



Exploring the Writing Process with Primary Source Materials

Lesson Topic: Drafting - Adding Sensory Details

Lesson Plan Created By:

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Grade Levels:

6th - 8th, High School

Primary Source:

"The Village Blacksmith," poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, published 1841 in Ballads and Other Poems. 1840. Manuscript/Mixed Material.

<https://www.loc.gov/item/mcc.033/>.

Compelling Question:

How do authors add sensory details to their writing?

Supporting Question:

How can I add sensory details to my writing?

Objective:

In this 50 minute lesson, students will explore a handwritten copy of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's "The Village Blacksmith" to better understand the use and development of sensory details in writing.

Standards - Common Core:

Lesson Standards 6th - 8th

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6-8.3.D

Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events.

Lesson Standards 9th - 10th

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3.D

Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.

Lesson Standards 11th - 12th

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.D

Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.

Lesson Activity Instructions

Whole Group Class Discussion Questions: (5 - 10 minutes)

What are sensory details? How do sensory details help readers visualize the writing?

Lesson Activity One: (10 - 15 minutes)

In this activity students will identify sensory details in the poem “The Village Blacksmith” by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Have students access the draft. Read the poem aloud as students may have difficulty reading the cursive print. Next, pass out the worksheet and review the directions. Students will read the poem and identify sensory details.

When students are finished, discuss their answers as a class. Ask:

- What type(s) of sensory details were used most often by the poet?
- What type(s) of sensory details were missing?
- Why do you think the poet did not include these types of sensory details?
- Would including more types of sensory details make the poem better? Why or why not?

Lesson Activity Two: (25 - 30 minutes)

In this activity, students will choose a type of sensory detail and write in Longfellow’s style to continue the poem. Students will focus on adding sensory details in each stanza. Students may use the worksheet or a writer’s notebook. Share work as time allows.

Closing Summary (5 minutes)

Summarize by reviewing the idea that writer’s use sensory details to help a reader visualize.

See accompanying activity handouts for students.

Credits

The creation of this lesson plan was funded by a grant from the Library of Congress *Teaching with Primary Sources* program.

Name: _____ Date: _____

EXPLORING THE WRITING PROCESS WITH PRIMARY SOURCE MATERIALS



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Primary Source: *"The Village Blacksmith," poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, published 1841 in Ballads and Other Poems. 1840. Manuscript/Mixed Material.*
<https://www.loc.gov/item/mcc.033/>.

Directions: Explore the draft to identify the poet’s use of sensory details. Identify the type of sensory detail (smells, sounds, looks, tastes, feels) and complete the chart below.

Image #	Stanza	Type(s) of sensory detail
1	“Under a spreading chestnut tree the village smitty stands; the smith a mighty man is he with large and sweaty hands; and the muscles of his brawn arms are strong as iron bands”	
1	“Week out, week in from morn till night, you can hear his bellows blow; you can hear him swing his heavy sledge with measured beat and slow, like a sexton ringing the old kirk chimes, when the evening sun is low”	
1 - 2	“And children coming home from school look in at the open door, They love to see the flaming forge and hear the bellows roar, And catch the burning sparks that fly like chaff from a threshing floor”	
2	“He goes on Sunday to the church, and sits among his boys; he hears the parson pray and preach, He hears his daughter’s voice singing in the village choir and it makes his heart rejoice”	
2	“It sounds to him like his mother’s voice, Singing in paradise! He needs must think of her once more, How in the grave she lies; and with his hard rough hand he wipes A tear from out his eyes.”	

Would including more types of sensory details make the poem better? Why or why not?

Directions: Now it is your turn to write. Add to the poem in the same style that Longfellow used. Your focus for each stanza is on a type of sensory detail.

Type of Sensory Detail:

Type of Sensory Detail:

Type of Sensory Detail: