

DESCRIPTIVE WRITING: Creating a Setting
DUE DATE: _____ **VALUE: 30 points**

Name _____ # _____

Date: _____

In the same way that a good essay uses specific evidence to prove its point, a good story makes you imagine its setting through the inclusion of vivid details that help you *physically experience* the environment. The writer describes what it is like to smell, taste, touch, hear, and see the world that the character inhabits. This is the difference between **showing** and **telling**.

Telling: It was a hot day in the desert.

Showing: My eyes, burned dry and scratchy with blowing sand, unsuccessfully tried to focus on the palm tree in the distance, wavering in the vision-distorting heat like a funny-mirror reflection.

Can you see how these two descriptions differ? The first merely tells you, without giving you any specific details to help you imagine what it is like to be there, while the second draws on your sense of touch and sight, using specific comparisons (like the carnival funny-mirror; something that most people have experienced) to put you there.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT: Show me the bedroom of your dreams. This might be a luxurious bedroom in a deluxe, but conventional suburban house, or it might be a high-tech fantasy, or it might be a jungle tree house, or a rugged cabin getaway - depending on your personality and interests. Which leads us to guideline number one:

1. **REFLECT YOUR PERSONALITY AND INTERESTS IN CREATING THIS ROOM.** Your bedroom should show me your tastes in decor, entertainment, music, etc.
2. **USE OF ALL OF THE PHYSICAL SENSES IN DESCRIBING YOUR ROOM:** smell, sight, sound, taste, touch. Show, don't tell.
3. **MAKE YOUR DESCRIPTION ACTIVE.** Describe yourself *doing something* (other than sleeping) in the room; and this again should be in keeping with your true interests. What kind of mood do you enter the room in? What do you go there to do?

FORMAT:

Make it neat:

- No fringes.
- Observe margins on top, bottom, left, and right sides.
- Type or write neatly in blue or black pen.
- Include your name, class hour, and the date in the upper right hand corner of the first page.

Length: 1-2 pages.

EXTRA CREDIT OPTION: Draw -neatly and well, with great detail - a picture of the room to accompany the description.

9/11/96

English 9, 3rd period

Linnea Vedder-Shults

Bundled up in my warmest winter coat, I trudged up the stairwell. My boots boomed heavily on the steps, and the weight of my backpack tugged at my shoulders. I paused to unbutton my jacket. Again I marched up and up. My back ached, and my arms and thighs itched with a feeling of thawing. Almost too weary to continue, I finally reached the top. My whole body sighed with relief.

I turned the doorknob and stepped inside my room. A waft of tropical air stunned me and washed over my winter weariness. I stood a while, reflecting on my hard day. Sweat started to collect on my brow and under my clothes. I wasted no time ~~to~~ ^{to} dash inside and throw ~~my~~ ^{the} bag and coat in a heap on the ground. Next I shed my sweater and the shoes that held in the oppressive heat. I fell back into the pile. I closed my eyes, enjoying the caressing warmth that licked my body. It was like a blanket, surrounding me and covering me. Soon the sweet scent of flowers filled my nostrils, wiping all cares from my mind.

I leapt up, remembering my flowers, and raced across the expanse of my room. My garden was a beautiful sight. The pumpkins were huge and round, the flowers were brilliant in rows of red roses, yellow sunflowers, blue bachelor's buttons. As I neared the garden, I could make out the white camomille flowers. I reached out and flicked the "automatic watering" switch. Misters all over my room sprang to life, spraying the trees, palms, shrubs, grasses and flowers.

Feverishly I scampered back to my knapsack and, with a heave, carried it over to the pillows. I toppled over onto the cushy velvet of goose down. I lay in the mound of pillows, staring up at the ceiling. The ceiling made me feel so small, its vaulted curve ending some 50 feet above me. Much of the ceiling was made of glass, allowing me to see the winter's bright blue sky. The rest of the ceiling was covered with murals, dreamlike panels of wonder that floated above me. For a few minutes I lay there in a state-of-trance.

The heat was becoming too much for me. My mouth was like a parched desert of sand. Sweat trickled down my neck and through the back of my shirt. I stood up slowly, ²⁴assuring that I did not fall from dizziness. I could hear the whispering of the waterfall calling, "Linnea, Linnea." I stepped across the moist grounds, and the damp grass cooled my tension. I rolled up my pant legs as I neared the water. It was shallow and crystalline blue. I sat on the bank and dipped first one toe and then my entire foot into the cool liquid. I bent down and scooped some water between my hands and poured it into my mouth. The water spilled down my chin and trickled down my neck.

I looked around my room. The blue walls reflected the blue of the sky outside and were painted with puffy white clouds. The walls were lined with glass, and today I couldn't tell the difference between the actual sky and the imitation. I felt like I was flying.

From the other side of the room came the faint noise of a flipping-skipping record. Agitated I rushed over to see what was the problem. I changed the record and Ani Difranco came blasting on. I sagged down on my bed, letting the melodies wash over me. The sweet smell of peaches reached me, drifted and encased me with its pungent aroma.

I stared up at the sky, or was it the painting? A warm breeze blew my eyelids shut. I slept soundly, far away from the city below me, caressed by music and the smell of a rushing waterfall.