

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	4
<b>Standards for Writing</b> .....	5
<b>Setting the Groundwork for Descriptive Writing</b>	
Criteria of Descriptive Writing .....	9
Example of a Description of Setting .....	10
Example of a Description of Character .....	11
Example of a Description of Action .....	12
Descriptive Writing Peer Response Form .....	13
Descriptive Writing Rubric .....	14
<b>Building Skills in Descriptive Writing</b>	
Finding Your Topic .....	15
Focusing on a Topic .....	17
Using Graphic Organisers .....	19
Sensory Web .....	20
Character Chart .....	21
Setting Chart .....	22
Action Chart .....	23
Object Chart .....	24
Asking the Right Questions .....	25
Observing the World Around You .....	26
Observation Guide .....	27
Interviewing .....	28
Know Your Reader .....	30
Leads .....	33
Using Supporting Details .....	35
Organising Your Details .....	37
Linking Details Using Transitions .....	39
Writing Conclusions .....	41
Voice .....	43
Tone .....	45
Mood .....	47
Identifying Theme .....	49
Describing Conflict .....	51
Building Style in Descriptive Writing .....	53

# Table of Contents *(cont.)*

Varying Sentence Structure and Length	56
Elaborating Using Prepositional Phrases	58
Simile and Metaphor	60
Alliteration and Assonance	61
Repetition	63
Onomatopoeia	65
Hyperbole	66
Personification	68
Word Choice for Descriptive Writing	70
Using Vivid Verbs	72
Using End Marks Correctly	74
Verb Tense	76
<b>Descriptive Writing Prompts</b>	
Responding to Prompts	78
A Favourite Childhood Toy	79
A Favourite Friend	82
A Favourite Meal	85
Bedroom Description	88
A Scene from Nature	91
A Favourite Character	94
A Favourite Holiday	97
Backyard Description	100
A Favourite Animal	103
A Favourite Teacher	106
The Family Car	109
A Recent Sports Event	112
A Musical Event	115
A Thunderstorm	118
A Snowstorm	121
The Neighbourhood	124
The Classroom	127
A Favourite Television Show	130
Final Assessment	133

# Introduction

Descriptive writing allows writers to express the ways in which they view and experience the world. At the same time, many skills can be taught while the students enjoy expressing themselves.

This comprehensive book contains practical step-by-step lessons designed to build skills in such areas as focusing on the topic, using graphic organisers, selecting appropriate transitional words, and appealing to the reader. There also are writing process connections, student samples, and writing prompts that are ready for classroom use. Rubrics provide clearly defined criteria for evaluating the skills being taught. At the end of the book is a final assessment that incorporates the writing process and determines the students' proficiency in adding various stylistic elements.

Each descriptive writing lesson provides you with objectives, standards for mastery, and the procedure for completing the activities. Each lesson also gives you many ideas for ways to extend the lesson, including:

- A **Portfolio Piece** that provides you with ways to get students to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of their writing.
- A **Publishing** prompt that helps you to organise celebrations of students' work.
- A **Technology Connection** that offers ideas for doing research, revising, and enhancing text with graphics and fonts.
- A **Home-Schooling Connection** which provides ideas for linking what the students are learning in school with their lives outside of school.
- An **Assessment** which provides you with ways to evaluate the students' work.

By completing the lessons in this book, students will learn how to write descriptive paragraphs, essays, stories and articles for the purpose of entertaining and influencing readers.



# Criteria of Descriptive Writing

**Objective:** The students will identify the criteria of descriptive writing in a sample piece and then write their own pieces of descriptive writing.

## Procedure

1. Write the definition of descriptive writing on the overhead or blackboard. *Descriptive writing* uses adequate details to describe a particular topic in such a way as to appeal to the reader.
2. Inform the students that descriptive writing has the following criteria:
  - a focused topic
  - an engaging lead
  - adequate supporting details
  - transitions
  - varied sentence structure and length
  - several elements of stylistic language (similes, metaphors, adjectives)
  - a powerful conclusion
3. Have students read the sample on page 10 and discuss the criteria met by the piece.
4. Select all or some of the following tasks for the students:
  - Use the lessons throughout this section for instruction.
  - Use the prompts on pages 79–132 for student response.
  - Use the ‘Descriptive Writing Peer Response Form’ on page 13 for the students to give each other feedback.
  - Use the ‘Descriptive Writing Rubric’ on page 14 to give the students an opportunity to evaluate their own writing.

**Portfolio Piece:** Have students include their descriptive writing in their portfolios. Have them reflect on how they wrote their lead and included strong supporting details.

**Publishing:** Provide students with the opportunity to publish their descriptive writing in a class anthology.

**Technology Connection:** Have students word process their descriptive writing to resemble excellent published examples.

**Home-Schooling Connection:** Share descriptive writing with family members.

**Assessment:** Use the ‘Descriptive Writing Rubric’ on page 14 to evaluate the students’ descriptive writing.

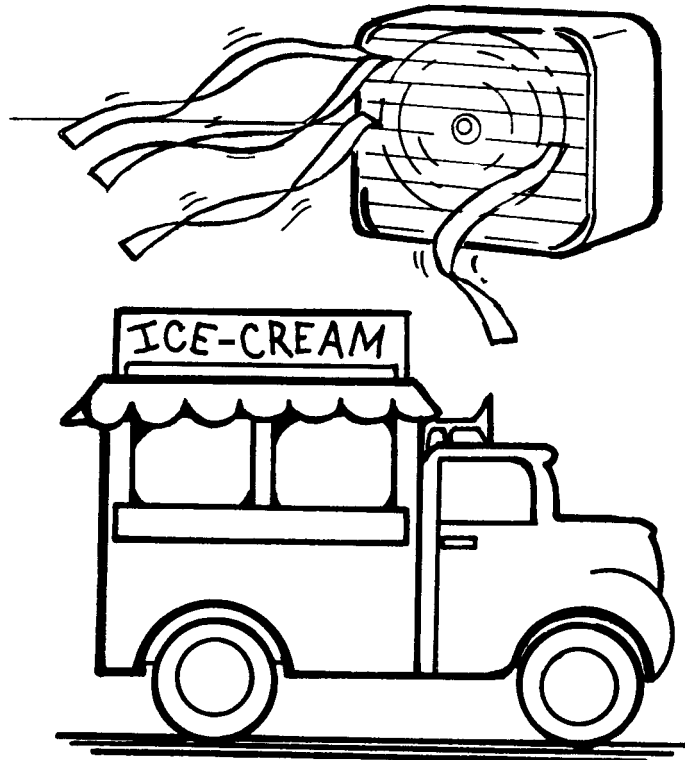
# Example of a Description of Setting

Imagine a hot summer day. The sun beats down on the road and the city air rises up in a zigzag. Light bounces off the cars parked on the street. For a time, the only sound heard throughout the neighbourhood is the steady hum of fans, labouring to cool residents from the sweltering temperatures.

Bored children decide to brave the humid heat and play basketball in the streets. Thump! Thump! Thump! The repetitive sound of a basketball breaks the monotonous silence. The children weave in and out, in and out, jumping, moving, dodging and laughing as they move effortlessly, having fun in the hot summer rays.

Spewing a nerve-jangling tune, an ice-cream truck arrives on the scene. The kids race over to the truck and select sweets – vanilla cones, chocolate crunch bars, wildly coloured icy poles. In minutes, the sweets are devoured and the kids return to their energetic play.

Dark storm clouds roll through the sky overhead and the street empties. A gloomy greyness envelops the sky like a giant umbrella. Craaaaack! Thunder roars with anger and lightning dances fleetingly in the distance. The rain comes in torrents, beating, beating, beating down on the footpaths, streets and houses. Faces peer out windows, watching the dazzling show. When the clouds roll away, steam rises, drying the streets for another round of play.



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## Stylistic elements included:

**Engaging lead:** Imagine a hot, summer day

**Alliteration:** humid heat, chocolate crunch

**Onomatopoeia:** Thump!, Craaaaack!

**Repetition:** in and out, 'ing' verbs

**Vivid verbs:** jumping, moving, dodging, laughing

**Simile:** A gloomy greyness envelops the sky like a giant umbrella

**Personification:** thunder roars with anger; lightning dances fleetingly



# Finding Your Topic

**Objective:** The students will brainstorm topics for descriptive writing, select one, and create an action plan for writing the description.

## Procedure

1. Distribute 'Finding Your Topic' (page 16). Lead a brainstorming session to help students complete the first question. Possible answers include nature, animals, house, best friend, family member, school.
2. Have students choose one of these topics and help them select something even more specific about the topic. For example, for nature, one might choose a rainforest.
3. Discuss the creation of an action plan. Where do students need to go to read, listen or view information on their topic? Do they need to visit a zoo or park? Read books? Look on the Internet? Ask them to list on the reproducible the steps they would need to take.
4. To connect descriptive writing to the content, have students brainstorm books or stories related to topics that they want to describe. For example, if students want to describe something in nature, have them use their science textbook as a reference. Have them evaluate the usefulness of their textbook in helping describe their topic.

**Portfolio Piece:** Have students put their brainstorming lists in their portfolios.

**Publishing:** Create a bulletin board of possible writing topics. Group the topics by category for easy selection.

**Technology Connection:** Have students use Internet search engines such as Yahoo! or Excite to research their topics for descriptive writing.

**Home-Schooling Connection:** Have students brainstorm possible topics with a family member. Remind the students to look in their home libraries for ideas.

**Assessment:** Evaluate the students' ability to complete the 'Finding Your Topic' reproducible.