

Important Concepts . . .

Preview Review



Language Arts

Grade 8

*W2 - Lesson 4: Descriptive and
Expository Paragraphs*

Important Concepts of Grade 8 Language Arts

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Materials Required

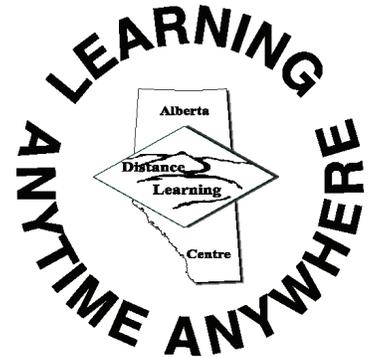
Textbooks:

1. *ResourceLines 7/8*
2. *SightLines 8*

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Preview/Review W2 - Lesson 4

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Preview/Review Concepts for Grade Eight Language Arts



*W2 - Lesson 4:
Descriptive and
Expository Paragraphs*

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, you should

- understand and demonstrate good paragraph structure
- understand the purpose of descriptive and expository paragraphs and write one of each type of your own
- develop a clearer understanding of consistency in spelling, point of view, style, and titles
- rewrite a paragraph in logical order

GLOSSARY

coherence - the result of sentences written in a logical progression

consistency - doing something the same way every time

descriptive paragraph - creates a detailed picture in the reader's mind

expository paragraph - shows or explains something

figurative language - techniques that make writing more colorful and descriptive for the reader

point of view - indicates who is telling the story

W2 - Lesson 4: Descriptive and Expository Paragraphs

Consistency

The English language has many inconsistencies. This means that, although rules apply to many situations, they do not work in every situation. Sometimes more than one method of doing something is acceptable.

Spelling is one type of inconsistency that you will face. For example: *colour* and *color*, and *centre* and *center*. Each spelling is correct, but only one should be used in a single piece of writing. Most Canadians use *colour* and *centre*.

Point of view is another possible inconsistency. If you choose a first-person point of view, you must remember that the narrator knows only what that character sees, hears, and thinks. The character cannot read the thoughts of others, unlike in the third-person point of view.

Be sure to choose one style or **degree of formality** in your writing. Do not switch from *do not* to *don't*. In formal writing, avoiding the use of contractions is best. Write *she is* instead of *she's* or *I am* instead of *I'm*.

When writing **titles**, do not use all upper case letters (capitals) in one and then all lower case in the next. Following the directions given for a particular assignment and following the expected format is best.

Regardless of what influences your choice, being consistent throughout your single piece of writing is important. Consistency creates credibility and balance in your writing.

Read the following sentences that demonstrate inconsistencies. Proofread, edit, and revise the sentences so your word choices are consistent. Take care not to change the context of the messages.

Activity 1

1. My doctor appointment is at 2 P.M. and my hockey practice is at 5 p.m.

2. Dr. Ashley Brade and Doctor Michael Smith will be answering biology questions in our science class.

3. During our holiday, we visited Edmonton, AB; Banff Nat. Park in Alberta; Vancouver, British Columbia; and Cal., Alberta.

4. Two of my favourite books are THE DOG WHO WOULDN'T BE and Homecoming.

5. When I got to the top of the hill the view was amazing. You could see for miles.

6. I like summer sports, e.g., swimming. I also like winter sports, for example, skating.

7. My soccer sweater no. is 33 and my friend has number 14.

8. I need twelve hot dogs, 12 cans of soda, six marshmallows, and 8 salads.

9. The roller coaster took my breath away. You could not move because of the speed.

10. We cannot go to the park, and we don't want to go to a movie.



Descriptive Paragraphs

A descriptive paragraph creates a detailed picture in the reader's mind. It uses precise and vivid adjectives and adverbs along with interesting figures of speech to bring the subject to life.

Be sure to note the difference between **informative description** and **imaginative description**.

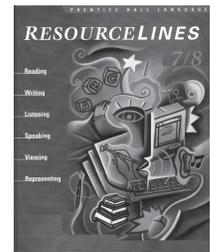
Informative description must use clear and precise details. It is less concerned with the reader's emotional or sensory response and more concerned with facts.

When you read **imaginative description**, you should be able to picture the thing being described. In many cases, you should also be able to almost taste, touch, smell, hear, or feel the object. In other words, the description should appeal to your senses. Similarly, when you write imaginative description, you should be trying to create this experience for your reader.

Figurative language can be an important tool in accomplishing this. When you write description, you should use imagery and other types of figurative language, such as simile and metaphor, to help your reader experience with his or her senses the thing you describe.

Turn to page 87 of *ResourceLines 7/8* and read

- the section "Descriptive Paragraph"
- the example that follows
- the "Bright Ideas for Writing Descriptive Paragraphs"



Activity 2

Here are two more examples of descriptive paragraphs:

Example 1:

Myra was sitting up in bed, in a bulky stiff hospital gown. Her hair was down, the long braids falling over her shoulders and down the coverlet. But her face was the same, always the same.

From "Day of the Butterfly" by Alice Munro in *SightLines 8*

What is the overall impression you have of Myra?

Example 2:

The egg screwed apart in the middle. Inside, wrapped in a small piece of faded velvet, was the wish. It was a small wish, about the length of a man’s thumb, and was made of black clay in the rough shape of a bird. Marguerite decided straight away that it was a crow, even if it did have a splash of white on its head. That made it just more special for her because she’d dyed a forelock of her own dark hair a peroxide white just before the summer started – much to her parents’ dismay.

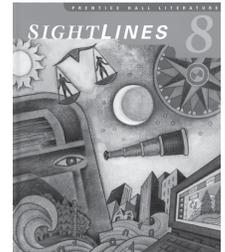
From “A Wish Named Arnold” by Charles de Lint in *SightLines 8*

Identify two sensory details.

Activity 3

Writing a Descriptive Paragraph

1. Look at the picture on page 4 of *SightLines 8*.
2. Think of ways to describe this picture.
3. Think of images, similes, and metaphors that can help you to describe this picture.
4. Write a well-organized, descriptive paragraph of 150 to 300 words describing the scene in the picture. Be sure to
 - a. arrange your sentences in a logical order with a clear topic and a closing sentence
 - b. consult your thesaurus to select words that are precise and evocative
 - c. try to include imagery, simile, and metaphor in your paragraph.
 - d. give your paragraph a suitable and interesting title



Expository Paragraphs

Writing that explains or informs is called expository writing. Being able to tell someone clearly and precisely how to do something is an important skill. When directions are given orally, the listener can ask questions if he or she is confused. With a written explanation, the writer is not present to help smooth out the rough spots. The paragraph you write must be well-planned and easily understood.

When you write a paragraph that explains, follow these steps:

1. **Be sure you know what you are talking about.** An opinion is never enough; you must be able to support it with facts or examples. Otherwise, you are simply rambling on, not saying anything of substance. Show that you totally understand your topic. If you do not have **supporting details**, get more information before you begin.

Here is what a Grade 8 student wrote about a subject she said she cared about passionately. However, she failed to support her opinion. Instead of a strong, passionate expository piece, we must read a rant.

Men are sexist and that is wrong. It sounds Neanderthal when they say sexist things, which is wrong. After they make sexist comments, I lash out by swearing or something like that and then I get in trouble for swearing in public! Who is wrong? Me or them? They treat women like second class citizens. Last Friday, I went into a mountain bike store with my brother. Even though it was a bike for me we were looking for, the clerk jerk spoke only to my brother. When I tried to ask a question, he just laughed at me and asked which colour did I want. Like colour matters? Like it matters that I am a female. Females ride mountain bikes, too.

2. **Take time to think clearly about the explanation.** Begin by listing the details you will include in your paragraph. Think of giving someone directions to your house. There are several ways to getting there—by foot, by bus, by car perhaps, and each route needs to be clear in your mind before you start giving directions. You cannot have someone in a car “cut across the back yard behind Bob’s house”.
3. **Include only the important details** when you write your paragraph. Arrange them in correct order. In other words, get the person to your house. Do not have that person wander off the path; stick to what you need to explain.

Here is an example of what happens if instructions are not given in order:

(1) Go through the gate and knock on the back door. (2) Then you turn right and keep going down for another two blocks until you see the Conklin Street sign. (3) Between the sign and the big, green garbage bin, go down the back alley until you see a red picket fence; that is where I live. (4) You are probably coming into town on the highway, so find the school first. (5) As you drive in, it is next to the cemetery, on the right hand side of the highway.

Do you think you could find my house? Probably not! In the very first sentence I forgot to tell you where to start from. You are given the starting point (the school) in the second last sentence. This is not very helpful after you have become so frustrated from the first sentence that you may give up trying to find me.

In the second sentence, I do not say to which direction to turn on Conklin Street. You could walk along trying to find Conklin Street when you get into town; however, the search would be easier for you if you had all the instructions before you started wandering about aimlessly among the streets.

4. **Make use of transitional words** for coherence in your paragraph. Coherence is *keeping order, a logical sequence of time and space*. Transitional words add coherence because they are the stepping stones between your points. They allow your reader to follow your work, your directions or instructions.
5. **When you are finished, re-read your paragraph** to ensure all the necessary steps are included, and that your paragraph is clear and accurate. Editing can vastly improve your writing. You must be clear. Having pride in your ideas means taking time for that polishing. It is all part of the process of achieving success.



Activity 4

To get to my house, rewrite the sentences on the previous page in the correct order.

Activity 5

Choose one of the following topics or create your own. Write an **expository** paragraph.

1. How to make a pizza
2. How to wash your hair
3. How to tie your shoes (laces, not velcro!)
4. How to play a simple song on the guitar or piano
5. How to do a certain computer game move (finding the hidden treasure or hidden door)

Learning Log

Take time to reflect on and record your learning process for this lesson.

1. What are some common problems with consistency that I have learned about?

2. What do I know about descriptive and expository paragraphs?

3. What questions do I still have about these paragraphs?

