DRESCRIPTIVE ESSAY WRITING

Your first task in writing a descriptive essay is to **choose a topic** that has many interesting parts or qualities to talk about. Unless you have a really vivid imagination, you'll find it difficult to write much about a simple object like a comb, for example. It's best to **compare a few topics** first to make sure they'll work.

The next challenge is to figure out the best way to describe your chosen subject in such a way as to relay a complete experience to the reader, so that he or she is able to see, hear, and feel through your words.

As in any writing, the **drafting stage** is key to writing a successful descriptive essay. Since the purpose of the essay is to paint a mental image of a specific subject, it helps to make a list of all the things you associate with your topic.

For example, if your subject is **"the farm"** where you visited your grandparents as a child you would list all the things you associate with that place. Your list should include both general attributes associated with a farm and the more personal and specific things that make it special to you and the reader.

Start with general details:

- . Cornfields
- . Pigs
- . Cows
- . Garden
- . Farm house
- . Well

Then add the **unique details**:

- . That spot by the pig barn where you fell in the manure
- . Playing hide and seek in the cornfields
- . Picking wild greens for dinner with your grandmother
- . The stray dogs that always wandered onto the farm
- . Scary coyotes howling in the night

By tying these details together you can make the essay more relatable to the reader. Making these lists will allow you to see how you can tie things from each list together.

At this stage, you should determine a good order for the objects you'll describe. For example, if you are describing an object, you should determine whether you want to describe its appearance from top to bottom, or side to side.

It's time to start writing paragraphs!

As you build your paragraphs, you should **avoid confusing the** reader by bombarding them with unfamiliar information immediately; you must ease your way into your topic in your **introductory paragraph**. For example, instead of saying,

> *The farm was where I spent most summers holidays. During the summer we played hide and seek in the cornfields and walked through the cow pastures topic wild greens for supper. Nana always carried a gun for snakes.*

Instead, give the reader a broad view of your subject and work your way into the details. A better example would be:

> ***In a small rural town in central Ohio was a farm surrounded by miles of cornfields. In this place, on many warm summer days, my cousins and I would run through the cornfields playing hide and seek or making our own crop circles as clubhouses. My grandparents, whom I called Nana and Papa, lived on this farm for many years. The old farmhouse was large and always full of people, and it was surrounded by wild animals. I spent many of my childhood summers and holidays here. It was the family gathering place.***

Another simple rule of thumb to remember is "**show don't tell."** If you want to describe a feeling or action you should reinvent it through the senses rather than just state it. For example, instead of:

I got excited every time we pulled into the driveway of my grandparents house.

Try to elaborate what was really going on in your head:

> ***After sitting for several hours in the back seat of the car, I found the slow crawl up the driveway to be absolute torture. I just knew Nana was inside waiting with fresh baked pies and treats for me. Papa would have some toy or trinket hidden somewhere but he would pretend not to recognize me for a few minutes just to tease me before he gave it to me. As my parents would struggle to pry the suitcases out of the trunk, I would bounce all the way up the porch and rattle the door until someone finally let me in.***

The second version paints a picture and puts the reader in the scene. Anyone can be excited. What your reader needs and wants to know is, what makes it exciting?

Finally, don't try to cram too much into one paragraph. **Use each paragraph to describe a different aspect of your subject**. Check to make sure that your essay flows from one paragraph to the next with good transition statements(discussed in the other lecture).

The conclusion of your paragraph is where you can tie everything together and restate the thesis of your essay. Take all the details and summarize what they mean to you and why it is important.