

C1

Descriptive essay

General information

- The description should go beyond simple **sensory** detail and aim to create atmosphere, mood, and subtle evaluation.
- **Language devices:** striking adjectives, figurative language (metaphor, simile, personification, irony, sarcasm), rhetorical questions, parenthetical, parallelisms, comparatives, superlatives, conditionals, modal verbs.
- Use **vivid** language (adjectives and vivid verbs [see Narrative_Essay.pdf])

Adjectives

Sight

Brightness and light: bright, dazzling, blinding, vivid, radiant, luminous, glowing, brilliant, gleaming, sparkling, shimmering, twinkling, glowing, incandescent, sunlit, beaming, glistening, blazing

Darkness and shadow: dim, shadowy, murky, gloomy, dusky, misty, hazy, opaque, smudged, foggy, obscure, pitch-black, overcast, starlit

Colour and vividness: vibrant, vivid, bold, striking, faded, dull, muted, colourless, pale, washed-out, drab, flamboyant, iridescent, pastel, mottled, speckled, streaked

Shape and texture: jagged, angular, blocky, boxy, curvy, sleek, polished, glossy, blunt, smooth, rough, (a)symmetrical, crooked, distorted, uneven, chunky

Size and scale: tiny, minuscule, microscopic, vast, immense, enormous, towering, colossal, gigantic, sprawling

Sound

Loudness: deafening, booming, thundering, thunderous, blaring, clamorous, ear-splitting, roaring, resounding, crashing

Softness and quiet: whispering, hushed, muffled, muted, faint, subdued, gentle, soft, barely audible, breathy, low-pitched, stealthy, tranquil

Pitch and tone: shrill, piercing, high-pitched, squeaky, screeching, squealing, low, rumbling, deep, booming, mellow, resonant, sonorous, nasal, whining, keening.

Pleasant sound: melodic, harmonious, rhythmic, lilting, musical, soothing, lyrical, tuneful, chiming, tinkling, angelic

Unpleasant sound: grating, harsh, jarring, discordant, screeching, abrasive, grinding, clashing, squealing, croaky, rasping, guttural, grumbling

Distinct qualities: crisp, clear, echoing, reverberating, ringing, hollow, crackling, snapping, popping, sizzling, fizzing, bubbling, humming, droning, murmuring, clattering, rattling

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Touch

Texture: rough, coarse, scratchy, abrasive, gritty, bumpy, jagged, prickly, splintery, pebbly, scaly, grainy | smooth, silky, velvety, sleek, glossy, polished, satiny, slippery, glassy, supple, silken, waxy, soft, cushiony, fluffy, downy, feathery, pliable, doughy, tender

Temperature: warm, toasty, hot, scalding, blistering, fiery, blazing, sizzling, scorching, searing, sweltering, steaming | cool, chilly, icy, frosty, freezing, arctic, glacial, brisk, polar, biting, gelid, nippy

Moisture: sticky, clammy, greasy, slimy, sweaty, damp, soggy, moist, dewy, parched, slushy, squishy, mushy, brittle, parched, crumbly

Weight and pressure: light, airy, weightless, delicate, fragile, buoyant, floaty, feather-light | heavy, dense, solid, stiff, firm, rigid, crushing, leaden

Sensation: tingling, prickling, itchy, numbing, soothing, comforting, stinging, burning, throbbing, sharp, dull, achy, ticklish, jittery, vibrating

Taste

Sweet: sugary, syrupy, honeyed, saccharine, caramelised, candied, fruity, chocolaty, confectionary, luscious,

Sour: tangy, tart, zesty, acidic, citrusy, sharp, lip-puckering, vinegary, sharp, pickled

Salty: briny, savoury, seasoned, cured

Bitter: acrid, sharp, harsh, earthy

Spicy/hot: fiery, pungent, peppery, smoky

Bland: flat, tasteless, plain, mild, watery

Rich: creamy, buttery, cheesy, hearty, robust, flavourful, indulgent, savoury, velvety, nutty

Smell

Pleasant scents: fragrant, floral, perfumed, aromatic, sweet, honeyed, fruity, herbal, citrusy, piney, earthy, woody

Strong odours: pungent, acrid, sharp, overpowering, intense, biting, suffocating

Clean: fresh, crisp, breezy, airy, earthy, grassy, rain-soaked, salty, oceanic, minty, dewy, alpine

Rotten/unpleasant: musty, stale, mouldy, rancid, sour, foul, putrid, fishy, skunky, fetid

Smoky/burnt: charred, ashy, woody, toasty, roasted, singed

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Sample layout

Title: heading (and subheading)

1) Hooking introduction: Capture attention, set the tone, and introduce what will be described.

Evocative opening line (surprising, paradoxical, or vivid). Brief context (what/where/why it matters). Hint at the perspective (personal, critical, admiring, humorous).

"The ground was hard, the air was still, my road was lonely; I walked fast till I got warm, and then I walked slowly to enjoy and analyse the species of pleasure brooding for me in the hour and situation."

2) 1st dimension of description: Present a vivid initial impression (appearance, scale, setting; visual).

Dominant physical or sensory features (what strikes the observer first). Use of enumeration or contrast for emphasis. Initial evaluative comment (positive/negative/ambivalent).

It was a fine, calm day, though very cold; I was tired of sitting still in the library through a whole long morning: Mrs. Fairfax had just written a letter which was waiting to be posted, so I put on my bonnet and cloak and volunteered to carry it to Hay; the distance, two miles, would be a pleasant winter afternoon walk.

3) 2nd dimension of description: (atmosphere; auditory)

The church bell tolled as I passed under the belfry; the charm of the hour lay in its approaching dimness, in the low-gliding and pale-beaming sun

4) 3rd dimension / Reflection: Deepen or complicate description with contrast, narrative, or personal reflection. A counter-perspective or limitation (not only beauty but also flaws). Personal or societal implications. Symbolic interpretation. (emotional, philosophical)

What good it would have done me at that time to have been tossed in the storms of an uncertain struggling life, and to have been taught by rough and bitter experience to long for the calm amidst which I now repined! Yes, just as much good as it would do a man tired of sitting still in a 'too easy chair' to take a long walk: and just as natural was the wish to stir, under my circumstances, as it would be under his.

5) Conclusion: Round off with a lasting impression that unites description and evaluation. Reinforce central image or mood. Offer final thought (what it represents, why it stays in memory).

"I lingered at the gates; I lingered on the lawn; I paced backwards and forwards on the pavement; the shutters of the glass door were closed; I could not see into the interior; and both my eyes and spirit seemed drawn from the gloomy house—from the grey-hollow filled with rayless cells, as it appeared to me—to that sky expanded before me,—a blue sea absolved from taint of cloud; the moon ascending it in solemn march; her orb seeming to look up as she left the hill-tops, from behind which she had come, far and farther below her, and aspired to the zenith, midnight dark in its fathomless depth and measureless distance; and for those trembling stars that followed her course; they made my heart tremble, my veins glow when I viewed them."