

TODAY YOU WILL...

- > UNDERSTAND WHAT THE FIVE SENSES ARE AND HOW TO USE THEM IN YOUR WRITING
- > DEVELOP YOUR VOCABULARY
- > WORK IN PAIRS EFFECTIVELY
- > WRITE IMAGINATIVELY USING VOCABULARY AND SENTENCE STRUCTURE FOR EFFECT.

UNCOMMON SENSES

PICTURES, PROPS AND OTHER PROMPTS CAN REALLY HELP LEARNERS OF ALL ABILITIES DEVELOP THEIR POWERS OF DESCRIPTIVE WRITING, SAYS JACKIE BOWEN...

STARTER ACTIVITY

This is about understanding students' ability to pick out key details and vocabulary. Learners should enter the room to a detailed scenic image (and perhaps some music playing). In pairs, they have to generate as many adjectives to describe the image and music as possible, writing them on sticky notes. If you have a class that is lower ability, word cards could be given and students asked to select the most appropriate ones. Equally if the class is higher ability you could ask students to write short sentences that are metaphors, similes or that use personification or onomatopoeia in their description.

Stick the words and sentences generated by learners to a wall, or the whiteboard, as they may be useful later for reluctant students. It is also good to share some of the ideas together as a class – this should give a nice link to discussing the senses, as many students will have only focused upon what they can see and hear and perhaps will not have taken the imaginative leap into what they could potentially taste, touch or smell.

It can also be useful here to have some pre-prepared lines about the image with students guessing which part it belongs to. For instance, if you have shown a picturesque beach scene you may like to write a couple of lines about the birds engaged in a 'harmonious chorus' to remind students that focusing in on small details really helps the reader imagine they are there.

We all know that some learners find descriptive writing very difficult; this is particularly true for those who find taking imaginative leaps a struggle. Students often have some knowledge of descriptive writing from their primary experience but all too often their approach lacks imagination – they find it difficult to contextualise and often ask 'why are we doing this?' Many students also find it difficult to 'stick to the brief' of description and instead take a narrative leap into story telling.

This lesson aims to inspire students to be more imaginative in their writing and really bring together elements of other curriculum areas to help them understand the importance of creativity and the place of writing across all disciplines. The session also gives a range of approaches to widening vocabulary and developing sentence structures, which is vital to promote literacy across the curriculum and narrow the achievement gap between pupil premium students and their more affluent peers.

The elements of this lesson can be used together or as starters in a series of sessions both within and beyond English and are designed to really engage students in addition to promoting their academic achievement. This plan could also be adapted to suit a particular theme if students complete project or thematic based learning.

"STICK THE WORDS AND SENTENCES GENERATED BY LEARNERS TO A WALL, OR THE WHITEBOARD, AS THEY MAY BE USEFUL LATER FOR RELUCTANT STUDENTS..."



+ KEY RESOURCE

ROBINSWOOD

Take a look at the Robinswood High Interest teenage novels. They are amazing: so fast-moving, so full of characters relevant to your students, so cleverly cliff-hangered... so your teenagers get totally engrossed, whether avid readers or a bit more reluctant. Everyone can read the same story; true – some faster than others. But no-one's left out. There are currently 24 stories with more in the pipeline – all in the AR Programme. Find more information at robinswoodpress.com or call 01384 397475



INFORMATION CORNER

ABOUT THE EXPERT



Jackie Bowen is an English teacher and assistant vice principal at Cedar Mount Academy, part of the Bright Futures Educational Trust. Jackie has been a teacher for six years in challenging urban secondary schools and has a passion for developing innovative ways to improve literacy. Jackie also facilitates training for teachers and middle leaders to develop pedagogy and practice in the areas of English and literacy.

DIFFERENTIATION

FOR MORE ABLE STUDENTS IT MAY BE PERTINENT TO ASK THEM TO INCORPORATE A RANGE OF LITERARY DEVICES OR USE A RANGE OF GRAMMATICAL CONSTRUCTIONS TO STRETCH THEM. FOR LOWER ABILITY PUPILS USING WORD BANKS, A THESAURUS OR SENTENCE STEMS MAY HELP THEM TO FORMULATE THEIR IDEAS.



MAIN ACTIVITIES

1. Hand out small items of food (pieces of fruit, for example) to students – but secretly, so that no one knows what anyone else has been given. Learners should then write a description of their item using at least three of the five senses, and incorporating other literary elements if appropriate, without being too obvious.

Students then take it in turns to read out their description and their classmates are invited to guess the object they have been given. During writing, it may be useful for learners to have sentence stems or write on mini whiteboards, as they often find the competitive element pushes them to create the most interesting and abstract descriptions.

2. The next exercise involves students taking their learning

outdoors as they visit an area of the playground or school buildings. Organise learners in groups, each of which should given one of the senses to focus on when drafting ideas or sentences (on large pieces of paper) to describe the scene. Students can swap their work and generate synonyms to improve the quality; and again to re jig sentence structures for effect.

3. Upon returning to the classroom, the work of the groups should be displayed prominently around the walls. Students could then recap the effective elements of description they have used throughout the lesson to use as a checklist, after which they can be asked – individually, in pairs or in groups – to describe the school as a whole. A picture could be

SUMMARY

At the end of the lesson, students could read their work aloud and verbally peer assess or use the checklist generated earlier in the lesson to see if they have incorporated all the elements of description.

displayed, or you might ask different groups of students to focus on different areas such as the classroom, the library, the canteen and so on. The final descriptions could be placed on the school website or sent to partner primary schools so students can take pride in their achievements.

HOME LEARNING

Literacy based homework, such as synonyms or spellings, is ideal for this kind of lesson. Another good home learning opportunity is to ask students to describe a person who is important to them in fewer than 200 words, using the skills they have learnt. It may also be useful and interesting for students to find effective descriptions from prose texts they are reading and draw out how they envisage the scene, annotating with effective details.