



SOUND IT OUT

Sounds surround us. But do we pay attention? And do we appreciate their significance? I guess this issue has resonance because people dear to me have suffered hearing loss; they understand the meaning of sounds.

Since the world's audio system definitely plays a role in our lives, it should also play a role in our writing. Don't undervalue its effectiveness. Sounds grab attention: they give warning, stir yearning, spark memories. They work to connect our readers to our message.

Incorporating sounds into prose or poetry takes some effort. Is that blast, squeak or peal the protagonist or antagonist? Either way, sounds can add another layer to our plot and our characters. A useful tool, audio inclusions can add drama and suspense to the written word.

Here's a powerful example of the meaning of sound. There was a petite Asian woman in a writers' workshop I led. I asked the group to talk about music that had moved them. Her response: "Sounds are music to me. The wind in the trees is the most moving sound I know. It brings me to tears. It took me years to understand why. When I was a child, we had to flee Hong Kong during the war. We took only what we could carry. I remember the sound of the wind in the trees as we fled. It represented freedom to me. It still does."

WORDS' WORTH PROJECT #5: HEAR MORE

Materials Needed: comfortable seat; digital recorder (optional but perhaps useful for those with diminished hearing); writing paper & pen.

- 🔗 Find a place to sit - either indoors or outside.
- 🔗 Close your eyes. If you have a recorder, turn it on. Sit quietly for at least 15 minutes.
- 🔗 Listen.
- 🔗 Identify 3 different sounds. Pay close attention to how they interact.
- 🔗 Continue sitting quietly. Write down your impressions of the sounds - use words or phrases.
- 🔗 Give a personality to each sound you've identified. Describe them as characters (human or otherwise).
- 🔗 Using only dialogue, devise a scene where these 3 characters interact.