1. Explain snapshot using your pen as a camera. Your pen is a magic pen. You can use this pen to take a picture. It is not like an ordinary camera, it can also record sensory details such as smell, taste, touch, etc. Close your eyes and I will show you an example from writing from a real writer to show you how this works. Pen zooms in on a specific moment and slows down the detail. Read examples of snapshot.

Snapshot Little House on the Prairie - “Ma kissed them both, and tucked the covers in around them. They lay there awhile, looking at Ma’s smooth, parted hair and her hands busy with sewing in the lamplight. Her needle made little clicking sounds against her thimble and then the thread went softly, swish! through the pretty calico that Pa had traded furs for.”

Notice how Ingalls Wilder zooms in closer to her subject with more particular physical detail in each sentence. I sometimes tell students that details are boxes inside boxes. One detail unlocks several others, and so on. Laura Ingalls Wilder begins by looking at Ma and ends up dwelling on Ma’s hands sewing. This telephoto quality becomes sharply apparent when we convert this snapshot back into the questions Laura Ingalls Wilder may have asked in her mind as she wrote this passage. Here’s what I came up with.

* What did Ma do to put the girls to bed?
* What did the girls look at?
* What did Ma’s hair look like? How was it parted?
* What were Ma’s hands doing?
* How much light was in the room?
* What did the needle sound like when it hit against the thimble?
* What did the thread sound like when it went through the calico?
* Where did the calico come from?

Snapshot Maniac Magee -

Maniac had seen some amazing things in his lifetime, but nothing as amazing as that house. From the smell of it, he knew this wasn’t the first time an animal had relieved itself on the rugless floor. In fact, in another corner he spotted a form of relief that could not be soaked up by newspapers.

Cans and bottles lay all over, along with crusts, peelings, cores, scraps, rinds, wrappers-everything you would normally find in a garbage can. And everywhere were raisins.

As he walked through the dining room, something-an old tennis ball-hit him on top of the head and bounced away. He looked up-into the laughing faces of Russell and Piper. The hole in the ceiling was so big they both could have jumped through it at once.

He ran a hand along one wall. The peeling paint came off like cornflakes.

Nothing could be worse than the living and dining rooms, yet the kitchen was. A jar of peanut butter had crashed to the floor; someone had gotten a running start, jumped into it, and skied a brown, one-footed track to the stove. One the table were what appeared to be the remains of an autopsy performed upon a large bird, possibly a crow. The refrigerator contained two food groups: mustard and beer. The raisins here were even more abundant. He spotted several of them moving. They weren’t raisins; they were roaches (1990, pp. 131-32)

2. Your pen is also magical and can read thoughts. When you put it to your head, you can know exactly what somebody is thinking in the moment they are thinking it. Read example of thoughtshot.

Thoughtshot Hatchett -

The jolts that took the pilot had come, and now Brian sat and there was a strange feeling of silence in the thrumming roar of the engine-a strange feeling of silence and being alone. Brian was stopped.

He was stopped. Inside he was stopped. He could not think past what he saw, what he felt. All was stopped. The very core of him, the very center of Brian Robeson was stopped and stricken with a white-flash of horror, a terror so intense that his breathing, his thinking, and nearly his heart had stopped.

Stopped.

Seconds passed, seconds that become all of his life, and he began to know what he was seeing, begin to understand what he saw and that was worse, so much worse that he wanted to make his mind freeze again.

he was sitting in a bushplane roaring seven thousand feet above the northern wilderness with a pilot who had suffered a massive heart attack and who was either dead or in something close to a coma.

He was alone.

In a roaring plane with no pilot he was alone.

Alone. (1987, p 12)

3. An exploded moment is when you have pictures and thoughts combined to make one great scene in a story. Read examples

Exploded Moment from Sisters by Jan Wilson

I watched myself begin this horrible deed. My hand seemed to suddenly have a will of its own. It picked up the milk carton. The spout was already open. My arm extended over Carol’s head, tipping the carton. The liquid poured in slow, steady thick unending steam down through her long blonde hair, soaking the back of her clothes and running onto the floor. As the milk reached the floor I shifted the spout slightly to begin another long milky journey down the front of her. It poured over her forehead, in the eyes, running in rivers down each side of her nose, converging on the chin and splashing into her plate. Her food was soon awash and the milk poured over the edge, and ran into her lap. And still I poured on-it was too late to stop now. The rapture of it all. Oh, sweet revenge.

Carol was shocked into absolute silence, her milk-washed eyes staring at me in total disbelief-almost uncomprehending. What had I done? I only meant to pour a little to scare her and now it was all over-everywhere. Her chair was a four-legged island in the middle of a giant white pond in the kitchen floor. How could one quart of milk go so far? For a second or two she didn’t react and I had a brief but fleeting prayer that she was stunned speechless. However, not for long.

“Daddeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!” she screamed at the top of her lungs. The sound of cocktalk glasses being knocked over the coffee table in the living room and my father charging around the corner happened almost simultaneously. In an instant he took in the whole scene. Horrible big sister pours milk over innocent little sister’s head. I simply couldn’t have looked much worse. It didn’t take any smarts to realize that. I knew there was no way of explaining my way out of this one. “Guilty” was the immediate verdict of the judge. My mother, the long since powerless “jury” of one, as usual, did not interfere.

My father, in self-righteous splendor, straightened to his full 6’6” of height, and livid with rage, dragged me into my bedroom, stripping off his belt on the way. I tried to escape his iron grip, to no avail. I had the horrible impression this was going to be a beating that I’d never forget.

Exploded moment from The Great Gilly Hopkins

*Unpacking even just a few things in her brown suitcase, always seemed a waste of time to Gilly. She never knew if she’d be in a place long enough to make it worth the bother. And yet it was something to fill the time.* There were two drawers at the top and four larger ones below. She put her underwear in one of the little ones, and her shirts and jeans in one of the big ones, and then picked up the photograph from the bottom of the suitcase. (1987, p. 9)