

How does he do it? Pullman's use of description

Read the following descriptions.

The dark quadrangle was still full of the _____ night air. Overhead the last stars were still _____, but the light from the East was gradually _____ into the sky above the Hall. Lyra ran into the Library Garden, and stood for a moment in the immense _____, looking up at the stone _____ of the Chapel, the _____ - green _____ of the Sheldon Building, the white-painted lantern of the Library. Now she was going to leave these sights, she _____ how much she'd miss them.

Something _____ in the study window and a _____ of light _____ out for a moment. She remembered what she had to do and _____ on the glass door.

In Mrs Coulter's flat, everything was pretty. It was full of _____ for the wide windows faced south, and the walls were covered in a _____ gold-and-white striped wallpaper. _____ pictures in gilt frames, an _____ looking-glass, fanciful _____ bearing anbaric lamps with _____ shades; and frills on the cushions too, and _____ valances over the curtain rail, and a soft green _____ - _____ carpet underfoot; and every surface was covered, it seemed to Lyra's innocent eye, with pretty little china boxes and _____ and _____ of _____.

1. With a partner, decide on the words you would choose to use if you were writing the novel. Discuss your choices.
2. Now compare your ideas with Pullman's (pages 73 and 76). Discuss why you think he might have chosen his words.
3. Look at the contrast he makes between the hard masculine world of Jordan College and the pretty, soft and warm world of Mrs Coulter's flat. List the words that help to create this contrast under headings of 'hard' and 'soft' words. Remember to think about how the words sound as well as what they mean.
4. Now think of your own setting. It can be anywhere you like, but try to either describe it using either hard/tough or soft/gentle language.