

Descriptive Writing – Essay Assignment Description

Using Chapter 15 on descriptive writing in your *Models for Writers* text as your guide for this assignment, write a descriptive essay of at least 3 *full* pages. You may choose your own topic, as long as you model the descriptive strategies we've learned about this unit from the assigned chapter readings.

For your topic selection, you might choose to describe a memorable experience or encounter you have had with nature or with some other specific place you have visited in the past, or perhaps with a particular person influential in your life for some specific reason, or perhaps with a particular significant experience from your past that altered the way you see things now, for example. Why do you remember these places, people or experiences? Do any of them form a single impression when you think about them? Write an essay that describes a specific encounter with or impression of your chosen topic, using memory associations and sensory details to describe it richly and deeply. Remember to **show** your readers what you wish to describe with multilayered sensory detailing rather than just telling them about it in simplistic terms based mainly on sight or other overly general descriptions. Decide on a dominant impression – a specific description of the major feeling, mood or atmosphere you wish to convey to us about your subject – and put dominant impression somewhere in the first paragraph of your essay so that your reader will immediately understand *exactly* what you wish to communicate about it.

As you begin the process of developing your topic and writing, follow the steps outlined below. Remember to leave plenty of time in your writing process for revision and proofreading. Remember also to study and review carefully the structure and writing strategies you see being used in the sample student essay I've made available for you on our 846 course page at GregTeach.net.

1. Decide on a **dominant impression** you wish to convey in your essay – the specific feeling or mood about your topic you wish to have the reader remember after reading your work. Choosing and then clearly stating your dominant impression up front gives your description clarity and unity, and it also helps you focus your discussion by choosing only the exact details that will best communicate this feeling.
2. Decide how much of your decision should be “**objective**,” or factual, and how much of it should be “**subjective**,” or comprised of personal reactions and reflections. An objective description is like a dictionary definition – accurate and fact based. Subjective description, in contrast, tries to produce a specific emotional response in your reader by relying on your own feelings and impressions. A balance of both kinds of description works well.
3. Draw on your **six senses** to write a good description. Limiting your description to only what you see is a big mistake: good descriptive writing relies on *all six senses* (sight, sound, touch, smell, taste, feeling) to communicate its message effectively.
4. When you describe something, **show** it to your readers rather than just telling us about it. Use your writing skills to actually *paint the picture, recreating the event or scene you are describing so that your readers can actually see, hear, feel, smell, taste and understand it right along with you*. Your ultimate goal in writing a descriptive essay is to give your readers a real experience of *being there with you*, in all its dimensions, good and bad.
5. **Organize** your description so that your readers can easily follow it – move logically from general to more specific, or from details to main idea, or spatially from one area to the next, or chronologically from one moment or event in time back or forward to the next. **Note: If you do not have a very clear organizational structure guiding your reader through your essay then he or she is likely to become confused and lost in your work. Work hard to make the different sections of description logical, connected, clear, colorful and engaging.*

On your **final** essay version only (the version you will upload as a digital file into the WebAccess submission tool) you must do the following on your completed essay:

- Highlight in a different color your dominant impression
- Highlight in a different color one example of each of 6 different levels of sensory description
- List your organizing strategy at the top of your essay, right underneath the name, date and short assignment description you will also be putting in the top left-hand corner of your first page, like this:

Greg Christensen
English 846
January 31
Description Essay
Organizational strategy: Chronological