



Oakland Unified School District
Writing Proficiency Project

Process Writing Assessment
(PWA)

Fifth Grade

Fall

Descriptive Essay
“My Home”

Teacher Instructions

5th Grade Fall Prompt Descriptive Writing

This Process Writing Assessment consists of five lessons that prepare students to write a descriptive essay. Ideally it should take place on consecutive days during your regular writing period. Due to scheduling constraints, you may have to “chunk” lessons into more/fewer days. If this occurs please do the lessons in order. Many activities are designed to be done with a partner. Look for the partner icon and plan accordingly.  Note that shaded boxes are from the student booklet.

*Overview of week**

Suggested time

Day One	<i>- Introduction - Reading and Responding</i>	60 minutes
Day Two	<i>- Making Connections</i>	40-60 minutes
Days Three & Four	<i>-Drawing- -Sensory Details and Vocabulary</i>	45-60 minutes
Day Five	<i>- Writing</i>	45-60 minutes

 You may distribute the time allotted to each activity differently across the days, combining or splitting lessons as seems appropriate, taking up to four weeks to complete them all.



DAY ONE: Reading and Responding

 Pass out the student booklets and have students write their names on the front page. Read aloud the following:

Writers do their best writing when they have time to read, think, and plan. During the next few days you will:

1. Read a descriptive essay written by a published author.
2. Analyze the descriptive essay.
3. Think about and draw a place where you have lived.
4. Plan and write a descriptive essay about a place where you have lived.

Teachers hope you will learn more about writing, enjoy these activities, and do your best work. When you finish, your teacher will read your essay, score it and then plan lessons to help you become a better writer.

 **GOAL:** *The first goal of this lesson is for students to carefully read the selection and begin the writing process with note taking. The second goal is for students to differentiate between “fact” and “opinion.” The third goal is for students to identify the “controlling idea” of the selection.*

 You may want to read the selection aloud. Encourage students to use the **My Notes** space to record what they think and what they wonder about as they read. Encourage them to make connections to their own experiences as they read or listen. You can model reading aloud and writing your own entry into the **My Notes** space.

1. The selection you will read today is author Laurence Yep’s description of his grandmother’s apartment.

 Use the **My Notes** space (see student version) to write what you think or wonder about the apartment and what the author says is unique or special about it.

 Tell students: Read the story and follow these directions:

2. Reading the Story

My Notes

The Lightwell
By Laurence Yep

My grandmother lives in a tiny studio apartment in Chinatown. Her home, in the rear of the building, receives no direct sunlight even though her window opens on a lightwell; for the lightwell seems to stretch endlessly upward and downward among the many buildings. At its brightest, it is filled with a kind of tired twilight.

Although the lightwell is a poor source of light, it is a perfect carrier for sound. In the mornings it carries sound from all the other apartments - the slap of wet laundry being hung in the window, the rush of water into a sink, the crying of a baby. During the afternoons, bits of conversation float into my grandmother's home like fragments of little dramas and comedies-just as, I'm sure, the other tenants can hear the shuffling of my grandmother's cards and her exclamations when she loses at solitaire.

Toward evening, as my grandmother clanks pots on her stove, I can hear matching sounds from the other apartments as her neighbors also prepare their meals. And the smell of my grandmother's simmering rice and frying vegetables mingles with the other smells in the lightwell until there are enough aromas for a banquet.

Side by side, top and below, each of us lives in our own separate time and space. And yet we all belong to the same building, our lives touching however briefly and faintly.

*I wonder what a lightwell is?
Why is it important?*

2. Rereading the Story

- ☆ Put a star by passages that were so descriptive you could imagine the scene.
- Circle any parts you have questions about.

☞ Tell students: When you write a descriptive essay it is important to be able to distinguish “facts” from “opinions.” The following activities will help you to see the difference between facts and opinions.

3. Facts: Now you know a number of facts about his grandmother’s apartment. Write two or three of these facts.

I know... (Facts)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

4. Opinions: You also know what the author thinks is special or unique about his grandmother’s apartment building. Write two or three statements giving your opinion about how he feels about his grandmother’s apartment. I think he feels. .(Opinions)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

☞ Tell students: A descriptive essay needs to have one idea that frames the whole piece. Otherwise the writing can just describe a place instead of being an essay with a controlling idea. Yep organizes his writing using details and language to show us how he feels about his grandmother’s apartment building. Understanding Laurence Yep’s controlling idea will help you write your own essay.

5. Controlling Idea: A controlling idea is the author’s central idea, opinion, position or claim about a particular topic. What do you think is Laurence Yep’s controlling idea in his essay? What evidence do you have?

I think the controlling idea of “Lightwell” is _____



DAY TWO: Making Connections

👉 **GOAL:** The first goal of this lesson is for students to be able to identify the features of a descriptive essay. The second goal is for students to make connections from the text to their own topic. The third goal is for students to identify details that support a controlling idea.

👉 Guide students through the following activities. Remember that the goal is for all students to successfully prepare for writing.

1. Review your work from Day One. Share your facts, opinions, and thoughts about the controlling idea with a partner. Listen to your partner.
 - Share the descriptive parts you starred when you read.
 - Share your questions from My Notes. Try to answer your partner’s questions.
 - Discuss the controlling idea. Does your partner have a different controlling idea?
2. The controlling idea of the essay you will write is how your house or apartment makes you feel and what is special or unique about it. You will need to describe your home using details and events that have contributed to your feelings about it. You can write about a place where you no longer live.

My home makes me feel _____
 _____ because _____

My home is unique or special because

3. In “Lightwell,” Laurence Yep includes many facts about his grandmother’s apartment building that support his controlling idea. With your partner, pick out some of these facts and write them in **Column One**. You can use the **controlling idea** from yesterday, or revise it if necessary.

4. In **Column Two** list facts about your house or apartment that support your controlling idea.

Column One	Column Two
Laurence Yep’s controlling idea:	My controlling idea:
Facts that support his controlling idea	Facts that support my controlling idea:



DAY THREE: Drawing and labeling your house/apartment

👉 GOAL: The goal of this lesson is for students to visualize the topic of their descriptive essay and begin to develop descriptive vocabulary to be used in their essay.

👉 TELL STUDENTS: This is a sketch and not an art project. Pencil or pen is fine and stick figures will work great.

1. Draw a picture of your house or apartment with details that support your controlling idea.
2. Include images you see, hear, smell, taste, and touch
3. Use descriptive words to label parts of your house or apartment.
4. Discuss your finished drawing with a partner. You may add things to your drawing as you share. 🧑🧑

My Home



DAY FOUR: Sensory details and vocabulary

GOAL: *The goal for this lesson is to increase student descriptive vocabulary about sensory details and emotional influences.*

☞ **TELL STUDENTS:** In “Lightwell” Laurence Yep uses descriptive language. He uses words to “paint” a picture of his grandmother’s apartment. **Today, you will do some activities to help you paint with words in your essay.**

1. Look at the drawing of your house/apartment and now paint a picture with words. Write words, phrases or metaphors that describe what you can see, hear, smell, taste, and touch when you are at the house/apartment.

See:

Hear:

Smell:

Taste:

Touch:

2. Write words, phrases or metaphors that describe what is special or unique about your house or apartment. Use the sentence frames, or make your own.

My home is like a _____

because _____.

My home is a _____

that_____.

My own words that describe what is special or unique about my home:



DAY FIVE: Writing a Descriptive Essay

👉 GOAL: The goal for this lesson is for students to plan and write a descriptive essay.

👉 Plan on a full 60 minute writing period. Students can use up to 15 minutes to plan their writing including using a graphic organizer.

👉 Read aloud the prompt and writing reminders aloud.

Write a descriptive essay for your teacher that describes your house or apartment. Describe details and events that show how your home makes you feel or what is special or unique about it. Paint a word picture using vivid, descriptive, sensory language so that your teacher experiences your home as you do.

Before you begin to write, take a few minutes to look through your booklet and decide what you want to include in your essay. You can include additional information that is not in your booklet.

Writing Reminders:

Keep the following points in mind since you won't have time to rewrite:

- Introduce your house/apartment with a sentence that captures the reader's attention.
- Organize your ideas so that they are easy to follow.
- Use precise and vivid vocabulary to describe your house/apartment.
- Use a variety of sentence types.

After you write:

- Check your punctuation. Use capital letters, commas, periods, quotation marks and spelling correctly.
- Give your essay a title. (Write a title that will help your reader to know what your essay is about).

- Go back and check that you have done everything on this checklist.

- ☞ Distribute writing packets and tell students to fill in the information box. Write your name and school name on the board for them to copy.
- ☞ Circulate through the classroom as students begin to write to help them settle into the assignment. Less teacher input now will give you a clearer picture of student writing when you plan for future instruction.
- ☞ As students finish, collect student booklets and writing packets.