

OLYMPIADS SCHOOL/GRADE 9 AND 10 WRITING/HOMEWORK 2**NAME (FIRST AND LAST):** _____ **GRADE:** _____**DESCRIPTIVE WRITING**

In class, we learned that descriptive writing has the following characteristics:

1. Good descriptive writing includes many vivid sensory details that paint a picture and appeals to all of the reader's senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste when appropriate. Descriptive writing may also paint pictures of the feelings the person, place or thing invokes in the writer.
2. Good descriptive writing often makes use of figurative language such as analogies, similes and metaphors to help paint the picture in the reader's mind.
3. Good descriptive writing uses precise language. General adjectives, nouns, and passive verbs do not have a place in good descriptive writing. Use specific adjectives and nouns and strong action verbs to give life to the picture you are painting in the reader's mind.
4. Good descriptive writing is organized. Some ways to organize descriptive writing include: chronological (time), spatial (location), and order of importance. When describing a person, you might begin with a physical description, followed by how that person thinks, feels and acts.

Read the following selection (from Judy Fong Bates' *Midnight at the Dragon Café*) and respond to questions on page 3.

Alexander Chiddie Public School was the only elementary school in Irvine. It sat at the top of a hill like a hat perched on a head. Constructed only a few years before our arrival, it was a flat-roofed, red brick building with clear shiny windows, surrounded by parklike grounds. Flowing at the bottom of the hill was Willow Creek, a meandering stream with clumps of sumac growing up the bank and willow trees along the edge, their graceful branches bending over and grazing the water. Large elms, maples, and a few red pines dotted the hillside.

The school was named after Alexander Chiddie, the first principal in Irvine. Hanging in the foyer, under pictures of the Queen and Prince Philip, was his portrait, a dark oil painting with a heavy gilded frame. Although his lips pressed down and his head thrust out from a tight-fitting white collar, there was something unthreatening, almost welcoming about him. He seemed to offer everyone who entered his warning and blessing.

Both my parents walked me to school on my first day. My mother made me wear extra sweaters under my coat and put on

the thick boots that my father had bought at Reids' Five and Dime, a pair of ugly, brown rubber overshoes that buckled up past the ankles. Unlike the wide streets of Chinatown where the sidewalks were cleared of snow, the sidewalks in Irvine had large drifts along the side spilling on to the road. I wanted to run up and down along the ridge of snow, but my father held my hand and I knew he would not let me play. We walked up Main Street and continued through town to the bridge that crossed Willow Creek below the school. My mother seemed to hesitate, and glanced nervously at me before stepping on the bridge. As we started on the asphalt path that wound up the hill on the other side, she stopped again and turned around to stare at the icy creek with its cracks of melting water.

"You must be careful by the river, Su-Jen. Always hold the rail when you are on the bridge," she admonished, pointing to the iron railing, the muscles in her face tense. "And don't go near the water. Su-Jen, are you listening?" I nodded my head solemnly, and knew she was thinking about my water fate.

My father said nothing, but carefully led me around some patches of ice on the path while my mother followed close behind. The trees on the hillside were bare against the grey sky.

We entered the building and my father took us down an empty hall. It seemed endless, with ceilings high above us. In the school office a woman was sitting behind a large desk. She smiled at my father and spoke loudly to him. A man in a suit came out of a smaller office and shook my father's hand; he nodded at my mother. Both my parents seemed to shrink as they looked at this man who was so friendly. In appearance he wasn't unlike the other *lo fons* who came into the Dragon Café, the ones my father and Uncle Yat joked about, their large noses, pale complexions, and watery eyes. It was strange to see my father so meek, almost fearful.

I had never gone to school before and I was excited to learn how to read and write and to speak English. If we had stayed in

Hong Kong I would have started school earlier, but my mother said there was no point in paying for just a few months. The man explained to my father that it was Friday and school was almost over for the week, that it would be better if I came back on Monday and he would take me to my Grade One class. All the way home, my mother told me how lucky I was. She said it was the most beautiful school she had ever seen. My father told me that I would have to study hard and to respect all my teachers and obey the man who was the principal of the school.

ANALYSIS

1. To what extent does the writer include vivid sensory details? Discuss with evidence from the selection.

2. To what extent does the writer use figurative language? Discuss with evidence from the selection.

3. To what extent does the writer use precise language? Discuss with evidence from the selection.

4. To what extent is the writing organized? Discuss with evidence from the selection.

WHAT DOES “SHOW’S, DON’T TELL” MEAN?

Today we’re going to learn about the old writing adage “Show, don’t tell.”

Good writing tends to draw an image in the reader’s mind instead of just telling the reader what to think or believe.

Here’s a sentence that tells:

Mr. Bobweave was a fat, ungrateful old man.

That gets the information across, but it’s boring. It simply tells the reader the basics about Mr. Bobweave.

Here’s a way to create an image of Mr. Bobweave in the reader’s mind:

Mr. Bobweave heaved himself out of the chair. As his feet spread under his apple-like frame and his arthritic knees popped and cracked in objection, he pounded the floor with his cane while cursing that dreadful girl who was late again with his coffee.

In the second example, I didn’t tell you Mr. Bobweave is fat. I showed it by writing that his feet spread and describing his apple-like frame. I didn’t tell you Mr. Bobweave is old. I showed it by mentioning his arthritic knees, his cane, and that he has a girl who tends to him. I didn’t tell you he is ungrateful, but with the impatience of a pounding cane and his disdain for his caregiver, I got you thinking that he may not be a very nice man.

- See more at: <http://www.quickanddirtytips.com/education/grammar/show-dont-tell#sthash.v5QVDTv8.dpuf>

YOUR TURN TO PRACTICE “SHOW, DON’T TELL”

(From readwritethink, International Reading Association)

In the table below, there are two columns—one containing a telling sentence and one containing a space for rewriting that sentence into a descriptive scene. Rewrite each telling sentence into one or several sentences that recreate the scene more vividly. Think of word choice and use senses (e.g., smell, touch, sight, taste, sound) to show the scene—feel free to invent details within your revised sentences.

Telling Sentence	Showing Sentence
<i>The old man stood in the grass and relaxed as the sun went down.</i>	
<i>The boy pulled a large fish out of the river.</i>	
<i>The girl stood on the corner of the busy intersection and witnessed the accident as it happened.</i>	

<i>The woman had a terrible headache.</i>	
<i>The meadow slowly came to life as the sun came up.</i>	
<i>The hunted creature ran through the thick forest and screamed as the thorns cut into his skin.</i>	

GRAMMAR

ACTION VERBS AND VERB PHRASES

Key Information

Action verbs tell what someone or something does, either physically or mentally.

The ball **slammed** into the catcher's mitt.

The child **dreamed** of cotton candy.

Transitive action verbs are followed by words that answer the question *what?* or *whom?*

We finally **spotted** our mistake.
[spotted what?]

We eventually **invited** Kate.
[invited whom?]

Intransitive action verbs are *not* followed by words that answer *what?* or *whom?* Instead, they are frequently followed by words that tell when, where, why, or how an action occurs.

I sometimes **sing** in the shower.
[sing where?]

Mark Twain **wrote** with great wit.
[wrote how?]

A **verb phrase** consists of a main verb and all of its **auxiliary**, or helping, **verbs**.

The ice **was melting** quickly in the sun.

He **did remember** to order french fries.

■ A. Distinguishing Between Transitive and Intransitive Verbs

Underline the entire action verb, including all auxiliary verbs, in each of the following sentences. Then write whether the verb is *transitive* or *intransitive*.

1. Sailboats have the right-of-way over motorboats. _____
2. The careful truck driver slowed noticeably in the rain and snow. _____
3. The Chinese pandas should attract many visitors to the zoo. _____
4. Architects begin their work long before the start of construction. _____
5. Most of the actors have already learned their lines. _____
6. The new compact disc will arrive in stores tomorrow. _____
7. The ball landed only six inches from the hole. _____
8. The scent of fresh sheets welcomes the hotel's guests every night. _____
9. Did you simply guess on the last question? _____
10. A blues singer does not always sing sad songs. _____

LINKING VERBS

Key Information

A **linking verb** links, or joins, the subject of a sentence with a word or expression that identifies or describes the subject.

The most commonly used linking verb is *be* in all its forms—*am, is, are, was, were, will be, has been, was being*.

Other verbs that sometimes act as linking verbs include the following:

appear look smell

become remain stay
feel seem taste
grow sound

Note: Except for *seem*, these words can also serve as action verbs. If *seem* can be substituted for the verb in a sentence, that verb is probably a linking verb.

The soup **smelled** delicious. [linking]

The chef **smelled** the soup. [action]

■ **A. Distinguishing Between Action and Linking Verbs**

Underline the verb in each of the following sentences. Then write whether it is an *action* verb or *linking* verb.

1. Many people admire Andrew Jackson. _____
2. He came from the Carolina pine woods. _____
3. He eventually became president. _____
4. Later he built a house near Nashville, Tennessee. _____
5. Tourists still visit it today. _____
6. The house looks lovely. _____
7. Jackson grew hickory trees there. _____
8. People called Jackson “Old Hickory.” _____
9. To many people he seemed a tough man. _____
10. However, he was a man of tenderness, too. _____

THE END