

Description

ESTIMATED TIME

2 class periods

PREREQUISITES

■ This lesson is one in a series of lessons designed to develop research skills. It can be completed on its own or in conjunction with the other lessons to build expertise in writing research reports.

RESOURCES AVAILABLE

- **Description Rubric**
- **The War of the Ghosts**
- **Mandela: American Businessman**
- **Mandela: ANC Youth Member**
- **Mandela: Boer Police Officer**
- **Mao: Assistant to the Director of Cultural Affairs**
- **Mao: English Journalist**
- **Mao: Wealthy Farmer**

ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Description is a crucial skill for any subject. It is used in all types of writing, including narrative, persuasive, expository, and scientific writing. Therefore, this lesson will assist students across disciplines. Teachers from any discipline will appreciate having students who understand how their perspective affects their approach in describing a subject.

LESSON PLANNING

LESSON GOAL

Communicate one's perspective while accurately describing an experience, person, or research topic.

Essential Question

What are the elements of effective description?

Student Expectations

1. Listen to *The War of the Ghosts*.
2. Rewrite the story you have heard.
3. Share your story with your group and create a group story.
4. Define and discuss characteristics of descriptive writing.
5. Read *Mandela* and *Mao* handouts and collaborate on a group paragraph using different perspectives.
6. Brainstorm research topics and complete a research brief.
7. Write a reflection about the lesson.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Demonstrate how perspective affects description.
2. Demonstrate accuracy when retelling an event by re-writing the story.
3. Develop expertise in descriptive writing.
4. Determine topics worth researching.

RATIONALE

This lesson is in conjunction with a series of lessons (Note Taking, Observation, Graphic Organizers) in which students ultimately complete a research project related to their internship sites. In this lesson, they will explore perspective (or bias) as it relates to description. In the first part of the lesson they will repeat a famous experiment that was done in 1932 by the psychologist Frederic Bartlett in which he had subjects read a Native American story about ghosts and had them retell the tale later. Because their backgrounds were so different from the cultural context of the story, the subjects changed details in the story that they could not understand. In these instances, interpretation based on personal experience is everything. Because of this, understanding how to accurately describe an object, event, person, or place in a research paper can be a tricky business. This lesson is meant to be part of a larger lesson on writing research papers, particularly the description process of writing research papers. Being able to correctly identify your topic and being aware of your bias will benefit students in technical writing for internship sites, classes, and later in their adult life.



Description Rubric



Holland's Personality Cards

PROCEDURES: WHAT TO DO

- 1. WHOLE GROUP** Distribute the *Description Rubric* to provide an overview of the lesson and explain how students will be evaluated. Then read *The War of the Ghosts* aloud to the class.

ASSESSMENT

Listen Listen to a story.

- 2. INDIVIDUAL** After the story has been read, ask students to rewrite the story in their own words as completely as possible.

ASSESSMENT

Rewrite a Story Rewrite a story in one's own words.

- 3. SMALL GROUPS** Have students gather together into small groups of



ASSIGNMENT 1

three to share their stories with one another. Once the students have shared their stories, the group should compose a retelling of the story. Each student should have a copy of the group version and his or her own version of the story.

ASSESSMENT

Group Story Work with a group to compose a group story.

- 4. WHOLE GROUP** Have each group share its version of the story with the class by having one student read the group version aloud to the class. Discuss the following points. After the discussion, have students use the *Sakai* Assignments Tool to submit their individual and group stories for evaluation.
 - How were the individual stories in your group different?
 - How were they the same?
 - Why were they different?
 - Have you ever experienced a situation in which several people witness the same event and have different interpretations?
 - What makes an interpretation wrong or right?
 - How does personal experience lead to different interpretations.
 - How do you think advertising or pictures affect memory? In a research study, *Make My Memory*, researchers found that advertising made people believe they had done things they hadn't done. How can this be?
 - How do you think interpretation affects history?



Nelson Mandela Group Handouts



Mao Group Handouts



Student Pages

- 5. WHOLE GROUP** Explore the characteristics of the genre of descriptive writing. Begin by discussing how descriptive writing compares to other forms of writing. Explain that descriptive writing can be part of any form of writing. Then make a class list of characteristics of descriptive writing. Characteristics might include the following.
- Sensory language describing how things look, taste, feel, smell, or sound
 - Use of figurative language (simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, symbolism)
 - Showing rather than telling through the use of adjectives, adverbs and active verbs.

ASSESSMENT

Discussion Participate in discussions about interpretation and effective description.

- 6. SMALL GROUP** Re-convene the small groups of three and follow these directions.

 **ASSIGNMENT 2**

- Groups should either be *Mao* or *Mandela* groups. Give each member his or her own *Mao* or *Mandela* handout.
- Have each student read his or her handout, but he or she should not share it with the other group members.
- After reading, have each student write a one-paragraph description of the event told from the perspective described in the handout.
- After all paragraphs have been written, have the groups work together to agree on a final version of the description using each perspective as they write.
- Have students use the *Sakai* Assignments Tool to submit their individual and group paragraphs for evaluation.

ASSESSMENT

Historical Description Collaborate on a description of a historical event told from different perspectives.

- 7. WHOLE GROUP** Explain that students will be writing a research paper about an aspect of their internships. They may have already written a paper about the organizational structures of their sites, in which they interviewed someone at the site. In this paper, they will conduct research and organize and present the information using the tools they have been learning, such as note taking, interviewing, observing, and writing descriptions. Then they will begin to brainstorm topics they may want to research. Record their ideas on the board.

They may include the following.

- a. the history of the business or service of the internship
- b. how a product is made
- c. where resources come from to make products
- d. how a business works
- e. what different employees do
- f. how the business makes money
- g. if nonprofit, how the internship serves the community

- 8. INDIVIDUAL** Have each student choose an appealing topic and write



ASSIGNMENT 3

a one-page description about the topic that can act as an abstract or summary. In the abstract each student should describe what the paper will explain about the topic. Students may choose to change their topics at a later time if they find another. Have students use the *Sakai* Assignments Tool to submit their topics for evaluation.

ASSESSMENT

Research Topic Write a description of a chosen research topic.

REFLECTION

Have students write a three or more paragraph reflection that covers the following questions. Have them use the *Sakai* Assignments Tool to submit their reflections for evaluation.

**ASSIGNMENT 4****Paragraph 1**

- Describe your impressions of the *War of the Ghosts* story.
- What did you find confusing? Interesting?
- When you re-wrote your story, where did you have confusion?
- Why do you think that that was confusing for you to remember?

Paragraph 2

- Through the lesson and the other activities, what did you learn about your perspective when it came to interpreting and describing events, persons, or issues?
- How does that perspective appear in your writing, relationships with others, or at your internship site?

Paragraph 3

- Explain why you chose the research topic you did. What appeals to you about it?
- Describe what research you think you will need to do to complete this project .

ASSESSMENT

Reflection Complete a written reflection about perspective in descriptive writing.

ASSESSMENT

Use the *Description Rubric* to evaluate student performance. Have students complete the rubric as a self-evaluation and then discuss the results.

INTEGRATING TECHNOLOGY

ANNOUNCEMENT

- Use Announcements to remind students of assignments and due dates.
- Announcements should be coordinated with Assignments and Schedule.

SCHEDULE

- Add Assignments to the Schedule

EVALUATE/REVIEW

- Use Drop Box to access and evaluate student assignments
- Use Assignments to access and evaluate student assignments
- Student Portfolio
- Add a test or quiz if desired

LESSONS

- Review Lessons
- Add Resources if desired
- Change a Lesson if desired
- Schedule a Lesson
- Unschedule a Lesson

COMMUNICATE IF DESIRED

- Blogger
- Chat Room
- Drop box
- Mailtool
- Roster

Ohio Academic Content Standards

English Language Arts

Communication Oral and Visual

1. Apply active listening strategies (e.g., monitoring message for clarity, selecting and organizing essential information, noting cues such as changes in pace) in a variety of settings.
9. Deliver formal and informal descriptive presentations that convey relevant information and descriptive details.

DIFFERENTIATING INSTRUCTION

SPECIAL NEEDS

Students with an IEP may need substantial assistance in completing all of the written work in this lesson.

GIFTED AND TALENTED

Students will be expected to demonstrate mastery over English composition skills, leadership in their small groups, and in-depth analysis of their perspectives. In addition to this, these students may be asked to submit an analysis of the *Make My Memory* abstract. They will be examining this resource for bias (there should be none if it is properly written), the intended audience for the article, and the use of language in the abstract.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

WEBSITE SOURCES

Preview sites for appropriateness before recommending them to students. If links are broken, search for similar information.

- Access The Writing Site for more information about descriptive writing and links to teaching tools. <http://www.thewritingsite.org/resources/genre/descriptive.asp>
- Access this site for a tutorial on descriptive writing by author Virginia Hamilton. <http://teacher.scholastic.com/writewit/diary/index.htm>

BOOK RESOURCES

- Bartlett, Frederic C. *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology*. Cambridge University Press, 1932, 2nd edition 1995. Use this book to learn more about *The War of the Ghosts* experiment.
- Braun, Kathryn A., Rhiannon Ellis, and Elizabeth F. Loftus. "Make My Memory: How Advertising Can Change Our Memories of the Past." *Psychology & Marketing*, 2002: 1-23. Use this journal article to learn how advertisers sway people's memories and change their perspectives. <http://faculty.washington.edu/eloftus/Articles/BraunPsychMarket02.pdf>
- Mandela, Nelson. *Long Walk to Freedom*. Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 2000. Use this book to learn more about the life of Nelson Mandela.