

Writing Lesson Plan

Descriptive Paragraph

Bethany Anderson

Azusa Pacific University

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Context

These lessons will be taught as part of a Reading/Writing curriculum in a community college credit ESL class. Students in this class range from high beginning to low intermediate levels of English reading/writing proficiency. Most students in this program plan to enroll in regular credit classes upon completion of ESL courses and need to demonstrate a sufficient level of reading/writing proficiency (as determined by the college's placement test) in order to move on to College Reading and Writing, the next required course for any degree program.

The class is comprised of students from a variety of countries who live in the community as well as international students who are participating in short-term exchange programs at the college or are student athletes. Students' ages range from 17-50, with approximately half the class of "traditional" college age (17-21) and the other half older adults who have enrolled in college to improve their English and/or make a career change. Classes meet two days per week for 50 minutes.

The class texts are *Writing Power I* (Blanchard, 2013) and *More About the USA* (Broukal & Milhomme, 1996). The purpose of this course is to build English reading and writing skills while preparing students for college-level reading and writing courses. Upon completion of this course, students will have the necessary competencies in academic reading and writing to enroll in College Reading and Writing.

Rationale

This course begins building the skills that will be necessary for writing assignments in the required course College Reading and Writing, following a genre-based model (EAP) focused on developing academic writing skills (Ferris & Hedgecock, 2014). This lesson fits within that

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framework by focusing on the type of descriptive writing that will be required in College Reading and Writing and Composition I (e.g., the descriptive narrative essay). The prewriting activities included in this lesson use picture prompts, brainstorming interviews (*Foreign Language Teaching Methods*, 2010) and text analysis to prepare students to write a paragraph describing a familiar place.

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Writing Lesson Plan**Title:** Descriptive Paragraph**Time Frame:** 50 minute lesson**Assumptions:** Students have learned basic parts of speech (verb, pronoun, adjective) in previous lessons.**Materials Needed**

- *More About the USA* text
- *Writing Power 1* text
- Beach or other distinctive place picture (See Appendix A)

Lesson Outcomes

Upon completion of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify descriptive adjectives in a reading passage
- Identify details to describe a place based on the five senses
- Brainstorm a list of adjectives to describe a place
- Write a descriptive paragraph about a familiar place

Warm-up (5 min)

- Show a picture of a distinctive place on the projector (Example: beach picture, Appendix A)
- Ask Ss to describe the picture
- Write any descriptive adjectives they provide on board

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- Ask, “What are all these words?” (adjectives)
- Remind Ss that adjectives describe a noun (like a person, place, or thing)
- Ask Ss to think of additional adjectives that describe the photo; write on board

Adjective Practice (10 min)

- Go over the explanation of adjectives on p. 24 in *Writing Power I* (Appendix B).
- Have Ss complete Exercise 1 on their own.
- Go over the answers to Exercise 1, calling on Ss to provide the adjective in each sentence.

Text Analysis (10 min)

- Have Ss choose a partner and read the first paragraph of “The Okefenokee” in *More About the USA* (Appendix C). Working together, have pairs identify all adjectives used to describe the swamp.
- Call on Ss and have them list one adjective from the text (mysterious, unknown, terrifying, ancient, thick, moist, heavy, narrow, misty, etc.). Write adjectives on the board.
- Ask, “what details help you to picture this place in your mind?”

Brainstorming Interview (10 min)

- Have Ss think of a place they like to go. It might be a city (like their hometown or somewhere they have traveled) or a specific location, like a relative’s house or a favorite coffee shop.

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- Have Ss partner with a classmate and ask each other Wh-questions about what they see, hear, feel, smell, and taste in this place.
- After they have answered each other's questions, have each S write a list of all the details they described to their partner.

Descriptions using the 5 senses (10 min)

- Write, *What do you. . .* on the board and the words below as column headings:

<i>See</i>	<i>Hear</i>	<i>Smell</i>	<i>Taste</i>	<i>Feel</i>
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- Explain that these are the five senses and thinking about these senses will help them create a mental image so their readers can imagine the place they are describing. (To illustrate this point, ask Ss which sentence helps them imagine the place better: *There is a beach* or *There is a peaceful beach where salty turquoise waves rhythmically meet the warm, white sand?*)
- Have Ss call out descriptive words they wrote in their list that go with each of the five senses and write on the board under each heading.
- Instruct Ss to think of a few descriptive adjectives that give more information about some of the details in their list (e.g. noisy waves, scratched table, quiet street, etc.).

Wrap-up (5 min)

- Have Ss copy the column headings from the board (*see, hear, smell, taste, feel*) into their notebook.
- Have Ss to write all the descriptive words they want to include in their paragraph under the appropriate category.

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- Ask, *do you have at least one word for each category? If not, think of one or two descriptive words for each sense before you start writing.*
- Ask, *do you have a descriptive adjective for at least some of your nouns? If not, think of a few adjectives you could use to describe the place even more clearly before you start writing. To think of more adjectives you can ask yourself, “**What kind of a house? What kind of a room?**”*

Assignment

- Write 6-8 sentences about the place you chose. Help your reader imagine what you see, hear, feel, and smell in that place using descriptive adjectives.

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Appendix A**Example Beach Photo Prompt**

Retrieved from <http://www.cataloniacaribbean.com/en/visit-the-best-beaches-of-punta-cana/>

Appendix B

Adjectives Explanation and Exercise (Blanchard, 2013, p. 24-25)

USING ADJECTIVES

Good writers add interest to their writing by describing nouns. An **adjective** describes a noun or a pronoun. Adjectives often answer the question *what kind*. For example, adjectives can tell the size, color, age, or quality of something or someone. Adjectives help your reader “see” the person, place, or thing.

Using adjectives in your writing will make it more interesting. Adjectives add details about nouns and help distinguish one noun from other nouns.

Look at the underlined adjectives in the examples.

Examples:

Describing quality: *We ate at an excellent restaurant.*
Adjective Noun

Describing age: *He is watching a new movie.*
Adjective Noun

Describing color: *I bought a red car.*
Adjective Noun

Describing size: *It is big.*
Pronoun Adjective

Use adjectives correctly when you write. Here are some guidelines.

Guidelines for Using Adjectives

1. An adjective usually comes before the noun it describes.
I like my sunny bedroom.
2. An adjective can come after linking verbs such as *be*.
The bedroom is sunny.
3. Adjectives are always singular. They do not have a plural form.
I love the beautiful roses. NOT I love the beautifuls roses.

EXERCISE 1

Read the underlined nouns. Circle the adjectives that describe them. Follow the example in number 1.

1. Miguel's kitchen is clean.
2. I like your new shoes.
3. We put a small table next to the brown sofa.

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4. My apartment has high ceilings and large windows.
5. She is wearing a comfortable sweater.
6. Do you like spicy food?
7. This cake is delicious.
8. We moved into an old house.
9. Our neighbors are noisy.
10. Ms. Kahn is an excellent librarian.

EXERCISE 2

A. Read the letter. Circle the adjectives and underline the nouns they describe.

June 14, 2013

Dear Mom and Dad,

I hope you're doing well. Rob and I are spending the weekend in Skaneateles for our anniversary. We are staying at a charming inn called The Arbor. We sent you a postcard. Did you get it? The owner is friendly and helpful. He is also an excellent cook, and he makes us a delicious breakfast every morning. The inn is in a great location. There are nice shops and excellent restaurants close by. The main attraction is the lake. Skaneateles Lake is a beautiful lake. The name Skaneateles means "long lake" in the Iroquois Native American language. On Saturday we rented a boat and went sailing. Later, I bought a terrific painting of the lake. I can't wait for you to see it. Let's all go to Skaneateles for a long weekend together and stay at The Arbor!

Love,

Anna

B. Compare answers with another student.

Appendix C

Unit 10: The Okefenokee (Broukal & Milhomme, 1996, p. 59)

THE OKEFENOKEE

Unit
10

Look at the picture. What kind of place do you think this is?

What kind of animals do you think live here?

Do you think people could live in a place like this?



1 The mysterious, and once unknown and terrifying, Okefenokee Swamp is located in southeastern Georgia. It covers over 660 square miles. It is an ancient place with thick forests. The air is moist and heavy. There are narrow waterways and misty lakes full of water plants. Many animals live in the **swamp's** waters, on its islands, or high in its trees. For people, this jungle once served as a safe place to hide or as a home far away from civilization. Today, most of the swamp is a national wildlife **refuge**. The people have gone, but the beauty and mystery remain.

2 The Native Americans named the swamp Okefenokee (pronounced O-keefe-no-kee), from a native word meaning "Land of the Trembling Earth." That's

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References

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