

Using Sentence Lengths for Effect 1

A tsunami is a large wave on the ocean, usually caused by an undersea earthquake, a volcanic eruption, or coastal landslide. A tsunami can travel hundreds of miles over the open sea and cause extensive damage when it encounters land.



Imagine you are on holiday on the beach and see a huge tsunami heading towards you. What might you be thinking or feeling?

Read the text below. The narrator is on the beach watching a huge tsunami heading towards her.

Copy the short sentences used in the extract and think about their effect on the reader.

The water is only feet away now. I stand frozen on the beach, praying that the ocean will merely tickle my toes with its cooling surf. But it does not. A huge, roaring sea tiger devours me in one ravenous bite, lifts me off my feet and tosses me like a rag doll towards the hotel. I can't see. I can't breathe. This is it. I am going to die....

The writer uses the short sentence 'But it does not' to emphasise the narrator's horror about the sheer power of the water coming towards her. The effect of this is to draw attention to her rising panic about being caught up in the huge wave.

Furthermore, the writer uses other short sentences, such as

' _____ ,

to _____ . The effect of this is

The story continues below. Here the punctuation has been removed. Copy it out, putting the punctuation where you think it would be most effective.

Try to punctuate to emphasise the narrator’s thoughts and feelings at this point.

Use a mixture of long and short sentences in order to highlight the most dramatic parts of the text.

Round and round and round I go like an old pair of socks in a giant washing machine I am thrown against chairs and tables and plant pots and parasols thwack a heavy cocktail glass falls from the bar and strikes me on the head blood fills my eye and I cannot see frantically I thrash my arms and legs about, trying to reach the palm tree I can just make out to my left my fingertips brush against the tree trunk and I struggle to grab hold of it then I am caught up in the spin cycle again round and round and round I go scraping against walls and steps and sun-beds and broken bottles I cannot possibly survive this

