



Oakland Unified School District  Process Writing Assessment  
Descriptive Writing - Winter

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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 about a neighborhood in San Francisco.
2. Analyze the descriptive essay.
3. Think about and draw a neighborhood in Oakland.
4. Plan and write a descriptive essay about a neighborhood in Oakland.

We hope you 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.



**Day One: Reading and Responding to an Essay**

1. Thinking questions: Cities have many neighborhoods. You live in a neighborhood. Read these questions and think about how you would answer them. Be ready to share your thinking with classmates.

What is a neighborhood?

What do you see in your neighborhood?

Who are the people in your neighborhood?

What are some landmarks of your neighborhood?

2. Read: The essay you will read today is about San Francisco's Chinatown neighborhood. It is a chapter in a children's book about San Francisco. As you read, circle words that you are curious about. Underline words that are examples of descriptive language.

### San Francisco's Chinatown

As soon as you pass under San Francisco Chinatown's Dragon Gate, you enter another world. You will hear people speaking Chinese, smell the spicy foods of street vendors and restaurants, and see the bright colors of t-shirts sold in tourist shops. Chinatown is a place where many people live, but it is also very busy with stores, businesses, restaurants and tourists visiting from around the world. Chinatown is a lively neighborhood that no visitor to San Francisco would want to miss.

Gung Hay Fat Choy! That means "Happy New Year!" in Chinese. You may be lucky enough to visit Chinatown in late January or early February when the Lunar New Year is celebrated. New Year's is a special time in Chinatown. People wish one another good luck and happiness, and children receive lai-see - small red envelopes filled with money. You will hear the loud noises of firecrackers and may see the colorful lion dance parade around the streets.

Chinatown is colorful all year round. Walk down Grant Avenue with its streetlights that look like lanterns. Street signs are written in Chinese and English, and you'll find herb stands, fish markets, tea rooms, and splashes of red on nearly every block. The street is lined with shops selling colored objects and Chinese foods. Chinese jade, ivory carvings, incense sticks, dried fish, and herbs used as medicine packs line store shelves and window displays. Color and light everywhere make Chinatown a bright and lively place.

Wind chimes tinkle, and banners wave in the breeze. Smoked ducks hang in shop windows, and live squid swim in huge tanks. Along the crowded streets, Chinatown's many restaurants offer tasty foods from every district of China. As you eat dim sum, you will listen to the spattering pops of frying meat in the shop next door, and the bump of Chinese hip-hop coming from the apartment above. The streets are alive with the unique sounds of Chinatown.

If you want to visit some place lively, go to Chinatown. Your eyes, nose, and ears will be filled with interesting sights, smells, sounds. As you stroll through the bustling streets you will see that this neighborhood is full of surprises that will teach you about Chinese culture.

### 3. Find the Controlling Idea

A descriptive essay has a controlling idea that expresses your attitude toward that place and helps the reader understand why you include some details and not others. In academic writing, the controlling idea is often (but not always) the last sentence of the introductory paragraph. What is the controlling idea of this essay about Chinatown?

Chinatown is a \_\_\_\_\_ neighborhood.

What are some details from the essay that support this idea?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. Find Descriptive Language

What are some examples of descriptive language? Write them in the lines below.

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## Day Two: PREWRITING - Drawing Your Neighborhood

1. Draw a picture or a map of your neighborhood *and write labels to describe what you have drawn*. Try to put in as many details about your neighborhood as you can. You can also add landmarks (lakes, buildings, streets, stores, trees.)
2. Try to include the important sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and textures that are in your neighborhood.



3. **SHOP TALK**-Sharing your drawing with your writing community. Think about how you will share your neighborhood picture with a partner or a group. Think about what questions you would like to ask a classmate about their neighborhood drawing. You can finish your drawing after you share.



### Day Three: Brainstorming details and adjectives to find a controlling idea

1. Name and describe some of the people, places, activities, and events in your neighborhood. Some might be in your drawing from yesterday. Record them below. Some of these will be the supporting details and evidence in your essay.

<p><b>People</b> Example: <i>the crossing guard; old, friendly man, orange vest</i></p>	<p><b>Place</b> Example: <i>Quickie Mart; magazine rack, noisy, smells like icee</i></p>
<p><b>Activities</b> Example: <i>soccer game; cheering parents</i></p>	<p><b>Events, Festivals, Holidays</b> Example: <i>Cinco de Mayo; music, red, white, green flags</i></p>



### 2. SHOP TALK- Sharing your ideas with your writing community

Get ready to share what you recorded about your neighborhood. Talk about what it is like to live in your own neighborhood. Members of your group may live in different neighborhoods, so you can compare facts and details. Be sure each person has a chance to share.

### 3. ORGANIZING -Selecting a Controlling Idea

\* Look back at your drawing and notes and think about what you see and do in your neighborhood. Brainstorm adjectives that describe your neighborhood.

Adjectives that describe my neighborhood: e.g. *friendly, diverse, safe, busy*

\* Look at the boxes on page five and the adjectives above. Choose the **adjective** that best sums up the overall impression you have of your neighborhood. Choose one that could be interesting to write about. This will be your controlling idea. You will be using some of the information you have written in the last few days to support this idea. Write your controlling idea.

My neighborhood is \_\_\_\_\_.  
(adjective that best describes your neighborhood)

**4. Test Drive Your Controlling Idea** - Read your sentence to a partner. He/she will ask you “probing questions” in order to convince them it is true. When the questions are done you get to ask if you proved your statement.

Examples of Probing Questions: “What makes you think your neighborhood is \_\_\_\_\_?” “Why do you think your neighborhood is \_\_\_\_\_?” “Tell me more about why your neighborhood is \_\_\_\_\_?” “What about your neighborhood makes it so \_\_\_\_\_?” “Are there other examples of why your neighborhood is \_\_\_\_\_?”

**5. Strengthen Your Controlling Idea-** Add any new details that you thought of while answering the questions.



## Day Four: Planning Your Essay

### Introduction

(Introduce your neighborhood and write your controlling idea from page 7)

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Choose two or three details (people, places, activities, events) from the boxes on page six that support your controlling idea.

Supporting detail #1 \_\_\_\_\_

Evidence:

Supporting detail #2 \_\_\_\_\_

Evidence:

Supporting detail #3 \_\_\_\_\_

Evidence:

**Conclusion** (Creatively restate controlling idea)

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## Day Five: Writing a Descriptive Essay

Here's the Prompt:

### A Description of Your Neighborhood

A newspaper is running a series of articles about different neighborhoods in Oakland. Write a descriptive essay about the neighborhood you live in to include in the next issue. Look back at all your charts and planning sheets in this packet so that you can think about your controlling idea and choose descriptions of your neighborhood that will support it.

#### *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 know what your essay is about).
- Go back and check that you have done everything on this checklist.