

## Scriptwriting Skill Module

# Using Sensory Details

### STUDENT OBJECTIVES

- Distinguish between literal and figurative language
- Recognize sensory details in writing
- Revise writing to strengthen use of sensory details
- Evaluate the effect of sensory details on personal writing

### RESOURCES AND PREPARATION

- *You Try It!* Student Worksheet – Add Zing With Sensory Details!

#### Additional Online Support:

- [www.holtmcdougal.hmhco.com](http://www.holtmcdougal.hmhco.com)
- [www.BlueNoseEd.com](http://www.BlueNoseEd.com)

## Teach the Skill

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### 1. Introduce Sensory Details

Remind students that television and film tell stories through the use of *sounds* and *images*. Working with specific sounds and sights is of great importance in these art forms. Directors and cinematographers decide on the “palette” of shows—which colors and visual styles they will use. Sound designers deliberately choose to use certain types of sounds, certain songs, and certain timbres of the human voice.

Scripts for TV and movies therefore make extensive use of *sensory details*. When scriptwriting, students need to find the right scenes and dialogue to convey the story they have to tell. But of almost equal importance is finding the sensory details that will make that story have a visceral impact.

### 2. Teach Sensory Details

- Have students vote on which of the following situations best conveys an idea about traffic stuck on a highway.

#### EXAMPLE

(A) On a hot expressway, traffic is stalled in a traffic jam.

(B) An ancient-looking, scaly turtle steps onto the shimmering concrete of a baking expressway. Walking up on its claws, looking like a miniature dinosaur, the turtle creeps across the concrete. Passing under and in front of idling, smoke-belching cars, it makes it to the other side without being run over.

*Ask:* which is more exact? which paints a more vivid picture?

- Even without using terms such as *imagery*, *figurative language*, and *simile*, volunteers should be able to explain why the second example is more effective. Explain that **figurative language** includes words used in an imaginative way to convey emotions and connotations beyond the literal meaning of the words. Further explain that **imagery** consists of details that appeal strongly to people’s senses of sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell. When writing for film and TV, students should include specific images that will make their narratives spring to life.

- To give the students experience with these terms, draw the following chart on the board. Remind them that imagery appeals to the senses: sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste. As a fun, creative exercise, fill in the headings with their suggestions.

**EXAMPLE**

Literal Situation	Statement Dramatized With Sensory Details
1. Rowdy is a nice dog, but sometimes he can be hard to get along with.	1. At a backyard barbecue, a Dalmatian tears around the yard, knocking food out of people’s hands, digging huge holes in the dirt, and jumping up on a woman wearing a white dress and leaving muddy paw-prints all over her. But then, a little kid comes over to pet him, and he becomes very sweet, staring lovingly into the child’s face.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
6.	6.

**3. Apply the Skill:** Distribute copies of the You Try It! Worksheet: “Add Zing With Sensory Details!” Read the directions aloud, then allow the students to work independently. When the students are done, ask for volunteers to read their work aloud.

**QUICK CHECK** Ask students to define figurative language. Have them explain how they can add emotional energy to their scripts by including more sensory details.

## YOU TRY IT!

# Add Zing With Sensory Details!

### ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

**Figurative Language** words and images used in an imaginative way to express ideas that are not literally true, but which carry emotional meaning.

**Imagery** details that appeal strongly to people's senses of sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell.

### DIRECTIONS

Much work in TV and film is done collaboratively. Get in groups of four and work through the following diagram on a piece of paper. Read aloud the literal situations listed in the left column. Working as a group, revise each situation to include sensory details. How does each situation change as you add different kinds of sensory details to it?

Literal Situation	Same Situation, Revised to Include Sensory Details
1. At a school dance, two young people catch each other's eye.	<i>1. With a popular song booming in the background, two young people—both of them dancing vigorously—make eye contact. From each person's point of view, the other person appears to be dressed in more colorful, eye-catching clothing; also, as they look at each other, the sound of the song seems to diminish and for a few seconds, they look at each other in absolute silence</i>
2. Two homicide detectives, one a veteran, the other a rookie, arrive at the scene of a murder.	
3. It's fourth and twenty with four seconds left in the state championship game. Down by six, the quarterback takes the snap and drops back to pass.	
4. During the annual Thanksgiving Day parade, a flying saucer lands in the middle of the town square.	
5. It's an idealistic young teacher's first day of work at a tough high school. Getting out of his car, he makes his way to class.	

### Self-Check

Once you have revised the situation to include sensory details, circle the revisions that are the most striking. Which are better, the original ideas, or the ones that include more sensory details?