

Focus on time / context
immediately – does this reflect its
importance to the novel?

Juxtaposition of good and bad
attributes

Anonymous - nameless

In eighteenth-century France there lived a man who
was one of the most gifted and abominable
personages in an era that knew no lack of gifted and
abominable personages.

Another reference to the time –
making a comment about
society?

Hints that protagonist is not 'out of
the ordinary' – perhaps implying
that the time was extraordinary?

God-like: use of he before his name is mentioned.
– builds the suspense straight away about who the character is and the extent of his notoriety

His story will be told here. His name was Jean-Baptiste Grenouille, and if his name – in contrast to the names of other gifted abominations, de Sade's, for instance, or Saint-Just's, Fouche's, Bonaparte's, etc. – has been forgotten today, it is certainly not because Grenouille fell short of those more famous blackguards when it came to arrogance, misanthropy, immorality, or, more succinctly, wickedness, but because his gifts and his sole ambition were restricted to a domain that leaves no traces in history: to the fleeting realm of scent.

Scent leaves no mark – suggests someone invisible; untraceable; uncatchable; unreal?

List of famous historical figures – makes an assumption about how the reader will perceive them.

Includes the reader – draws them in to the story

In charge – overpowering

In the period of which we speak, there reigned in the cities a stench barely conceivable to us modern men and women. The streets stank of manure, the courtyards of urine, the stairwells stank of mouldering wood and rat droppings, the kitchens of spoiled cabbage and mutton fat ...

Repetition of the word 'stank' emphasises the pervasive nature of the smell.

Use of adjectives heightens the understanding of the terrible nature of the smell.

Sets up an opposition between 'us' and 'them'.

List of smells reflects the inescapable nature of the stench

Now look at the rest of the second paragraph from, '... the unaired parlours ...' to '... that was not accompanied by stench.' and annotate it carefully analysing the language closely. Consider how the writer affects our understanding of the text by his use of language.

Share your ideas with a partner or the class.