Description and Atmosphere

KS3 English · Follows the national curriculum

Name _____ Class _____ Date _____

1. Worked example

Plan a five-paragraph description of a train station at night, using a camera structure.

Step 1 · Wide shot

The empty platform under orange lights; rain on the roof.

Step 2 · Zoom in

A vending machine humming and flickering.

Step 3 · Close-up

A ticket, stamped with today's date, stuck to a puddle.

Step 4 · Shift

A distant train horn; the rails start to sing.

Step 5 · Pull back out

The train arrives and leaves; the platform empty again, a little different.

Answer: Wide → zoom → close-up → shift → pull back: five paragraphs with a clear focus and a change in mood.

Check: Each paragraph takes the reader somewhere new.

2. Now try one with the steps

Upgrade a flat sentence: 'The house was old and scary.'

Step 1 · Cut the telling words

Step 2 · Find specific details

Step 3 · Choose a verb with connotations

Step 4 · Add a sense

Answer:

3. Practice

Show your working. The marks tell you how much is expected.

1. What is the main difference between descriptive and narrative writing? [1]

2. How many senses can you use in description? Write the number. [1]

3. What is a semantic field? [1]

4. In the eerie playground passage, which verb makes the fog seem alive? [1]

5. Name the technique in 'Early light pooled on the playground like spilled honey.' [1]

6. What is pathetic fallacy? [1]

7. Give two words with connotations of warmth and comfort. [1]

8. Rewrite 'The sea was rough.' to show, not tell, in one sentence. [2]

9. Why does the chaotic playground passage use a long list? [2]

10. How does the single glove create atmosphere in the eerie passage? [2]

11. Describe the camera structure for descriptive writing. [2]

12. Write a sentence about a city street using sound and smell. [2]

13. Explain how changing sentence length can shift atmosphere. [2]

14. Why is 'show, don't tell' especially important in descriptive writing? [2]

4. Before you hand it in

Turning the description into a story with lots of events.
Keep one focus and let small changes (light, sound, mood) give it movement.

Stacking adjectives: 'the dark, gloomy, creepy, spooky night'.
Use one precise image or a strong verb instead.

Mixing atmospheres by accident: 'menacing shadows' next to 'cheerful daisies'.
Keep a consistent semantic field, unless you are deliberately shifting the mood.

Only describing what things look like.
Add at least two other senses.