

## **Descriptive Writing and Visual Images**

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### **Introduction:**

The idea of good writing and how to obtain it from one's students is a concept that most likely keeps English teachers up at night. With these lessons, the students and the instructor come to a common definition of good writing and use that definition to create their own "good" descriptive writing pieces.

### **Guiding Questions:**

- What is good writing?
- What characteristics do you look for when deciding whether a piece of writing is good or not?
- Why does good writing even matter?

### **Learning Objectives:**

By the end of this lesson students will be able to:

- Create a common definition of good writing
- Be knowledgeable about the descriptive writing
- Analyze works of art in writing
- Create their own pieces of good descriptive writing

### **Materials Needed:**

- Copies of excerpts from *Slam!* and *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*
- 3 x 5 index cards
- Charles Sheeler's *American Landscape, 1930*
- William Van Alen's *The Chrysler Building, 1926-1930*
- LCD project to display one of the images from the Picturing America since they are back to back on the posters

### **Lessons:**

#### Day One:

- Students will complete a journal that answers the question: What characteristics do you look for when deciding whether a piece of writing is good or not? (8 mins.)
- With a shoulder partner, students will share their answers with each other. (2 mins.)
- As a class, students will create their own definition of good writing using the characteristics listed in their journals. (8 mins.)
- Students will listen to the excerpt from *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* and complete a drawing on a 3 x 5 card. (3 mins.)
- On the back of the 3x5 card, students will explain how the excerpt fits the definition of good writing. (3 mins.)

- Students will share drawings with a shoulder partner, explain their choices and share their explanations. (3 mins.)
- Teacher will explain descriptive writing. Students will practice writing descriptive sentences that appeal to at least one of the five senses. Volunteers will be asked to share examples. (15 – 20 mins.)
- On a 3 x 5 card, students will complete an exit slip defining descriptive writing, giving an example of descriptive writing and explaining how the example meets the definition of descriptive writing. (5 -7 mins.)

### Day Two:

- Students will complete a journal that explains how descriptive writing meets the qualifications of good writing. (8 mins.)
- Student volunteers will share their journals with the entire class. (3 mins.)
- Charles Sheeler's *American Landscape, 1930* and William Van Alen's *The Chrysler Building, 1926-1930* will be displayed in the room. (one will be displayed using LCD projector)
- Students will write a descriptive paragraph on either print. (10 mins)
- With a shoe partner, students will decide which description to share with the class. (4 mins.)
- Each group will share their group's descriptive paragraph. (15 mins)
- Teacher hand out copies of the *Slam* excerpt and read it to students. (3 mins)
- Students will underline descriptive writing as the teacher reads.
- Students will share what was underlined with a shoulder partner. (3 mins)
- Teacher will assign homework, which is for students to write a descriptive essay about their neighborhoods, including the architecture of their neighborhoods. Any questions will be addressed at this time. (5 mins.)
- Students will complete an exit slip that answers the question: Why does good writing even matter?

### **Excerpts:**

Mercer House had been empty for more than ten years. It stood at the west end of Monterey Square, the most elegant of Savannah's many tree-shaded squares. It was an Italianate mansion of red brick with tall, arched windows set off by ornate ironwork balconies. It sat back from the street, aloof behind its apron of lawn and its cast-iron fence, not so much looking out on the square as presiding over it. (*Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* by John Berendt)

I got dressed and went up to the roof... There was a cardboard box and I knew somebody was sleeping in it. We went to the edge and looked down. The hood looked nice from the roof. I could see people starting off to work, a few guys who had been out all night collecting cans were coming back, and some people had already found them a spot on the stoop. (*Slam!* by Walter Dean Myers)