

Topic: Descriptive Writing

Text: *Come On, Rain!* By Karen Hesse

Elements of Descriptive Writing:

- Vivid Verbs
- Sensory Words
- Astounding Adjectives
- Creating a picture with words
- Specific, Unique Word Choice
- Figurative language

Time Frame: At least 4 lessons

Objectives:

TSW identify vivid verbs used in Hesse's text and utilize one of her words in their own writing.

TSW identify sensory words or phrases used in this story and how it makes the reader's experience more real.

TSW identify unique adjectives Hesse uses in this text.

TSW choose a specific sentence or paragraph where Hesse particularly paints a picture with her words. Use her technique in their own writing.

Lesson Ideas:

1. **Vivid Verbs**—Go on a vivid verb hunt through the text. Students can write the vivid verbs on sticky notes. Share these with the class.

Application to writing: "Word Stealing" Take one of Hesse's vivid verbs and utilize it in one of their stories. Try to replace boring words with more vivid ones.

Example:

- **squinting** in the endless heat
- **sagging** over her parched plants
- sound of a heavy truck **rumbles** past
- heat **wavers**
- gray clouds **bunched** and **bulging**
- her legs, like two string beans **sprout** from her shorts
- **peeling** out of my clothes
- **sweeps** off her hat
- drops **plop** down big
- dust **dance**

- clouds **burst**
- it **freckles** our feet, **glazes** our toes
- **squealing** and **whooping** in the streaming rain
- the music....**shimmies** and **sparkles** and **streaks** like night lightning
- **tromping** through puddles
- **romping** and **reeling** in the moisty green air

Use it in my writing: The airplane rumbles overhead, drowning out the quiet.

2. **Sensory Words**—Create a chart of sensory words/phrases

Sight	Smell	Sound	Touch	Taste
Clouds rolling in, gray clouds, bunched and bulging under a purple sky	Smell of hot tar and garbage bullies the air	Sound of a heavy truck rumbles past	Endless heat	I aim a spoonful of sugar into my mouth, then a second into the drink
Her long legs, like two brown string beans sprout from her shorts		The needle sticks on her phonograph, playing the same notes over and over in the dim, stuffy cave of her room.	Slick with sweat	We gulp down rain

3. **ASTOUNDING ADJECTIVES**—Ms. Hesse does NOT use words like “nice”, “good,” “awesome” to describe the rain. She uses very specific WORD CHOICES to describe the scene.

Students can do a “Scavenger Hunt” like for vivid verbs, looking for these word choices in her text.

Examples: (Including the nouns they describe)

- listless vines
- parched plants
- crackling-dry path
- dim, stuffy cave
- swollen sky
- streaming rain
- moisty green air
- wet and wild-hair mammas

Students could also make a list of all of the words that she uses to describe the HEAT and compare it to the words that she uses to describe the RAIN.

Application to Writing: Students could brainstorm unique ways to describe something in their own writing. For example, they could come up with unusual ways to describe snow or beginning of summer, etc.

4. **Create a picture with words.** This is a good activity to do BEFORE showing the students the actual pictures from the book. Read a particularly good section of the story and have students DRAW what they see in their mind.

Example:

"I stare out over the rooftops,
past chimneys, into the way off distance,
And that's when I see it coming,
clouds rolling in,
gray clouds, bunched and bulging under a purple sky."

Give students a copy of the TEXT only (attached). Have them mark sections of the text where they can SEE the images in their mind because of the words.

Application to Writing:

Have students draw a small, detailed picture (index card size). Have them write a few sentences to a paragraph using WORDS that create a picture in the reader's mind.

5. **Unusual word choice**—much of this fits into other categories

Examples:

"kneeling over the hot rump of a melon"

"insects have gone still"

"a smile spreads from porch to porch"

6. **Figurative Language**

Look for examples of figurative language.

Examples:

Metaphor:

"in the dim stuffy cave of her room"

Personification:

"hot tar and garbage bullies the air"

"her legs, like two string beans sprout from her shorts" (and simile)

"Making dust dance all around us"

Simile:

- the music....shimmies and sparkles and streaks like night lightning