

By the Chimney with Care

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.3.D](#)

Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to convey experiences and events.

Context:

I would be teaching this lesson in a middle school classroom. I could see this lesson being helpful to all age groups in middle school because even if descriptive language has been taught to them before, it would still be helpful to have more instruction. Also, I would have to assess the actual school/classroom/students that I am working with because in this age range, students could be at a variety of different levels.

This specific lesson is being taught at the beginning of the second creative writing piece that we are doing for the year. I have created a creative writing element into the classroom in order to best teach the literacy.w.6.3 standards. They all have to do with language and description; therefore, I thought that it was best to complete this with creative writing projects. The first story that students wrote included a lot of action, but less detail about the setting where the action or dialogue was taking place. Because of this, I wanted to model to my students what they are missing, or better yet what they are including, when they provide descriptive language in their writing. This element provides a better piece of writing because the reader can actually see more about where you are and what is happening in the story.

This lesson would take place immediately after introducing the assessment that they will complete. Their assessment will be a piece of writing that is describing a character and a place, and the assessment would be graded based on the use of descriptive language and organization of details. The prompt reads:

Write about at least one character and a specific setting where the character is.

This can be any character that you create and any place that you can think of.

They might both be made-up or real.

(If you're stuck: think about someone that you admire, or the place that you love the most in the world to build off of. Remember, you're not being assessed on creativity, but in how well you are describing your character and the setting that your story takes place in, and how well the details in your story flow to the reader.)

After introducing this assessment, I would move into this lesson. The next day after this lesson, I would have a follow up lesson on descriptive details that would be more hands-on application. I might have rotations or activities that students will actively participate in in order to get more practice with this skill. I might include one more lesson before the assessment, but I wouldn't teach any new skills because I want students to be focusing on specifically using descriptive language for this assessment. Each time students have a new creative writing prompt, I would remind them of the previous skills that we had practiced, and I would explain how I expect them to include those skills as well in every creative writing assignment moving forward. At the end of this three-four day lesson sequence, I would give students one full class period to write their assessment.

Objective: The objective for this lesson is for students to learn the importance of descriptive language in their writing, and how to apply using descriptive language to give your reader enough background to understand the setting and your writing as a whole.

Procedures:

Read *By the Chimney with Care* handout:

- Hand out graphic organizer. Tell students to label the four boxes 1-4. In the first box, have students draw what their living room looks like/what they think a living room would look like at Christmas time.
- Hand out *By the Chimney with Care* handout.
- “As we read the following passage, notice what details you get about the living room.”
- Read the first passage out loud to the class.
- “What do you notice about the living room from this passage? As we talk about these, highlight or circle them on your worksheet.”
 - We will go around sharing this information.
- “Now based on this information, draw what you think this living room looks like in box 2.”
 - Give students 3 minutes to do this. Might take less for the first box since there are fewer details.
- “Alright, let’s read this second passage. This is the same story/living room. Take note about what new information you are given about the living room.”
- Read the second passage out loud to the class.
- “What were some of the new details that you noticed? Highlight these new details.”
 - Share details
- “Based on your new information, draw what you think this living room looks like in box 3.”
 - Give students 4 minutes to do this.
- “Alright, let’s read this final passage, and as we read, I want you to circle or highlight all of the brand new information that we are getting as readers.”
- Read the third passage out loud to the class.
- “What were some of these new details?”

- Share details.
- “Based on all of the information that we’ve gathered about this living room, draw what you think this living room looks like.”
 - Give students 5 minutes to do this.
- Share as a class how they might have drawn the living room. Have students share their details as you draw a picture of it on the board in front of the whole class. As we place specific items into the living room, we will look at the detail that gave us that information.
 - After we have the living room drawn, brainstorm what else we might be missing in the living room, or what other details we weren’t explicitly given.
 - Ask students what they liked about the passages as they had more details.
 - Explain how you don’t need to explain each and every detail, but that the more details you give, the more the reader will understand.
- Have students move on to page 2 of the handout. Students will pick one room in a house and will write a descriptive paragraph about that room.
 - Give students 10-15 minutes to work on this.
 - Then have students draw a picture of the room they just wrote about.
- Have students trade papers with a partner and read each other’s descriptions. As they read their partner’s passage, they will circle or highlight information that gives them detail about the room. After reading, they will try to draw a picture of the room that is described.
- Compare the pictures and talk about what details might have been missing, what details might not be important, or what details helped them to draw the picture correctly/incorrectly.

Rationale:

In this lesson, students are making observations about descriptive language by themselves instead of being told how to use descriptive language. We go through this handout so that students can see the importance of adding descriptive language in their writing. As we read through each passage, students are identifying details by themselves before they even understand that those are what descriptive details are.

As we go, students are also drawing a picture of the details given in each passage so that they have a visual representation of how descriptive language is important in their writing. I will be able to note the students understanding when they can have a conversation about or why not they have included specific details in their own passage. When we participate in discussion about the new details that every passage gives, students will be able to understand how important the descriptive language is.

When we come together to draw the picture together, I will be able to understand that the students are following and understanding if we are able to make the picture correctly by describing what details helped us to know what goes where in the picture. We also will have a short lecture/discussion about how to apply descriptive details in students' writing and this is to help students to deepen their thinking about the descriptive details.

When students actually write their own passage, they will be able to apply the skill that we are learning. They will also get to test out whether or not they have completed the task well by exchanging papers and getting feedback from their peers. They will be able to visually see the details that they have provided based on the picture that their peer will draw for them, and the conversation that will take place between the students.

We also used the passages in order to model how to apply descriptive details. Students are also able to reference this when they are writing their own passage, which will help them to specifically understand how to apply writing descriptive details.

I modified some of Noden's ideas from The Artist's Eye in order to create this activity. I specifically used the word-image senses idea, but instead wanted to use a story that the students would visually be able to see and reference back to instead of using a sound or smell.