

UNIT II

DESCRIPTIVE WRITING

A descriptive essay simply describes something or someone by appealing to the reader's senses: sight, sound, touch, smell and taste. Here are the basic steps to writing an effective descriptive essay:

1. Select a subject:

Observation is the key to writing a good description. For example, if you are writing about a place, go there and take notes on the sights, sounds, and smells. A descriptive essay paints a picture for the reader, using descriptive devices and the senses. Create a thesis statement that informs the reader who or what you are describing. Examples: "The wooden roller coaster in Coney Island is a work of art." "My bedroom is an ocean sanctuary."

2. Select dominant details:

Select only the details that support the dominant impression (your thesis statement).

3. Organize details:

The paragraphs in a descriptive essay can be structured spatially (from top to bottom or from near to far) or chronologically (time order) or from general to specific. Descriptive essays can also use other patterns of organization such as narrative or exemplification.

4. Use descriptive words:

Do not use vague words or generalities (such as good, nice, bad, or beautiful). Be specific and use sensory, descriptive words (adjectives). For example:

I ate a good dinner. OR I devoured a steaming hot, cheese-filled pepperoni pizza for dinner.

Provide sensory details:

- Smells that are in the air (the aroma of freshly brewed coffee)
- Sounds (traffic, honking horns)
- Sights ("The sun scattered tiny diamonds across dew-covered grass as it peeked out from beyond the horizon.")
- Touch ("The texture of the adobe hut's walls resembled coarse sandpaper.")
- Taste: sweet, sour, salty, bitter, tart ("Giant goose bumps formed on my tongue when I

accidentally bit into a sliver of lemon.”)

5. Draw a logical conclusion:

The conclusion may also use descriptive words; however, make certain the conclusion is logical and relevant.

Description Sample

Summer Escape

My family has always looked forward to leaving Florida during the torrid summer months. It is a tremendous relief to get out of the heated hustle and bustle of summer living in Florida. Each summer, we follow the yellow brick road to our hometown in upstate New York.

As we drive through state after state, it becomes apparent that the world around us is changing. In South Carolina, we already begin to notice changes. The trees appear to be touchable, offering soft, plush leaves which sway in the breeze, and the grass actually invites us to share its place rather than scaring us away with mounds of intruding fire ants. As each state brings new surroundings, our anticipation builds, and home seems closer all the time.

Leaving the flatlands and entering an area where we are suddenly surrounded by hills of purple and blue are by far the most awakening moments. Virginia and Pennsylvania offer brilliant scenery with majestic hills and checkerboard farmlands. As we descend through the curves and winds of the northern region of the United States, home is now very close: we are almost there. Suddenly, we have driven from wide-open flatlands to a narrow, winding road surrounded by hillsides of stone and trees. Around every curve, orange and black tiger lilies claim their place in the world as they push themselves out toward the car, waving hello and flashing their mysterious black spots toward us as we drive by.

The journey home is almost complete. As we begin our final descent through the state of Pennsylvania into upstate New York, the surroundings become comfortably familiar. Before long, we are welcomed by a sign that reads “Waverly, 18 miles” and the familiar fields of grazing cattle. Through the last stretch of Pennsylvania, the bursting foliage seems to envelop us and carry us over the hills like a carriage created by nature.

It is at this point that our family, even the youngest member, knows that our vacation in New York is about to begin. Our eldest son has joked for years that he can “smell” Grandma’s apple pie already. Approximately fifteen minutes pass and as our vehicle takes us over the final crest, we see the smoke stack from the local factory as we cross the border of Pennsylvania and New York and are aware of our surroundings. A couple of turns later, we are there. We have reached our destination; we are home.

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SHORT STORIES

A narrative essay tells a story. In fact, narrative is another word for story. It is an informal piece of writing that relates a story from real life events experienced by the author. The experience serves as a vehicle for a specific point the author wants to make in his or her essay and includes the authors commentary on the event.

Essential Elements of Narrative Essays:

Narrative essays tell a vivid story, usually from one person's viewpoint. A narrative essay uses all the story elements -a beginning, middle and ending, as well as plot, characters, setting and climax - bringing them together to complete the story. The focus of a narrative essay is the plot, which is told with enough detail to build to a climax.

- It is usually told chronologically.
- It always has a purpose.
- It may use dialogue
- It’s written with sensory details and bright descriptions that involve the reader. All these details relate in some way to the main point the writer is making.

Parts of a story:

- An introduction
- A Plot—sequence of events
- Characters • Setting or place

- Climax or focal point of the story
- Conclusion

A narrative essay should also include:

- Purpose – The purpose acts as the thesis of your narrative essay
- Point of View – Usually first person (I, Me, We)

Short Story Sample

My Little Brother

In my short life, there are many experiences that could qualify as life-changing. Every new experience was, at one time or another, the first experience. For good or bad, each instance changed the course that my life has taken. But, the most transformative experience was the birth of my youngest brother.

Joel is someone my parents often call a happy accident. At the time that my mother became pregnant, I was 13, and my other brother, Jake, was 10. We were what you would call a well-rounded, perfect family of four. We neatly fit into the perfect classification in nearly every way. We didn't realize what we were missing until the moment that my youngest brother first opened his striking blue eyes.

In truth, I resented the fact that I would be having another sibling. Nothing needed to be added to our family, and my mother, already 38 at the time, was considered high risk because of her age. The pregnancy itself was full of complications that sent the straight course of my life into rollercoaster-like loops that my 13-year-old mind had a hard time comprehending. But now, I can see how forging through those loops helped me to roll with the punches that life inevitably brings

The day Joel was born; my mother took me with her to the hospital rather than my father. It wasn't a planned move, but Jake and my father were both feverish; I was the next best alternative. Sitting with her through every contraction, I gained a new respect for just how powerful and strong a woman could be in what might be considered their weakest moment. Holding her hand and feeding her ice chips, I gained a connection with my mother that I didn't realize we were lacking.

The moment my new baby brother came into this world, I realized two things nearly simultaneously. First, you don't realize how much you need something until it's sitting in your

lap. Second, my life after this moment would never be the same. The moment he curled his chubby little finger around mine, I understood the words “happy accident” completely. There are many different experiences in life that have changed a part of me as a person. But, nothing so profoundly changed my views and outlook on life like the birth of my youngest brother. Joel’s arrival was a life-altering event that caused me to see the world through new eyes.