



## Colorful Narratives – Descriptive Writing Inspired by the Visual Arts

### Introduction

This lesson uses art as inspiration for descriptive writing. Students will create their own “word pictures” in response to a work of art of their choice, writing in first-person and drawing on sensory details to make their writing more vivid and descriptive.

### Grades

Upper Elementary (Grades 3-5)

### Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Use their descriptive writing skills to write a story in first-person perspective
- Add sensory details to improve the quality of their writing

### Time

This lesson requires 3 sessions in the computer lab

### Materials

The Art of Storytelling website – [www.artofstorytelling.org](http://www.artofstorytelling.org)

Five Senses Idea Web

Pencils

Overhead projector

Transparency markers

### Standards

NL-ENG.K-12.4: Communication Skills

Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

NL-ENG.K-12.5: Communication Strategies

Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

NL-ENG.K-12.11: Participating in Society

Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

NL-ENG.K-12.12: Applying Language Skills

Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

### Instruction

- Begin the lesson by asking students why it may be important to include sensory details into their writing. Explain to students that by adding these components the quality of writing will be improved. Descriptive writing tells us what a person, place or thing is like and, as writers, we want to be as descriptive as possible.
- Using time in the computer lab (session 1), select one work of art (*Marooned*, by Howard Pyle) and together as a class discuss how it might feel if they were the pirate marooned on the shore. What do they see? Can they hear anything? What does the sand feel like?

(Have each student access the image of *Marooned* by going to the **Art Gallery** page of **The Art of Storytelling** website.

- Project a transparency of the **Five Senses Idea Web** and have students consider sensory details from the work of art, one sense at a time (The sense of *taste* may be challenging for some students; have them consider time they may have spent at the beach; did they ever taste the grittiness of sand or the salty water?) Add student comments to the idea web to model what they will be doing for their own writing project.
- Show students a descriptive writing sample (written in first-person) using Howard Pyle's *Marooned* as inspiration. Have students point out sentences that include sensory details. Tell students that during their next visit to the computer lab they will be choosing a new work of art to write about.
- During students' second visit to the computer lab (session 2), have students select an image from the **Art Gallery** page of **The Art of Storytelling** website (make sure students select a work of art that includes a character and setting). Ask students to take a closer look at their selected work of art. Emphasize that in this assignment they are to take on the role of one of the figures represented in the work of art, and they will write from a first-person point of view.
- Using photocopies of the **idea web** as a pre-write, have each student focus on and list ideas for the five senses as they explore their work of art. This will help them organize their thoughts as they begin to work on their first-person descriptive narrative. Have students print out their picture to place in their writing folder so they can continue to work on the writing process back in the classroom.
- Back in the classroom, have students work on a first draft of their descriptive narrative. In pairs, have students read their drafts to one another. After they have read their drafts, have them show their selected image to each other and allow them time to make revisions to their text as necessary.
- Once proofreading is complete and students have their final copy, take students to the computer lab (session 3). During this visit to the computer lab they will type up their final copy and publish their story on **The Art of Storytelling** website. Have students click on the **Tell a Story** tab and select their work of art. Once they have selected an image, students can click on the "NEXT" arrow to begin typing their descriptive narrative. (If students have their final copy in a Word document, they can simply copy and paste). Once finished, students have the option to email their story to the Delaware Art Museum to be included in the archive of stories on **The Art of Storytelling** website, and/or they can choose to email to an account at school.

**NOTE:** Students under the age of 13 need the permission of a parent/guardian to submit their story to The Art of Storytelling website. Teachers can create a permission slip for a parent/guardian to sign in advance of presenting this lesson plan to the class.

### Closure

Have students read their final descriptive narratives back in class. Once they have read their narrative, have each student show the handout of their work of art which inspired their writing. As a group, discuss how using sensory details were helpful in improving the descriptive quality of their writing.

### Extensions

- Make a class album that includes the descriptive narrative and accompanying work of art from each student.
- Have students select a picture book of their choice and have them write the text that would accompany each image

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

**Five Senses Idea Web**

