

DESCRIPTIVE WRITING

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The descriptive essay is a genre of essay that asks the student to describe an object, person, place, experience, emotion, situation, etc. This genre encourages the student's ability to create a written account of a particular experience.

What is more, this genre allows for a great deal of artistic freedom (the goal of which is to paint an image that is vivid and moving in the mind of the reader).

guidelines for writing a descriptive essay:

- *Take time to brainstorm*
- *Use clear and concise language.*
- *Choose vivid language.*
- *Use your senses!*
- *What were you thinking?!*
- *Leave the reader with a clear impression.*
- *Be organized!*

Planning your descriptive essay:



- What or who do you want to describe?
- What is your reason for writing your description?
- What are the ***particular qualities*** that you want to focus on?

WORD WEB



Drafting your descriptive essay:

- What sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and textures are important for developing your description?
- Which details can you include to ensure that your readers gain a vivid impression imbued with your emotion or perspective?
- What details should be left out?

Focus on the Five Senses

- **Sight**
- **Sound:** *If you are describing a person, remember to include dialogue.*
- **Smell**
- **Touch**
- **Taste**



Adding details to sentences

Details tell what something looks like, or how it sounds, feels, tastes, or smells. We can use nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and verbs to add details. The more specific the details are, the more effective and interesting the writing will be. Clear, specific details allow the reader to create a picture in his or her mind of what is being described. Compare the general sentences below with ones that have specific details.

General sentences	Sentences with Specific Details
The crabs were <u>good</u> .	The crabs were tender and sweet with a salty taste .
He bought some <u>fruit</u>	He bought some sweet, juicy strawberries .
She <u>walked</u> to the door	She <i>tiptoed</i> to the door.
She walked to the door	She walked quickly and silently to the door.

Similes

Descriptive writing may use similes to make something seem more familiar or more creative. Similes make ideas easier to understand, and they can also express feelings. Similes are often used in literature and poetry. Look at the famous examples below:

The sun was like a glowing ball of fire. -Shakespeare

My love is like red, red rose. -Robert Burns

I was young and easy... and happy as the grass was green. -Dylan Thomas

Simile Structure

A simile can use the preposition *like* + noun or noun phrase

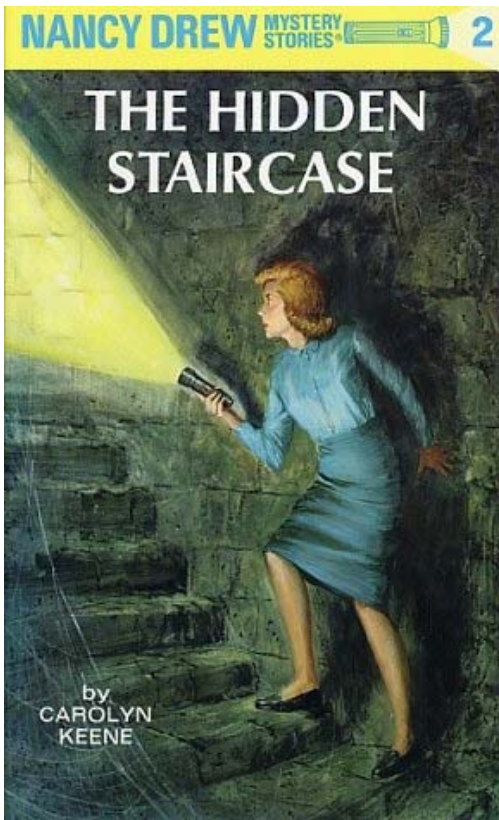
The stars looked like diamonds

A simile can also use *as ... as* + noun or noun phrase. This kind of simile also uses an adjective

He is **as** clever **as** a fox

Concrete Details

She was nervous as she approached the staircase.



She used the sleeves of her stained wool sweater to wipe the sweat from her forehead before squinting into the darkness that lay before her. She rubbed her moist palms against her jeans before shoving her hand back into her side pocket and hastily pulling out her flashlight.

Show: Don't Tell

But what's the difference between showing and telling? Consider these two simple examples:

• **I grew tired after dinner.**



• *As I leaned back and rested my head against the top of the chair, my eyelids began to feel heavy, and the edges of the empty plate in front of me blurred with the white tablecloth.*

Word Choice:

VIVID VERBS

- The courthouse **sagged**
- A black dog **suffered**
- Men's stiff collars **wilted**



Descriptive organization

In a descriptive essay, a writer uses details to tell how a subject looks, sounds, smells, tastes, or feels. The essay should make the reader feel like responding to what he or she is reading.

Introduction

- The hook introduces the object or event of description
- The middle sentences provide the background
- The thesis statement tells why the object or event of description is important to the writer.

Body paragraphs

- Most of the description is in the body paragraphs.
- Adjectives and adverbs make the experience more vivid.
- The scene is often described with prepositions and prepositional phrases that specify location or position in space.
- Comparisons, such as similes, can make the writing more descriptive, familiar, and expressive.

Conclusion

The conclusion gives the writer's final opinion about the description.

Tips for Organization

- Try moving your reader through space and time chronologically.
- Use a then-and-now approach to show decay, change, or improvement. The house where you grew up might now be a rambling shack. The variations on this strategy are endless.
- You may also use a topic-by-topic approach, especially if you are describing a person.

Remember to come up with a clear thesis statement/focus. However, this thesis does **not necessarily have to come at the beginning of the essay.**



In this case, you may come to your overall statement about the value of the object(s) **in your conclusion.**

It is at least twenty years later and I can still remember my first visit to Lou's Café. Stopping in to see if anyone could tell us where to locate the turn we had missed, my husband and I received a large dose of culture shock. It seemed as if we had opened the door to the decades: a place where generations came and went, a place where time stood still and passed by at the same time.

Miss Lou Dixon owns and runs that restaurant in the middle of the town of Sunbright, Tennessee. Miss Lou has been in business at that location since 1954. Even though the place looks a little squalid, it is not for lack of care; in fact, Lou is proud of how clean she keeps her place. She has often been heard to say, with the strongest East Tennessee accent, "It don't matter how pore a body is. They can be clean." She is proud of her "A" rating and prominently displays it.

It is not a fancy restaurant. The hundreds of booted loggers, railroad workers, and oil field roughnecks trekking through have worn the carpet thin. Chunks are missing from the carpet at the favorite tables of the workers. The hardened veneer on some of the tables is missing a notch here and there. The paint on the walls has cracks and there is a perennial smell of hamburgers permeating the air. The casual observer could be forgiven for thinking the place is about to fold financially; instead, what we found that night was a well camouflaged center of social activity and the finest, most accurate, information available.

When entering the door at Lou's, two things are immediately noticeable: the place is rarely empty and seems to consist of a maze of rooms. The first room,

through the door, is the main part of the restaurant. There is another, rarely used, dining room off to the right. It was added during the oil well boom of the seventies. Through the main dining room is yet another room; it guards the door leading into the kitchen. This room contains the most coveted table in the place. The highest tribute Lou can bestow on anyone is to allow them access to seats at this table. This table is the family table; it is reserved for Lou's, and her daughter Karen's, immediate family and treasured friends.

When entering the main dining room, whether by design or by custom, there is a definite pecking order involved in the seating arrangements. The first table on the left, presided over by an elderly gentleman with Basset Hound eyes, belongs to the old men of the town. The table sits in front of one of two large windows; the old men can see and are able to comment on the "doins of them young 'uns running the town these days." It is amusing to discover that the average age of the people under discussion is at least fifty and they took over their businesses from the same old men looking over them now.

On the right side, the other large window is dominated by the "women's information league." In other towns they would be known as busybodies or gossips. At Lou's, they are part of the complicated information gathering process. They bring all the information from the night before and are linked to the rest of the town

through the old fashioned rotary telephone hanging outside Lou's kitchen door. The phone rings constantly: someone wants to call in an order, someone wants to leave a message for a person the caller knows is going to be there sometime during the day, and someone else wants to know where the police and the ambulance were going last night. Along with all the calls coming in for the special of the day are also calls delivering the latest events of the day. The old men on the other side of the room will be giving a running commentary on the family of the latest newsmaker, their history in the community, arrest record if any; the who, what, when, where, and why, of the story, with an accuracy to equal any television or newspaper reporter.

In the evenings, when Lou's daughter Karen gets in from school, she brings a change of atmosphere. Even though the news branch never stops, it is replaced in importance by the young people, heralding the evening. The old juke box, reigning in the corner, is brought to life and starts blasting tunes that cover at least twenty years of change in musical tastes. The place fills up with the town's young people. Whether the kids are flirting, giggling, strutting around, being manly for the girls, or hiding in the darkest corner to profess undying love for each other, the restaurant begins its shift as the town's social center.

All of the activity at Miss Lou's is conducted in a haze of aromas, guaranteed to make the mouth water. The smell is never the same; it depends entirely on what is cooking at the time. Whether it is roast for tomorrow's

lunch special, a cake someone asked Lou to make, the spices of an apple pie, or the ever present odor of hamburgers, it is a well known fact, it will taste as good as it smells. The best part of being at Lou's is not her food, however; it is the feeling of being part of her extended family, being part of a tradition, when traditions are hard to come by.

The last time I was in Lou's, I experienced another trip through time's door; it was as if nothing had changed, nothing, except the amount of gray in her hair. Some of the old men had passed on; they have since been replaced by two or three of the "young 'uns" they used to keep their eyes on. The phone still rings constantly, the women still gather their news, and a new bunch of kids take over at night. **Everything is the same, everything is different.**

WRITING TASK 1

DESCRIPTIVE ESSAY

Write an essay where the description of one of the main characters' mood could be used to support your thesis