



Brushstrokes

Communication: Using Descriptive Language



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Grade Level	7th – 12th Grade	Time Frame	2-3 class period(s)
Subject	English/Language Arts	Duration	90 minutes

Essential Question

How do people communicate with one another? How does the type of communication we engage in affect our message? What sensory details and descriptions are present in our world?

Summary

In this lesson, students will listen to a song while completing a painting activity. Students will collaborate to paint a list of descriptive words on their canvases based on the song. Considering the song lyrics as poetry, students will analyze the song, focusing on descriptive language and sensory details. Students will then create their own poems modeled after the song lyrics. Throughout this lesson, students will focus on various modes of communication and how different media affect understanding and interpretation. While this lesson is currently aligned only to 8th grade standards, it would be appropriate to teach in grades 6th through 11th, adjusting standards as needed.

Snapshot

Engage

Students write about different modes of communication, paint in response to a song, and then rotate to other paintings, listing descriptive words that align with with each one.

Explore

Students edit and revise the set of descriptive words for their own paintings and contribute to a whole-class set of words related to the song and paintings.

Explain

Students analyze song lyrics as poetry, looking for figurative language, sensory details, and descriptive word choice.

Extend

Students create original poems modeled after song lyrics.

Evaluate

Students revisit the idea of varied communication and complete an Exit Ticket that focuses on what and how they learned. Students' paintings, analyses, and original poems are all options for assessment.

Standards

Oklahoma Academic Standards for English Language Arts (Grade 8)

8.3.R.7: Students will make connections (e.g., thematic links, literary analysis) between and across multiple texts and provide textual evidence to support their inferences.

8.7.R.1: Students will determine the intended purposes of techniques used for rhetorical effects in written, oral, visual, digital, non-verbal, and interactive texts to generate and answer interpretive and applied questions to create new understandings.

8.7.R.2: Students will analyze the impact of selected media and formats on meaning.

Attachments

- [Lesson Slides—Brushstrokes.pptx](#)
- [Tweet Up—Brushstrokes - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Tweet Up—Brushstrokes - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Tweet Up—Brushstrokes.docx](#)
- [Tweet Up—Brushstrokes.pdf](#)
- [What a Wonderful World Lyrics—Brushstrokes - Spanish.docx](#)
- [What a Wonderful World Lyrics—Brushstrokes - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [What a Wonderful World Lyrics—Brushstrokes.docx](#)
- [What a Wonderful World Lyrics—Brushstrokes.pdf](#)

Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- Copy paper, poster board, or white butcher paper
- Painting supplies: watercolor paints, paintbrushes, water jars, paper towels, etc.
- Writing materials: pens, pencils, and paper
- What a Wonderful World Lyrics (attached, one per student)
- Tweet Up (attached, one per student)
- Student devices with Internet access (optional)

Engage

Display **slide 3**. As an introduction, ask students to engage in a [Quick Write](#) about ways in which they communicate with others on a regular basis. Ask them to write about specific types and examples of communication. After a few minutes, ask students to share with an [Elbow Partner](#), and then ask for volunteers to share with the whole class.

Next, have students listen to a song. The song we've chosen for this lesson is "What a Wonderful World," written by Bob Thiele and George David Weiss and performed by Louis Armstrong.

Embedded video

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=A3yCcXgbKrE>

Teacher's Note: Song Choice

Feel free to choose another song if you prefer, but be aware that it will alter some activities later in the lesson.

Display **slide 4**. For the first round, play the [What a Wonderful World](#) video and ask students to listen to the song and read the lyrics without writing or doing anything. This enables students to use their listening skills as they focus on just the music and words, without being responsible for any sort of product.

Display **slide 5** and get students set up with painting supplies. Play the song again and ask students to paint as they listen. They can paint their mood, reaction, thoughts, etc. The activity should be open-ended. Encourage students to express themselves freely and try a variety of colors, brushstrokes, etc. Repeat the song a few more times until students have had sufficient time to complete their paintings.

Display **slide 6**. Ask students to take out a sheet of notebook paper and lay it down next to their painting. Then ask them to take a pen or pencil and rotate to another student's painting for a [Gallery Walk](#). As students view their classmate's painting, they should add one or two descriptive words to that painting's notebook paper. Students should think beyond the surface to describe the paintings. For example, naming colors and shapes is not as significant as using words such as swift, bold, connected, whole, etc. Allow students time to rotate to several paintings and continue adding to the descriptive word list next to each one.

Teacher's Note: Wet Paint

Remind students to be careful as they rotate, as the paintings might not be dry yet!

Explore

Display **slide 7** and have students return to their own paintings. Give students a few minutes to view the lists of words that their peers compiled to describe their paintings and make any revisions that they deem necessary. Encourage students to add at least three of their own descriptive words. Students can also delete words that they don't see as relevant to their paintings. When they are finished, they should have a detailed list of words that accurately describe their individual paintings that they can refer to as they write an original poem later in the lesson.

Optional Extension

Ask students to take their lists and rearrange the words from least to most descriptive without deleting any. This process could generate substantive conversation around the connotation of certain words and provide a way to practice evaluating word choice based on an author's purpose.

Display **slide 8**. Using a version of the [Strike Out!](#) instructional strategy, ask students to each identify the top three most descriptive words related to their paintings. After they've decided, ask them to come to the board and write the words or add them to the blank chart on **slide 9**. Once all students have had a chance to add their words, encourage students to analyze the list and work as a class to "strike out" words that they find less descriptive or not relevant. The end result should be a class list of descriptive words that students can refer to in addition to their individual lists as they write their poems.

Optional Tech Integration

Consider having students submit their words using the word cloud feature in [Mentimeter](#) or via another Word Cloud application.

Explain

Display **slide 10**. Have students revisit their Quick Writes to edit and revise their writing. As they revise, encourage students to consider the role of non-verbal communication and elaborate on the importance and relevance of the non-verbal communication types they've been exploring in this lesson—written words and pictures (referring to their experiences in the previous activities). Give students five minutes to review their original Quick Writes to edit as they see fit.

Display **slide 11**. Use the [Think-Pair-Share](#) strategy to structure a discussion with students about how their writing and viewpoints changed from the beginning of the lesson to its completion:

1. Give students a few minutes to think about the discussion question and formulate their own response.
2. Pair students up to discuss their individual responses and formulate a shared response. (Now is a great time to use a creative pairing strategy, or you can allow students to choose their own partner.)
3. Ask each pair to share out with the class

Display **slide 12** and pass out the attached **What a Wonderful World lyrics** to each student. Now that they've considered how people communicate, have students analyze the lyrics using a modified [CUS and Discuss](#) approach. Students should collaborate with their partners from the previous activity to locate instances of figurative language, sensory details, and descriptive word choice and discuss how each is used to enhance the communication style of the song lyrics. Ask students to annotate as follows:

- C = circling the imagery (sensory details)
- U = underlining the figurative language and labeling the type in the left margin
- S = starring the descriptive words.

Teacher's Note: Descriptive Words

Concerning descriptive word choice, ask students to consider how words from the song relate to their painting/descriptive word choice activity from the previous section. Students should make a connection between the painting activity, the descriptive words, and the song itself. Students should discover that nonverbal communication often relies on specific word choice and vocabulary, especially in a written work or a reaction to piece of art.

Once students have completed their annotations, engage students in a whole-class discussion and ask for volunteers to share out what they noticed in the poem, especially in terms of figurative language, sensory details, and descriptive word choice. Mark students' observations and annotations on a class copy of the song lyrics.

Teacher's Note: Modeling

Annotating the lyrics as part of the whole-class discussion can serve as an excellent model for students who might struggle with this particular skill.

Possible Student Responses

Students should notice vivid sensory details, especially visual details: "trees of green," "red roses," "skies of blue," "clouds of white," "colors of the rainbow," "faces of people," etc. The sense of sound is also present in the phrase "I hear babies crying."

Extend

Display **slide 13**. Instruct each student to create a poem based on their paintings.

Display **slide 14** to review the definitions of figurative language, sensory details, and descriptive words. Students should focus on these elements as they write with the goal of making their paintings come to life.

Optional Extension

Ask students to revisit their original lists of descriptive words from the Explore activity. Students may take their original lists and arrange them a second time according to another choice poets have to make (economy of language, for instance). Students may arrange the words from most economic (words that carry the most weight or say the most) to least economic (words that do not do a lot of work). Then they can compare the lists. Students might discover there are words that say a lot but are not necessarily descriptive, or vice versa. As authors, students may have to make compromises to emphasize economy. Ask students to explain how they would make those decisions.

Return to **slide 13** to review the rest of the guidelines for the poem. Ask students to get out their individual lists of descriptive words and their lyrics to "What a Wonderful World," as they'll be referring to these as they write. Students should incorporate descriptive words from their own lists and from the class list, and they should model their poems after the lyrics to "What a Wonderful World" both in terms of structure and theme. Students' poems should use the following structure:

1. Five stanzas
2. Four lines per stanza (except for stanza 5, which has two lines)
3. (Optional) A rhyme scheme similar to "What a Wonderful World" (The song's primary rhyme scheme is aabc, but stanza 3 is aabb if students want to deviate.)

After students have a clear understanding of the requirements, give them time to write. Display the class list of descriptive words for them to refer to during this time.

Teacher's Note: Student Ownership

Allow students some autonomy and ownership of their poems. While they are modeling their poems after the song's structure and theme, they should take them in a direction that works best for them. The parameters for this assignment should be flexible. Therefore, adherence to the rhyme scheme should be optional based on the needs of individual students.

Teacher's Note: Pair Writing

Give students the option of creating a poem on their own or working with a partner. Some students will thrive in a pair setting and prefer that to working individually.

Evaluate

Display **slide 15**. As an [Exit Ticket](#), students reflect on what they've learned about nonverbal communication through their experiences in this lesson.

Have students get out a sheet of paper, or pass out copies of the Tweet Up template. Structuring this reflection using the [Tweet Up](#) instructional strategy focuses students' thinking and requires them to use precise and concise language. Students' responses should address the lesson's essential questions (repeated on **slide 16**) and be limited to 140 characters or less (including spaces and punctuation). Responses should also include a hashtag that sums up the main idea or key point from what students learned. Encourage students to refer to their Quick Writes and other products from this lesson to assist them with their reflections.

When they have finished writing, ask students to share their responses with a small group or with the whole class.

Optional Tech Integration

If students have access to Twitter or another digital platform, consider having them compose and share their tweets online.

In addition to the Exit Ticket, students' paintings, descriptive word lists, song lyric annotations, and original poems are all potential options for assessment. Consider giving students a choice of which piece from this lesson they are most proud or certain of and have them turn that in for a grade.

Resources

- K20 Center. (n.d.). Bell Ringers and Exit Tickets. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/d9908066f654727934df7bf4f505d6f2>
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- K20 Center. (n.d.). Gallery Walk/Carousel. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/d9908066f654727934df7bf4f505a54d>
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- K20 Center. (n.d.). Mentimeter. Tech Tools. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/645>
- Lyrics. (n.d.). What a wonderful world lyrics. <https://www.metrolyrics.com/what-a-wonderful-world-lyrics-louis-armstrong.html>
- Piquant. (2010, November 25). Louis Armstrong - What a wonderful world (lyrics) [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A3yCcXgbKrE>