

Name: _____ Date: _____

Exploring Mood

Mood is the feeling you get from reading a piece of writing. Another way to describe mood is *atmosphere*. When you walk into a place, it has an atmosphere that makes you feel a certain way; when you "walk into" a story, it too has an atmosphere that creates a feeling. Writers create mood through word choice, imagery, dialogue, setting, and plot.

In this activity, you will consider the mood of the following passage from "Bearing Up":

You'll find out what the marks are for when you read the next page.

He'd had the bear dream for as long as he could recall, although it didn't start out as a bear. Back when he was a kid, it had been a dagger-toothed tyrannosaur stomping through the patio doors, hunting him across the family room at the old house in Ottawa. Another time, a golden-eyed tiger glided after him into the garage, and once, when he was really little, Cookie Monster shadowed him around daycare, goggle-eyed and blue-shaggy.

Now it was the bear. It would come for him every few months; not that he could count on it to keep to a schedule. Sometimes it was twice in the same week.

The settings varied but never the sequence of events. He'd be doing something ordinary—getting off a bus, walking up his front steps—when he'd catch a flicker of movement from the corner of his eye. He'd turn, and there'd be a glimpse of something dark sliding around a corner or dipping down behind a wall. The glimpse always shot through him with a bolt of white terror. He would back up, turn around, edge off in another direction. If he fled the house, the bear would lurk in the yard. Get on the bus, and it would come snuffling at the door. Try to outrun it, and he would feel its breath bursting hot on the back of his neck.

At the end of the dream, he'd be trapped, hedged in, the bear stalking closer and closer. The bear seemed to enlarge toward him, ^{*}like a dark balloon swelling across his field of vision, or as if he were a lost astronaut falling into a vast planet.

Then when it was about to touch him, there'd come a high-pitched whine, loud enough to make his teeth buzz, and he'd burst out of the dream, sweating and gasping.

Here is one word that could be used to describe the mood of the passage:

frightening

Now let's look at what creates this mood.

1. Plot

Complete the sentences below to explain how what is happening in the passage helps create the frightening mood.

The narrator is describing a dream in which Mike is being chased by _____.
_____. This is a _____ situation.

2. Verbs

Look at all of the vivid verbs that author Matt Hughes uses! These verbs help create the mood.

We circled one verb that helps create a frightening mood. **CIRCLE at least three more vivid verbs.**

3. Imagery

Imagery also helps create the mood of the passage. (Imagery is description that appeals to the reader's sense of sight, hearing, taste, smell, or touch—also known as sensory details.)

We underlined one sensory detail that helps create the frightening mood. **UNDERLINE three more sensory details.**

4. Figurative Language

Hughes uses figurative language to help readers feel what Mike is feeling. This also helps create the mood.

We put a star next to one simile (a comparison using *like* or *as*) that helps create a frightening mood. **PUT A STAR NEXT TO one more simile that does this.**

5. You try it!

Below, write a short passage about a dream Mike could have had that involved a bear, but with a different mood than the passage from the story. For example, the mood of your passage could be silly, gloomy, or peaceful.

In this box, write the mood that you will create.

Now use plot as well as descriptive writing—vivid verbs, imagery, and/or figurative language—to create the mood that you chose. Use the back of this page or another sheet of paper if you need more space.