

Take Language Arts Outdoors With These 10 Quick and Easy Descriptive Writing Ideas

Outdoor areas near your school can be a great place to practice descriptive writing. Students can focus on natural objects that they can see, feel, hear, and smell. Use these lessons as a starting point for any form of writing such as poetry, creative writing, or scientific writing.

1. Metaphors: I am a _____.

In this lesson, students will create their own nature metaphors. Have each student find a natural object and bring it back to the circle. Once everyone has an object, explain that their job is to find one similarity that they have with that object. Go around the circle and have people say what they are, and why they are like that particular object. For example: I am a blade of grass because I like to blend in with the group.

2. Similes

Have students go out and find two different natural objects. Bring them back to the circle and have them find one thing that they have in common. Go around the circle and share why one object is like another. You could also ask students to find objects that are related to a text that they are reading, and create similes that tie the object to the text.

3. Frame It

For this lesson, pass out real frames, paper frames, or a string to each student. Have them find a place to put their frames, and take 5-10 minutes to describe everything that is going on in their frame. You can focus this activity even more by telling them to use their senses one at a time. For example, describe only what you see for the first 3 minutes, and then close your eyes and describe only what you feel. Or you can encourage students to use all of their senses to write their descriptions. This can be turned into a game by having students share their descriptions with a partner and seeing if the partner can find the framed area that is described.

4. Frame It Story Starter

Use the same frames that you had in the previous lesson, and let each student choose their framed spot. Have them choose a natural object from somewhere nearby, and that object will become the main character in their story. Have students create the rest of the story that takes place within their framed area. Save time for students to share their stories with each other. Consider letting students bring their character objects back to class so that they can continue to write about their adventures.

5. Meet a Tree

You will need some simple blindfolds for this activity. Have students find a partner, and one partner will be blindfolded. The other partner will lead them to a nearby tree. The blindfolded partner will feel the tree and describe what they are feeling to the other person so that they can take notes. They should be as descriptive as possible! After a few minutes, lead the blindfolded person away from their tree. Spin them around a few times and remove the blindfold. Now their task is to go and see if they can find their tree by feel.

6. Soundscape

Spread students out and give them their own place to stand. Start a timer and have students keep track of the number of different sounds they hear with their eyes closed. Have students come back to the group and share what they have heard, or write down what they've heard. Use these sounds as a story starter or as practice for descriptive writing.

7. Onomatopoeia poetry

Using footsteps or another natural object outside, experiment making different sounds. Using these sounds, create words to describe the sounds and use these as a poetry starter.

8. Bug Story

Find a bug and observe for a set period of time. Have students take notes about what the bug is doing. Use this as a story starter. Students can write either fiction or non-fiction.

9. Sensory Writing with 3 Objects

Have students spread out and find three different natural objects. For each object, choose one of your senses and tell students to describe their object using only adjectives that go with the sense you chose. Mix and match senses and objects and write a personal narrative or a fictional story that includes these sensory details. Or, have students describe the objects to each other and see if they can find what their partner is describing.

10. Riddles

Have students use the same objects as in #9. Have them write riddles using those sensory details. Students can trade riddles with a partner to see if they can guess their objects.