Multi-sensory Writing

Grade Level: 8th grade Language Arts

English Proficiency Level: Early Advanced

Objective: The aim of this lesson is for English learners as well as other students to learn how to use their senses to describe a special place they have been, essentially using “showing”, not “telling” descriptive writing. They will be required to write a short sensory-image essay that incorporates all five of their senses, and also meets the ELA and ELD standards listed below. Additionally, students should be able to identify sensory language while reading different pieces of literature.

ELD Early Advanced Standard(s) grades 6-8: Create coherent paragraphs through effective transitions and edit writing for grammatical structures and conventions of writing.

ELA Content Standard for grade 8: Establish coherence within and among paragraphs through effective transitions, parallel structures, and similar writing techniques.

Key Concept(s): The key concept to this lesson is the understanding of how senses are used to describe an object. Students should learn how to utilize each sense in a short composition. Accordingly, students should be able to clearly compose an essay in which a person, place or thing is described by how it looks, smells, sounds, tastes and feels.

Assessments: There are both summative and formative assessments built-in to this lesson. The summative assessments come at the end of both the “Into” and “Through” lessons. At these points, the teacher should be able to determine through the use of class discussions, free writes and homework assignments if the students are ready to move on in the lesson. However, there are two formative assessments, which come in the form of a final essay and “peer-review worksheet”. The teacher should be able to assess the student’s mastery of the lesson in two ways. First, the teacher can review and grade the final sensory-image essay (be sure to check that each student met both the ELA and ELD standards in their compositions). The teacher can then inspect the student’s responses on the “peer-review worksheet” (which asks for the students to locate sensory-image writing while reading through two of their classmates’ essays) and look over the editing they did on their group member’s rough drafts (to check for the ELD standard).

Contextual Clues: The teacher can use simple gestures and facial expressions to dramatize or act-out each sense. For example, the teacher can use gestures and a universally known facial expression to show how one would respond to smelling something pleasant or touching something prickly. Also, props and realia would help make this lesson more comprehensible, by allowing the students to work with objects hands-on. Visuals, such as graphic organizers and worksheets also can contextualize this lesson, by helping students brainstorm and organize their thoughts and ideas. New vocabulary could also be added to the student’s word bank or personal dictionaries, as they are discussed.

Strategies: The key strategy to this lesson is scaffolding, or building upon students’ prior knowledge. If students are unfamiliar with sensory-image language in English, a teacher can use the students’ native languages to translate the concepts (and build new vocabulary for the students). The teacher should carefully build-up this lesson, beginning with the overall idea of “the five senses” and then breaking them apart and describing how each of them is used. Finally, when the students demonstrate they understand how to employ each sense in their writing, the teacher can then assign a fairly simple writing assignment in which these senses should be included.

Key Vocabulary: The words “senses”, “sight”, “sound”, “smell”, “taste” and “touch” are essential to truly comprehending and executing this lesson successfully.

Graphic Organizers: “clustering” (please see attachment); “senses worksheet” (please see attachment)
Into: Ask the students to take out a single piece of paper and a pen. Distribute an orange to each student and then ask the students to write a description of the oranges for a few minutes. Ask them to please try to write in English, but they can use their native language to substitute for words that they do not know the translation of. When the students are done writing, ask students to share their descriptions with the person sitting next to them (a shared reading activity). After the groups are done sharing, ask if any students would like to share their descriptions aloud. When students are done sharing aloud, begin a class discussion about the exercise they just performed. Let them verbally discuss how they described their oranges in their free-writes (i.e. what language and/or words they used in their descriptions). Begin to introduce the ideas of “senses” and how they are each used to describe an object. Use examples from the students’ work of hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting and touching sensations incorporated into their free-writes. Then, ask the students if they can identify other senses they used in their free-writes to check for understanding. (Clarify ideas as they are needed before going on to the next portion of this lesson – this is somewhat of a teacher directed mini-lecture).

Through: Use a transparency or a piece of butcher-paper to create a “cluster” graphic organizer (please see example attached to this lesson plan). In the center of the cluster write the words “5 Senses”. Ask the students if they can identify the five senses: sight, sound, smell, taste and touch. As students volunteer the information, write each sense in a separate bubble that connects back to the main idea bubble: “5 Senses” (a brainstorming activity). Then, conduct a class discussion about each sense. You might need to clarify the ideas in the students’ native languages, so that they learn the appropriate translations (and new vocabulary). This would be a very good time to contextualize the lesson by using universal gestures and facial expressions that symbolize different senses, such as smelling a flower or tasting something delicious. Then, ask students for words that would be used to describe each sense. For example, students could say that things smell sweet, sour, strong, bad, nice, etc. or that something sounds loud, soft, annoying, pleasant, clear, jumbled, etc. For each example, create a separate bubble off of the sense they were describing. When this exercise is complete you could ask the students to write 10 of their favorite words in their personal dictionaries and then possibly hang the graphic organizer, if it is on butcher-paper, on the wall so the students could continually look it over. To check for understanding you could ask the students (for homework if necessary) to describe the orange again, writing at least two sentences for each sense. Monitoring and assessing their work would indicate if they are ready to proceed with the “Beyond” portion of this lesson. (If students are not ready, reinforce this lesson with similar lessons, again using graphic organizers, realia, contextual clues, props, facial expressions, transparencies etc. – repetition might be necessary.)

Beyond: Part I: After assessing their work and feeling confident that the students understand how to describe an object using all five of their senses, assign a 1-page writing assignment (which can be either written at home or in school). Ask the students to pick a place they clearly remember: their bedroom, a classroom, a beach, a garden, etc. Tell the students that they will be required to use all five of their senses to describe this place. Explain that they will need to show this place by describing how it looks, smells, tastes, sounds and feels. Give them a typed, specific sheet of instructions that clearly describes what you are looking for in their essays. Also, you could give them a “Senses Worksheet” to help them organize their descriptions. They can later use these descriptions in their essays. Finally, give them a due-date for the essay and ask them to have a neatly written rough-draft ready to share in class on that day.

Part II: On the day the rough drafts are due, conduct a “peer review workshop.” Arrange the students into groups of three (a cooperative group activity). Explain to them that they will be reading their group members’ essays, and filling out a “peer review worksheet” for each essay. Clarify that you will be checking for two specific things. First, you will be monitoring to see if they can identify the sensory-image writing in their classmate’s essays. Second, you will be looking to see if they can edit spelling, grammar, punctuation and other errors in their classmate’s essays. (This second assessment, which can be done when they hand-in their peer-review worksheets, checks for the ELD standard, “editing writing for grammatical, structures and conventions of writing”). Give the class the appropriate time needed to conduct the peer-review workshop, as it truly helps both the authors and editors of the essays to read and check each other’s work. After the workshop is completed, allow the students to take home the peer-review worksheets and their rough drafts for two or three nights. Tell them they have this time to finalize their essays, using feedback from the peer-review worksheets. On the day the final essays are due, explain that you will collect the final copy, rough draft and both peer-review worksheets (all of which will be used to assess their work and understanding of the lesson).

Handouts to be included w/ the lesson:
1) “cluster” graphic organizer; 2) senses worksheets; 3) writing assignment and grading rubric; 4) peer-review worksheet
“Senses” Worksheet

1. What is the place or location you are going to describe? (Make sure you pick a place that you clearly remember!)

2. What does this place look like?

3. What does this place smell like?

4. What sounds can you hear in this place?

5. Did you taste anything while at this place? What did it taste like?

6. Did you touch something while at this place? What did it feel like?
Writing Assignment

Directions: Pick a place that you clearly remember; it could be your bedroom, a beach, a garden, a classroom, a playground, etc. Be sure that you pick a place that you remember very well. In a 1-page (type, double-spaced) or 2-page (handwritten, double-spaced) essay, describe this place through the use of your five senses. To receive a good grade you must include: all five (5) of your senses: sight, sound, smell, taste and touch, in your essay. (On the back of this sheet you will find the grading scale that I will use to grade your papers.) A rough draft is due _______ because it will then be reviewed by two of your classmates in a peer review workshop. (You may want to take your personal dictionaries home with you, if you need to use new vocabulary in your essay.) After the workshop you will be allowed to take the rough draft home for two or three more nights, and use your classmates suggestions and corrections to complete your final paper, which is due on __________________. Also, I will be looking to see how well you worked in your peer-review group, filling-out the "peer review worksheet" and editing your group members' essays. Good luck and have fun!
Grading Scale:

To get an “A” for this assignment:

• All five (5) senses are correctly used in your essay
• The essay is clearly written and has correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and transitions
• Your responses on the “peer review worksheet” were both thoughtful and helpful
• You made helpful edits and corrections on your group members’ rough drafts
• The minimum page requirement is met and/or exceeded

To get a “B”:

• All five (5) senses are correctly used in your essay
• Paper is clear but has some grammar, spelling, punctuation or transition mistakes
• Your responses on the “peer review worksheet” were both thoughtful and helpful
• You made helpful edits and corrections on your group members’ rough drafts
• The minimum page requirement is met and/or exceeded

To get a “C”:

• Only four of the five senses are correctly used in your essay
• Paper is somewhat clear and has grammar, spelling, punctuation and/or transition mistakes
• Your responses on the “peer review worksheet” could have been more thoughtful and helpful
• You made somewhat helpful edits and corrections on your group members’ rough drafts
• The minimum page requirement is met

To get a “D”:

• Only three or four of the senses are correctly used in your essay
• Paper is not well organized and has grammar, spelling, punctuation and/or transition mistakes
• Your responses on the “peer review worksheet” were not thoughtful or helpful
• You did not make helpful edits and corrections on your group members’ rough drafts
• The minimum page requirement was not met

To get an “F”:

• Only one or two of the senses are correctly used in your essay
• Paper is poorly organized and contains obvious grammar, spelling and punctuation mistakes
• Your responses on the “peer review worksheet” were not thoughtful or helpful
• You did not make helpful edits and corrections on your group members’ rough drafts
• The minimum page requirement was not met
Peer Review Worksheet

1) What is the place that is described in this essay? (If you are not sure, please explain why)

2) Did the author of this essay describe what this place looked like? If so, where in the essay?

3) Did the author of this essay describe how this place smelled? If so, where?

4) Did the author of this essay describe the sounds he/she heard at his place? If so, where?
5) Did the author of this essay describe what he/she tasted at this place? If so, where?

6) Did the author of this essay describe how this place felt? If so, where?

7) Please give at least one suggestion to help make this a stronger sensory-image essay.

8) What is your favorite part of this essay? Please explain why. (Be specific!)
Example:
Graphic Organizer

5
Senses

smell

sound

taste

sight

touch