

Introduction and Pretest

Your students should be familiar with the proofreading and technology skills in the advanced level of the Writer's Guide before beginning this unit.

PREPARATION Each student will need lined paper, a folder to use as a writing portfolio in which to keep writing assignments, and a dictionary.

Introduction

Introduce the students to the unit with an explanation like the following: *We're going to learn to be authors who can write many different kinds of passages. Sometimes authors work with other authors to produce one piece of writing. Authors who write together work in a cooperative group to produce a piece of writing. Their writing is often improved by sharing and discussion. Sometimes we'll work as a cooperative group to write a class passage. When we write cooperatively, I'll write the ideas and the passage on a chart for the whole class. Everyone will contribute ideas to the class passage.*

Sometimes authors work alone. After we practice together, you'll produce a piece of writing of your own.

For the next few lessons, you'll be learning about descriptive writing. In descriptive writing, you choose words carefully and thoughtfully with the goal of making a clear picture in the reader's mind.

Beginning Writing Sample

PREPARATION Write the following prompt on the board or on an overhead transparency: Write a passage of three hundred to five hundred words that describes a person you know whom you respect or admire. Write about the physical appearance and the personality of that person using descriptive words and examples.

Explain to the students that before they learn about descriptive writing, you'd like to have a sample of their writing. Tell them you'll save this sample so you and they can see how their writing improves as they learn more about descriptive writing.

Read the prompt aloud. *A writing prompt may include words you don't fully understand. Are there any words in this prompt you don't fully understand?* Ideas: *Respect, admire, personality.* Ask the students to look up the words. Discuss their meanings. Ideas: *Respect—to admire, to look up to, or to have a high opinion of; admire—to have a high opinion of, to look up to; personality—a person's nature or characteristics, including habits, behavior, and other qualities.*

Provide the following additional information as necessary for your students. *A passage is a piece of writing containing one or more paragraphs. Three hundred to five hundred words equals about one word-processed page or two handwritten pages. To describe is to make pictures with words. A person you know could be a friend, an acquaintance, or a family member. Physical appearance is what a person looks like, including age, height, gender, eye color, hair color, and clothing.*

Reread the prompt to the students. Ask the students to write a descriptive passage on lined paper. Ask them to edit, proofread, and write a final copy of the passage. Evaluate the students' writing using the rubric on the following page. Keep the writing sample and the scoring rubric for comparison at the end of the unit.

RUBRIC**Pretest****Posttest****Scoring the Samples**

Give the student a score of 0 if there is no evidence of the element.

Give the student a score of 1 for each element at the emergent or minimum level.

Give the student a score of 3 for each element at a satisfactory level.

Give the student a score of 5 for each element at the mastery level.

Evaluating the Elements of a Piece of Descriptive Writing

	The author of this piece of descriptive writing . . .	Points Earned
O R G A N I Z A T I O N	Uses an opening sentence or paragraph that clearly introduces the topic.	
	Develops related sentences in middle paragraphs.	
	Uses transition words and sentences to move the reader from one paragraph to the next.	
	Follows a logical sequence and order.	
	Uses a concluding sentence to bring closure to the passage.	
C O N T E N T	Uses descriptive details that involve at least three senses.	
	Uses descriptive details for physical appearance.	
	Uses descriptive details for personality traits.	
	Describes personality traits through the actions of a subject.	
	Gives a personal response to the subject.	
S T Y L E	Uses specific nouns and verbs.	
	Uses at least fifteen adjectives to modify nouns.	
	Uses at least ten adverbs to modify verbs.	
	Uses figurative language (onomatopoeia, similes, alliteration, metaphors).	
	Uses a variety of sentence beginnings.	
M E C H A N I C S	Indents paragraphs.	
	Capitalizes proper nouns and the first word in sentences.	
	Uses appropriate end punctuation.	
	Uses conventional spelling at a developmentally appropriate level.	
	Employs standard English usage.	
Total Points		

If the student scores . . .

85–100 points	The student has mastered the skills and concepts taught in the advanced level of Descriptive Writing.
20–84 points	The student is properly placed in the advanced level of Descriptive Writing.
0–19 points	Administer the pretest for the intermediate level of Descriptive Writing.