

# Halloween Descriptive Writing Assignment

## Background

This time we will work at the paragraph level, the building blocks of an essay. We'll also do a portion of this exercise in class, working in teams. Begin by writing **three** descriptive paragraphs as described below.

## Writing a descriptive paragraph

A descriptive paragraph describes a person, place, or thing and its purpose is to paint a word picture using rich vocabulary. Each paragraph includes a topic sentence, a *minimum* of 3 details, and the closing sentence.

The topic sentence, also known as the opening sentence is to grab the readers' attention. It should highlight something about the person, place, or thing that will engage the reader. The details of the paragraph serve to paint a vivid picture of the person, place, or thing being described. It is important to use rich vocabulary if the reader is to be able to visualize what is being described. Lastly, the closing sentence is to summarize the description or transition to the next paragraph. In this exercise, the closing sentence should be a summary.

One technique for writing a descriptive paragraph is "writing using the five senses." Pretend you are an alien and want to send information back to your home planet about a new discovery, "Object X." Your description would include:

- what it looks like;
- how it feels,
- the sound it makes;
- the smell of Object X
- and, (possibly) the taste of Object X!

## Writing with vivid imagery

Imagery is the use of vivid description, usually rich in sensory words, to create pictures, or images, in the reader's mind. Imagery involves one or more of your five senses (hearing, taste, touch, smell, sight). To create vivid imagery, use specific, concrete details. Don't write "book", write the title of a specific book, one that conveys the tone and mood at that moment. Select specific details that create and convey the emotional impact you want to convey. The more specific the detail, the more vivid the image in the reader's mind.

Writing with sensory descriptions of sound, touch, smell, sight, and taste requires the use of a precise and sophisticated vocabulary, and the use of subtle nuances. For example, a

voice can sound hollow, shrill, frantic, seething, sarcastic, annoyed, etc. . . A blanket may feel scratchy, fluffy, silky, coarse, or fuzzy, etc. . . **Vocabulary matters!** Here are a few examples of descriptive words taken from a [Study Guide of Descriptive Word Lists](#).

### **Smell and Taste**

- Sweet
- Sour
- Salty
- Bitter
- Bland
- Citrus
- Acidic
- Alkaline
- Nutty
- Rancid
- Spicy
- Aromatic
- Rotten

### **Size and Quantity**

- Small
- Large
- Tiny
- Gram
- Huge
- Mammoth
- Voluminous
- Empty
- Liberal
- Scarcity
- Gigantic
- Petite
- Microscopic
- Vast
- Paucity
- Cellular

### **The writing prompt**

In honor of Halloween, you are asked to write three paragraphs with each paragraph describing a different spooky scary thing. Examples of a “spooky scary thing” include a haunted house, a ghostly apparition, a Halloween costume, a monster, a creepy scene from a movie, ... almost anything that you’ve experienced with your senses and found scary or

spooky. **To facilitate our in-class exercise, all of your paragraphs must include visual imagery.**

## **Due Date**

Bring your three paragraphs to the next class meeting for an in-class exercise.

## **Grading Criteria**

To get a C+ or higher your paragraphs must meet the following criteria:

1. The writing responds to the writing prompt.
2. The writing is in the active voice with a minimum of nominalizations.
3. All sentences are complete sentences.
4. The writing is free from basic grammatical errors.

To get a B or an A, your paragraphs must meet the following additional requirements:

1. The writing responds to the prompt in a complete and interesting way.
2. Each paragraph contains a topic sentence and a closing sentence.
3. The writing uses vivid words and phrases that draw pictures in the reader's mind, and the choice and placement of the words seems accurate, natural and not forced.
4. Each paragraph includes details that appeal to your sense of sight and at least one of the other five senses (taste, touch, sound, smell).
5. The writing style is interesting and efficient, not wordy or unclear.
6. The writing is thoughtful and original.