

How to Write a Classroom Sensory Poem

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Age Group: Elementary School-Middle School

Materials:

Observation Handout

Sensory Bags

Frame Poem (Optional)

Lesson Objectives:

- Students will be able to write a poem using sensory details of sight, touch, smell and sound
- Students will be able to make inferences based upon their observations about a subject.
- Students will be able to make and record observations using the five senses about a particular subject.

Key Terms:

- Observations- Facts (something that can be proven) that we gather by using our five senses. We make observations by using our sight, smell, touch, taste, and our ability to hear.
- Inference- A possible explanation or guess about an observation.

Lesson Overview and Background:

Strong writers use sensory details to enhance their writing. When writers use concrete details and concrete description, it allows readers to 'see' a scene rather than relying upon a vague and sketchy report.

In addition, sensory writing is a phenomenal place to teach inference and observation to students. In sensory writing, students not only have to make observations, gathering details of what they can actually perceive using their five senses, but also explore vast possibilities about the subject they are writing about through inferential skills. For instance, as a writer, I might observe the green, lush leaves and ripening orange colored fruit of a tree in a yard. Using the skill of inference, I can now imagine that the fruit is an orange, that the owners of the tree are conscious gardeners, and Southern California has received rain. By using observation and inference, students can broaden their understanding of a subject and begin to make associations that are often needed to deepen their reading of texts and to add meaningful analysis to creative and expository writing.

In Preparation:

Find a subject that is of high interest for your students, and a subject that is easy subject to activate prior knowledge. In preparation to the lesson, find items related to your poem's subject. I love this activity because the rigor can be increased for any age group, and you can use almost anything to create a sensory poem. For instance, a 9th grade class studying *Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men*, can create a sensory poem using Ansel Adam's photographs to explore the setting of the Mid-West during the Dust Bowl Era. Select items or photos that are thought provoking, colorful, or provide sensory engagement.

How to Use the CORD File:

First, define the key terms of observation and an inference. At this time, you can ask students to describe what they actually observe or see in a picture or item. Explain to students that they are making an observation. Students can record their responses on the CORD Handout page 1.

Next, have students create inferences about the item. Stress the importance of writers using their imagination to infer certain things that they are unable to sense. For example, if a student is examining a laminated photograph of an ocean, students can create inferences for touch, sound, taste, smell, and where the ocean is located. Students can record their inferences on the CORD Handout page.

Lastly, dependent upon your students' level of familiarity with poetry, I found it helpful to use a frame poem for younger students. A frame poem is simply an organizational and visual aid that allows students to plug in ideas into lines versus composing a poem simply from scratch. (See example Frame Poem below).

Ideas for Sensory Poems

Fall

A bag of dried leaves and acorns
A small ornamental pumpkin
A piece of pumpkin spice scented wax
A laminated picture of birds migrating
A turkey feather
A mitten

Music

A CD Case
Sheet music
Small instrument like a kazoo or harmonica
Pictures of popular pop artists
A short recording of a song

The Ocean

A bag of sea shells and sand
A treasure map
A piece of rope
A picture of the ocean
A picture of a nautical animal

Sports

Baseball and basketball cards
A Baseball
A finger skate board
Pictures of famous athletes
A recording of an audience cheering

Sensory Poem Handout

Item: _____
 WHAT ITEM DID YOU FIND?

I SEE	I TOUCH
I HEAR	I SMELL
I CAN INFER ABOUT THE ITEM:	

Item: _____
 WHAT ITEM DID YOU FIND?

I SEE	I TOUCH
I HEAR	I SMELL
I CAN INFER ABOUT THE ITEM:	

Item: _____
 WHAT ITEM DID YOU FIND?

I SEE	I TOUCH
I HEAR	I SMELL
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Example Frame Poem for I-Detective Lesson

DETECTIVE NOTES: CASE 1561: Fluffy the Hamster
AGENT:

Title: _____

I find _____
What clue did you find?

because Fluffy, the hamster has gone missing.

First, he _____
Where did Mr. Fluffy go?

I touch _____

I smell _____

I hear the sound of _____

Fluffy, was _____
What was Mr. Fluffy doing?

I find _____
What clue did you find?

because Fluffy, the hamster has gone missing.

First, he _____
Where did Mr. Fluffy go?

I touch _____

I smell _____

I hear the sound of _____

Fluffy, was _____
What was Mr. Fluffy doing?

