

Elaborative Detail

In narrative writing, an entertaining beginning is often followed by an elaborative detail segment. In order to write effectively the author must first choose an element to describe. We emphasize to students that it should be central to the story in some way such as an important character or object. Often times, young authors might describe the setting in which the character finds himself or herself.

Through this element, students are learning not only to identify where to focus the elaboration but also the power of *specific* rather than *general details*. Words such as nice, pretty, fun, and awesome create only very general impressions. Instead, they are taught to use their five senses and to ask specific, detail generating questions as they write.

Some specific questions might include: What color is it? What kind of teeth/hair/eyes does it have? What is it wearing? How big/small is it? What does it taste like? Does it remind you of anything? How does it smell? What sound does it make? Notice that these questions are specific, not yes or no questions. In addition, students learn to use *sentence variety* as they incorporate specific details into their writing. Instead of I saw... I saw...I saw... we use sentence starters such as: Looking closer I noticed... My eyes opened wide when I saw...

Read the student samples below to see some great examples of elaborative detail segments! As reflected in the narrative writing rubric, these samples skillfully stop the action and provide a creative description including sensory details to describe a character, setting or object. You will see that the writer's words help the story come to life!

“As I traveled up the hill, I heard a loud clicking sound and all of the people on the ground began to look like little ants. Looking over the park, all the other rides didn’t look that bad anymore. My heart was pounding a mile a minute. I was holding on so tightly my knuckles turned white. When we reached the top of the mountain, I glared out into the parking lot, all of the cars looked like they little toy cars you can buy at the store. The then clocking noise came to a stop. Oh my gosh, we are going down!”

“ After I had applied the smooth, white sun lotion to my skin, my mother finally agreed to let me go swimming! I quickly dashed into the water, realizing that this was a horrible idea! I had been swallowed in an endless blue oasis teeming with life, but this was not the first thing I noticed. As soon as my skin collided with the water, tiny goosebumps appeared and my skin tingled! The water was very close to FREEZING! I had no idea how this could be refreshing to anyone! While my body adjusted to the harsh temperatures of my surroundings, I was able to recover my eyesight, I began to make out a tiny bunch of colorful organisms swaying with the tide. Fish and marine life appeared and scurried everywhere I looked! Fish in the shallow waters were swinging about, trying to combat and cop with the overpowering waves. I kicked furiously off of the shore into deeper water. Coral of all different sizes and shapes were scattered randomly, with octopi and eels lurking in their shadows, waiting for some curious fish to accidentally wander into its mouth. I shivered.