



Descriptive Language

Lifescapes 2020

Descriptive Writing



Goal: portray people, places, and things in such a way that readers can visualize and immerse themselves in the writer's experience.

Uses:

- Introducing characters, settings and narratives
- Creates a specific effect or atmosphere

Characteristics:

- Showing instead of telling, through the use of active verbs and precise modifiers
- Sensory and figurative language

Show, Don't (Just) Tell



Purpose: the technique of using carefully selected words to create an image is important for getting your story across and helping the reader experience your journey with you.

Tools: active verbs, adjectives, adverbs and dialogue

Active Verbs



Definition: verbs can either be active or passive.

- Active: the subject of the sentence does the action.
- Passive: the subject of the sentence has the action done to it.

Use: active verbs tend to form more efficient and more powerful sentences than passive verbs.

Example: “Your *dog bit me!*” (active) vs. “I was *bitten* by your *dog.*” (passive)

* *subject* * *verb*

Adjectives



Definition: words that modify or describe nouns.

Use: choose adjectives that are precise. Vague descriptors can detract from your statement rather than enhance the reader's experience.

Examples: The **older** boys. The **taller** boys. The **embarrassed** boys.


Adverbs



Definition: Adverbs are words that **modifies** any other element of language other than nouns, including verbs, adjectives, numbers, clauses, sentences, and other adverbs.

Use: Adverbs typically answer questions such as *how?*, *when?*, *where?*, *why?*, and *to what extent?* They often end in **-ly**.

Example: An *extremely attractive* woman entered the room.
 adverb *adjective*



Replacing Adverbs



Purpose: if the quality that the adverb indicates can be put in the verb (or other element) itself, do it.

Example: *“They ran quickly to the door”* → *“They raced for the door”*



Definition: literally appealing to or evoking one of the senses.

Use: uses your senses (describing the smells, sounds, tastes, feels, sights, and inner feelings and thoughts) to ground your action in settings of time and place so your readers can relate and imagine your past with you.



Definition: writing tools that compare, clarify or add complexity to sentences.

Tools: simile, metaphor, personification, onomatopoeia, and hyperbole

Simile



Definition: A figure of speech that expresses a resemblance or comparison between two things that have something in common but are actually unlike.

Use: Comparison is drawn clearly by the use of the words “like” or “as.”

Example: *“He is as loud as thunder.”*

Metaphor



Definition: A figure of speech in which an expression is used to refer to something that it does not literally denote in order to suggest a similarity or comparison.

Use: An *implied* comparison that does not use the words “like” or “as.”

Example: *Shakespeare called the sun “the eye of heaven.”*

Personification



Definition: A figure of speech that gives non-human entities, human traits and qualities such as emotions, desires, sensations, physical gestures, or even speech.

Use: Can be applied to objects, animals, or ideas.

Example: *“The drums were weeping today.”*

Onomatopoeia



Definition: Words that sound like their meaning. They appeal to our tactile senses (hearing, touch) and help bring a description to life.

Example Words: *buzz, rattle, bang, sizzle, tick-tock, cuckoo, meow*

Example Sentence: *“She hissed in response.” (Resembling the sound of steam, or a snake)*

Hyperbole



Definition: Overstatement; intentional exaggeration for emphasis or comic effect. It gives prominence to events or concepts without being literally true.

Example: *“I’ve told you a million times.”*

Thanks!



Questions? Comments?
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