

WRITE! TM H

***Foundations and Models
for Proficiency***



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THINK ABOUT

Well-chosen **nouns** can add clarity, richness, and appeal to your writing.

A **noun** is a word that names a person, place, thing, or idea.

- A **concrete noun** names a person, place, or thing that can be seen or touched.

These words are **concrete nouns**: *ballerina, anthropologist, carpenter, arrow, vineyard, Italy, calculator, pamphlet, suspenders, orangutan.*

- An **abstract noun** names an idea, which cannot be seen or touched.

These words are **abstract nouns**: *July, ancestry, opinion, withdrawal, urgency, wetness, taste, din, aggression, clarity, foolishness, vigilance.*

These **concrete nouns** name **people**: *neighbor, trooper, plumber, pilot, judge, infant, aunt, Daphne, Mrs. Sanchez, Dr. Lewis.*

These **concrete nouns** name **places**: *beach, basement, courtyard, theater, forest, Avanzo's Bakery, North Dakota, Crater Lake, Mauna Loa, Antarctica.*

These **concrete nouns** name **things**: *anchor, broom, magnet, pendant, keyboard, gravestone, cauliflower, tarantula, Pluto, food.*

These **abstract nouns** name **ideas**: *bounty, universe, purpose, time, depth, fragrance, observation, acceptance, ferocity, selfishness.*

STUDY A MODEL

Read the paragraph from a book on art history.

Late in the nineteenth **century**, the Impressionist **painters** shared an **idea**. Each of these **artists** saw extraordinary **beauty** in the **ordinary**. Train **stations**, **bridges**, **farms**, and **fields** became their **subjects**. **Light** was their **inspiration**. They painted outside to capture visual **truth**. The **technique** of many Impressionist painters was to paint pure **colors** in **dots** and **dashes** on the **canvas**. **Monet**, **Degas**, and **Renoir** were masterful with this **form**.

Concrete nouns are red, and abstract nouns are blue.

• In the first and second sentences, the words *painters* and *artists* are concrete nouns. They name types of people, who can be seen.

• Notice that the words *beauty*, *ordinary*, *subjects*, and *inspiration* are abstract nouns. They name ideas, which cannot be seen or touched.

• The words *Monet*, *Degas*, and *Renoir* are concrete proper nouns, naming specific people.

PRACTICE

A Label each underlined noun C for concrete or A for abstract.

1. that philosopher
2. an argument
3. an antique
4. a pharaoh
5. many pleasures
6. a rainbow
7. the Mitchell Laboratory
8. his attitude
9. the freeway
10. their laughter

B Read the sentences. Write the 8 concrete nouns and the 8 abstract nouns.

1. The elephants had to leave the fragile environment.
2. Will the three jugglers perform in the main tent?
3. A poorly packed backpack can actually cause injury.
4. That old ceramic pitcher may be considered art.
5. His specialty was designing huge mobiles.
6. This technique is a classic.
7. For safety, we hired an experienced guide.
8. How is Julianne doing with the experiment?

C Read the paragraph. Write the 11 concrete nouns and the 11 abstract nouns. One concrete noun is used more than once.

Although it is difficult to imagine, there was a time when many young children had full-time jobs. Though their wages were low, they needed to support their families. Some youngsters worked for twelve hours a day in dirty mines. Other children sold papers, worked on farms, or labored in mills. The working conditions were often dangerous. Many young workers suffered ill health, and some even died as a result of their employment. The laws eventually corrected the wrongs that these children suffered. Now, if young people work, it is highly regulated.

A **concrete noun** names a person, place, or thing that can be seen or touched.
An **abstract noun** names an idea, which cannot be seen or touched.

WRITE

Write a paragraph describing yourself to someone who has never met you. Include interesting concrete and abstract nouns in your writing.

Writing Tip

Two other kinds of nouns are **compound nouns** and **collective nouns**.

Compound nouns are made up of more than one word. Some have hyphens, and others do not.

- My *sister-in-law* does a broadcast every evening.

Collective nouns name a group of persons or things.

- The *audience* applauded wildly for our class.

DESCRIPTIVE ESSAYS

A description creates mental impressions of people, places, or things. In a **descriptive essay**, you use carefully chosen details and descriptive language to create vivid images in readers' minds.

Here is a sample prompt for a descriptive essay.

Write an essay describing a place where you feel good.

Read this descriptive essay, which was written in response to the prompt. Then read the Writing Tips to learn more about descriptive essays.

Writing Tips

- * Show instead of tell. When you describe a person, place, or thing, remember that readers need your specific words and details to help them experience what they don't know. Make them feel as though they are experiencing your subject with you as they read.
- * Before writing, think about your five senses to generate sensory details that will make images of the subject come vividly to life in your readers' minds. When describing a place, ask yourself: What can I see and hear there? Can I smell, taste, or touch anything? Jot down whatever comes to mind.
- * Carefully choose the most precise adjectives, adverbs, nouns, and verbs to build the description.
- * Order your details in a way that makes sense: by time, position, or importance, for example.
- * Occasionally use figurative language, such as similes or metaphors, to develop aspects of your images. If there are dry leaves on the ground, do they "rustle like rushing water"?
- * Give your description a catchy title and a clear beginning, middle, and ending.

The Cabin

Every August, we visit a log cabin in northern California. It's small and low and has a wide front porch, dark green shutters, and a stone chimney. It crouches there in the woods, looking like an old friend who has been waiting for us to arrive.

As we turn off the two-lane road, my heart always pounds when the cabin comes into view. I can hardly wait to jump from the car and breathe that fresh air that smells and tastes like pine. The ground will be springy with a layer of pine needles that crunch lightly under my feet. The blue jays and chipmunks will make a racket. It's like they are scolding us for the invasion.

As soon as Dad gets the front door open, my brother and I burst through. We blast past the sitting room, still dark from the winter shutters. The wooden staircase is worn and steep, but we race up. On the landing, we wedge side-by-side in the doorway of our familiar knotty-pine room. It looks and smells like home. To the left and right of the window, two narrow beds are neatly made and plumped as high as hills. We gaze at them in anticipation. We have come for those mattresses, stuffed with goose down!

My brother and I exchange silent looks and step to our positions at the foot of our beds. We holler, "One! Two! Three!" and dive through the air. The next second we're sinking, feather by feather, into the most comfortable place on earth.

USING GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS

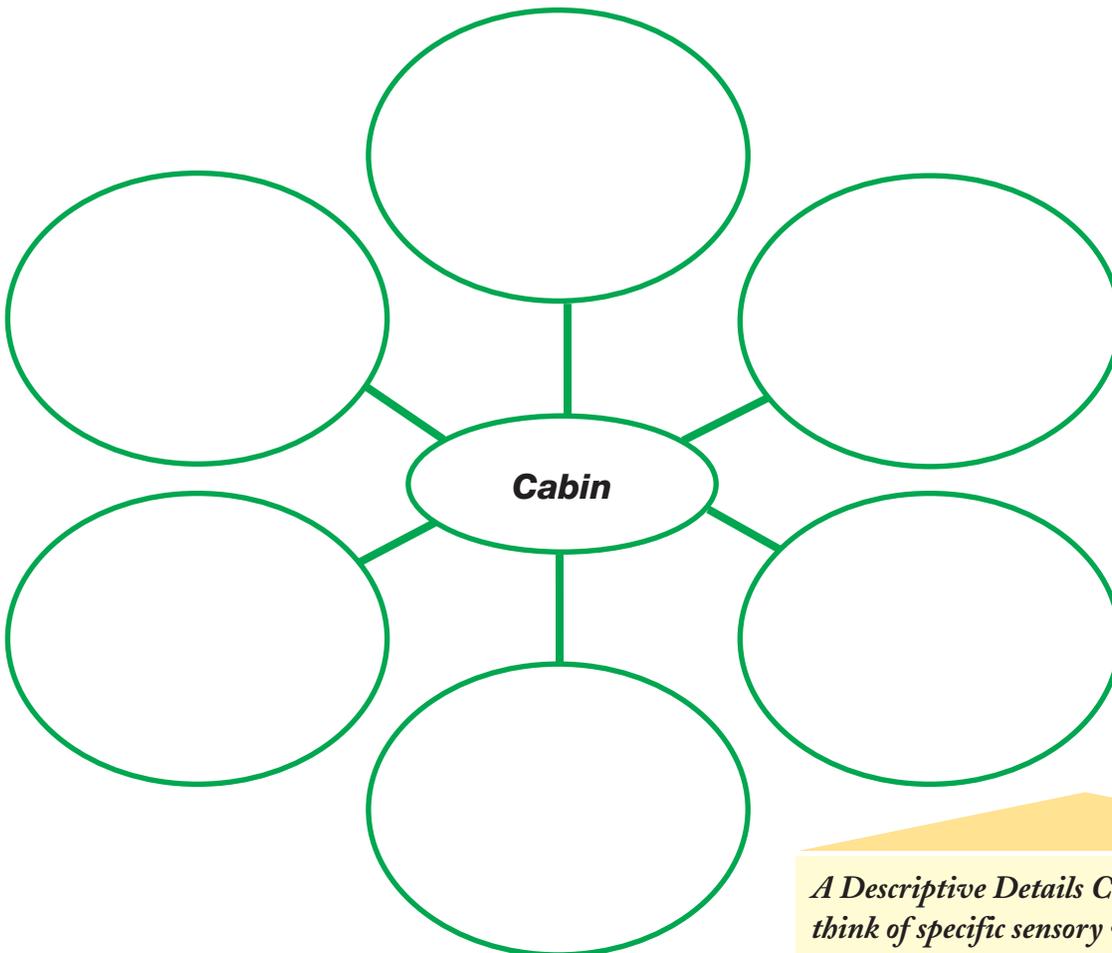
Before you write, use **graphic organizers** to help yourself gather and sort information for your description.

The writer of the descriptive essay about the cabin on page 76 might have used a **Sensory Words Chart**, such as the one below.

Sight	wide front porch, dark green shutters, stone chimney, two-lane road, dark sitting room, wooden staircase, knotty-pine room, narrow beds high as hills, mattresses
Sound	pine needles crunching lightly; blue jays and chipmunks making a racket; scolding; hollering
Taste	fresh air that smells and tastes like pine
Touch	crunch lightly; springy ground; my heart pounds; wedge side-by-side; sink, feather by feather
Smell	air smells like pine; room smells like home

A Sensory Words Chart helps writers gather and organize details related to some or all of the five senses. The details can then be used to create vivid images in descriptive writing.

The writer of the description on page 76 might also have used a **Descriptive Details Cluster** such as the one below. If you had been the writer, what descriptive details would you have used to create strong images of the cabin in the woods? Fill in the ovals with descriptive details.



A Descriptive Details Cluster helps writers think of specific sensory words to create vivid mental images for readers.

TAKING A LOOK AT DESCRIPTIVE ESSAYS

Score:

4

Read the descriptive essay below, which was written in response to the prompt on page 76. This description scored a 4 on a scale from 1 to 4 (with 4 being the best). Then read the comments and think about why this description scored a 4.

1

Aqua Maureen

My name is Maureen, and my favorite sport is snorkeling. I'm lucky because every summer I get to snorkel above a tropical reef. I love the way it makes me feel. When I wade into the lapping surf, it is as warm as a blanket. I adjust my mask and snorkel. Then I bend at the knees and go under until my ears are submerged. Under the water, all I can hear is my breath, drawing in and blowing out.

I start to relax, face down in the shallow water, letting myself float. My hands touch the coarse sand and reach for coral outcroppings to pull me along. The rubber fins on my feet paddle so easily that I hardly have to try. I drift along, as weightless as a sea creature, following the current and my curiosity.

The mask feels tight, but it keeps the water out so I can see the fish, which are everywhere. They hover and then flash away. My favorite fish are bright yellow with a black spot under each eye. The anemones are interesting, too, with tiny pink tentacles that wiggle like fingers. Once I saw a spotted eel which looked like a snake with teeth. It darted its head out from a little cave, but I kept my distance!

Marine time passes so gradually that you hardly notice. When its time to come in, I always feel ridiculously heavy, tall, and clumsy as I first stand up. Because the fins make it hard to wade in any direction but backwards, I stagger and splash. In the cool air, my skin develops goose bumps. The call of sea gulls sounds too loud. Unfortunately, I'm back on land again.

Your Turn

Now it's your turn to help the writer. Find and fix the errors in the writing. Go back to the pages in green if you need help.

1. Find and fix the nonessential clause that should be set off by a comma. The clause begins with *which*. See pp. 12–13, 30–31, 36–37, and 52–53.
2. Find and fix the contraction error. See pp. 54–55.

TEACHER COMMENTS

4

- ▲ Your title is catchy. Good!
- ▲ I can easily imagine the reef and the snorkeling experience from your sensory words and details.
- ▲ Your simile comparing the eel to “a snake with teeth” is perfect! No wonder you kept your distance!
- ▲ You've done a nice job of varying your sentence structure.
- ▲ The order of organization (entering, exploring, leaving marine setting) works really well.
- ▲ You have written an effective closing.

PARTNER COMMENTS

3

Your description came totally alive in my mind. I felt like I was at the reef myself. Great description.

Score:

3

Read the descriptive essay and the comments that follow. Think about why this description scored a 3.

1

Above the Reef

Snorkeling is my favorite thing to do. The water over the reef is always real warm. I go in, and most of the sounds around me disappear. When I put my ears underwater, I only hear my breath.

I float in the shallow water, and my hands grab things to pull me along. My feet wear fins like a duck. I paddle along with the current, but I will be swimming in other directions when I see something interesting.

My mask feels funny but it helps me see the fish and the fish are everywhere, and I never really know how they will move. They never seem stationery. I might see anemones waving like tiny fingers. I might see an eel, but it could be dangerous.

If I see an eel peeking from a hole, I get out of the way fast!

When it's time to go in, somehow I always know. When I stand up out of the water, I feel kind of funny. The fins, my heaviest piece of equipment make me stumble. I'm cold. I'm back on land again.

2

PARTNER COMMENTS

Your description got my attention, but you could have used more details and some words that told more about what it's like to be underwater. Your sentences were a little choppy. Your ideas were in an order that made sense, though.

3

Your Turn

Now it's your turn to help the writer. Find and fix the errors in the writing. Go back to the pages in green if you need help.

1. Find and fix the **adjective** that should be an **adverb**. See pp. 26–27.
2. Find and fix the error in **inconsistent verb tense**. See pp. 42–43.
3. Find and fix the **rambling sentence**. See pp. 40–41.
4. Find and fix the **incorrect homophone**. See pp. 28–29.
5. Find and fix the **appositive** that is missing a **comma**. See pp. 38–39.

TEACHER COMMENTS

4

- ▲ Because you introduced the subject in your title and opening paragraph, I know what you are going to describe.
- ▲ Your details are arranged in a logical sequence, into and then out of the water.
- ▲ It's nice that you're including some comparisons, but make sure they make sense. Does a duck wear fins? Is it anemones, or their tentacles, that wave?
- ▲ You use a variety of kinds of sentences, but your sentences could flow more smoothly. Try including some **transitional words**, such as *then* and *next*. See pp. 60–61 for help.
- ▲ You make some nice word choices, but you could use more **sensory words** to enliven your description. In what way does your mask feel “funny”? Does it scratch your face? Is there water in it? See pp. 58–59.

TAKING A LOOK AT DESCRIPTIVE ESSAYS continued

Score:

2

Read the descriptive essay and the comments that follow.
Think about why this description scored a 2.

1

I can only hear my breath under the water. Most sounds disappears. I float in the water. I grab things to move along. I wear fins. And a mask.

I feel great snorkeling. There are many fish and anemones and an eel and eels can be dangerous, so you should get out of there way fast. The Reef invite you to come on in. When it's time to go out, you'll no. I try standing up, but it isnt easy. I way too much. Then I fall down. It is the fins. I hear the gulls's sounds. Im in the air again. Because it is very cold. I want to be in the water again.

2

PARTNER COMMENTS

I could tell that you were talking about snorkeling, but you didn't really describe a place. Many sentences were too short and rushed. Better details would have helped.

3

Your Turn

Now it's your turn to help the writer. Find and fix the errors in the writing. Go back to the pages in green if you need help.

1. Find and fix the two errors in **subject-verb agreement**. See pp. 18–19.
2. Find and fix the two **sentence fragments**. See pp. 34–35.
3. Find and fix the **rambling sentence**. See pp. 40–41.
4. Find and fix the three incorrect **homophones**. See pp. 28–29.
5. Find and fix the **capitalization** error. See pp. 48–49.
6. Find and fix the two **contraction** errors. See pp. 54–55.
7. Find and fix the incorrect **possessive noun**. See pp. 8–9.

TEACHER COMMENTS

4

- ▲ Please add a title to your descriptive essay.
- ▲ You do include some details, but to form strong images, the reader needs to know more. Take your time and add enough details to create a vivid description.
- ▲ Your description includes both *I* and *you*. Use one or the other.
- ▲ The parts of your description don't follow a logical order. This makes it hard for me to read. You want to hold, not lose, your readers' attention.
- ▲ Can you give more variety to the **structure** of your **sentences**? Many sentences begin with *I*. Try **joining** some of the short **sentences**. See pp. 36–37 for help.
- ▲ Use more **descriptive words** so that readers will form images in their minds. See pp. 22–23.
- ▲ Try to use more **sensory words** to enliven your descriptions. See pp. 58–59.

Score:

1

Read the descriptive essay and the comments that follow.
Think about why this description scored a 1.

1

My sister always talks about the beach. She go there. With her friend Liz. I dont know why. I like the mall. My sister and me disagrees sometimes she says she likes the beach, but I think she just like lying around in the sun she never swims or snorkels. I would like to snorkel. At a reef. One time my sister and myself went to Walton beach. That was the most hottest day of the year. She got in the water then. I was really like totally surprised. Thats all I can tell you.

PARTNER COMMENTS

Your essay needs a title. I wasn't sure what your subject was. It was hard to picture anything because your ideas jumped all around. You needed better organization.

2

TEACHER COMMENTS

- ▲ The essay should describe a place that makes you feel good. Please follow the prompt.
- ▲ Your description needs a more specific beginning, middle, and ending. Your thoughts wander; you should order them better.
- ▲ Your **main idea and details** should be connected and should lead logically from one to another. Use more **transitional words** or **phrases**. See pp. 58–59 and 60–61 for help.
- ▲ Use some **sensory words** that give more specifics about the beach so that readers can get a picture of it in their minds. See pp 58–59.
- ▲ Try using more **variety** in your **sentences**. See pp. 30–31, 36–37, and 44–45.
- ▲ Create a paragraph for each new idea, and indent each **paragraph**. See pp. 58–59.

4

Your Turn

Now it's your turn to help the writer. Find and fix the errors in the writing. Go back to the pages in green if you need help.

1. Find and fix the two errors in **subject-verb agreement**. See pp. 18–19.
2. Find and fix the two **sentence fragments**. See pp. 34–35.
3. Find and fix the two **contraction** errors. See pp. 54–55.
4. Find and fix the **rambling sentence**. See pp. 40–41.
5. Find and fix the incorrect **subject pronoun**. See pp. 10–11.
6. Find and fix the incorrect **reflexive pronoun**. See pp. 14–15.
7. Find and fix the **capitalization** error. See pp. 48–49.
8. Find and fix the **double comparison**. See pp. 22–23.
9. Find and fix the **unnecessary phrase**. See pp. 42–43.

USING A RUBRIC TO SCORE DESCRIPTIVE ESSAYS

This rubric is based on a point scale of 1 to 4. It was used to score the descriptive essays on pages 78–81. Use the rubric to remember what is important in descriptive essays.

4

A score of **4** means that the writer

- connects the writing directly to the prompt.
- almost always uses the correct forms of words.
- almost always uses capitalization and punctuation correctly.
- almost always uses clear and complete sentences and uses variety in sentences.
- creates a title that clearly relates to the description.
- introduces the subject clearly at the beginning.
- creates a description with a clear beginning, middle, and ending.
- uses interesting details and sensory words to create strong images for readers.
- uses comparisons, if they strengthen the imagery.
- uses an appropriate system of organization, such as spatial order.
- begins a new paragraph for each change of idea or speaker.

2

A score of **2** means that the writer

- connects the writing to the prompt in a general way.
- uses some incorrect forms of words.
- makes some errors in capitalization or punctuation.
- uses little sentence variety and uses some run-on or rambling sentences or sentence fragments.
- usually creates a title that relates in some way to the description.
- presents the subject somewhere within the description.
- creates a description with a weak beginning, middle, or ending.
- uses too few interesting details or sensory words to create strong images for readers.
- uses no comparisons or uses them unsuccessfully.
- uses a weak system of organization.
- may make some paragraphing errors.

3

A score of **3** means that the writer

- connects the writing to the prompt.
- usually uses the correct forms of words.
- usually uses capitalization and punctuation correctly.
- usually uses clear and complete sentences and uses some sentence variety.
- creates a title that relates to the description.
- introduces the subject toward the beginning.
- creates a description with a beginning, middle, and ending.
- uses some interesting details and sensory words to create images for readers.
- uses some simple comparisons to strengthen the imagery.
- uses an adequate system of organization.
- usually begins a new paragraph for each change of idea or speaker.

1

A score of **1** means that the writer

- does not successfully connect the writing to the prompt.
- uses many incorrect forms of words.
- makes several errors in capitalization or punctuation.
- uses almost no sentence variety and uses several run-on or rambling sentences or sentence fragments.
- usually creates a poor title or has no title at all.
- identifies the subject in an unclear way or not at all.
- creates a description without a clear beginning, middle, or ending.
- uses words and details that fail to create strong images for readers.
- uses no comparisons.
- uses an inadequate system of organization.
- may make many paragraphing errors.

SCORING DESCRIPTIVE ESSAYS

Now it's your turn to score some descriptive essays. The four descriptive essays on pages 83 and 84 were written in response to this prompt.

Write an essay describing a specific person's face.

Read each descriptive essay. Write a few comments about it and then give it a score from 1 to 4. Think about what you've learned in this lesson as you match each description with its correct score.

Model A

A Writer's Face

I was at the Smithtown Public library. I saw a picture of someone with a face like I don't see every day. It was a writer named Samuel Beckett. His face made me stop to look at it real close.

Mr. Beckett's hair was gray, short on the sides, and longer on top. You could hardly tell that his eyes were blue because they were so light. His forehead had deep wrinkles, and his eyebrows were bushy and his nose was like a beak.

Beckett reminded me of some kind of angry bird. His face made me sort of think of that. But maybe he couldn't help it.

Score:

Comments: _____

Model B

The library is where I go after school, its in Smithtown on Taylor Street. I always sits at the same table I seen a book their with a picture of a writer Mr Bekett. That man looks mad maybe he had a bad time. I finished my homework and then went home. When I got home we will have supper and Im ready myselfs.

Score:

Comments: _____

Model C

A Look on a Book

After school, at the Smithtown Public Library, I noticed a book on the table. It showed a picture of the author Samuel Beckett. His face practically jumped out at me, so I stopped, and looked closer.

Beckett had silver hair, which was cut short above his ears. On top it was longer and scrunched up, like a crown of feathers. His forehead had rows of wrinkles across it. His eyebrows stuck out like another set of plumes. His pale blue eyes seemed to be sharply focused on something. His nose was like an enormous beak, and it cast a shadow across his mouth. He was frowning as if he had invented the frown!

I wondered how someone could develop a face like that. What had Mr. Beckett been thinking all his life? He looked like a wild eagle.

Score:

Comments: _____

Model D

I was at the library. I seen a book with a picture of Mr. Samuel Beckett who was a writer. He wrote books and plays. But I havent seen any of them. I was just sitting at the table when I saw it. Then I got to looking at the picture. Mr. beckett did not look not even one little bit happy in that picture, he looked kind of mad or sad or something you couldnt tell for sure. He had gray hair. He looked like some kind of animal, like the way some people look like there a dog or a cat. Only he didnt look like one of them.

Score:

Comments: _____

WRITING A DESCRIPTIVE ESSAY

Now you get to write your own descriptive essay. Use the prompt below.

Write an essay describing a place where you like to spend time.

When You Write Your Descriptive Essay

1. **Think about** what you want to write. Close your eyes and think about the place you want to describe. Ask yourself some questions.
 - What do I see and hear there?
 - What can I touch and what does it feel like?
 - Can I smell or taste anything there?

Use graphic organizers to gather and sort the information.

2. **Write** your first draft. Your descriptive essay should be four to five paragraphs long and should have a clear and effective beginning, middle, and ending.
3. **Read** your draft. Use the checklist that your teacher will give you to review your writing.
4. **Edit** your essay. Make changes until your description creates strong images.
5. **Proofread** your descriptive essay one last time.
6. **Write** a neat copy of your descriptive essay and give it to your partner.

Work with a Partner

7. **Read** your partner's descriptive essay.
8. **Score** your partner's descriptive essay from 1 to 4, using the rubric on page 82. Then complete the Partner Comments sheet that your teacher will give you. Tell what you like about the description and what you think would make it better.
9. **Switch** papers.
10. **Think about** your partner's comments. Read your essay again. Make changes that you think will improve your descriptive essay.
11. **Write** a neat final copy of your descriptive essay.



Making Connections

- ◆ As you read books and magazines and watch TV and movies, notice how sensory details are used to create vivid mental images. If used well, sensory details can make readers and viewers feel as if they are part of the story.
- ◆ Think about different ways you could order a description. If you were describing your room, you first might want to describe objects or areas that mean the most to you. This is called "order of importance." Think of other kinds of orders that you could use in your writing. How about orders based on location or size?
- ◆ Jot notes in your journal about people, places, or things that would be fun to describe. Remember that when you describe people, you can include details about how they behave. Does someone laugh, scratch his or her head, or sing a lot? What does he or she sing? Save your notes. They can provide ideas for future writing.