

3rd Grade Creative Writing Unit

Unit Description: The goal of this unit is for students to become comfortable using sensory words and figurative language in their writing. It is also for them to be able to understand poems and how sensory words and figurative language impact the writing of famous poets. The idea is that when analyzing the poetry there really isn't a wrong answer, and that the important thing is to be inspired. Above everything is the idea that students can use something that they read or experience to inspire their own writing. We will be focusing on the theme within the poems and stories and in turn use those themes in their writing.

Descriptive writing is different than narrative. In descriptive writing the student should focus on a moment not on the whole story. Descriptive writing uses words that show what the writer has seen, heard, smelled, tasted, or experienced. Descriptive writing paints a picture with words so that the reader can easily imagine what the writer is describing.

Descriptive writing shares the following characteristics:

- 1. Good descriptive writing includes many vivid sensory details that paint a picture and appeals to all of the reader's senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste when appropriate. Descriptive writing may also paint pictures of the feelings the person, place or thing invokes in the writer.**
- 2. Good descriptive writing often makes use of figurative language such as analogies, similes and metaphors to help paint the picture in the reader's mind.**
- 3. Good descriptive writing uses precise language. General adjectives, nouns, and passive verbs do not have a place in good descriptive writing. Use specific adjectives and nouns and strong action verbs to give life to the picture you are painting in the reader's mind.**
- 4. Good descriptive writing is organized. Some ways to organize descriptive writing include: chronological (time), spatial (location), and order of importance. When describing a person, you might begin with a physical description, followed by how that person thinks, feels and acts.**

It is very important to leave time for students to share what they are working on each day. They will be writing with careful attention to the theme of stories and poems. Please use the examples so that expectations are consistent and that the students have an understanding of how this is different from the narrative unit.

Week 1:

Day 1: Connect the use of sensory words and use of figurative language to descriptive writing. Use the poetry term chart to review poetry terms with the students.

Explain to students that they will now be working on descriptive writing. Tell students that this writing is similar to narrative, but that they will not be writing a full story with a beginning, middle, and end. Tell students that descriptive writing uses words that show what the writer has seen, heard, smelled, tasted, or experienced. Descriptive writing paints a picture with words so that the reader can easily imagine what the writer is describing. It shows the reader instead of tells the reader. Instead of writing a whole story they want to focus on one moment that correlates with the theme.

Have students take out their writing journals. Display the picture for the students to see. Tell students that you want them to describe the scene. Show with words what you would see, hear, feel, touch, or taste if you were here. Display the second picture and have students do the same thing. Give time after each picture for students to share their writing. Guide students in the right direction if you feel that they are not writing descriptively.

Day 2: Pass out the theme graphic organizer and explain that students will be identifying the theme in stories and poems. As your reading they should think about what the theme of the story is. Lessons on theme should be covered in your reading units. Read the story, "Rosie and Michael" by Judith Viorst. Together decide on the theme of the story, which is friendship. On the graphic organizer write a description for what the theme of friendship means.

Task: Have students write a descriptive paragraph about what friendship means to them.

Day 3: Pass out the theme graphic organizer. Read the book, "Owen and Mzee" by P. Kahumba. Discuss the story as you read and see if students can pick out the main theme of the story. The theme of the story is friendship. Discuss how this story is different from "Rosie and Michael", but still has the same theme. Add this story to theme chart.

Task: Allow students time to write a descriptive piece or story inspired by this story.

Day 4: Display the poem, "A Time to Talk" by Robert Frost. Line by line go through the poem and discuss the meaning. Have students take notes on the side of the poem as you discuss the poem meaning. The goal is to connect this poem to the theme of friendship and have students write a descriptive story with the same theme. Add this title to their theme chart.

Give students two minutes to brainstorm ideas they could write about based on the theme of friendship. Have students share their ideas and make a chart on the board. Try to connect their ideas to the poem by Robert Frost.

Task: Have students write their own story inspired by this poem.

Week 2:

Day 1: Pass out the theme graphic organizer. Tell students that they will be working on a different theme this week. Read the story, "My Little Round House" to the class. As you are reading point out different clues that the students can use to guess the theme. After reading, fill out the organizer for the theme of change together. Discuss what changes happened in the story.

Task: Allow students to write a descriptive piece or story inspired by this book. Tell students they should focus on the theme of change in their story.

Day 2: Pass out the poem "Rathers" by Mary Austin. Read the poem once aloud to the students. Tell students just to listen to the poem and think about what the author is saying. Then read the poem again and have students draw the imagery they pictured in their minds as they are listening to the poem. Discuss what the students drew and what you think the theme of the poem is and what it means. Discuss how the author would like to change herself into different animals and ask students why they think the author wants to be different animals. Add to the theme chart.

Task: Have students write a descriptive piece or story about change or a time they wanted to change something about themselves.

Day 3: Pass out the poem "Fear of Change" by Sam Byron. Go through the poem line by line and have students take notes on the side of the poem. Get into the deeper meaning of the poem that is although we may not like change, change is good. Focus on the final line of the poem "Without change we cannot go forward" and get students opinions of what this may mean.

Task: Have students write a descriptive piece of story about a time they were afraid to change. Give students time to get with a partner and share their writing.

Day 4: Pass out the poem "A Change in Perspective" by anonymous and the Poetry Reading Pre-Assessment Sheet. Give students time to read the poem and fill out the assessment sheet. Put students in pairs or groups and have them share what they found. Then bring the class together and discuss what the students discussed. Add poem to theme chart.

Task: Have students continue writing their descriptive piece or story about change, making adjustments from the new poem discussed.

Week 3:

Day 1: Pass out the theme graphic organizer. Tell students we will be working on the final theme of fear. Discuss what the theme of fear means and add it to your chart. Read the story *There's a Nightmare in my Closet* by Mercer Meyer. Discuss with students why this story goes with the theme of fear.

Give student two minutes to brainstorm ideas they could write about that go with the theme of fear. Have students share and make a list together.

Task: Have students write a descriptive piece or story based on the theme of fear.

Day 2: Pass out the poem "the fear of fear" by Samah Khan. Read the poem once together with the students. Then put students in pairs or groups and have them fill out the Five Senses Word Sheet using the poem. Bring the class together and discuss what the students wrote for the five senses. Explain how poems and stories that appeal to all our senses are more interesting to read and understand. Discuss how the author is saying that we have fears in our lives, but sometime we let the fear drive us to make decisions. The author is saying that sometime the fear stops us from doing the things we want to do. Connect this to the story from Day 1. Add title to the theme chart.

Task: Have students write a descriptive piece or story about a time they let fear stop them from doing something.

Day 3: Pass out the poem "Are You Afraid of the Dark?" by Raevynn Blaque and the Poetry Reading Pre-Assessment Sheet. Give students time to read the poem and fill out the assessment sheet. Put students in pairs or groups and have them share what they found. Then bring the class together and discuss what the students have found. Add poem to theme chart.

Task: Have students write a descriptive piece or story based on the theme of fear.

Week 4

Use this week to take one descriptive writing piece to final draft. Conference with students about how they can improve their writing. Allow for time to share their final copies.

4th Grade Creative Writing Unit

Unit Description: The goal of this unit is for students to become comfortable using sensory words and figurative language in their writing. It is also for them to be able to understand poems and how sensory words and figurative language impact the writing of famous poets. The idea is that when analyzing the poetry there really isn't a wrong answer, and that the important thing is to be inspired. About everything is the idea that students can use something that they read or experience to inspire their own writing. Each week the poems are focused around a common theme, which will hopefully help to inspire the students' writing.

It is very important to leave time for students to share what they are working on each day. This will help inspire some students who may not know exactly the direction to go in. They will be writing with careful attention to style and use of literary devices. Please review some of the examples provided so the expectations are consistent and there is a clear understand of how this type of writing is different than the narrative unit. The students are not writing a beginning, middle, end but instead focusing on one moment and thoroughly describing it.

Week 1

Day 1: Review using sensory words by reading aloud, "The Storm Book" by Charlotte Zolotow. Connect the use of sensory words and use of figurative language to descriptive writing.

Task: Have students write a descriptive paragraph about "The Storm Book" by Charlotte Zolotow using examples of figurative language.

Day 2: This week the poems will be centered on the theme of hope. Display "The Gift of Miracles" by Rajagopal Haran. Line by line, go through the poem and discuss the meaning and how the author used metaphors throughout the poem. The meaning of the poem should lead to a discussion of the theme. Connect this to descriptive writing. How can we use other written texts to inspire a story or descriptive piece? This poem may inspire a story about hope, specifically one particular moment of hope.

Task: Have students write their own story or descriptive piece inspired by this poem, remember to add figurative language.

Day 3: Read and discuss the poem "Hope" by Will Curl, going through line by line. Again, discuss how the meaning can lead us to the theme of hope. Repeat this activity with "Mother to Son" by Langston Hughes. Here, focus on how Langston Hughes uses a character to describe difficult times that were inevitably overcome.

Both of these poems can inspire stories of overcoming struggles or hope for the future.

Task: Students can start a new descriptive piece or story inspired by any of these poems.

Week 2

Day 1: The poems this week will all be focused around the theme of appreciation for nature. Read and discuss the poem “Monotone” by Carl Sandburg, going through line by line. Be sure to discuss the meaning of the theme. Noting the descriptive language, especially with the rain and sun.

Task: Allow students to write a descriptive piece or story inspired by this poem.

Day 2: Read and discuss the poem “October” by Robert Frost, going through line by line. Discuss how the meaning can lead us to the theme of appreciate for nature. Focus on Robert Frost’s ability to paint a picture in the readers’ mind with lines such as “The sun with gentle mist” and “leaves burnt with frost.”

Task: Allow students to write a descriptive piece or story inspired by this poem.

Day 3: Read and discuss the poem “Hyla Brook” by Robert Frost, going through line by line. Discuss how the meaning can lead us to the theme of appreciate for nature. Focus here on how Robert Frost takes something that isn’t typically considered beautiful, a dried up brook, and can make it seem special.

Task: Allow students to write a descriptive piece or story inspired by this poem.

*Since this week is about appreciation of nature, it might be a good idea to write outside so students can be inspired.

Week 3

Day 1: The poems this week will all be focused around the theme of love (specifically love found in a family). Read and discuss the poem “A Family is Like” by Nicole O’Neil, going through line by line. Noting the use of similes in this poem. Discuss how the meaning can lead us to the theme of love.

Task: Allow students to write a descriptive piece or story inspired by this poem.

Day 2: Read and discuss the poem “How Do I Love Thee?” by Elizabeth Browning, going through line by line. Discuss how the meaning can lead us to the theme of love.

Task: Allow students to write a descriptive piece or story inspired by this poem

Day 3: Read and discuss the poem “A Treasured Gift” by Margaret Raikowski, going through line by line. Discuss how the meaning can lead us to the theme of love within a family.

Task: Allow students to write a descriptive piece or story inspired by this poem

Week 4

Use this week to take one descriptive piece to final draft. Conference with students about how they can improve their writing. Allow for time to share their final copies.

Creative Writing Unit Fifth Grade

*** Unit Description: The goal of this unit is for students to become comfortable using sensory words and figurative language in their writing. It is also for students to be able to understand famous poems and how sensory words and figurative language impact the writing of famous poets. The idea is that when analyzing poetry there really isn't a single meaning, but there is often a common theme or message that the author is using. The important thing is for students to be inspired, and to reinforce that other texts and personal experiences can inspire great writing.**

*** It is very important to leave time for students to share what they are working on each day. They will be writing with careful attention to style and use of literacy devices. Please review the examples provided so that expectations are consistent. These examples can also be read to the students so that they have a clear understanding of how this type of writing differs from what they have already done in the narrative unit.**

*** I have found it to be very helpful to keep my own writing journal and share each day. Hearing my examples inspires the students to really push their creativity.**

Week 1

-Day 1- Review the use of sensory words by reading aloud, A Quiet Place by Douglas Wood. Connect the use of sensory words and the use of figurative language in descriptive writing.

-Task- Have students write a descriptive paragraph(s) about a special place using using examples of imagery and figurative language.

-Day 2- Display the poem, “The Road not Taken,” by Robert Frost. Line-by-line go through the poem, discuss the meaning, and discuss how the author used description to add to the poem. Connect this to descriptive writing, and how students can use other written texts, like poetry, to inspire a story. The goal is not for students to write a short poem (although I have a board where students can post poems that they write on their own). The goal is to connect this poem to the idea of making choices.

-Task- Have students write their own story or description inspired by this poem. Circulate around the room to check in with students give them support. Give students the time to share sections of their writing.

-Day 3- Have students pair up for a few minutes and share their writing from the previous day. They can discuss ways that their partner can be more descriptive. Next, display the poem, “Make Your Choice” by Michael Messineo. Line-by-line go through the poem, discuss the meaning, and discuss how the author used description to add to the poem. Connect this to descriptive writing, and how students can use other written texts, like poetry, to inspire a story. The goal is to connect this poem to the theme of making choices that was discussed in Day 2.

-Task- Have students write their own story or description inspired by this poem. Circulate around the room to check in with students give them support. Give students the time to share sections of their writing.

Week 2

-Day 1- Display and discuss the poem, “Storm Fear,” by Robert Frost. Line-by-line go through the poem, discuss the meaning, and discuss how the author used description to add to the poem. Connect this to descriptive writing, and how students can use other written texts, like poetry, to inspire a story. The goal is to connect this poem to the theme of fear.

-Task- Have students write their own story or description inspired by this poem. Circulate around the room to check in with students give them support. Give students the time to share sections of their writing.

-Day 2- Display and discuss the poem, “Narrow Fellow in the Grass,” by Emily Dickinson. Line-by-line go through the poem, discuss the meaning, and discuss how the author used description to add to the poem. Connect this to descriptive writing, and how students can use other written texts, like poetry, to inspire a story. Point out to students how the author describes a snake without ever saying the word. Encourage them to use this technique in their own writing.

-Task- Have students write their own story or description inspired by this poem. Circulate around the room to check in with students give them support. Give students the time to share sections of their writing.

-Day 3- Display and discuss the poem, “Little Girl, Be Careful What You Say,” by Carl Sandburg. Line-by-line go through the poem, discuss the meaning, and discuss how the author used description to add to the poem. Connect this to descriptive writing, and how students can use other written texts, like poetry, to inspire a story. The theme of this poem is the strength of words. Students can think about a time when someone’s words can have a strong effect on them or others. They can then focus on the feeling that these words evoked to set the tone for their writing.

-Task- Have students write their own story or description inspired by this poem. Circulate around the room to check in with students give them support. Give students the time to share sections of their writing.

Week 3

-Day 1- Display and discuss the poem, “Landscape,” by Carl Sandburg. Line-by-line go through the poem, discuss the meaning, and discuss how the author used description to add to the poem. Connect this to descriptive writing, and how students can use other written texts, like poetry, to inspire a story. For this poem, focus on how nature can inspire descriptive writing.

-Task- Have students write their own description about something in nature. Ideally this would be a good time to take students outside and so that they can gain inspiration from nature.

-Day 2- Display and discuss the poem, “A Prayer in Spring,” by Robert Frost. Line-by-line go through the poem, discuss the meaning, and discuss how the author used description to add to the poem. Connect this to descriptive writing, and how students can use other written texts, like poetry, to inspire a story. For this poem, focus on how the author shows appreciation for nature and connect to, “Landscape.”

-Task- Have students write their own story or description inspired by this poem. Circulate around the room to check in with students give them support. Give students the time to share sections of their writing.

-Day 3- Display and discuss the poem, “Young Sea,” by Carl Sandburg. Line-by-line go through the poem, discuss the meaning, and discuss how the author used description to add to the poem. Connect this to descriptive writing, and how students can use other written texts, like poetry, to inspire a story. For this poem, focus on how the author uses personification to describe something in nature.

-Task- Have students write their own story or description inspired by this poem. Circulate around the room to check in with students give them support. Give students the time to share sections of their writing. Students should begin thinking about the writing piece that they would like to bring to final copy.

Week 4

-Day 1-3: Students will use this week to work on their final papers for creative writing. Please be sure to allow students a day to share their writing and celebrate the culmination of the writing units. This is a great time to point out all of the improvements that you have seen throughout the year!!