

Using Sensory Details for Descriptive Writing — Grade Eight

Ohio Standards Connections

Writing Process

Benchmark C

Use revision strategies to improve the style, variety of sentence structure, clarity of the controlling idea, logic, effectiveness of word choice and transitions between paragraphs, passages or ideas. (Grades 8 - 10)

Indicator 9

Use precise language, action verbs, sensory details, colorful modifiers and style as appropriate to audience and purpose. (Grade 8)

Writing Applications

Benchmark A

Compose narratives that establish a specific setting, plot and a consistent point of view, and develop characters by using sensory details and concrete language. (Grades 8 - 10)

Indicator 1

Write narratives that:

- a . sustain reader interest by pacing action and developing an engaging plot (e.g., tension and suspense);
- b . use literary devices to enhance style and tone; and
- c . create complex characters in a definite, believable setting.

(Grade 8)

Lesson Summary:

Students will create narrative paragraphs in response to a prompt. They will use the senses of smell, taste, touch, sight and hearing to completely respond to the prompt. Students' responses should show a personal style and a clear audience.

Estimated Duration: *Three hours*

Commentary:

Writing narrative accounts that develop character, setting and plot is a third grade benchmark, and using narrative strategies (e.g., dialogue and action) to develop characters, plot and setting and maintain a consistent point of view is a fifth grade benchmark. So by the time students complete this lesson at the eighth grade level, they have been practicing and polishing skills that have been addressed at earlier grade levels on an ongoing basis. Even so, having a clear understanding of the purpose and audience in a written work is absolutely essential to successful implementation of this lesson. Therefore, teachers may decide that before they proceed with this lesson, they need to further address particular purposes and audiences when developing written narratives. This may be addressed in a separate lesson prior to proceeding with the pre-assessment strategy and instructional procedures offered in this lesson.

Students need to be taught that, in order to engage an audience, recognizing the incorporation of sensory details in writing is a highly valued skill, whether the writing is a persuasive piece or a narrative. The pre-assessment that is proposed in this lesson centers on the writing of descriptive paragraphs in response to a prompt. The writing that results is evidence of students' abilities to develop creative writing — a skill that is somewhat difficult to teach.

The post-assessment, on the other hand, allows students to try their hands at writing one piece that is both creative and a narrative. The post-assessment calls for students to use sensory details, as well as dialogue, to develop characters and setting and explain a personal account of something that has happened.

The student work samples included with this lesson were collected during the pilot testing of the lesson. The work samples are the result of students being asked to imagine their dream vacation and to write a paragraph describing this dream vacation. The outcome of this assignment resulted in a creative piece. In this model lesson, students are required to recollect a vacation, class trip, or positive personal event or experience and to write a creative piece that tells what happened. In this way, the written work also is a narrative that has incorporated the sensory details needed to give it a creative flare.

Pre-Assessment:

Conduct an informal class discussion about descriptive writing, asking questions like : What is descriptive writing? When have you been assigned descriptive writing projects in the past? and Who was your audience?

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Scoring Guidelines:

This is an informal assessment that has no scoring rubric.

Post-Assessment:

Students will be asked to write descriptive paragraphs in response to a narrative prompt that is personal in nature.

Scoring Guidelines:

3 = Narrative strategies (including sensory details) were adequately used.

Paragraphs were used skillfully; the response to the prompt was appropriate; the intended audience was clear and rules of grammar and punctuation were observed.

2 = Narrative strategies (including sensory details) were used but not to the full extent. The overall response was appropriate in length; the intended audience was clear and rules of grammar and punctuation were mostly observed.

1 = Narrative strategies (including sensory details) were not used in descriptive paragraphs. The overall response to the topic was brief; the intended audience was unclear and rules of grammar and punctuation were randomly observed.

0 = off task, off topic.

Instructional Procedures:

1. Write the definition of narrative writing on the board. Review this definition with the students.
2. Provide examples of acceptable and poor narrative paragraphs.
3. Ask students, "What makes a good narrative paragraph?"
4. Ask students which example is better and ask "What can we do to improve the poor example?"
5. Divide students into pairs.
6. Distribute one transparency sheet and one transparency marker to each pair of students.
7. Invite each pair to choose one lemon.
8. Advise students to use their senses of sight, taste, touch and smell to record observations of the lemon.
9. Assign each group to use these observations to write a narrative paragraph (focusing on sensory details) about its lemon, using the transparency sheet.
10. Students may be directed to write about, for example, their reactions to the taste, feel or smell of the lemon.
11. Collect the narratives from each group.
12. With an overhead projector, review these narratives with the class, using the following questions:
 - Is this paragraph a complete description of the lemon?
 - Were the sensory images used?

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- What could have made this paragraph more detailed or complete?
- What did you like best about this paragraph?
- Were action verbs used and did students use a variety of sentence structures within their narratives?
- What narrative elements were incorporated into their paragraphs (i.e., character development, setting, etc).

Differentiated Instructional Support:

Instruction is differentiated according to learner needs, to help all learners either meet the intent of the specified indicator(s) or, if the indicator is already met, to advance beyond the specified indicator(s).

- Extended time can be given to IEP students.
- Extra examples can be given to students.
- Arrange for peer tutoring.
- Students may write a descriptive essay on a specific prompt.
- Examples of prompts may include describing the first day of school this year, describing your favorite meal or describing your room at home.

Extension:

- Students can search for descriptive excerpts from their favorite author. Ask students to explain what makes an author's writing come to life.
- Students can search for examples of good and bad descriptive writing, from books, articles, media, etc., to share with the class.

Homework Options and Home Connections:

Students may use descriptive details to describe characters, events or settings of an assigned story.

Interdisciplinary Connections:

Work with history or art teachers to develop projects describing events and time periods.

Materials/Resources Needed:

For the teacher: Chalk, chalkboard, overhead projector, definitions of descriptive writing, and lemon slices.

For the students: Paper, pen or pencil, transparency sheets (at least one sheet for every two students), transparency markers (at least one marker for every two students) and lemons (at least one for every two students).

Key Vocabulary:

- sensory images
- descriptive writing
- narrative writing

Technology Connections:

- Students can use computers to type their descriptive paragraphs.
- Students can search specific Internet sites to find examples of good and bad descriptive paragraphs.



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General Tips:

- Use this lesson during a unit on the types of writing.
- Model prewriting and editing for several topics for descriptive writing prior to implementing this lesson.
- Allow adequate time for student-directed revisions and discussion.

Attachments:

- Narrative 1
- Narrative 2
- Narrative 3
- Narrative 4