the day passed, the plan was slowly coming to fruition. Finally success was there for the taking. But it was all about timing: too soon and the plan could go disastrously wrong; too late and... Well, there would never be another chance. Time hung heavy. Minutes turned to hours and then at last, the bank was closing, the staff began to leave one by one. I sent the text message through to my partner, " It's time". I sat anxiously in our transit van parked on the opposite side of the road to the bank. Everyone and everything was in place.

It was 17: 00. The man appeared from the bank's entrance. He walked briskly, checking the time on his Rolex whilst making a quick phone call. The same man who had opened up at 08: 00 that morning now stood before us locking the front doors. In anticipation, we watched as he made his way to the car park. He stopped suddenly, turned around and looked straight at our van and directly into my eyes. I quickly looked down at my newspaper, but it was too late. Shit - he knew. Panicking, the man sprinted for his Merc.

" Go, Go, Go!" I shouted down my radio. Within a split second my undercover colleagues leapt into action from their ready positions. The man froze in sheer terror surrounded by eight Specialist Firearms Officers each aiming an MSG-90 semi-automatic directly at his head.

" Slowly put your hands on your head and kneel down on the ground!" screamed the chief officer. With a look of complete shock and disbelief, the man did as he was told, and as he slowly raised his hands to his head, I could see the silver ring on the middle finger of his right hand. The very same ring I had seen on the CCTV camera as I zoomed in on him tapping in the code for the vault that morning; the very same ring that linked him right into the heart of our investigation.

I swiftly made my way over to arrest him. We'd done it. Months and months of close surveillance had finally paid off. We had our man. The passengers on the 04: 00 flight to New York would arrive safely. By then the last of the 9/11 terrorists would be firmly behind bars.

Commentary for Short Story of 'A Closer Look'

I chose to explore the genre of crime fiction, aimed traditionally at a male target audience of both young and old. My piece was influenced by style models consisting of extracts from short stories, following their primary purpose which is 'to entertain'.

A first person narrative voice is used in my story, similarly to the style model from J. D Salinger's 'The Catcher in the Rye' in which the narrator speaks in quite an informal tone, for example, " if you really want to hear about it".

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This use of conversational language encourages a more intimate relationship with the reader particularly through using a personal pronoun making direct reference to "you". Although my piece originally referred to the reader in this way, I later decided against it since it would be less suitable for my chosen genre. Instead, through use of first person narrative I created a similar informal tone allowing the protagonist to express his apprehensiveness and how "[He] had to get this right".

I also used a number of words and phrases from the semantic field of crime, influenced by the style model from Clive Cussler's 'The Chase' which uses a range of clichéd crime words and phrases, such as, "sheriff", "wanted poster" and "freight wagon". These terms appeal to the specialist audience of crime whilst also remaining recognisable to a wider audience. By using the lexis of crime in my piece, with terms such as "operation", "undercover" and "Specialist Firearms Officers", it helped define the piece's genre, allowing it to be clearly relevant for traditionally male readers of this style, but at the same time appropriate for a wider audience.

With regards to discourse structure, I have used varying sentence types throughout. This was particularly influenced by 'The Catcher in the Rye' in which Salinger uses a number of compound and complex sentences throughout the opening, before breaking up the structure with short, dramatic simple sentences such as "He's in Hollywood", and "It killed me". In my piece, I have used this technique extensively. For example, in paragraph 3, I have interspersed a number of compound and complex sentences with a simple sentence, "He glanced cautiously over his shoulder". This keeps the reader entertained through building tension. I also

used a balanced complex sentence, " I felt somewhat edgy; somewhat sceptical", enabling me to reflect the precision of the " operation" whilst reinforcing the appeal to my target audience.

Whilst I used a variety of sentence structures in my piece, I kept paragraphs quite short. This was in order to stay in keeping with the crime fiction genre and the style models, particularly Cussler's 'The Chase' which also uses short paragraphs. I also decided to keep the narrator's character less developed than I had originally done so in my first draft, similarly to Cussler's narrator who is kept quite restrained also. This has greater appeal to the target audience who are more entertained by action and content rather than longwinded character descriptions.

I feel that overall one of the most important linguistic methods I used was the manipulation of the crime lexis. By creating a semantic field of crime and observation through use of words and phrases which are familiar to the target audience, the genre of the piece became clearly defined. I believe another technique that was vital in creating my piece was the use of varying sentence structures. This allowed me to successfully create a discourse structure that remains fluent whilst also keeping the audience entertained and in suspense throughout.