

## Example of Revising from Edgar Allan's Official Crime Investigation Notebook

by Mary Amato

(Coming from Holiday House in October 2010)

Sometimes, editors catch a problem that appears more than once in a book. Mary Cash, my editor for this book, noticed that many of my chapter openings were bland. She suggested that I “jazz up” my chapter openings, and she was right! Here’s an example of how I revised one chapter opening.

Original draft:

### Chapter Twelve

**It was raining when Edgar woke up, raining when he went out to catch the bus, and still raining when the bus pulled into the school parking lot.**

First, I looked at my original writing for clues to tell me what kind of day it was and what was happening in this part of the story, and then I imagined that I was Edgar (a boy who wants to use his detective skills to find a thief that has been stealing things from his teacher’s classroom) and that I was riding the school bus in the rain. I asked myself: What would I see? What would I hear? What would I be thinking? Here’s my revision:

### Chapter Twelve

**Overnight, dark thunderclouds had invaded the sky, and now the rain was pounding on top of the school bus like it was trying to get in. An ominous morning. As the bus pulled into the school parking lot, Edgar looked out to see if there were any criminal-looking types lurking around the school’s entrance.**

Much better! But I’m not done yet. Before I send a final revision back to my editor, I always read my work aloud. Reading aloud helps a writer to catch repetitions and other things that you don’t notice when you read silently. When I read this aloud, I noticed that I used both “looked” and “looking” in the last sentence. To make the sentence have a little more sparkle, I decided to change the first “looked” to “peered.” So I revised that sentence to read:

**... As the bus pulled into the school parking lot, Edgar peered out to see if any criminal-looking types were lurking around the school’s entrance.**

Now I’m happy!