

Lesson Plan – *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*

Going Beyond Adjectives: Using *Tom Sawyer* for Descriptive Writing

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Suggested Grade Level: Intermediate (4th grade enrichment/gifted)

Time Frame: Two 60 minute sessions with homework assigned

Objectives:

- Students will correctly use the five parts of a letter to write a friendly letter. (W3-E)
- Students will determine and state the intended audience and purpose for their friendly letter. (W3-E)
- Students will use a graphic organizer such as a 2-column chart, web, or describing wheel. (W1A)
- Students will write one or more paragraphs within their letter that describes or explains a familiar object, event or experience. (W3-C)
- Students will use and recognize more exact verbs in writing a description with at least 3 precise verbs underlined in their writing. (W2-D)

Show-Me Missouri Standards

CA1 speaking and writing standard English (including grammar, usage, punctuation, spelling, capitalization)

CA4 writing formally (such as reports, narratives, essays) and informally (such as outlines, notes)

Missouri 4th Grade GLE's (Grade Level Expectations)

W1-A Follow a writing process to independently use a simple **graphic organizer** in pre-writing

W3-C Write expository (exposition/expository writing) and persuasive (persuasive writing/argument) paragraphs with three or more supporting details

W3-D Use parts of speech correctly in written text including verbs that agree with compound subject

W3-E Write **informational reports, diary/journal entries, organized friendly letters, thank you letters**, and invitations in a format appropriate to an intended audience and purpose

Assessment/Evaluation:

Students will write a friendly letter to an appropriate recipient for their subject matter correctly using the five parts of a letter. The body of the letter will include a description that describes or explains a familiar object, event or experience in their lives.

Language/Vocabulary:

Friendly letter – A letter written to a friend or family member. The five parts are the heading, the greeting, the body, the closing, and the signature.

Description: Writing that describes a person, a place, a feeling, or an idea. Descriptive writing is intended to allow a reader to gain a mental picture of the person, place, or feeling being described. This description could often evoke an intended emotional response: a dark, spooky graveyard may evoke fear, and a peaceful, sunny meadow may evoke calmness. The vocabulary of the writer uses language that is active and fresh.

Integrated Curriculum:

In order for this project to be tied to the 4th grade Social Studies curriculum, famous Missourians could be chosen as recipients of the students' letters. An example may be that a student wants to describe a native plant or animal and they choose to send their letter to Meriwether Lewis or William Clark for use on their journey. Or, students could write letters to living Missourians (e.g., Representative Rachel Bringer) that could be sent to the living person.

Background Information:

Tom Sawyer was written about an ornery boy's life in a small river town. Twain captures the essence of small-town life perfectly using the beliefs, dialects and syntax of boys from that era. His descriptions of events, settings, and artifacts are priceless.

Students should have had instruction on friendly letters, adjectives, similes, metaphors, and the use of graphic organizers such as webs.

Materials:

- Teacher copy of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, the Authoritative Text, by Mark Twain (University of CA Press, 1980), with descriptive passages tagged
- paper
- pencils
- chart paper
- markers

Technology Support: Students may use a word processor to help them easily identify synonyms for adjectives they choose to use.

Related Twain Quotes/Other Readings:

Quotes by Mark Twain (www.twainquotes.com)

- As to the Adjective: When in doubt, strike it out.
- *Pudd'nhead Wilson*
- When you catch an adjective, kill it. No, I don't mean utterly, but kill most of them--then the rest will be valuable. They weaken when they are close together. They give strength when they are wide apart. An adjective habit, or a wordy, diffuse, flowery habit, once fastened upon a person, is as hard to get rid of as any other vice.
- *Letter to D. W. Bowser, 3/20/1880.*
- The difference between the almost right word & the right word is really a large matter--it's the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning.
- *Letter to George Bainton, 10/15/1888*

Scenes from other Mark Twain works that demonstrate descriptive writing:

Sunrise on the Mississippi scene from *Life on the Mississippi*, Chapter 30

Sunset on the Mississippi scene from *Life on the Mississippi*, Chapter 9

Volcano description found at: <http://www.twainquotes.com/18661116u.html>

Lesson Plan Format –

A. Introduction:

Teacher will use attention grabber activity to hook students, as outlined below, while introducing the general idea of the book *Tom Sawyer*.

B. Lesson:

Students will listen and/or follow along as teacher reads descriptive passages from *Tom Sawyer*. They will brainstorm adjectives, use verbs to portray mood, and utilize other methods to help their reader “see” the scene they are painting with words.

C. Closure: Students will write a friendly letter (in correct form) describing an event, scene, or object to a person of their choice. Their audience must have a connection to their description.

Scheduled Use of Time:

Time	Teacher Activity/Questions to be asked	Student Activity
Day 1: 15 min.	Hook: Teacher should come to front of classroom while swinging a rubber rat on a string above his/her head. Allow students to ask questions to determine how the rat will be used. Teacher should provide short background of <i>Tom Sawyer</i> and read the whitewashing scene on page 15. Teacher explains that the class will be using excerpts from <i>Tom Sawyer</i> to give examples of good descriptions provided by Mark Twain to help them write better descriptions.	Listen and respond
Day 1: 15 min.	Ask students to brainstorm a list of words that would describe a dead rat (color, size, shape, etc). The teacher will record responses on chart paper.	Contribute words to list.
Day 1 30 min.	<p><u>Input/Modeling:</u> Read aloud passages from <i>Tom Sawyer</i> demonstrating Twain’s expertise with descriptive writing. Especially point out how Twain portrays the feeling/mood of the character or event being described. Examples: Chapter 14 – Tom, the pirate awakes before the others and describes the animals, birds, and bugs; Chapter 16 - Description of the storm; p. 127 3rd paragraph - short description of boys as they wake from sleeping in the sun. Students can close eyes to picture the scene and/or sketch the image that comes to their mind’s eye.</p> <p><u>Sample Questions:</u> How did Twain paint a picture using more than adjectives? How does this passage make you feel? What moods do you feel? What is your favorite phrase from the passage that makes you “see” the scene?</p> <p><u>Assignment:</u> Find an object that is closely related to the student and a person who is connected with the student and the object (Example: stuffed bear given to child by Grandma or a beloved pet and a veterinarian who takes care of it.)</p>	Listen and respond Think of an object and a person who is connected in some way to that object.
Day 2 20 min.	<p><u>Guided Practice:</u> Teacher will revisit the brainstorming activity from the introduction.</p> <p><u>Sample Questions:</u> Did we describe the swinging rat in Twain form? How can we make our description better? How can we use verbs to portray the descriptive qualities</p> <p><u>Procedure:</u> The class will choose one sensory aspect to concentrate on in order to describe the rat and write in</p>	Listen, respond, contribute to partner or group descriptions.

	<p>“Twainian Form” either in pairs or as a whole group activity.</p> <p>Example sentence: The lifeless rat swung high above my head. It was full of microscopic pests and minuscule microorganisms causing my skin to crawl like the effect of fingernails down a chalk- board.</p>	
<p>Day 2 40 min in class and time at home for assignm ent as needed</p>	<p>Closure: Assign students to write a letter to an individual of choice with the following prompt: You have just spent a week with (person of choice) and you and he/she have found you have a common interest in (your object or event). Unfortunately, your friend has been hit in the head and has lost all memory of the week you shared. Write a letter to this person to describe the object or event you have in common. Describe the object in great detail so that your reader can remember and enjoy each detail You should use a graphic organizer and write the letter making sure to include all five parts of a friendly letter.</p>	<p>Respond in written form to a prompt provided by the teacher. Final products will be a graphic organizer and a friendly letter.</p>
<p>Day 3 30 min</p>	<p>Instruct students to share letters with the class by reading them aloud and posting them on the bulletin board with an addressed envelope. Bulletin board heading could be: Painting the Town with Words and Descriptions. Teacher will score letters using the scoring guide below.</p>	<p>Read letter to the class and address envelope</p>

Strategies/accommodations to support students with exceptionalities:

Play the “Instead Of Game” to reinforce word choice with lower ability students. See directions at: http://www.education.com/activity/article/instead_of_word_game_fourth/

Adjective PowerPoint for students who need reinforcement with the concept of adjectives
<http://www.myenglishlessons.net/powerpoints/adjectives.pdf>

For gifted students: Assign students to read a scene from another Twain work as listed in the related Twain writings above and write their own version of the description.

Possible Follow-up Activities:

Share letters with the person for whom they were written.

Scoring Guide for Descriptive Writing in a Letter Format

Descriptive Writing Criteria	4 points	3 points	2 points	1 point
Letter format	Letter uses all 5 parts of a letter correctly	Letter has all 5 parts but some are incorrectly used.	Letter is missing a few parts and/or has many errors in format.	Letter has many errors in format and is unrecognizable as a letter.
Graphic Organizer	A relevant graphic organizer is included and filled out	A graphic organizer is included but may be hard to understand.	A graphic organizer is included but has no relevance to the project.	No graphic organizer.
Use of descriptive language and details	Words are used to help the reader see, hear, and feel what is described.	Stronger words could have been chosen to help the reader see what is being described.	Better words are needed to help the reader see what is being described in many parts of the description.	Descriptions are vague and uninteresting.
Grammar, Punctuation, and spelling	No errors that distract the reader from the content.	A few errors that distract the reader from the content.	Many errors that distract the reader from the content.	So many errors that the content is not comprehensible.