



Language Arts Lesson 6
Writing Strategies: Organization and Focus (Grades 9-12)

Instruction 6-7
Natural, Fresh, and Vivid Language Usage

The Hurricane

*When the hurricane unfolds
Its fierce accordion of winds,
On the tip of its toes,
Agile dancer, it sweeps whirling
Over the carpeted surface of the sea
With the scattered branches of the palm.*

-Luis Palés Matos
(translated from the Spanish by Alida Malkus)

Read the poem “The Hurricane.” In this poem, the writer compares the hurricane to an agile dancer on the tips of its toes. Can you picture the hurricane dancing? Notice how the image creates a fresh picture in your mind.

The writer of this poem used figurative language. When he compares the hurricane to a dancer, he’s giving it characteristics of a human being. This is a literary device called **personification**. You can use personification and other literary devices to make your writing come alive.

Another literary device that this poet uses is **metaphor**. You may recall that a metaphor is a comparison between two unlike things or ideas. A metaphor does not use the words “like” or “as.” Can you spot the metaphor in the poem above?

In the second line of the poem, the writer compares the hurricane winds to an accordion. This makes the reader picture the winds contracting and expanding like the squeezebox of an accordion. Perhaps the winds even make wheezing or moaning sounds like an accordion would make.

When you appeal to the reader’s senses with your writing, you are using **imagery**. If you can make your readers feel, smell, taste, hear, or see something in their minds, your writing becomes alive through your readers.

Now read this poem:

Child on Top of a Greenhouse

The wind billowing out the seat of my britches
My feet crackling splinters of glass and dried putty
The half-grown chrysanthemums staring up like accusers,
Up through the streaked glass, flashing with sunlight,



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A few white clouds all rushing eastward,
A line of elms plunging and tossing like horses,
And everyone, everyone pointing up and shouting!
Theodore Roethke

What kind of picture does this poem create in your mind? Can you feel the wind blowing your clothes? Can you see the clouds rushing across the sky?

The writer is using imagery. He's creating a picture with words.

As a writer, you have a challenge of trying to find new and fresh ways to describe things. You should avoid **clichés**—overused expressions. Here are a few clichés that you'll probably recognize:

the blind leading the blind
as white as snow
ate like a pig
scream bloody murder

Instead of enriching your writing, clichés make your writing flat. People are so used to clichés that they hardly even see them. Try using a new and fresh expression, and you'll find it really gives your writing more power!

Remember that whatever you write, you are “showing your colors.” Your attitude towards the subject, the audience, and yourself is called **tone**. Tone is the emotional coloring, or emotional meaning, of a work. Your tone could be playful, formal, intimate, angry, serious, ironic, outraged, baffled, tender, serene, depressed, and so forth.

You can use literary devices like personification, similes, and metaphors to make your reader feel, taste, see, hear, or smell the scene you're creating. Be conscious of your tone, and make sure that your words reflect the message you're trying to send. And remember—avoid clichés. Try to be original! Your writing will be stronger and more interesting for your efforts.