Common Core Standards Addressed:

W.3.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

RL.3.1 Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

RL.3.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, distinguishing literal from nonliteral language.

Learning Goals:

Students will...

Understand that descriptive writing engages readers and paints a clear picture of a story.

Know

Descriptive language: shows rather than tells, and creates a vivid visual for the reader.

Simile: compares two objects using the words “like” or “as”

Do

Describe an object using descriptive language and similes.

Materials Needed:

Leven Thumps and the Gateway to Foo by Obert Skye

Paper

Pencils

Procedures:

• Read the first sentence of Leven Thumps aloud to the students.
  - “It was forty degrees above warm”
  - Right away, how does the author hook the readers with this sentence?
  - Why do you think he chose to introduce the story this way, instead of saying “It was a hot day”?

• Tell students that Obert Skye does a really good job of painting a picture of a scene with his words. In this paragraph, he shows us exactly what it would feel like to be in this story.

• Continue reading the rest of the paragraph.

• Explain that good writers show, not tell.
  - Instead of simply telling us that it was hot outside, Skye shows us what it felt, looked, and even smelled like. He paints us a clear picture of the setting.
  - Did you notice any good descriptive words in this paragraph? Some examples are: sizzled, droop, majestically, & multicolored.

• Reread this sentence – “The day felt like a windowless kitchen where the oven had been left on high for an entire afternoon.”
  - What kind of sentence is this? (Simile)
  - Remind students that similes compare objects using “like” or “as”.
  - How is this better than saying “It is hot”?
  - One way to use descriptive writing is through the use of similes.
  - You could also talk about the personification or metaphors found in this passage with more advanced students.
Next, tell the students you are going to describe an object and see if they can guess what it is (this example is a pencil, but you can use whatever object you like).

- Start with words that aren’t very vivid. “It is yellow, small, and does not bend.”
- The students are probably not going to be able to guess the word using this description.
- Explain to the students that when we write, we want to use really descriptive and detailed words to help readers get a clear idea of what we’re talking about.
- It was hard to guess what the object was because the description was not very vivid.
- Have students try to guess the object again, this time using good descriptive language.
  “It is narrow and sleek, shiny and yellow as the sun. On one end, it has a sharp lead tip, pointed like a shark tooth. The other side is a thick pink rubber.”
- Discuss with students why this description made it easier to guess the object.
- Why is it important that we use strong descriptions in our writing?

Have the students practice this skill on their own. Each student should first pick one object in the room without letting anyone know what it is.

In the first round, students have one minute to write about their object using as many descriptive words as they can. They should not actually mention the name of the object they are describing.

- In the second round, students are still focusing on describing the same object as before. This time, they have one minute to describe the object using as many similes as they can.
- They should then pair up with a partner and try to guess each other’s words based on the descriptions they wrote.