

Focused Description

WRITING WORKSHOP
Unit 1, Part 2, Grade 10





Focused Description

Literary writers and journalists employ focused descriptions to create a vivid sense of “present” that puts readers as close as possible to the actual experience of the moment or scene being described.





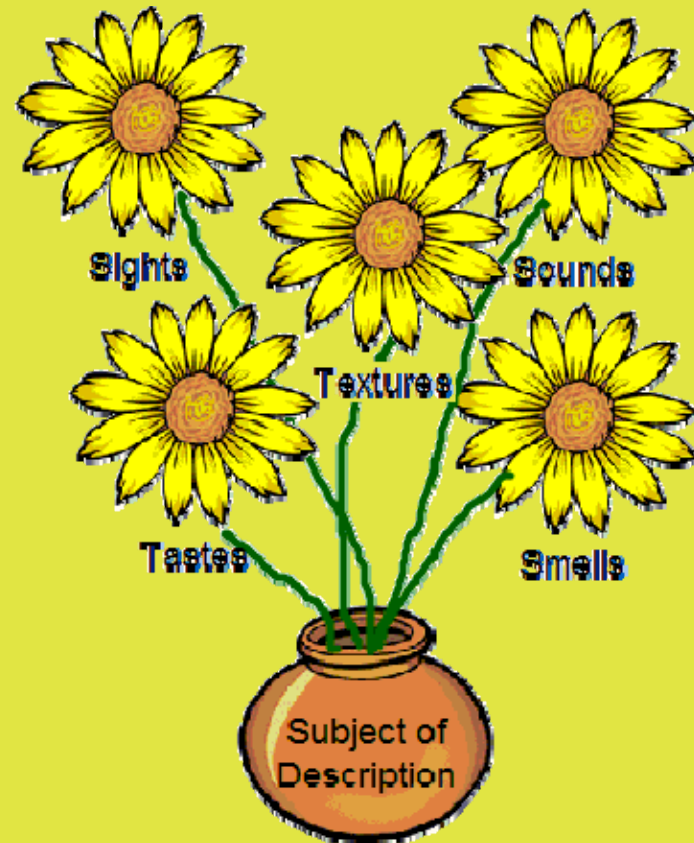
Focused Description

- What are some examples of vivid, focused descriptions from your recent reading?
 - What effect does this have on the reader?
 - How do the details make the writing come alive?
- You will be able to create a detailed “present” in which readers feel like they are actually in the scene witnessing an event or viewing the scene or object being described.



Basics in a Box

- The elements of a focused description appeal to all the senses to create a vivid picture in the reader's mind.
- The graphic suggests the kinds of sensory details you can use to write an effective description.





Analyzing a Student Model

- In this student model, descriptive detail enables readers to visualize a grocery store that strikes the narrator as a lonely, unusual place.
- The writer's choice of certain words and details helps establish this distinct mood.





Analyzing a Student Model

1. What is an alternative opening based on the other options listed?
2. Notice how the writer begins her description of the grocery store by stating how she feels when she first sees the store from the outside.





Analyzing a Student Model

3. What are the details that contribute to the mood?
4. How does the writer use movement to keep the description from being static and passive?
 - Look again at the opening paragraph and explain how the strategy of a moving point of view is working in both places.



Analyzing a Student Model

5. Evaluate how successful these details are in creating a sense of “present moment” that puts readers in the scene.
6. Words and phrases such as “suspiciously”, “slowly”, “all herself”, “cheap magazines”, and “none of them looked up” reinforce the sense of loneliness and boredom.



Prewriting

Choosing a subject

- Look through photo albums at home in search of particularly memorable moments or past experiences.
 - » Bring photos to class to recall specific details.





Prewriting

Choosing a Subject

- Think about a special event, such as a vacation, a party, a sports event, or an awards ceremony.
 - » Describe your emotions and recall details of the setting.

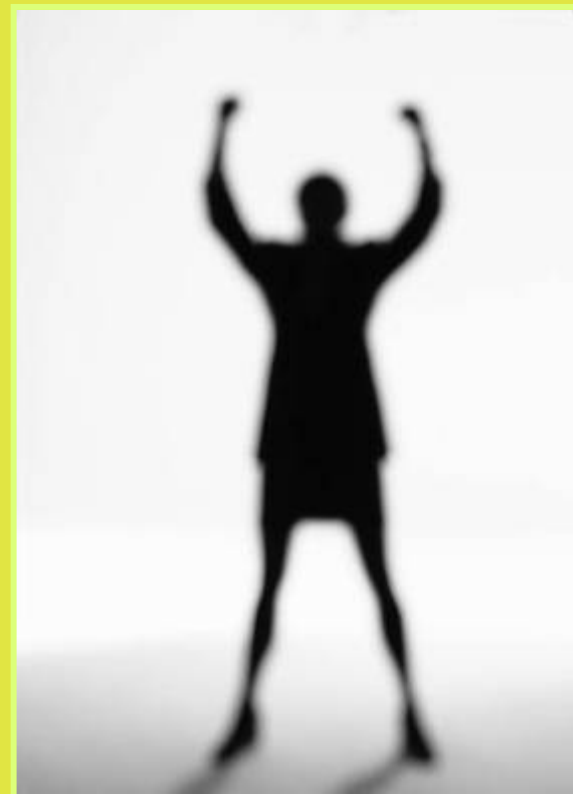




Prewriting

Choosing a Subject

- Choose someone that stands out in your memory and list several sensory details about them.
 - » What makes these people unique?
 - » In what setting would they feel comfortable?





Prewriting

Planning a Focused Description

- Work in pairs to discuss your subjects.
 - » Explain to your partner why your subject is important to you.

- Imagine the object or scene as if you were stepping into an old photograph or movie.
 - » As you explore the scene, picture and record what you see, hear, smell, taste, and feel.



Drafting

Organizing the Draft

- What are the advantages of using a moving point of view that leads readers gradually closer to the object, as in the student model?
 - » What would be the effect of other organizational methods listed in the text?





Drafting

Organizing the Draft

- Consider yourself the director of your focused descriptions.
 - » What detail will the reader get first?
 - » When should the camera zoom in on a small detail?
 - » When does the camera pan around the room absorbing the entire scene?
 - » Does the first shot focus on a small item and then pull back for a bigger picture?



Revising

Word Choice

- The example shows how the writing was revised to make the descriptions more specific.
 - » What is the impact of these revisions?





Revising

Word Choice

- Choose one paragraph.
- Circle all of the adjectives and nouns and underline all the verbs.
- Revise where appropriate using more concrete and specific words.
- Reread your entire paper to look for ways to make your details more specific.





Editing and Proofreading

Subject-Verb Agreement

- Agreement errors can occur during revision when words in sentences are being added and deleted.
- Agreement errors are also common when the subject and verb are separated by phrases and clauses.
- To find errors, first underline the subject of each sentence.
 - » Then check to see that singular subjects have singular verbs and that plural subjects take plural verbs.



Reflecting

- What the revision process as productive as it could have been?
- Did your final draft differ significantly from earlier drafts?
 - Focus your comments on what you accomplished or failed to accomplish in making revisions.
 - Add these self-evaluations to your working portfolios.