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| Year 7 & 9 English  Descriptive Writing    Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Year \_: \_\_\_\_ |

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# UNIT OVERVIEW

What is descriptive writing?

A stylistic strategy using sensory details to portray a person, place, or thing.

What we will do in this unit of work:

Create a character

Develop Conflict

Engage in writing a setting

Develop a beginning and ending of a story

Structure your story

Annotate descriptive writing example

Use descriptive language

Develop a draft

Engage in peer review of draft

Be assessed on critique, draft, revision process, and final product

Participate in evaluation of unit

Assessment: annotating,

# creating a CHARACTER

Developing a character is like creating a person. It’s more than just a description of what they look like. It’s who they are. There are many ways you can do this:

* Base the character on someone you already know
* Do a questionnaire on behalf of your character
* Interview your character
* Stream of consciousness writing as your character
* Think of a side character in a book/movie that you want to develop further
* Create a visual pinboard of your character either with paper or digitally using Pinterest or other software. Find pictures of what they look like, what they wear, where they live.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| EXTERNAL  1. Who is your main character?  Name:  Age: | * Karen, * 14 yo |
| 2. What does your character look like? Describe their appearance? What are their unique features? Try to include more senses than just the visual--how the person sounds, smells, the texture of their hair and skin. | * Curly, bouffant hair * Wears vanilla scent * Freckles |
| 3. What does their voice sound like? Do they have a speech mannerism? Is there something they repeat? | * Close talker * Says ‘do you know what I mean’ a lot |
| 4. How does your character walk? What does their walk say about them? Do they have special gestures/mannerisms. | * Walks with a bounce that makes her curly hair jump around her head * Rubs her lip when she’s thinking |
| INTERNAL:  5. Next, write a little about what you can't observe about the person from the outside. What is their secret fear? What is their pet peeve? What do they love eating? Do they have a pet? | * Scared of spiders * Hates people who are shy because she thinks they’re pretending to get attention * Loves liquorice * Has a goldfish |
| 6. What is your character’s defining quality, that is, how would anyone describe your protagonist? What trait is the most prominent in her personality? What kind of a person are they? | * Is vain |
| 7. How would you show this quality? | * Is asked to give new student school tour and be her buddy, but instead uses her to get with the cool girls |
| 8. What is a secret they don’t share? Write a scene about the moment when this secret was formed? | * She is poor, but pretends to be rich. |

# CHARACTER EXERCISE

*Write a paragraph or plot how you would show this quality in your short story.*

When my alarm went off at 5 o’clock in the morning I quickly shut it off before Mum heard. I got out of bed and turned on the light. Even though I had to wear a uniform at school, I still ensured that I was an individual.

After my shower I stood in front of my vanity and carefully used the curling iron on my hair. My hair was naturally curly, but if left to its own devices it looked like I had put my finger in an electricity socket so every morning I woke up early and used the curling iron and hair product to make it straight. An hour later my arms were aching from holding them above my head, but my hair was sleek as a seal’s pelt.

I opened my make up bag and began rubbing on foundation. Even though make up was frowned upon at our school, as long as you went for the natural look teachers wouldn’t say anything.

Although I don’t know why they called it the natural look when putting it on was anything but natural. By the time I finished dabbing the foundation, then the blush on my cheeks, mascara and light pink lipstick, another hour passed.

I heard Mum’s alarm go off and she knocked on my door and called out, ‘Breakfast time,’ before walking to the kitchen.

‘Just a minute,’ I shouted and put rubbed my lips together.

I examined myself in the mirror. Perfect. The make up hid my freckles and my hair looked gorgeous. I was ready for the part of posh schoolgirl.

I was \_\_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_\_

# CHARACTER TEMPLATE

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| EXTERNAL  1. Who is your main character?  Name:  Age: |  |
| 2. What does your character look like? Describe their appearance? What are their unique features? Try to include more senses than just the visual--how the person sounds, smells, the texture of their hair and skin. |  |
| 3. What does their voice sound like? Do they have a speech mannerism? Is there something they repeat? |  |
| 4. How does your character walk? What does their walk say about them? Do they have special gestures/mannerisms. |  |
| INTERNAL:  5. Next, write a little about what you can't observe about the person from the outside. What is their secret fear? What is their pet peeve? What do they love eating? Do they have a pet? |  |
| 6. What is your character’s defining quality, that is, how would anyone describe your protagonist? What trait is the most prominent in her personality? What kind of a person are they? |  |
| 7. How would you show this quality? Write a paragraph or plot how you would show this quality in your short story. |  |
| 8. What is a secret they don’t share? Write a scene about the moment when this secret was formed? |  |

# CONFLICT

* The reason that we read a book or watch a movie or TV show is because a problem/conflict is presented and we need to know how it is resolved.
* The simplest way to understand conflict is to ask the question:
* What does your character want and why can’t they get it?

**Formula:**

GOAL+OBSTACLE=CONFLICT

CONFLICT + CHARACTER = READER INTEREST

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. A short story is about a conflict/problem that your character faces. What is your character’s goal? What does your character want/desire/aspire to? | Karen wants to be with the in crowd. The Stiletto crew are the cool girls at her school whose parents are rich and famous. |
| 2. What is the obstacle preventing your character from achieving their goal? Why are they not able to get what they want/desire/aspire to? | Karen is at the posh school on a scholarship, but has been pretending she’s rich too. However as time passes the other students are becoming suspicious about her outlandish stories. |
| 3. When did this conflict/problem first begin for your character? Why is did it occur? How does your character feel about it? | When Tom started liking Karen the Stiletto Crew gave her grief because Carmen, the leader, liked him too. |
| 4. When writing a short story you need to build the suspense so that reader is curious as to how the character will resolve his/her conflict. What steps does your character take to overcome the obstacle to achieving their goal? List three possibilities. | 1. She tells Tom she’s not interested in him and tries to push him toward Carmen.  3. Karen tries to ingratiate herself with Carmen by buying her Justin Bieber concert tickets and pretending that her father gave them to her as a present  3. She hears about the new girl starting school who is the daughter of a famous movie star and decides to be her friend so that the Stilletto crew take her in. |
| 4. Now imagine that none of these actions help resolve the problem. For each possibility list a reason why the problem wasn’t resolved. | 1. Tom is angry with her and she ends up losing an important ally.  2. Carmen tricks her into giving her both tickets so she goes with her friend.  3. Sapphira, the new girl, isn’t interested in hanging out with the cool girls |

*Congratulations. You have now developed the plot of your short story.*

# CONFLICT EXERCISE

*5. Pick one of the steps your character takes to resolve the conflict. Now write a scene in your character’s point of view where they are attempting to achieve their goal, but are prevented from doing so. Don’t forget to use the five senses (smell, sight, taste, touch, hearing).*

I saw the Stiletto Crew before they saw me. They were sitting in their usual spot outside of the library. Not because they were big readers or anything, but because the glass wall allowed them to check out their reflection and practice their posing.

‘Hey Carmen,’ I said, speaking to the self appointed leader. Even though Carmen wasn’t technically the wealthiest at our posh school, her father was a newscast presenter, she was the one who was the most confident and vivacious so she always took the lead.

‘Karen.’ Carmen gave me the Queen nod, moving her head just enough to acknowledge me and to indicate her disdain.

She was still angry about Tom asking me out to the school dance. Even though I said no and Carmen was now going with him, she still hadn’t forgiven me for the fact that he’d asked me first.

‘I wanted to introduce you to my friend Sapphira,’ I said. I’d put special emphasis on the word “friend.” Even though Sapphira and I had only known each other for a week I’d worked hard to cement our connection, even reading The Hobbit so I could claim it as my favourite book. Sapphira’s friendship was crucial to my plan to get back into Carmen’s good graces.

‘Nice to meet you,’ Carmen said, her tone indicating anything but that.

‘Sapphira’s Mum is Evelyn Curtis,’ I said.

Carmen narrowed her eyes as she gave Sapphira the once-over looking for a resemblance to her famous mother, but Sapphira took after her father and had his brown hair and eyes. It didn’t matter. Even though Sapphira didn’t have the movie star looks, she had the movie star pedigree and at Sheffield Prep that’s all that mattered.

‘Let me introduce you to the gang.’ Carmen stepped forward with a bright smile and did the introductions.

I breathed a sigh of relief. It was working. I was going to get in the popular crowd.

Sapphira shot me a look of desperation. She was shy and didn’t do well in situations where she had to meet lots of people.

‘We were just going to the library,’ I said, and yanked Sapphira away. ‘We’ll see you later.’

As we entered the library I saw Carmen through the glass looking frustrated. I was glad. Now that Carmen knew that the only way she was going to get to Evelyn Curtis was through me, it was just a matter of time until my invitation to Carmen’s school-dance-after-party came through.

# CONFLICT TEMPLATE

**Formula:**

GOAL+OBSTACLE=CONFLICT

CONFLICT + CHARACTER = READER INTEREST

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. A short story is about a conflict/problem that your character faces. What is your character’s goal? What does your character want/desire/aspire to? |  |
| 2. What is the obstacle preventing your character from achieving their goal? Why are they not able to get what they want/desire/aspire to? |  |
| 3. When did this conflict/problem first begin for your character? Why is did it occur? How does your character feel about it? |  |
| 4. When writing a short story you need to build the suspense so that reader is curious as to how the character will resolve his/her conflict. What steps does your character take to overcome the obstacle to achieving their goal? List three possibilities. | 1.  2.  3. |
| 4. Now imagine that none of these actions help resolve the problem. For each possibility list a reason why the problem wasn’t resolved. | 1.  2.  3 |

# SETTING

* Setting is used to paint a picture for the reader. You do not need to describe every single thing instead you need to include just enough description for the reader to understand where the action is taking place.
* The way a setting is described reveals the character’s relationship to place and this adds another element to the story.

*Writing Tip: Find pictures of your setting to help you describe it.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Karen attends one of the poshest high schools in Australia. I’m going to base this school on Melbourne Grammar and have found a photo to use as inspiration. | Facts about Melbourne Grammar to be weaved in:   * The school opened in 1858. * The bluestone buildings at the senior campus are all on the Victorian Heritage Register. * In 2001, The Sun-Herald ranked Melbourne Grammar School second among Australian schools based on the number of their alumni mentioned in Who's Who in Australia (a listing of notable Australians). |

**Exercise:**

* Describe a setting that is important to your character. Don’t forget to use the five senses (smell, sight, taste, touch, hearing). How does your character feel about this setting? Why does your character like it/not like it? What memories does it hold?

# SETTING EXAMPLE

Our school was the second most elite school in Australia. Only those with the right breeding or the right bank account balance could attend. On my first day I’d looked at the bluestone buildings that looked like a British castle and felt like they were whispering to me that I didn’t belong here. Over time the buildings became just a part of the landscape, but I still heard a voice whispering that I didn’t belong.

# SETTING TEMPLATE

|  |
| --- |
| PASTE A PICTURE OF YOUR SETTING |
| What are some facts about your setting: |

# short story BEGINNING

A short story begins close to the conclusion. Start the story at the point where your character encounters the conflict/problem. Where are they? What are they doing? What are they feeling? What are they thinking? Use as many descriptive words as you can.

*Writing tip:*

Use the 5 W’s to set up your story:

**who** is the character,

**what** is the story about,

**where** is the story set,

**when** is the story happening,

**why** should the reader care

*What is the moment when the story begins?*

When Karen makes the decision to be friends with the new girl.

*How do you start the story?*

Bad: When Karen finds out about the new girl starting school.

Good: Karen is waiting in the school reception area for the new girl to arrive.

# BEGINNING EXAMPLE:

I sat in the school reception area, my eyes on the double glass doors. She could walk through any minute now. I smoothed down my uniform skirt. The school tried to make us look like clones, but still there were ways to be an individual. My hand went to my neck and I tugged the necklace. Before I realised I’d popped it into my mouth, my tongue darting out to touch the cool metal. The tang of metal instantly soothed me.

The receptionist hung up the phone and glanced over. I quickly dropped the necklace out of my mouth, after all I had an image to project. I touched my ears, feeling relief to as I touched my earrings. They were still there. I’d borrowed them from my grandmother to wear today.

Well maybe borrow was too loose a term, but I figure what she doesn’t know won’t hurt her. I’d taken the earrings out of my grandmother’s jewellery box when I visited last night. I’d return them tonight when I stopped by on the way home and she wouldn’t even know. Anyway, she should have passed on this family heirloom already. It’s not as if she would have the chance to show them off anymore. And today was make it or break it day.

The door opened and there she was. Evelyn Curtis. You know, THE Evelyn Curtis, the Oscar winner Evelyn Curtis. Yeah, that’s the one. Well once upon a time she was soap star on Neighbours, but that was a long time and now she was an Oscar winner, and that’s all that mattered.

I stood and approached her, offering my hand. ‘Ms Curtis, I’m Karen.’

She looked at me with a bemused smile.

‘I’m your daughter’s buddy.’

# SHORT STORY ENDING

Now let’s jump to the ending. Your ending must tie up loose ends and answer any unanswered questions in the story. Writing the ending is also as important as your opening. So, you need to write an ending that resonates in the mind of the reader and that answers the central conflict of the story.

*The best way to decide on your ending is to brainstorm three possible endings:*

1. The Disney ending where everything is perfect-The Stiletto Crew let Karen join their fold and she gets the popularity she always wished for, and Sapphira forgives her for lying to her and they all become besties.
2. The Soap opera ending-At the party with the Stiletto Crew Karen dies while saving Sapphira from falling off a balcony.
3. The Realistic ending-Karen becomes a part of the Stiletto Crew and realizes that she made the wrong choice in trying to use Sapphira instead of being a real friend.

# ENDING SAMPLE

‘We’ll just be a tic,’ I told Sapphira as we walked up the driveway.

Sapphira looked at the Toorak mansion with a frown. ‘I thought you said your Dad was an electrician?’

My hands began sweating. ‘I did?’ I said in a high voice.

We’d had a sleepover and I’d gotten too comfortable during our DMC and spilled the truth about being on a scholarship.

I rang the doorbell and prayed it would be answered quickly. Hearing the sound of high heels clattering I breathed a sigh of relief.

The door opened and there stood Carmen in a gorgeous satin red dress that shimmered under the chandelier. ‘Hello,’ she said, leaning forward for an air kiss. ‘I’m so glad you could make it.’

She held the door open and I stepped through. I was avoiding looking at Sapphira. Now that the moment of reckoning had arrived I felt sick of my stomach.

‘Come in,’ Carmen said. ‘Everyone is just dying to meet you.’ She took Sapphira’s arm and led her through to the living room.

As I followed Sapphira shot me a look and I wanted to drop to the ground and beg her forgiveness. I’d told her we were going to have our own dinner party and yet here I was, delivering her to the wolves. There was no coming back from this. I’d crossed over to the dark side, just like Golem with his love of Precious. I’d chosen popularity. I straightened my shoulders*. It would all be worth it*, I told myself, as I sashayed into Carmen’s house.

# SHORT STORY STRUCTURE

* **Introduction** - The beginning of the story where the characters and the setting is revealed.
* **Rising Action** - This is where the events in the story become complicated and the conflict in the story is revealed (events between the introduction and climax).
* **Climax** - This is the highest point of interest and the turning point of the story.  The reader wonders what will happen next; will the conflict be resolved or not?
* **Falling action** - The events and complications begin to resolve themselves.  The reader knows what has happened next and if the conflict was resolved or not (events between climax and resolution).
* **Resolution** - This is the final outcome or untangling of events in the story.

STRUCTURE SAMPLE

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Introduction**  The beginning of the story where the characters and the setting is revealed. | Karen waiting in the reception area for the new student to arrive. We find out Sapphira, the new student, is a movie star’s daughter. Karen and Sapphira’s discover they have lots in common and become friends. Find out that Karen has read Sapphira’s social media profile and pretends to like the same things. |
| **Rising Action**  This is where the events in the story become complicated and the conflict in the story is revealed (events between the introduction and climax). | Karen introduces Sapphira to the Stiletto Crew in order to get invited to the party of the year. |
| **Climax**  This is the highest point of interest and the turning point of the story.  The reader wonders what will happen next; will the conflict be resolved or not? | Sapphira refuses to attend the party so Karen tricks her into going. When they get there Karen leaves Sapphira alone, even though she knows that Sapphira is shy and suffers from social anxiety. |
| **Falling action**  The events and complications begin to resolve themselves.  The reader knows what has happened next and if the conflict was resolved or not (events between climax and resolution). | Karen gets what she wants, she’s at the party and Carmen accepts her as a member of the Stiletto gang and gives her the necklace that proves her membership. Karen feels terrible because she knows that Sapphira is upset and is hiding in the toilets to get away from people. |
| **Resolution**  This is the final outcome or untangling of events in the story. | Karen goes to get Sapphira and leaves the party. Realises that what she cares more about her friendship with Sapphira than about being popular. |

# STRUCTURE TEMPLATE

Plan out your own story structure

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Introduction**  The beginning of the story where the characters and the setting is revealed. |  |
| **Rising Action**  This is where the events in the story become complicated and the conflict in the story is revealed (events between the introduction and climax). |  |
| **Climax**  This is the highest point of interest and the turning point of the story.  The reader wonders what will happen next; will the conflict be resolved or not? |  |
| **Falling action**  The events and complications begin to resolve themselves.  The reader knows what has happened next and if the conflict was resolved or not (events between climax and resolution). |  |
| **Resolution**  This is the final outcome or untangling of events in the story. |  |

# DESCRIPTIVE LANGUAGE

*Metaphor*

A comparison of two things that have some quality in common without using like or as. Instead, it states that one thing actually is something else.

For example: The spring flower is a breath of fresh air.

An extended metaphor is a figure of speech that compares one thing to many unlike things at some length.

Example

Love is an ocean of blue warm waves.

Love is the calm in a storm.

Love is a life jacket in a sinking boat.

Love is an open boat that finally, finally found land.

*Simile*

A comparison of two things that have some quality in common using like or as. In a simile, the comparison is conveyed by means of the word like or as.

For example: The spring flower is like a breath of fresh air.

# DESCRIPTIVE LANGUAGE SAMPLE

Find a line and transform it into a simile or a metaphor.

Writing tip: Similes and metaphors are used to make impact and should be used sparingly.

On my first day I’d looked at the bluestone buildings that looked like a British castle and felt like they were whispering to me that I didn’t belong here.

Simile example:

On my first day I’d looked at the bluestone buildings that loomed over me like British sentries and that whispered that I didn’t belong here.

Metaphor example:

On my first day I’d looked at the bluestone buildings that were British sentries who whispered that I didn’t belong here.

WRITING YOUR STORY

Now put it all together. Make sure that you:

1. Tell your story from the point of view of your central character and stay in their point of view for the whole story

2. Introduce your problem/conflict early on, within the first paragraph or two

3. Build the suspense so that the reader wonders how the character will resolve his/her conflict.

4. Resolve the conflict at the end of the story in a way that is satisfying for the reader

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Structure |  |  |  |  |
| Beginning: Does the beginning start with |  |  |  |  |

Student evaluation

What did you enjoy about the unit?

What gave you the most satisfaction?

What do you think could have been done better?

What did you learn?

How could you apply this in the future?