"Revision Example", edited transcript.

[NARRATOR]

[0:02]

Alright, so today we're going to focus on revision, and remember, revision is what happens throughout your entire writing piece and it's focusing on those six traits that are word choice and sentence fluency and organization.

[0:17]

So we're going to work on that, and it's not to be confused with editing which is focusing on the conventions; that's the capitalization and the spelling and the punctuation and the grammar use. This is revision.

[0:30]

And you'll notice in this piece that we have here, it's a pretty poorly written piece; not a lot of showing, mostly telling. It's not very organized, it's pretty poorly written. So I'm going to give it a read, and we'll talk about it and make some changes.

[0:49]

[Reading] "Augusta, Kentucky."

"I grew up in a poor family in a poor town. We did not have much money or many of the good things in life, but we did have one another. One year the flood wiped out our home. In fact, it wiped out all of River Street. I'll never forget the morning I saw River Street for the last time. The river was on one side of the street, and the houses were on the other. We lived in one of these houses before the flood hit. There was mud on the walls of the houses, and many windows were broken. The roofs were in terrible shape. There were many gigantic trees. Children were still playing here, and I remember hearing music. There was a convenient store at the end of the street and after that a lot of weeds. The whole scene was pretty desolate."

[1:29]

As you can see I actually had trouble reading it and I don't know if you could hear it but I struggled figuring out where the organization was. You'll notice here we're talking about "I'll never forget the morning I saw River Street for the last time", and then it goes into talking, describing River Street, but prior to that it talked about River Street being wiped out, and then after that it goes into more details of the ... being wiped out but it doesn't say that it went into it.

[1:59]

So this sentence right here, "there was mud on the walls of the houses and many windows were broken", I didn't even realize that was talking about after theâ€”when I first heard it, I didn't realize it was talking about after the flood. I was thinking that's what it normally looked like because the prior two sentences were talking about what it looked like before the flood.

[2:17]

So it's really confusing, a fairly, very poorly organized piece. I'm not sure what the even the topic is. I mean you start out with a couple sentences up here talking about the family, and then you start talking about the flood and the emotion that I'm supposed to feel. I mean they tell me, in the last sentence, "desolate". So there's supposed to be desolation, and that's that empty, sad, you know, you think of a ghost town or a haunted house. That's desolate. It's empty. It's sad looking. But none of the words inside the paragraph actually tell me that.

[2:50]

So let's start beginning and then we'll work our way back to the end, though.

[2:55]

Those first two sentences are talking about the family and this is not even... well actually let's go all the way to the beginning. "Augusta, Kentucky" is the title but that's not evenâ€”the story is not about Augusta, Kentucky. It's about a flood on River Street and the author's house.

[3:14]

And so obviously there needs to be a change to the title so that the title can do a better job of describing what it is the piece is going to be about.

[3:24]

And from there, the first two sentences are talking about the family, but the story is not about the family, it's about the flood on River Street. So revising, we could take those first two sentences out. We'd want to change the title to something maybe [typing] "The Last Time I Saw River Street".

[3:50]

At least that title right there is going to describe what the piece is about.

[3:58]

Now, I was talking about the last sentence describe, or telling what the emotion is. That should come along in the first sentence. Your introductory sentence should introduce what the story is going to be about and give an idea of what emotion the audience should be feeling, and you don't get that until the very end of this piece.

[4:17]

So we're looking at organizing the piece so that it makes sense for the audience. We're talking about introducing the piece with an introductory sentence so that the audience has an idea of what they're supposed to be feeling.

[4:29]

Word choice should come in. When we want the audience to feel certain things, we've got to use words that are going to bring those feelings together.

[4:37]

So the words in here, "and many windows were broken", we look at this pair, this part of a sentence right here, this clause: "many windows were broken".

[4:46]

I don't really have a feeling for that. I mean I just picture windows broken, I guess, but it doesn't really do a good job of making me feel anything.

[4:55]

"Mud on the walls of the houses", the first part of that sentence, again, I don't, okay, there's mud on the walls of the houses, but what am I supposed to feel?

[5:04]

So here is an example of, and I'm just going to put it down here so you can see and compare the two. Here's an example of the edited or the revised version, I apologize, the revised version.

[5:18]

Let me read that. You'll notice, I hope, that there's more showing and less telling, stronger word choice, and it stays to the topic which is River Street After the Flood. It's not gonna talk about family and everything else, and it's organized in a way that makes sense. Hopefully you'll see that. So let me begin reading.

[5:40]

[Reading] "River Street After the Flood."

"I will never forget that desolate spring morning when I saw River Street for the last time. On the east side of the street, the Ohio river waited menacingly. The west side was lined with a single row of flood-damaged houses, sitting dark and abandoned, so completely decayed that even the poor could no longer live in them. Walls that once were pastel blue, green, or yellow were now layered with mud six or seven feet high. Paneless window jambs were opened like dark mouths to gulp down the muddy flood tides. Once sturdy beams that supported porch roofs stood shakily, missing chunks of molded wood from their damp middles. These rotting houses were still shaded by the enormous limbs of the old oaks. Fed by the rich river soil, the trees loomed over the streets like strange, dark mourners. Their massive gnarled roots had broken through the sidewalk, pushing up great chunks of jagged concrete. Tattered, dirty children played on these slabs while twangy country music drifted down from the bar at the end of the street. And that's where my memory ends, at the end of the street, lost in mud, weeds, and rubble. This was the last view I had of the street where I had grown up."

[6:49]

So again, you'll notice immediately, hopefully, you should, that there's vision. I'm telling you and I'm showing you with my words, you can create a movie out of the words that have been chosen here.

[7:03]

And the details include, instead of saying this first, this line right here, the river, if we look at the first paragraph: "the river was on one side of the street and the houses were on the other". Well that tells you, but if I tell you, if I show you using these words:

[7:20]

[Reading] "On the east side of the street, the Ohio river waited menacingly. The west side was lined with a single row of flood-damaged houses sitting dark and abandoned, so completely decayed that even the poor could no longer live in them." Now all of a sudden you've got an image. You don't have me telling you. And the detail: east-side, west-side of the street; Not just one side and the other.

[7:45]

So the next time you're looking at your piece, I want you to consider how you're organizing it. I want you to consider what words you're using, and make sure your audience is really having the ability to create an image from your words, and is able to follow your sentences and your ideas and get the emotion you want them to feel.

[8:09]

The words that were chosen in this piece, the way they were chosen, the way they were organized, allows for a very solid, strong mental image, and I get the emotion of desolation. I'm saddened by this. I'm picturing it, and it's a sad looking place.

[8:25]

So work on that on your piece the next time you get a chance to write.