

Read this extract:

This extract is taken from chapter one of a novel about a teenage spy. The story opens at an air show where members of the public can see military planes flying and even see them up close.

As with every public event in the UK, an extensive, almost invisible security net had been put in place. It was impossible to stop and search all the cars but CCTV cameras recorded every arrival and every number plate was instantly checked. People might notice police and even a few sniffer dogs moving among them. These were a common sight. But they would be unaware of the plain-clothes policemen, many of them with concealed weapons, mingling with the crowd. In fact the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC) had met in their offices close to the Houses of Parliament just a few days before and had agreed that the threat level at the Suffolk Air Show would remain at MODERATE. They weren't expecting any trouble.

And so nobody paid very much attention to the woman who arrived just after three o'clock. She had driven into the car park in a Ford Transit van which, according to the Automatic Number Plate Recognition system, belonged to the St John Ambulance service. This is the country's leading first-aid charity and, indeed, the woman was dressed in the green and black uniform of a local volunteer. She was carrying a nylon bag marked with a white cross which, if opened, would reveal medicine and bandages. She was short and round-shouldered with dark red hair that had been cut so badly that it stuck 11 Thin Air out straight on one side of her head and curled in on the other. There was something quite aggressive about the way she walked, like a boxer about to enter the ring.

She was overweight, breathing heavily, with beads of sweat on her upper lip. She had a lot of make-up on but it did nothing to make her more attractive, sitting uselessly on her leathery skin. As she walked, she put on a pair of cheap sunglasses. They concealed the smouldering violence in her eyes. There was a separate entrance leading into the airbase, reserved for paramedics, technicians, organizers ... anyone working at the event. She stopped and showed a pass which identified her as Jane Smith but this was not her real name. Nor had she ever worked for the St John Ambulance service. The security man at the gate might have wondered why she had arrived so late in the day, when the Air Show was almost over. He might have asked her why she was alone. But he was tired and he was looking forward to getting home. He glanced at her pass and waved her through. He didn't even look inside the bag.

Consider these questions:

1. How do you think the woman is presented in this extract?
2. Do you think this extract is interesting? Why or why not?
3. Is there a particular part of the extract that you find particularly effective or interesting? Why?
4. Can you pick out what the topic is for each paragraph?
 - a. Extension: Why do you think the writer waits to introduce the woman until the 2nd paragraph?
5. If you could write the scene right before this one, what do you think may have happened?
6. If you could write the next scene right after this one, what do you think might happen next?



7. A student said about the 3rd paragraph "I think this part of the extract builds a lot of mystery and tension around who this woman is and what she's planning to do". Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Can you find quotes from the extract to back up your ideas?