Writing Basics → Painting a Word Picture
Level: Elementary School

Descriptive writing helps your readers understand your meaning through details. Good descriptive writing lets your readers picture and even feel what you are writing about. One way to do that is to use *sensory language* -- words or phrases that relate to each of your five senses.

Practice brainstorming about a topic or a scene. Write words or phrases that relate to the topic and your five senses. Then select the two or three that you feel are the most descriptive and/or interesting -- i.e. the ones that would paint the best word picture in your reader’s mind. (The first one is done for you to use an example.)

1. **Topic: Waiting for a train**
   - See: mice on the tracks, red coat, shiny shoes, ticket on ground, grime
   - Hear: newspapers rustling, child crying, garbled loudspeaker announcements
   - Touch: hard wooden bench, gum stuck to shoe, cold metal ramp
   - Taste: popcorn, sour air, soda
   - Smell: garbage, roasting nuts, stale coffee

2. **Topic/Scene: A hot summer day**
   - See: ________________________________
   - Hear: ________________________________
   - Touch: ________________________________
   - Taste: ________________________________
   - Smell: ________________________________

3. **Topic/Scene: The city (or the country if you are not familiar with a city)**
   - See: ________________________________
   - Hear: ________________________________
   - Touch: ________________________________
   - Taste: ________________________________
   - Smell: ________________________________