

How to Generate Elaborative Detail

• Note the sentence variety in the elaborative segment describing the wheel barrow. It was not a “grocery list”—“It was big, old, gray, peeling, in good shape.” Nor was it a “broken record”—“It was big. It was old. It was gray. It was peeling. It was, it was, it was...” Instead, each sentence began in a slightly different way. The elaborative segment allows the reader to see the wheel barrow through the five senses of the main character. ***The vivid word choice and specific detail not only make for an interesting paragraph, but become powerful tools for building student vocabulary.***

Below, you will find a generic list of detail generating sentences that you may apply when creating elaborative segments of story critical characters, settings, objects:

MENU OF DETAIL GENERATING QUESTIONS AND SENTENCE STARTERS

QUESTIONS ABOUT A STORY CRITICAL CHARACTER -

• How tall/big was this character? • What color hair/eyes? • How old was the character? • What kind of eyes/nose/mouth/ears did he/she have? • What kind/color of hair did he/she have? (long, short, curly, straight, etc.) • What kind of marks, scars, or distinguishing characteristics did he/she have? • What was he/she wearing? • What kind of expression was on his/her face? • How did this character make you feel? • Who or what did this character remind you of?

QUESTIONS ABOUT A STORY CRITICAL SETTING -

• What was the temperature/weather like? • What kinds of trees/plants grew there? • How did the air feel? • What kinds of animals were there? • What kinds of buildings were there? • What kind of objects were around? • What kinds of sounds did you hear? • How did you feel about being there? • What did you smell?

QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT A STORY CRITICAL OBJECT -

• What color was it? • What did it feel like? • What was its shape? • What size was it? • How old was it? • What was it made of? • What did it smell like? • What kind of sound did it make? • How heavy was it? • Who did it belong to? • Where did it come from? • What did it remind you of?

Notice that none of these are yes/no questions! Detail generating questions must be specific and must ask for particulars--not true/false/positive/negative! These are just some suggestions. Not all of them are applicable all the time, nor are these the only questions you can ask - students will likely think of other effective questions to add to this list.

Lesson Plans -

A Sense of Autumn

Objective: Students apply detail generating questions to create a segment of elaborative detail describing a story critical setting. They use a variety of specific sensory details within the context of strong sentence variety.

Materials: Chart Paper, Markers, copies of student pg. 93

Procedure:

- 1.) Gather the students together. Hang five pieces of chart paper on the board, one for each of the five senses. You may label these as follows:
 - What we see • What we hear • What we feel
 - What we smell • What we taste(You may choose to simply have older students list each of these sensory categories on their own paper.)
- 2.) Discuss the season of autumn. (If working with younger students, you may want to prepare the class by reading several books about autumn.)
- 3.) Begin to chart (or have students list) specific details about autumn that you SEE, HEAR, FEEL, SMELL, TASTE. Their charts/lists may look something like this:

What we see:

brightly colored leaves
squirrels gathering nuts
a carpet of leaves on the ground
smoke from chimneys
pumpkins in the fields
scarecrows
dried cornstalks

What we taste:

spicy, sweet apple pie
rich hot chocolate
Halloween candy
candied apples

What we hear:

cool breeze blowing
crunching leaves underfoot
rustling leaves
crows calling
migrating geese honking

What we smell:

smoke from a wood fire
leafy, woody smell
pumpkin pies
apple cider

What we feel:

crisp, chilly air
dried leaves underfoot
cool breeze
a shiver