

WISH YOU WERE HERE!

Postcards
from future
Queensland

LESSON 1: One week after lockdown



You've probably been told before about using the senses in your writing, but what does that actually mean in practice? Should you describe everything five times: how does it look, sound, smell, taste, and feel under your fingers? No, it's got to be more organic than that. Let's drill down a bit into some of the underused techniques to do with three of the senses.

First, the often-overlooked sense of smell. It's good to include a description of smell because it can be such an unexpected detail and that's really engaging. There are delicate smells, like roses. Smells we associate with events, like sausage sizzles. And smells that gross us out, like sweaty gym clothes left in the car parked in the sun over a long weekend (or so I'm told). Smell is also great for evoking feelings and memories: the brain's smell centre, the olfactory bulb, is closely connected to the emotional hub of the brain. Next time you're writing a description, think about what smells you might include to fire up the reader's imagination.

Second, use the sense of sight wisely. If you just describe what you see—say, a boat on the water—it doesn't actually tell us much. It's abstract. When you use the sense of sight, think about using it differently. Think about colour, especially variants in colour. Light and shade. Show us a boat on still dark waters, and a fisherman lighting a cigarette: a brief blaze in the dark. Think about movement. Or the scale between small things and large things. A huge ocean wave tossing a tiny red boat. These create much more dynamic visual images in the reader's mind.

Finally, sound. Try this experiment right now. Close your eyes and listen. What can you hear? Sure you can hear me talking, but what else? What's the next layer down? ...The fridge humming? The fan beating? And then the next layer? ...A bird in the tree next door? A builder hammering somewhere in the distance? Layering sounds like this really brings the reader into the moment with you, and makes the world you are creating seem 3D and real.

Visit hass.uq.edu.au/wish-you-were-here to send us your postcard!

We can't wait to read your dreams and visions, and stories of another world.



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