

Descriptions & Vocabulary Choice

Activity

Read through the descriptions on this sheet. Highlight, annotate or underline the following. NOTE: some words may fit into more than one category.

- Abstract language (concept – can't be seen/touched)
- Concrete language (physical object – can be seen/touched)
- Figurative language (e.g. simile, metaphor, personification)
- Sensory language (describes the smell, sound, feel, taste)
- Character description (describes personality/behaviour rather than looks)
- Strong descriptive verbs (e.g. sprinted, bounce, slouching)
- Strong descriptive adjectives (e.g. jagged, scratchy, ripe)

A green hunting cap squeezed the top of the fleshy balloon of a head. The green earflaps, full of large ears and uncut hair and the fine bristles that grew in the ears themselves, stuck out on either side like turn signals indicating two directions at once. Full, pursed lips protruded beneath the bushy black moustache and, at their corners, sank into little folds filled with disapproval and potato chip crumbs. In the shadow under the green visor of the cap, Ignatius J. Reilly's supercilious blue and yellow eyes looked down upon the other people waiting... studying the crowd for signs of bad taste in dress.

- *John Kennedy Toole, A Confederacy of Dunces*

She has bright, dark eyes and satiny brown skin and stands tilted up on her toes with arms slightly extended to her sides, as if ready to take wing at the slightest sound.

- *Suzanne Collins, The Hunger Games*

It was a town of red brick, or of brick that would have been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it; but as matters stood, it was a town of unnatural red and black. It had a black canal in it, and a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye, and vast piles of building full of windows where there was a rattling and a trembling all day long, and where the piston of the steam-engine worked monotonously up and down, like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness.

- *Charles Dickens, Hard Times*

Lord Asriel was a tall man with powerful shoulders, a fierce dark face, and eyes that seemed to flash and glitter with savage laughter. It was a face to be dominated by, or to fight: never a face to patronize or pity. All his movements were large and perfectly balanced, like those of a wild animal, and when he appeared in a room like this, he seemed a wild animal held in a cage too small for it.

- *Philip Pullman, The Golden Compass*

Mama BekwaTataba stood watching us—a little jet-black woman. Her elbows stuck out like wings, and she carried a huge white enamelled tub on her head, which somewhat miraculously held steady while she moved in quick jerks to the right and left.

- *Barbara Kingsolver, The Poisonwood Bible*

He was a compact, clear-cut man, with precise features, a lot of very soft black hair, and thoughtful dark brown eyes. He had a look of wariness, which could change when he felt relaxed or happy – not often in these difficult days – into a smile of amused friendliness and pleasure.

- *A.S. Byatt, Possession*

His heart was like a sensitive plant, that opens for a moment in the sunshine, but curls up and shrinks into itself at the slightest touch of the finger, or the lightest breath of wind.

- *Anne Bronte, The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*

Peter was a gentle, red-haired bear of a man. Standing at six-four in his socks, he moved everywhere with a slight and nautical sway, but even though he was broad across the chest there was something centred and reassuring about him, like an old ship's mast cut from a single timber.

- *Graham Joyce, Some Kind of Fairy Tale*

A reef of clouds and lightning raced across the skies from the sea. My hands were shaking, and my mind wasn't far behind. I looked up and saw the storm spilling like rivers of blackened blood from the clouds, blotting out the moon and covering the roofs of the city in darkness. I tried to speed up, but I was consumed with fear and walked with leaden feet, chased by the rain. I took refuge under the canopy of a newspaper kiosk, trying to collect my thoughts and decide what to do next. A clap of thunder roared close by, and I felt the ground shake under my feet. On the flooding pavements the streetlamps blinked, then went out like candles snuffed by the wind. There wasn't a soul to be seen in the streets, and the darkness of the blackout spread with a fetid smell that rose from the sewers. The night became opaque, impenetrable, as the rain folded the city in its shroud.

- *Carlos Ruiz Zafón, Shadow of the Wind*

His long, long hair wafted around him like black smoke, its tendrils curling and moving of their own volition. His cloak — or perhaps that was his hair too — shifted as if in an unfelt wind.

- *N.K. Jemisin, The Hundred Thousand Kingdoms*

His hand was over his eyes. He looked like a failed soldier. Dirt seemed so worked into him that the lines of his face were like writing.

- *China Miéville, This Census-Taker*