



TEACHER GUIDE

DESCRIPTIVE WRITING—*Sharing Personal Experiences Gr. 4-5*

Learning Objectives Students will:

1. Write a descriptive essay to share a personal experience about a *person, place or thing*;
2. Use vivid sensory and feeling words and phrases as well as similes and metaphors;
3. Organize compositions around a main impression, with a strong opening, 3 supporting paragraphs, and a memorable conclusion;
4. Employ the five step writing process of pre-writing, first draft, revising, editing, and publishing;
5. Apply Grade 4-5 sentence fluency and conventions.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY

Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely. *W4.3.d and 5.3.d*

Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details. *W4.9A*

Recount an experience in an organized manner, using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes. *SL4.4*

Overview

The lesson-unit includes a **learning game** followed by **independent writing** supported by an array of video tutorials and handouts.

LEARNING GAME

Sharing Personal Experiences emphasizes three keys to effective descriptive writing: (1) vivid words which bring sensory and emotional experiences to life; (2) similes; and, (3) pulling the experiences together into one main impression.

SYNOPSIS

Carmen, editor of the *Kids2Kids* website, invites the student to build a blog post about an unforgettable day at the beach with friends. Short first-person videos immerse students in boogie-boarding, building a sandcastle, and singing and roasting hotdogs around a campfire.

Interactively, students choose language describing the videos, sort their words into sense and feeling categories, fill cloze-style blanks in a First Draft, and revise the draft by selecting more vivid words, phrases and similes. Scores are kept automatically. After completing the interactivities successfully, students are rewarded with access to memorable short videos and may be awarded certificates which can be posted digitally or printed out.

INDEPENDENT WRITING

Motivated by the interactive game, students **apply** its concepts to personal compositions on topics they care about.

Teacher Materials—*to enrich preparation, delivery, and assessment*

INTRODUCING LEARNING-GAME

1. **DESCRIBING A STRAWBERRY** Mini lesson to awaken sensory observation and trigger descriptive words and phrases. (See p. 2, SESSION ONE)

BEFORE INDEPENDENT WRITING

2. **TOPICS TO WRITE ABOUT**
3. **DESCRIPTIVE WRITING MAP** Handout helps organize ideas.
4. **USING SIMILES AND METAPHORS** 11 min. Video tutorial.

AFTER STUDENTS WRITE FIRST DRAFTS

5. **REVISING VIDEO 11 min.** Tutorial on evaluating and marking a First Draft.
6. **REVISING HANDOUT** Step-by-step guide.
7. **EDITING MARKS VIDEO 5 min.** Tutorial on using EDITING MARKS handout.
8. **EDITING MARKS HANDOUT**

Instructional Plan—2 to 5 sessions

PREPARATORY SKILLS It is recommended that students be able to:

1. Recognize sensory details;
2. Use vocabulary describing sensory experiences and personal feelings;
3. Organize compositions of three or more paragraphs, with topic and supporting sentences; and,
4. Apply 4th Grade conventions.

SESSION ONE *LEARNING-GAME*

1. Introducing the unit and learning game. Two options:
 - a. **MINI-LESSON DESCRIBING A STRAWBERRY**
(inspired by COSMIC ORANGES from read/write/think) This activity will set students on the path to engaged, curious observing and describing.

(Divide class into groups of 3 or 4 students. Give each group a few strawberries and tell them to appoint a note taker.)

TEACHER

Imagine that you're trying to tell someone from a distant land how much you love strawberries—but the person has never seen or even heard of strawberries. What words would you use to give this stranger a sense of

how a strawberry looks, feels, smells, and tastes? Give your note-taker the most precise words and phrases you can come up with.

(As each Note-taker reports, write words & phrases on the board, grouping them by sense and discussing which are most effective and why.)

b. DISCUSSION—UNFORGETTABLE PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

TEACHER

Sometimes you have an experience that's so special you want to tell your friends all about it—something you've seen or heard or touched or smelled or tasted. How can you find just the right words to share your excitement? The game you're about to play aims to help you learn how.

For a moment before you start, let's talk about some special experiences of your own. Let's list sensory and feeling words that describe them.

(Collect words & phrases on the whiteboard and group them by sense.)

Good job! Now it's time for you to go through the game.

2. **SHARING PERSONAL EXPERIENCES** (about 25 min. seat-time)

SYNOPSIS

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Interactively, students choose language describing the videos, sort their words into sense and feeling categories, fill cloze-style blanks in a First Draft, and revise the draft by selecting more vivid words, phrases and similes. Scores are kept automatically. After completing the game successfully, students are rewarded with access to memorable short videos and may be awarded certificates which can be posted digitally or printed out.

SESSIONS TWO to THREE *INDEPENDENT WRITING (Preparation & Drafting)*

1. CHOOSING A PERSONAL TOPIC

Discuss **TOPICS TO WRITE ABOUT**, a list of writing prompts on *People*, *Places*, and *Things*. Brainstorm additional topics, recommending that students pick experiences they most care about—the more unforgettable the better.

2. PRE-WRITING

Students brainstorm words and phrases, and use a **DESCRIPTIVE WRITING MAP** to plan their essays.

3. FIRST DRAFTS

Students write their first drafts. Advise them to work quickly and fix errors later.

SESSION FOUR *REVISING & EDITING (Seat time will vary.)*

1. VIDEO TUTORIALS

Students view a tutorial modeling use of the **REVISING** handout. (Note: misspellings are ignored in the **REVISING** video because students are encouraged to defer such corrections until **EDITING**.)

2. PREPARING TO REWRITE

Individually or collaboratively with peers, students mark their first drafts using the **REVISING GUIDELINES** handouts.

3. REVISING

Authors revise their essays.

SESSION FIVE *EDITING, FINAL DRAFT and PUBLISHING*

1. EDITING

- A. Students view the **EDITING MARKS VIDEO** 5 min. and mark their Final Drafts for editing.
- B. Authors correct their drafts, using Spell checkers where available.
- C. Multimedia enhancements are encouraged. For example:



Why not put yourself in the



Add your own drawings.

2. PUBLISHING

Students:

- Share their work with classmates, parents, and other students through presentations and media. Essays and responses may be saved to their personal portfolios.

- Start or join an online group where they can post their essays and receive feedback. (Make sure this is a school-approved secure site.)

Assessment

RUBRICS (see Page 6) are provided for reference in evaluating student essays.

Special Note regarding students writing at primary grade levels.

Many fourth and fifth grade classes include several students writing well below grade level. **LESSONS PLANS FOR GRADES 2-3** present the same basic concepts as the Gr. 4-5 lessons on genres (OPINION, DESCRIPTIVE, INFORMATIVE and NARRATIVE) but at a primary level. Other lessons introduce fundamental grammar and editing skills (*What is a Sentence?*, *Combining Sentences*, *What is a Paragraph?*, and *Zapping Run Ons*).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

CCSS Common Core State Standards Initiative

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/5/>

COGNITIVE RIGOR MATRIX: *Applying Webb's Depth-of-Knowledge Levels to Bloom's Taxonomy* K. Hess' Cognitive Rigor Matrix & Curricular Examples 2009

<https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Teaching/Educator-Evaluation-System/How-to-Design-and-Select-Quality-Assessments/HO4-Hess-Cognitive-Rigor-Matrix.pdf.aspx>

ISTE STANDARDS—Students *International Society for Technology in Education*

http://www.iste.org/docs/pdfs/20-14_ISTE_Standards-S_PDF.pdf

ISTE STANDARDS—Teachers (NETS) *International Society for Technology in Education 2000*

http://www.iste.org/docs/pdfs/nets_for_teachers_2000.pdf?sfvrsn=2

Teaching Elementary School Students to Be Effective Writers

Educators' Practice Guide WHAT WORKS CLEARINGHOUSE

NCEE 2012-4058 U.S. Dept. of Education Institute of Education Sciences

http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practice_guides/writing_pg_062612.pdf

Descriptive Essay Rubric

Title of Essay reflects content: Yes No

Peer Assessor: _____

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Introduction	Introductory paragraph clearly states subject of essay and captures reader's attention.	Introductory paragraph states subject of essay but is not particularly inviting to the reader.	Introductory paragraph attempts to state subject of essay but does not capture reader's attention.	No attempt is made to state the subject of the essay in an introductory paragraph.
Sensory Details	Essay includes details that appeal to at least three of the five senses (taste, touch, sound, sight, smell).	Includes details that appeal to fewer than three of the five senses.	Includes details that appeal to only one of the five senses.	Includes no details that appeal to one of the five senses.
Word Choice	Writer uses vivid words and phrases that linger or draw pictures in the reader's mind, and the choice and placement of the words seems accurate, natural and not forced.	Writer uses vivid words and phrases that linger or draw pictures in the reader's mind, but occasionally the words are used inaccurately or seem overdone.	Writer uses words that communicate clearly, but the writing lacks variety, punch or flair.	Writer uses a limited vocabulary that does not communicate strongly or capture the reader's interest. Jargon or cliches may be present and detract from the meaning.
Simile/Metaphor/Personification	Writer effectively uses simile, metaphor, and personification to describe the subject.	Writer uses one example of simile, metaphor, or personification to describe the subject.	Writer may try to use simile, metaphor, and personification but does so incorrectly.	Writer does not include simile, metaphor, or personification in essay.
Sentence Structure (Sentence Fluency)	All sentences are well-constructed with varied structure.	Most sentences are well-constructed with varied structure.	Most sentences are well-constructed but have a similar structure.	Sentences lack structure and appear incomplete or rambling.
Grammar, Spelling, Capitalization, & Punctuation	There are no errors in grammar, spelling, capitalization, or punctuation. Rubric is attached to essay. Essay is completed on time.	There are some errors; however, these errors do not distract the reader. Rubric is attached to essay. Essay is completed on time.	There are errors that distract the reader. Rubric is attached to essay. Essay is completed on time.	There are serious errors that interfere with the reader's understanding of the essay. Rubric is not attached to essay. Essay is completed on time.