

## Essay 2: Two Presentations of a Scene

Write two descriptions of the same scene, from contrasting angles of vision. Here is the catch: Your first description must convey a favorable impression of the scene, making it appear pleasing or attractive. The second description must convey a negative or unfavorable impression, making the scene appear unpleasant or unattractive.

Both descriptions must contain only factual details and must describe exactly the same scene from the same location at the same time. It's not fair, in other words, to describe the scene in sunny weather and then in the rain or otherwise to alter factual details.

Each description should be one paragraph long (100-150 words). Begin each paragraph with a strong, clear topic sentence.

Write your essay in a classic prose style: clear and concise, specific and engaging.

Make every word count.

**Due:** October 7

(Bring THREE copies of your essay to class for Peer Critiques.)

To get into the spirit of this unusual assignment, you need to create a framework for why you are writing two opposing descriptions. Here are three descriptive frameworks that might prove useful:

Descriptive Frameworks	
Different Moods	Pretend that you are observing this scene in different moods. How could you reflect a “happy” view of this scene and then a “sad” view? Let the mood determine your selection and framing of details, but don’t put yourself into the scene. The reader should infer your mood from the description.
Verbal Games	Here you see yourself as a word wizard trying consciously to create two different rhetorical effects for readers. In this scenario, you don’t worry how you feel about the scene but how you want your readers to feel. Your focus is on crafting the language to influence your audience in different ways.

Descriptive Frameworks	
Roleplaying	In this scenario, you imagine your descriptions as perceived by different characters. You might describe a dentist’s waiting room, for example, first from the point of view of the proud interior decorator who designed it. Then imagine a different character, say a patient who hates going to the dentist, and describe it again from this opposing perspective.

Once you have chosen your scene, you’ll need to observe and take notes for fifteen or twenty minutes in preparation for writing the focused descriptions of the scene using specific, concrete, sensory details. You need to compose descriptions that are rich in sensory detail—sights, sounds, smells, textures, even on occasion tastes—all contributing to a dominant impression that gives the description focus.

You can train yourself to notice sensory details by creating a two-column sensory chart and noting details that appeal to each of the senses. Then try describing them, first positively (left column) and then negatively (right column). Here is a sample sensory chart observing a scene in a local bar:

Sense	Positive Description	Negative Description
Taste	salted and buttered popcorn  frosty pitcher of beer  big bowls of salted-in-the-shell peanuts on the table	salty, greasy popcorn  half-drunk pitcher of stale, warm beer  mess of peanut shells and discarded pretzel wrappers on tables and floor
Sound	hum of students laughing and chatting  jukebox playing classic early Beatles tunes	din of high-pitched giggles and various obnoxious frat guys shouting at each other  jukebox playing out-of-date music