

Parenthesis

Adding extra information to a sentence (or paragraph) using brackets, dashes or commas.

If you take it out again, the passage should still make grammatical sense.

"The case was worn - and very full - and its straps struggled to keep in its contents."

Most of the time, parenthesis is tucked into a sentence, but a parenthesis can also be its own sentence as part of a paragraph.

She opened the envelope, carefully sliding the paper out.
(She hadn't received a handwritten letter in years).

You don't need to read the parenthesis for this to make sense, but it does give you more detail.

Parenthesis can help us better understand things like setting, or aspects of a character, like their emotions, motivations or background.

It can almost feel like the writer is whispering a secret in your ear.

Liz Lochhead's poem 'The Bargain' uses parenthesis to describe a character at the Barras market in Glasgow:

"nothing to sell, but three bent forks a torn, calendar (last year's) and a broken plastic sandal."

The person has nothing of value to offer, and the parenthesis reinforces this idea.

It's bad enough that the calendar is torn, but the parenthesis makes it clear just how pitiful and worthless it is, by telling us it's out of date too.

If your writing makes sense, but you want to add more info, try sticking in a parenthesis.
(You can really build on your ideas!)