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**DESCRIPTIVE ESSAY WRITING**

**1.Descriptive Essay Definition**

One of the most common types of essays is the descriptive essay. It is a genre of essay that enables the writer to provide description of certain object, a place, a person, an event or maybe even a memory of special significance. However, this type of essay is not description for description’s sake.

The descriptive essay strives to communicate deeper meaning through the description, and to paint a picture through its words. One clever way to do that is to evoke the reader’s senses: sight, sound, touch, smell and taste.A descriptive essay when done well will make the reader feel the emotions the writer was feeling at the moment.

**1.1.Types of description**

The description can be *informative* or *impressionistic/ evocative*.

* **An informative description** is the one that is factual, practical and to the point.

**Eg.** The house is two-story, while colonial with a black roof, black shutters on the window, and a red front door.)

* **The impressionistic/ evocative** description appeals to the reader’s senses, intellect and emotions.

**Eg.** The wind moaned as if the night were in pain.)

**2.Descriptive Essay Sample Reading**

**2.1. Sample one**

**Food is good**

At the six in the morning, we climbed into Monsieur Saint-Jour's small wooden boat with our picnic baskets. He was an old man dressed in ancient denim work pants. He had a leathery, tanned and windblown face, hollow cheeks, and tiny broken blood vessels on his nose and cheeks. We took the boat out to his underwater oyster park, a fenced-off section of bay bottom, and we sat…and sat…and sat, in the roaring August sun, waiting for the tide to go out. The idea was to float the boat over the fence walls, then sit there until the boat slowly sank with the water level until it rested on the bay floor.

There was, I remember, still about two feet of water left to go before the boat settled on dry ground and we could walk around the park. We'd already eaten all the food from our picnic baskets, but I was still hungry, and said so.

Monsieur Saint-Jour asked if any of us would like to try an oyster. My parents hesitated. I doubt they'd realized they might actually have to eat one of the raw slimy things we were floating over. My little brother pulled away in horror.

But I, in the proudest moment of my young life, stood up smartly in defiance, and volunteered to be the first. And in that sweet moment in my personal history, that one moment still more alive for me than so many of the others, I won glory. Monsieur Saint-Jour reached down into the water and came up holding a single oyster, huge and irregularly shaped, in his rough fist. With an oyster knife, he popped the thing open and handed it to me. Everyone was watching now, my little brother pulling away from this shiny, wet object, still dripping and nearly alive.

I took it in my hand, tipped the shell back into my mouth as instructed by Monsieur Saint-Jour, and with one bite and a slurp, I wolfed it down. It tasted of seawater…and flesh…and somehow…of the future.

**Exercise 1: Understanding the text**

**Question :Write *T* for true or *F* for false for each statement.**

1. Bourdain rode with his family in a large boat.
2. When Bourdain and his family arrived at the oyster park, they waited a short time for the water level to go down.
3. Everyone in the family wanted to try the oysters**.**
4. Bourdain was proud of himself for eating the oyster.

**Exercise 2: Responding to the text**

**Question :Write full answers for each question then discuss your answers with a partner.**

1. How had Monsieur Saint-Jour's work affected his appearance

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

1. How do you think Bourdian felt when he first saw the boat? Do you think his feelings changed during the trip? How so ?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

3-How did Bourdian describe the oyster trip when he returned home?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

4-What did he mean when he said" it tasted of…the future"?

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***2.2.*Sample two**

**The Best Pizza in Town and Maybe the World**

I have suffered a great deal because of a terrible addiction to pizza. Basically, I enjoy pizza too much. In fact, I enjoy it so much; I won’t share it, not even with my mother. People in my home town of Cabimas, Venezuela, laugh at me and call me the Pizza King of Cabimas, but it is a name that I am proud of. I have eaten in many places, and none is as good as the pizza of Cabimas.

The best place to eat pizza in Cabimas is at Papa’s restaurant. Customers have to wait in line to get a table but the wait is worth it. Once they are seated, pizza –lovers can choose from many varieties of pizza, such as pizza with shrimp and smoked oysters or pizza with pine nuts and garlics, but my favorite is the sausage and pepperoni. First of all, it is big. When the waiter puts it down in front of me, I feel happy because I will get enough to eat, it smells of garlic, oil, and spices. And it looks delicious too. The sauce oozes out from under a layer of rich melted cheese. The best part is the first bite. I sink my teeth into a slightly crunchy crust, thick tomato sauce and gooey cheese, and I am in heaven. I can eat two of these pizzas in one night, even though I know I will have a stomachache afterwards.

Now that I am in the United States, I am trying different kinds of pizzas here. I have never seen so many different pizza restaurants! I want to try them one by one. So far, some of them are delicious, but I am convinced that the best pizza in the world is still at Papa’s restaurant a couple of blocks from the house where I grew up.

**Exercise 3 :Examining the essay**

**A. Respond to the essay by answering the questions below.**

**1**. What is the main idea of the introduction?

a.The authors sufferance

b. Pizza

c. the author’s addiction to pizza

d. the author’s home town

**2**. Which paragraph has the most descriptive details? ………………..…………………………….

**3**. Does the conclusion end with a (n)………………………….………………………………….

a.description

b.restatement of the main idea in the introduction

c.story

d.an invitation

**B. Examine the organization of the essay by answering the questions below.Then compare your answers with a partner.**

1.What is the author’s thesis statement about pizzas?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

2.What words or phrases does the author use to describe the pizzas?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

3.What words or phrases does the author use to show his feelings when he eats pizza?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

4.What is the author’s final comment ,in the conclusion, about pizza?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

**3.Structuring a Descriptive Essay**

As all essays, the structure of the descriptive essay should include the following structure:

***3.1.Introduction:*** It

* Generally establishes the purpose and why it is interesting to make the description.
* should start with an opening that grabs the reader’s attention.
* sets the tone for the overall impression.
* is finished by a more specific statement (thesis statement) which tells why the object or event of description is important to the writer.

***3.2.Development:( Body paragraphs)***

* Most of the description is in the body paragraphs;
* Adjectives and adverb make the experience more vivid;
* The scene is often described with prepositions and prepositional phrases that specify location or position in place;
* Anecdotes or “narrative chunks’’ may serve as details or examples;
* Transitions connect ideas to each other in a logical way, and ensure the flow from paragraph to another.

***3.3.Conclusion:***It

* ties things up and makes a tidy and complete package;
* may summarize the writer’s main points and his emotional and physical attitude;
* may summarize the importance of the described things;
* reframe the thesis statement.

**4.Features of Descriptive Essay**

A good descriptive essay is comprised of following elements:

**4.1.Sensory and specific details*:***

* ***Sensory details:*** Good descriptive essay includes many vivid sensory details that paints a picture and appeals to all of the reader’s senses of sights, sound, touch, smell, and taste when appropriate.
* ***Specific details:*** the more specific the details are the more effective and interesting the essay will be. Clear, specific details allow the reader to create a picture in his or her mind of what is being described.We can use nouns, adjectives, adverbs to add details to sentences.

**Eg**. The crabs were good (general sentence).

The crabs were **tender and sweet with a salty taste** (sentence with sensory and specific details.)

**4.2. Figurative language:** good descriptive writing often makes use of figurative language to help paint the picture in the reader’s mind.

* **Similes:** Descriptive writing may use similes to make something seem more familiar or more creative. Similes are often used in literature and poetry.

**Eg.1** The sun was like glowing ball of fire-Shakespeare –

**Eg.2**I was young and easy…and happy as the grass was green-Dylan Thomas-

**Simile structure:**

* A simile can use the preposition***like* + noun or noun phrase.**

**Eg**.The stars looked **like** diamond (noun).

* A simile can also use ***as…as+ noun or noun phrase.*** This kind of simile also uses an adjective.

Eg. He is **as** clever (adjective) as a fox (noun.)

* **Metaphor**: a figure of speech in which one thing is represented (or spoken of) as something else.

**Eg**. Juliet is the sun.(Shakespeare). Girl Juliet is spoken of as sun.

* **Personification**: is a figure of speech in which a thing, an idea, or an animal is given human attributes.

**Eg**. The flowers danced in the gentle breeze.

* **Allusions:**An allusion is a brief reference to a well-known person, place, or happening. Sometimes the reference is explicitly identified: **Eg.**As it is, I am like that man in The Pilgrim's Progress, by some accounted man, who the more he cast away the more he had. W. H. Hudson

More often the reference is indirect, and the writer depends on the reader's recognizing the source and significance:

**Eg.**We [Western peoples] tend to have a Micawberish attitude toward life, a feeling that so long as we do not get too excited something is certain to turn up.

* **A dominant impression:** Much more like a thesis statement, the dominant impression unifies and organizes the essay by acting as foundation of what characteristics will be provided in the description. It informs the reader of the writer’s angle and creates a lens through which the reader sees the rest of the essay.
* **Precise language:**Good descriptive uses precise language. Using specific words and phrases will help the reader (see) what you are describing.
* **Careful Organization:** the paragraphs in descriptive essay can be structured spatially (from top to bottom or from near to far) or chronologically (time order) or from general to specific. Descriptive essays can also use other patterns of organization such as narrative or examlification.
* **Prepositional phrases:**Prepositional phrases are important in descriptive writing. They show the position, location, or direction of objects in space and time. We can also use Prepositional phrases to show manner or attitude.

**5.Language focus**

One of the characteristics of the descriptive writing is the frequent use of adjectives and prepositional phrases:

* **Prepositional phrases that show position and location:**

**Eg.** The boat slowly sank **with the water** level until it rested **on the bay floor.**

* **Prepositional phrases that show direction:**

**Eg**. We took the boat out **to his underwater oyster park**.

* **Prepositional phrases that show time:**

**Eg. At six in the morningin that sweet moment on Sunday**

* **Prepositional phrases that show manner or attitude:**

**Eg**. I stood up **in defiance.** He pulled back **in horror.**

* **Using adjectives:** adjectives are words that describe nouns-people, place, and things. Adjectives appear in different positions in the sentence.
* Adjectives usually come after an article and before a noun.

Eg. We sat in roaring sun.

* Adjectives can also occur after some stative verbs such as appear, be, become, feel look, seem. Use ***and*** to separate two adjectives that fellow a verb. Separate more than two adjectives with ***commas*** and the word ***and.***

**Eg1**. He was **hungry**.

**Eg2**.He became **thoughtful.**

**Eg3**. He was **sick** and **tired.**

**Eg4**. We were **exited, nervous, and anxious.**

**Practice**

**Activity one:**

1. **Think about the type food you like and write about. Add more words to each set to describe the food. Then circle the words you would like to use in each set.**

* Taste: salty, sour, bitter, sweet, juicy,…………………………………………………………
* Touch: soft, hard, chewy, tough, crunchy,…………………………………………………….
* Smell: sweet, comforting, sharp, strong, faint,………………………………………………

- Sight: small, big, tempting, smooth,………………………………………………………………..

1. **In a separate piece of paper, practice writing these words in sentence. Use your dictionary if needed**

**Activity two:**

**A-Turn the general sentences below into specific ones (details) using adjectives , nouns, verbs and proverbs.**

**General: Specific details:**

* He bought a vegetable. He bought some green spinach
* We returned from the store. ……………………………………………………………………………….
* I entered the room …………………………….…………………………………………………
* Our guests enjoyed the dinner. …………………………………………………………………………………………
* We put the spinach in the pan ………………………………………………………………………………..

**B-Write a five-paragraph descriptive essay on a tradition you like most in your culture.**