

Mastering Descriptive Language: The Art of Adjectives

Learning objective: To use a range of expanded noun phrases and precise adjectives to add detail, interest and atmosphere to descriptive writing.

Use this scaffold to build your own descriptive piece. Remember that a great adjective should paint a picture in the reader's mind. Use Max's 'maths of language' approach: choose your nouns carefully, then multiply their impact with specific, vivid adjectives.

As the sun began its slow descent behind the jagged horizon, Nova the owl adjusted her position on the gnarled oak branch, her golden eyes scanning the darkening landscape below.

Word bank: furthermore · consequently · in addition to · breathtakingly · vast · intricate · vibrant · ominous · ethereal · scintillating · shimmering · meticulous

1. Setting the Scene: Describe the environment Nova is observing. Use at least two expanded noun phrases to create an atmosphere. Start with: The forest floor was... (3 marks)

2. Character Focus: Describe Nova's appearance or mood. Explain why you chose these specific adjectives to show her personality. Start with: Perched silently, Nova appeared... (3 marks)

3. Sensory Details: What can Nova hear or smell? Use adjectives that appeal to the senses. Start with: A sudden, crisp breeze carried the scent of... (3 marks)

4. Justify your answer: Why is it more effective to use 'an ancient, weather-beaten trunk' rather than just 'an old tree'? Compare the impact on the reader. (4 marks)

5. What might happen if: Imagine the scene suddenly changes to a storm. How would your adjectives change to reflect a shift in mood? Explain your choices. (4 marks)

6. Creative Extension: Write a concluding sentence that leaves the reader feeling a sense of mystery or wonder, using at least one powerful adjective and one connective. (3 marks)

Extension challenge: Challenge: Choose one paragraph you have written. Can you replace every adjective with a more sophisticated, Tier 2 or Tier 3 synonym? Justify why your new choice is more precise than the original.