

7) Creating Strong Images

OBJECTIVES

Students will explore the difference between showing and telling.

Students will understand the concept of painting a mental image in songwriting.

Students will demonstrate the ability to create strong images.

VOCABULARY

images, metaphor, sensory details, simile, theme (review)

PREPARATION

- Make copies of “Coat of Many Colors” Lyric Sheet and Images From Memory Worksheet.
- Locate audio or video version of “Coat of Many Colors” written and performed by Dolly Parton.

STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.4

Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7

Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

FREE WRITE (5 minutes)

DISCUSS HOMEWORK (2 minutes)

Allow students to share with the class the favorite rhymes they wrote.

BRAINSTORM (6 minutes)

This exercise will help students become more aware of the details that their senses pick up constantly.

Prompt: In your journal, list as many details about your current surroundings as you can in 30 seconds. Try to move past the obvious things you see and try to find tiny details that someone else might not notice.

Ask students to raise their hands if they listed anything other than a visual detail (a sound, a smell, a feeling, or a taste) in their list. Share with students that we often rely on visual details, but using all five senses creates even stronger images.

Prompt: For the next 30 seconds, close your eyes and listen. Pay attention to every little sound. Open your eyes and list as many sounds as you can in 30 seconds.

Repeat this prompt for each of the other senses (smell, taste, touch), allowing 30 seconds to think with eyes closed and 30 seconds to write. If students have trouble with smell and taste, ask them to list memorable smells or tastes that they have experienced recently.

Ask students to share some of their details with the class.

ACTIVITY (30–35 minutes)

1. Share with students:

Every waking moment, we absorb a tidal wave of information through our senses, often without recognizing the many pieces that make up what we are experiencing. But when we concentrate on each sense, we are able to identify the **sensory details**, the individual sights, sounds, tastes, smells, and touch sensations that allow us to take in our surroundings. When we isolate these details and describe them in vivid and colorful language, we can stir mental pictures, or **images**, in our listeners' minds. We know this already from the storybooks we all read and enjoy. Whether spoken, read, or sung, words have the power to fire our imaginations, involving us in someone else's senses, memories, and feelings, almost as if we are experiencing them, too. Sensory details are the most powerful tool to create the images that move our emotions.

2. Write the following words on the board: sadness, joy, anger, fear, calm. Ask students to pick one of the words and think of situations when they had that emotion. (For example, here's a situation for joy: "My brother is in the Army and he's been away for six months. But last week, there was a knock on our front door, and when my mom opened it, there he was. I ran to him and he scooped me up and we hugged and cried.")

Students should spend five to seven minutes writing down a minimum of five ideas. Afterward, allow students to describe an experience with the whole group, urging them to try to tell the story without using the actual word for the emotion they're recalling (sadness, joy, etc.).

3. Share with students:

When you hear stories like this that communicate feelings, it's easy to picture them in your mind. These images allow you to show your audience an emotion instead of simply telling them you were sad, happy, angry, or afraid. Songwriters use images to show emotions to their listeners instead of directly stating, "I feel angry," or "I felt sad." Images support the **subject**, which is the topic of the song. So when you use a strong image in your writing, it shows your audience more about your subject than if you just told them about it. Remember that it's always more powerful to show, rather than tell.

4. Share this information, as well:

Two figures of speech, **simile** and **metaphor**, also can be used to create strong imagery in your lyrics. A simile is a descriptive comparison that uses "like" or "as." For example, "He was as fast as a whirlwind on the basketball court," or "The sun rose like a neon tangerine." A metaphor makes similar comparisons without using "like" or "as."

Notice how similes and metaphors compare two unlike things that share a similar feature. For example, "He was a whirlwind on the basketball court," or "At dawn, the sun was a neon tangerine."

5. Distribute the "**Coat of Many Colors**" **Lyric Sheet**. Play the song and ask students to point out images that Dolly Parton uses to show instead of tell.6. Distribute the **Images From Memory Worksheet** and review the directions:

First, circle one of the categories that reminds you of a memory. For example, for "kitchen/bedroom," you could remember making cookies in your grandmother's kitchen or spilling a carton of milk in a friend's kitchen or having a pillow fight in your sister's bedroom. Second, close your eyes and try to put yourself back in that memory. Think of who was there, what was around you, what emotions the memory gives you. List as many details as you can from each of your five senses and your emotions.

7. Share with students that songwriters choose sensory details and images carefully to evoke feelings in their listeners. Read aloud these lyrics written by a student who participated in the Words & Music program:

Sitting on the porch
Listening to the breeze
Watching the street scorch
Feel so at ease

Ask the class:

- What kind of images do you see when you hear these lyrics?
- What senses does the writer involve?
- What kind of emotion does the image create?

Now read aloud the second verse of the student's song:

Sitting on the porch
On a cold and dreary day
Listening to the storm
That just won't go away

Ask the class:

- What is different about the images in this verse?
- How does this lyric relate differently to your senses than the first verse?
- How is the emotion different from the first verse?
- What other senses could you use to build on the images in these two verses?

TEACHER TIP

Remind students that they will write the first draft of their final songs in the next lesson. They should be gaining inspiration from the writing they have already completed, so they should come prepared to the next class with all the writing they have done so far. Students should also bring an idea of the topic for their final song.

HOMEWORK

Direct students to use the sensory details on their **Images From Memory Worksheet** to write a paragraph, poem, or song in their journals that retells the memory. Ask them to use as many of the details from their lists as they can, and remind them to use at least one detail from each of the five senses. Also ask students to underline each occurrence of a sensory detail.

LYRIC SHEET

Coat of Many Colors*Dolly Parton*

Back through the years
 I go wand'ring once again
 Back to the seasons of my youth
 I recall a box of rags that someone gave us
 And how my mama put the rags to use.
 There were rags of many colors
 Every piece was small
 And I didn't have a coat
 And it was way down in the fall
 Mama sewed the rags together
 Sewing every piece with love
 She made my coat of many colors
 That I was so proud of.

As she sewed, she told a story
 From the Bible, she had read
 About a coat of many colors,
 Joseph wore and then she said
 Perhaps this coat will bring you
 Good luck and happiness
 And I just couldn't wait to wear it
 And mama blessed it with a kiss.

My coat of many colors
 That my mama made for me,
 Made only from rags
 But I wore it so proudly.
 Although we had no money
 I was rich as I could be
 In my coat of many colors
 My mama made for me.

So with patches on my britches
 And holes in both my shoes
 In my coat of many colors
 I hurried off to school
 Just to find the others laughing
 And making fun of me
 In my coat of many colors
 My mama made for me.

And oh I couldn't understand it
 For I felt I was rich
 And I told 'em of the love
 My mama sewed in every stitch
 And I told 'em all the story
 Mama told me while she sewed
 And how my coat of many colors
 Was worth more than all their clothes.

But they didn't understand it
 And I tried to make them see
 That one is only poor
 Only if they choose to be
 Now I know we had no money
 But I was rich as I could be
 In my coat of many colors
 My mama made for me
 Made just for me.



Dolly Parton wrote "Coat of Many Colors" about a humble jacket that was sewn by her mother because her family couldn't afford a new one. Parton says it is her favorite of the many songs she has written.

WORKSHEET

Images From Memory

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Circle one of the words in the list below that reminds you of a memory. For example, for the words “kitchen/ bedroom” you could have a memory about making cookies in your grandmother’s kitchen or spilling a carton of milk in a friend’s kitchen or having a pillow fight in your sister’s bedroom.

park / playground

kitchen / bedroom

sports / game

late at night / early morning

river / pool / lake

vacation / party

woods / field / yard

sunshine / snow / rain

Create your own: _____

2. Close your eyes and try to put yourself back in that memory. Think of who is there, what is around you, what feelings the memory gives you. Then open your eyes and list as many details from your memory as you can for each of your five senses and emotions.

SIGHT: _____

SOUND: _____

SMELL: _____

TOUCH: _____

TASTE: _____

EMOTIONS/FEELINGS: _____
