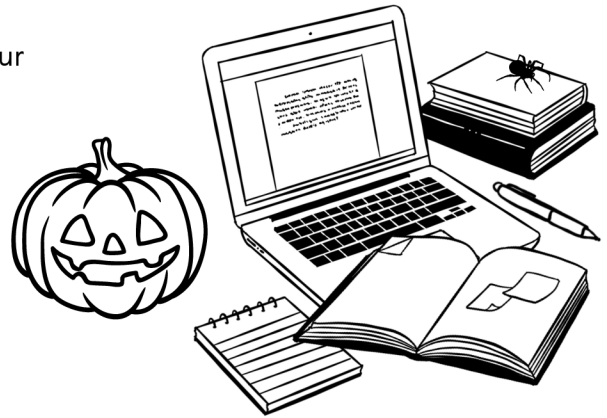


Descriptive Writing

Mini Lesson Handout

We will be exploring how to enhance the setting in your narrative work using descriptive writing. **Setting** is a literary device that helps to develop the mood and atmosphere in both fiction and non-fiction texts.



THE SETTING

The place, time, and circumstances in which a narrative occurs.

Writer's Question: *"How do I allow my audience to imagine the setting instead of explicitly describing it?"*

Answer: Show, don't tell. Show the audience an image of the setting in the same way your character would interpret it. For example, your character does not inherently know the date – they would look at a calendar, or perhaps see the date on a newspaper. Narrate the character's process of interpreting their surroundings in order to add more detail to your narrative illustration.

Writer's Question: *"What if I have a difficult time imagining the setting?"*

Answer: Use a photograph for reference. Describe the photograph as if you were having someone recreate it in front of you.

Writer's Question: *"How can I make my description sound more eloquent and engaging?"*

Answer: Use a thesaurus, especially for adjectives and verbs. There are also several tools on Pinterest that showcase beautiful alternatives to commonly used words.

Descriptive Writing

Mini Lesson Handout

Make Your Setting Stand Out

1 **Be Memorable**

Our memories of the settings we've experienced stand out in our minds for different reasons: we remember places for their remarkable beauty, but also for their oddities. Opt to cultivate similar responses from your audience by making your setting unique. Include unexpected elements, like a collection of Blue Jays baseball cards, or chipped paint on the walls.

2 **Appeal to all of the senses**

Imagery is not just about what we see with our eyes. Imagery includes odors, textures, temperatures, physical sensations, noises, and flavors too. Immerse your audience in a sensory experience as they explore your setting. Why is the sound of Jazz music coming from your neighbor's basement, and why does it smell like burning rubber? These are unique and unexpected details that will make your setting memorable.

3 **Be realistic**

Even fantasy worlds need some form of realism to allow your audience to immerse themselves. Consider culture and society when developing your setting - think about the systems in place in similar settings, as well as boundaries and rules that would make your setting seem more realistic. Maybe your highway in the sky has a few stop signs in it. Or maybe in a world where the sun never sets, there's a shortage of water.

4 **Evoke emotion**

How do your characters feel in their space? Do they feel calm, unclean, claustrophobic? Are they inspired, intimidated, lost? Describe the elements that evoke an emotional response to contribute to the mood.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Descriptive Writing

The "Zoom Method"

Use the "zoom method" to add more description to any setting. To apply the zoom method to your setting, pretend you are holding a camera and zoom in closer and closer towards your subject. As your scope becomes smaller, the image in which you describe will also decrease in size, but your descriptions will become more and more magnified.

Example:



The cemetery looks cold and forgotten, with tall, bare trees lining the path like guards that never blink. The fog hangs low, making everything feel distant and eerie, like the world is holding its breath. The gravestones start to stand out, some tall and fancy, others old and cracked, covered in moss and ivy like nature's trying to take them back. A few red candles sit by the graves, their wax melted and dried, like someone visited but not recently. The tiny raindrops are clinging to the stone, like tears that never got wiped away. The silence is thick, almost too loud, and the air feels heavy, like the whole place remembers every sad story buried here.