

WeeklyWriter<sup>SM</sup>  
**8th Grade**  
Week 1

Teacher's Edition

**Let's Write!**

What is Descriptive Writing?

Page 2

**Conventions**

Nouns

Page 8

**Application**

The Character Book

Page 12

**RIP & Write**

"Tornado Sirens"

Page 16

**Source Writing**

"A Rainy Afternoon" / "Rain"

Page 20

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# Let's Write!

## Worksheet



### Understanding:

Find a familiar object around you. Describe the object using your senses and emotions.

### Brainstorming:

## **Planning:**

## **Writing Instructions:**

Write a descriptive paragraph about your object using your brainstorming and your planning to guide you. Refer to the modeled piece of writing Mr. Butler wrote in the video.

## **Revising & Editing:**

When you have finished your draft, revise your writing for content. Is it descriptive? Do the words paint pictures in the mind of the reader? Can you add descriptive language to make the writing more descriptive. After you revise the content, edit your work for grammar and punctuation. Be sure to begin each sentence with a capital letter and end each sentence with the correct punctuation.

# Let's Write!



## What is Descriptive Writing?

Descriptive writing can be a single sentence, a paragraph, or an essay. Many people associate descriptive writing with narrative, since stories must be layered with description to create visual images in the minds of the reader. As a writer, you will learn that descriptive writing is not limited to narrative. It will be in every type of writing you do.

Aside from the narrative, explanatory, and argumentative modes of writing, descriptive can stand alone as its own mode of writing. The writer is the observer, capturing what they see, hear, smell, taste, touch, and feel inside. In this case, descriptives are best written in first person and in present tense.

If you are asked to write in the descriptive mode, you will see the word **describe** in the prompt or instructions. This is called a keyword. The keyword directs you to what kind of writing you are supposed to do.

Describing is like painting pictures with words in the mind of the reader. When we describe, we let the reader experience something. It may be a thing, a place, a person, or something that happens.

To describe, you start by **brainstorming**. Use your senses to ask great questions.

- What do you see?
- What do you hear?
- What do you smell?
- What do you taste?
- How does it feel to touch?
- How does it make you feel inside?

This last question pulls on your emotions. Writing about how you feel gives great voice and expression to your writing.

In the **video**, Mr. Butler will walk you through the writing process of **brainstorming**, **planning**, **writing**, and **revising and editing**.

# Let's Write!

## Teacher's Guide

Your students have been asked to write a descriptive paragraph about a watch. An effective approach to the modeling video is to watch it in pieces and interact with your students along the way. Watch the introduction and the brainstorming; pause the video; and model with your students. The writing process - brainstorming, planning, writing, and revising and editing - must become habit. To accomplish that, you will need to constantly model the process with them until it becomes natural.

### **ASSESSMENT**

What should you expect of your students? The prompt asks for a descriptive paragraph. To assess this activity, you need to assess the writing process as well.

- Did they brainstorm?
- Did they make a bullet plan?
- Did they write at least five sentences using the plan and the brainstorming? Do the sentences reflect descriptive writing?
- Did they capitalize the first word of each sentence? Is there end punctuation?
- Does each sentence make sense?
- Is there use of figurative language?
- Did they use adjectives, adverbs, and action verbs effectively?

Use the rubric to assess their writing. Although your students' writing may not look exactly like this, you will have a general idea of what is acceptable and what isn't.

## What We Wrote Together

Wrapped around my wrist rests the timekeeper. Second by second, the device counts the minutes of each day. The long hand travels around the dial counting the minutes, while the smaller hand keeps track of the hours. A second hand spins wildly in comparison to the other two. Tick, tick, tick. The constant ticking sound reminds me that life goes on regardless of my mood.

## Summary

In the video, you learned the keyword for descriptive writing is **describe**. When you see this word in directions, you will know you need to describe.

Mr. Butler helped you brainstorm ways to describe a watch. Mr. Butler made a plan for describing. He used bullets as a way to organize the plan. Sentence by sentence, Mr. Butler modeled complete sentences that described the watch. Finally, Mr. Butler revised and edited the paragraph.

## Your Turn!

Using the modeled piece of writing, you should write your own descriptive paragraph about an object of your choice. The object can be anything around you. Be sure to follow the process of **brainstorming**, **planning**, **writing**, and **revising** and **editing** as Mr. Butler did during the lesson.

# Let's Write!

## Teacher's Guide



### RUBRIC

#### **Exceeds Standards:**

The bright blue coffee mug patiently sits on the granite counter awaiting its normal brew. As I step into the kitchen, a beeping alerts me that my coffee is ready. I pour the dark roast into my cup, careful not to let the level reach the rim. Reaching into the refrigerator, I produce a carafe of vanilla creme and pour a helping into the cup causing the dark coffee to morph into a light tan.

#### **Meets Standards:**

My blue coffee mug sits on the kitchen counter waiting for me to fill it up. When I go into the kitchen, I hear the beeping noise of my coffee maker. I grab the pot and pour myself a cup. I stop it before it reaches the top so I can pour in the delicious vanilla creamer. The second I pour it in, my dark coffee turns tan.

#### **Below Standards:**

my blue coffee cup is in the kitchen i put coffee in it and I drink it it is good.

### CLICK

Understanding the skills are quite different from the application of skills. When understanding meets application, I call that a "click." It's like a puzzle piece finding its companion.

In this activity, the application of the writing process is the click. When your students apply the process viewed in the modeling video to their own writing, they will understand how following the process removes frustration from their writing.

# Conventions



## Nouns

A noun is one of eight parts of speech. A noun can be a person, place, thing, or idea. Proper nouns are nouns that are specific. They use a person's name or the name of a company or organization for example. They are capitalized.

**Person:** girl, teacher, Mr. Watson, the Attorney General

**Place:** a field, grocery store, Target, Oregon

**Thing:** cat, bed, Coke

**Idea:** love, fairness, Einstein's Theory of Relativity

A noun can function as the subject of the sentence (doing the action), as the object (having the action done to it), or as an object of a preposition.

Billy (subject) accidentally hit Bob (object).

A preposition is another part of speech. Its purpose is to show where something is or when it happened. Words like in, between, before, and since are prepositions. Nouns are used as the object of the preposition.

Billy (subject) accidentally hit Bob (object) in the face (object of the preposition).



# Conventions

## Teacher's Guide

### ASSESSMENT

Conventions covers punctuation, grammar, and spelling. It is one of the six traits of writing and commonly part of analytical assessment scoring.

In *Weekly Writer*, the instructional videos focus on holistic content writing first and editing for punctuation, grammar, and spelling at the end of the writing process. Students need to focus on first on their content. If the content of the writing isn't sound, then there is little need to edit. By nature, language arts teachers want to edit first for conventions, but if the student has to go back and rewrite sentences for content, then they feel like they've wasted their efforts.

Therefore, it is important for you to focus on the content of their writing as a primary goal. When the content is firm, then ask the student to edit for punctuation, grammar, and spelling.

In *Conventions*, the goal is to make basic punctuation and grammar second nature to the student writer. Consider these basics:

- Capitalize the first word of a sentence
- Capitalize the word "I"
- Capitalize proper nouns
- Add end punctuation for a statement, a question, or exclamation

Next, focus on —

- Subject and verb agreement
- Is the sentence a complete thought?

This week the lesson focuses on nouns. Although this is a basic grammar skill, many junior high students struggle with identifying the noun in a sentence as well as its purpose. The Checking for Understanding activity gives you a great platform to discuss nouns in student writing.

## Checking for Understanding

*Underline all the nouns in the following paragraph. Below, classify each of the nouns in one of the three categories by writing the noun under the correct heading.*

Ms. Hadley walked to the center of the stage and looked out at the crowd of people. Being a teacher, Ms. Hadley was used to presenting information, but not to such a large group. The lights were bright, and the people were quiet. Ms. Hadley smiled, took a deep breath, and began the speech. The audience listened intently, and responded with applause when the presentation ended.

Subject nouns:

Object nouns:

Object of the propositions:

# Conventions

## Teacher's Guide



This is a great group activity for an interactive white board. Feel free to print out the activity sheet and let the students do it on their own or with a partner. This activity can also be projected on your interactive white board or viewed on a tablet or computer with the students answering on notebook paper.

As teachers, we believe the recognition of nouns in a sentence should be easy for an eighth grader. However, that is not always the case. They struggle with the difference in "noun" and "subject." The subject of the sentence is a noun, but there are other nouns in the sentence.

This activity will help you promote the recognition of nouns under differing circumstances. As you work through the week, ask your students to identify nouns in their own writing.

Each time you write with your eighth graders, take the time to analyze the structure of each sentence. Consider diagramming a sentence to help your students understand the structure and organization.

### **CLICK**

For this *Conventions* lesson to click, you will have help connect the pieces. As described above, your constant modeling of pointing out different uses of nouns.

Many times we assume our students understand because no one is raising their hand. However, consider the possibility that you have students who are afraid to raise their hands for fear of being ridiculed. On the surface, a noun seems like a very simple thing to recognize, but you may have to connect the dots for them.

This concept will be a constant "click" each time you write. As you observe your students, be mindful of those who master this concept and those who need more attention.

# Application



## The Character Book

Complete all three activities to start building a library of characters. It is important to have detailed information on each character. You will also be creating worlds for these characters to live in - their settings.

By building a Character Book, you will have a library of characters and their worlds to pull from each time you write a narrative. You will use these characters and their worlds over and over. Just like an author who writes a series of books like *Harry Potter* or *The Hunger Games*, you will be quite familiar with the characters and their voices. By doing this, you will be able to take any narrative prompt and short-cut the planning process to write narratives under timed conditions.

### Activity #1

When you write stories, you need characters to write about. Fill out the character worksheet based on yourself.

### Activity #2

Create another character you completely make up. Make them your age and someone you with whom you would like to be friends.

### Activity #3

Create another character that is completely opposite of yourself.

For each character you create, place a *Character Worksheet* in your *Writer's Workbook*. When you write a narrative, use them to help you write.

To fill out a *Character Worksheet*, answer each of the questions. Use the box to draw a picture or paste a picture of your character.

# Application

## Teacher's Guide

### ASSESSMENT

This is an ongoing activity for the student. Make multiple copies of *The Character Worksheet* and place them in an easily accessible spot in your classroom.

When a student has an idea for a character, they can fill out a *Character Worksheet* and add it to their *Writer's Workbook*. I like to see eighth graders develop the following types of characters:

- **Main Characters** - These are characters the student wants to use as the main focus of a story.
- **Allies** - These are friends of the main character
- **Opponents** - These are good and bad opponents. Good opponents are teachers, parents, and friends who have the best interest of the main character at heart. Bad opponents are bullies or other bad guys in their stories.
- **Ally-Opponent OR Opponent-Ally** - These are characters who begin as one type of character but develop into another due to the circumstances of the story.

I highly suggest developing some classroom characters for the entire class to write about in your modeling lessons. I have seen amazing examples of how teachers have used classroom characters to reinforce character education concepts through narratives they wrote in modeling activities. Make these classroom characters part of your classroom family.

There is an example included in the answer key of how an eighth grader might fill out the *Character Worksheet*. As you review their choices, encourage them to make their character their age and grade. There is nothing wrong with having a variety of ages as they develop additional characters, but for the time being, they should create about what they know in their world.

**APPLY IT!**



# Character Worksheet

**Character's Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Animal or Human?** \_\_\_\_\_ **Boy or Girl?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Age** \_\_\_\_\_ **Birthdate** \_\_\_\_\_

**Main Character?** \_\_\_\_\_ **Ally** \_\_\_\_\_

**Opponent** \_\_\_\_\_ **Ally/Opponent** \_\_\_\_\_

**Tall, short, or average for their age?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Skinny, Average, or overweight for their age?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Eye color** \_\_\_\_\_ **Hair color** \_\_\_\_\_

**Hair length & style** \_\_\_\_\_

**Where do they live?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What are your character's strengths?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What are your character's weaknesses or fears?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Who is your character's best friend?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What is your character's family like?** \_\_\_\_\_

Use this part of the sheet to list anything else about your character that makes him/her different from any other character.  
Sketch or paste a picture of your character!

# Application

## Teacher's Guide



The question that pops into the minds of most teachers is, “Why are we doing a narrative activity while we’re working on descriptive?” Fair question. Although writing has been broken down into “modes” of writing, I firmly believe students must learn how to divide and conquer! They must be prepared to write in any mode or mix the modes at any time. Do we not describe in a narrative or possibly in a science or social studies question? Use this activity to build awareness and observational skills with your students. Allow this to transfer into other curricular areas as well.

In the descriptive sentences, make sure your students are not explaining details about the character. In other words, if they write — Everyone loves her because she smiles all the time. — point out that this is explaining “why” they like her. Notice how I reversed the same concept by letting the character have the action. She smiles all the time, and everyone loves her. I deleted the word “because” and used the action verbs “smile” and “loves” to show instead of tell or explain.

### CLICK

Allow this activity to click into multiple activities. Imagine your students filling out a *Character Worksheet* on another classmate, or a character from a novel they are reading, or a character from a story in your reading series.

As for their own work, students need to start building a collection of character worksheets for their narrative writing. Don’t let this one be the only one they do. Encourage your students to do several of these over a period of time.

Additionally, the *Character Worksheet* asks the students to be observant about what they see in their imaginations, and they have to describe as well. This is an excellent opportunity for you to drive home the message about descriptive not being just the sense of “seeing.” Describing must include all of the senses and emotions to be well-rounded.

# RIP & Write



*\*Remember, **RIP** stands for "Read, Interpret, Predict"*

*Reading to comprehend is a skill all to itself. Often, students skim and scan a passage and call that reading. Skimming and scanning is a wonderful skill to get an idea of what the passage is about, however, it never replaces close reading. When you close read a passage you will discover details and inferences in the words.*

*RIP is a reading strategy to help you close read a passage. As you read the math word problem, you will be guided through the RIP strategy.*

## **Tornado Sirens**

### **Read**

*Read a short portion of the text. As you read, remember to stop at the periods. Picture what's happening in your imagination. Read with expression even if you are reading in your mind!*

The city has just installed new tornado sirens in strategic locations throughout the city to help keep everyone safe in the event of severe weather. The sirens are on 65 foot poles. Workers attach four guy-wires to stakes in the ground 30 feet from the pole.

### **Interpret**

*We're not finished reading the passage, but let's stop and interpret by asking some questions.*

- What is the subject of the problem?
- How do you know it's a math problem? What context clues tell you this?
- Is "guy-wire" a real term? What do you picture in your mind when you hear this term?

### **Predict**

- Is a guy-wire a wire that holds up a pole?
- Is the problem going to ask me to determine how much guy-wire they need?



# **RIP & Write**

## Teacher's Guide

The RIP strategy has been proven to build reading comprehension through close reading. As your students are learning the strategy, model it with them. Each element of the strategy is key to building reading comprehension. There is nothing wrong with skimming and scanning to get a general idea, but it should never replace close reading.

### **GUIDE**

As you guide students through this lesson, point out that after reading these sentences, a red flag should pop up. This sounds and feels like a math lesson. Watch out! Which information is important? In your mind, convert the number words to digits and start predicting what math operation you will have to do.

Additionally, take notice of the descriptive language - *new, strategic, severe*. Is it odd to find descriptive language in a math problem? Did you think of these words as being descriptive?

Now that we *know* it's a math problem, let's be on the lookout for additional information we may need to solve a potential problem.

Keep reading —

Each guy-wire has a length of 45 feet. Approximately how far up the pole will the guy-wires be attached?

## **Read**

*Let's read the rest of the passage. Don't forget to stop at the periods, picture it in your mind, and use expression in your voice!*

Each guy-wire has a length of 45 feet. Approximately how far up the pole will the guy-wires be attached?

## **Interpret**

*We're finished reading the passage. Let's stop and interpret by asking some questions.*

- What kind of math can I use to solve the problem?
- Do I need to draw a picture of the pole to help me visualize the problem?

## **Predict**

*Look at the last sentence. What do you think you will have to do for an activity?*

## **Your turn!**

1. What information do you need to solve the problem?
2. Are there any necessary unit conversions in the problem?
3. What formula(s) will you need to solve the problem?
4. Answer the problem. Explain the steps needed to solve the problem.

# *RIP & Write*

## Teacher's Guide

Did you see the question in the instructions. Now, let's try to fully understand what the question is asking us to do. It will be important to use logical thinking as well as our knowledge and ideas from math to determine which approach we should use to solve the problem.

The instructions are clear. We are going to plug in the given information to the Pythagorean Theorem since the guy-wires will form right triangles to the base of the poles. The height the guy-wires will be attached up the pole will represent  $a^2$  (which is unknown) and the distance they are staked in the ground will represent  $b^2$ . The length of the wire will represent  $c^2$ . When these are plugged into the Pythagorean Theorem you get  $a^2 + 900 = 2015$ . Once that equation is solved for  $a$ , the answer is the guide wires will be attached approximately 33.5 feet up the pole.

As you guide your students through the *RIP & Write* lesson, you are clearly modeling the process step by step. You are not only building reading comprehension skills, but you are building logical thinking skills. Too often, we focus on "thinking out of the box," and forgetting that students need logical, common sense thinking skills as well. There is nothing difficult about this problem if you look at it from a logical perspective.

When you answer the open-ended questions, be sure to model how students should answer in a complete sentence.

### **CLICK**

During the week, we have talked about nouns. In math, it is important to answer open-ended questions with a complete sentence expressing the answer with details. And, it is important that students can recognize nouns in their own writing.

Use this opportunity to talk about the parallel of sentence variety in language arts to sentence variety in math.

Before they write their answers to the open-ended sentences, consider the purpose of each sentence.

# Source Writing



Let's take what we've learned this week in *Let's Write*, *Conventions*, and *RIP & Write* to do some Source Writing!

Answering questions based on multiple sources can be difficult. Over the next few weeks, we will break down the process for you step by step. Our goal is to learn how to **RIP** the passages for close reading, find the details needed to answer the questions, and learn how to write the answers in our own words. It will also be necessary to **cite** where you found the answer. The word "cite" means to give credit to the source where you found the answer.

## A Rainy Afternoon

Drip, drop. Drip, drop. The pitter patter of rain colliding with the tin roof causes goosebumps to rise on my arms. A strong scent of rain in the air consumes me. I shudder at the dampness in the air but have no desire to retreat into my house. The serenity of my porch swing suits me. As the rain beats like a drum, it speaks to me, carrying me away into a relaxing slumber.

*Did you **RIP** the passage? What kind of questions did you ask? If the passage continued, what do you think would happen next?*

## Rain

*Wikipedia*

Rain is liquid water in the form of droplets that have condensed from atmospheric water vapor and then precipitated—that is, become heavy enough to fall under gravity. Rain is a major component of the water cycle and is responsible for depositing most of the fresh water on the Earth. It provides suitable conditions for many types of ecosystems, as well as water for hydroelectric power plants and crop irrigation.

*Did you **RIP** this passage? What kind of questions did you ask? If the passage continued, what do you think would happen next?*

# Source Writing

## Teacher's Guide

### **ASSESSMENT**

Source writing brings it all together. One passage is descriptive and one is explanatory. The questions following the passages ask the students to do a variety of tasks.

- They have to identify descriptive details in the passage.
- Students have to use information from the passage to draw conclusions based on knowledge and understanding.
- Students have to explain the personification and simile by interpreting its meaning from the descriptive passage.

## Let's Source Write

*Step one in source writing is understanding. If you have read the two passages, you are aware of how different they are. One is a descriptive passage and one is an explanatory passage. How do you know that?*

*The Approaching Storm is written from the author's viewpoint and describes what the author sees, hears, and feels as a storm develops. Clouds, Storms, and Rain gives you information about the elements in a storm. Notice the credit to Wikipedia, an online free encyclopedia.*

*The next step is to answer the following questions in one or two sentences. This will help you determine if you RIP'ed the passages to clearly understand details, structure, and your own interpretation as it relates to you.*

### **Answer, Reply, or Instruction**

*Answer the following questions in one or two sentences. To the best of your ability, give credit to the passage where you found the information. Refer to the passage by its title.*

*For example — In A Rainy Afternoon, the onomatopoeia enables the reader to hear the rain falling. When you use the title in your answer, you are giving credit to the passage.*

### **Your turn!**

1. In your opinion, does the author of the passage like the rain? Use evidence from the passage to support your opinion.
2. Where does rain come from? Use information from the passage to explain in detail.
3. Write two additional descriptive sentences to continue the descriptive passage, A Rainy Afternoon. Be sure to stay in the same style and voice as the author.

# Source Writing

## Teacher's Guide

In your activity, students are asked to locate details from the passage and answer open-ended questions based on information and inference. If they did not RIP the passage, it is possible they only skimmed and scanned. The result will be frustrating to them; they will have no clue how to answer the questions.

The first question asks them to state their opinion about whether or not the author likes the rain. The evidence to support the answer is there, but the student must understand the inference and description of feeling to draw this conclusion.

The second question asks the student to draw from the informational passage. To do so, they must understand the passage and be able to reference information in their response.

Finally, students are asked to write two additional sentences about the beating drum and the rain carrying the author away into a slumber. Guide your students to utilize the writing process of brainstorming, planning, writing, and revising and editing to create these two sentences. If they are having trouble with this, you may have to model it for them in a group activity and then ask them to write two descriptive sentences on their own.

### CLICK

In Source Writing, students have to utilize the skills they have learned during the week. They have to:

- Read to comprehend using the RIP strategy
- Use the writing process to answer open-ended questions
- Use comprehension skills to identify details and information as well as draw conclusions
- Write in complete sentences using a variety of sentences

Each step of the way, you are making “clicks” for your students. Help them to make these connections. It may seem obvious to you and to me, but our student writers need you to connect the dots. By doing this, they will begin to do this independently as they write on their own.