

Grade 6: Precise, Descriptive, and Sensory Details

Aligns with CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.3.D:

- Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to convey experiences and events.

Welcome

In narrative writing, authors rely on making the reader feel as if they are in the story—it's what makes the story come alive. To do this, authors use precise, descriptive, and sensory language in order to paint the most vivid picture possible. If the story is vague, unclear, or lacks imagery, the story's meaning may be lost to readers. For example, if a writer is detailing a story about an ocean visit or vacation, describing the smell of salt in the air, the sand between fingers and toes, or what it's like swimming in such an expansive body of water could help bring the story to life for the reader.

Watch!

Watch this video to understand the difference between general and concrete details, and how writers use such details to convey experiences:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dVMcrchUpts>

Objectives

In this module, students will learn how to:

- determine which experiences and events need elaboration through descriptive details.
- use precise and descriptive words and sensory details to convey experiences and events.

Review

Key Terms

- Being **precise** refers to using concrete, exact, or accurate words and phrases for emphasis in details or expressions.
- **Sensory details or language** means to choose words or phrases related to the five senses: touch, sound, scent, sight, and taste.



Exploring the Standard

In narrative writing, the writer has a job of making the reader want to turn the page or continue reading the story. A writer can achieve this by using precise and descriptive, instead of vague or “empty,” words. Vague or empty words are ones that do not provide the reader with a concrete or clear image while reading. To avoid this, writers should use specific nouns/pronouns, active verbs, and modifiers such as adjectives and adverbs. Consider the following examples:

“Empty” Sentences	Precise Sentences	Explanation
We got a new dog.	My family adopted an adorable German Sheppard puppy with bright blue eyes.	In the first sentence, it’s not clear who “we” is and whether the dog was bought, found, or adopted. The second sentence clarifies that a family adopted a puppy. The sentence also describes the kind of puppy.
Dinner was gross last night.	My mom ordered a pizza with anchovies, mushrooms, and olives for dinner last night, which are my least favorite toppings.	The first sentence does not explain what the dinner was or why it was gross. The second sentence provides descriptive details that explain the dinner: pizza with several toppings that the narrator can’t stand.
I have a lot of fun with friends.	Last weekend, my friends and I went ice-skating at our local rink where we held our own figure skating competition, despite the cold weather.	The first sentence provides little detail. All the reader knows is that the narrator had fun with friends. The sentence does not state what they did or when. The second sentence fills in those blanks: they went ice skating last weekend and had a figure skating competition.

In the examples above, the sentences are expanded to include specific, more descriptive words to help the reader better understand the experience. Each revised sentence contains at least one concrete or specific image through the use of adjectives, active verbs, and precise nouns.

To take it one step further, writers can also use sensory details that enhance or clarify the image, expression, or experience being presented. Sensory details rely on the five senses (touch, taste, sound, sight, and smell) to make the writing come alive for the reader.

