

Descriptive Sensory Writing

Summary

Students will be able to incorporate sensory details into a piece of descriptive writing. Students will improve a piece of writing by using precise and vivid language and word choice.

Main Core Tie

English Language Arts Grade 5

[Writing Standard 3 d.](#)

Time Frame

3 class periods of 45 minutes each

Materials

Teacher Materials:

Picture books incorporating sensory details:

- *Owl Moon*
 , Jame Yolen
- *Miss Rumphius*
 , Barbara Cooney
- *Twilight Comes Twice*
 , Ralph Fletcher

Other books by Eve Bunting

Other books by Cynthia Rylant

Topic/detail graphic organizer

Student Materials:

Pictures or postcards (one per student)

Instructional Procedures

Pass out pictures or postcards to each student. Instruct students to write a description of the scene. Share student writing as time permits.

Read aloud one of the suggested titles (or a title of your choice) that incorporates the use of strong sensory details. Have students listen for phrases that draw on the senses of sight, sound, taste, touch, and hearing.

After finishing the book, chart sensory details on the board or a graphic organizer. Discuss with students how using a variety of sensory details improves a piece of writing.

Have students return to their postcard or picture description and underline examples of sensory details in different colors. For example, underline sight details in red, and touch details in green. Discuss which type of details students focused on and are needing improvement.

Have students return to pictures or postcards and fill in the graphic organizer/sensory web with additional sensory details.

Have students revise their descriptive paragraphs by including additional sensory details and vivid language. Have students compare the original and final versions of their paragraphs.

Writing Prompt: Think of a place that you can remember clearly and that is important to you. Think of the sights, sounds, and smells that come rushing back into your memory. Use words to paint a picture of this place that would make a reader feel as if he or she were right there.

EXAMPLE #1

[My Grandparents' House](#) (pdf)

IDEAS AND CONTENT: [5]

Ideas are clear and focused. Details are meaningful to the author. (Example: "Then the strong embrace of my grandpa makes me feel safe.") The writing gives insight into why the place is important to the author.

ORGANIZATION: [5]

The writing flows effectively from idea to idea. The presentation of information moves the reader through the text. Important moments (such as when grandparents are hugging the writer) are "slowed down" and elaborated.

VOICE: [4]

The tone adds interest to the writing and is appropriate to the audience. Voice has an honest and soothing feel.

WORD CHOICE: [4]

Word choice is natural and effective. The writer includes specific details, such as the "calming sound of people talking."

SENTENCE FLUENCY: [3]

Sentences flow easily and with rhythm. The paper lends itself to being read aloud. Sentences are correctly constructed and hang together.

CONVENTIONS: [4]

Spelling is generally correct. Errors tend to be few and do not get in the way of meaning.

AREAS NEEDING IMPROVEMENT:

Revise for a stronger conclusion.

Add lively verbs.

Add some variety to length of sentences.

Add commas to compound sentences.

EXAMPLE #2

[My Backyard](#) (pdf)

IDEAS AND CONTENT: [4]

The topic is specific and a manageable size. Ideas are fresh and help the reader to see things in new ways. (Example: "... a place to let out your frustration when no one will listen to you.") The reader is not left with unanswered questions; the reader can picture the scene clearly.

ORGANIZATION: [4]

The organization is strong enough to move reader through the text without confusion.

VOICE: [4]

The voice is relaxed and honest. The tone of the writing adds interest because of rich and vivid description.

WORD CHOICE: [4]

The writing has strong sensory details. (Example: "...cool breeze of wind runs into our mouths.")

There is some good use of simile and metaphor. (Example: "...leaves feel like velvet.")

SENTENCE FLUENCY: [4]

The sentence structure and length enhance meaning. Sentences are of appropriate length and feel relaxed. The paper lends itself to being read aloud.

CONVENTIONS: [4]

Spelling is generally correct. There are some errors needing correction before the paper is published.

AREAS NEEDING IMPROVEMENT:

Strengthen lead and conclusion.

Add lively verbs.

Polish for conventions.

EXAMPLE #3

[Untitled](#) (pdf)

IDEAS AND CONTENT: [3]

The topic is fairly broad. The writer seems to be drawing on knowledge or experience, but has difficulty going from general observations to specifics.

ORGANIZATION: [2]

This paper needs the most work in the area of organization. The writer needs a recognizable introduction and conclusion.

VOICE: [3]

The voice is earnest and pleasing but not compelling. It lacks individuality.

WORD CHOICE: [3]

Word choice is adequate and correct but not colorful. It is marred by passive rather than active verbs.

SENTENCE FLUENCY: [3]

The paper hums along with a steady beat. The use of creative and appropriate transitions would enhance the fluency.

CONVENTIONS: [3]

End punctuation is generally correct, and most words are capitalized correctly. Internal punctuation is faulty, and the spelling of some words is incorrect.

EXAMPLE #4

[Arcade](#) (pdf)

IDEAS AND CONTENT: [3]

The writer generally stays on the topic, but lacks ideas that are fresh and original.

ORGANIZATION: [3]

The sequencing shows logic, and the pacing is fairly well controlled. However, the paper ends abruptly, without a recognizable conclusion. The opening could also be more inviting.

VOICE: [3]

The writer seems sincere and pleasant but not compelling. The writer appears to play it safe and does not reveal who he or she is.

WORD CHOICE: [3]

Familiar words and phrases communicate and show an attempt at colorful language. Words and phrases are functional but lack active verbs.

SENTENCE FLUENCY: [2]

Parts of the text invite expressive oral reading, but sentence structure is lacking. Endless conjunctions ("and," "and so," etc.) create too many run-on sentences.

CONVENTIONS: [3]

Spelling is usually correct, but there are some internal punctuation problems. The paper needs paragraphing and fine-tune editing.

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