Visualize to Draft a Personal Narrative

1. Focus

Explain Visualizing

Ask: Have you ever gone on a vacation and sent a postcard to a friend? You probably wanted to describe the coolest things you did and saw on your trip. Before you started writing, you probably pictured the things you’d seen and done in your mind. We call that visualizing. When I write a personal narrative, I want the reader to see and feel what I did. So I visualize before starting to write—almost as if I’m watching a movie of my memories in my mind! Then I can just let go and write down my draft as I visualized it. Today we’re going to practice visualizing to help us draft our personal narratives.

Model Visualizing

Use the think-aloud below to model how a writer uses the strategy of visualizing information in order to help draft a personal narrative.

Sample think-aloud. Say: I am going to show you how the writer of “Mission Beach, San Diego” might have used visualizing before she wrote her personal narrative. I am going to think aloud as if I am the writer. I want my readers to see what I saw when I went snorkeling. But how do I start? I close my eyes and bring the scene back in my mind. Under the water, I see fish of all colors moving around me. I see several fish with bright, beautiful patterns and stripes. A little fish swims near me and touches my skin with its flipper. I visualize the rubbery feeling. If I share these images with my readers, they will understand what an amazing experience it was to go snorkeling at Mission Beach.

Now read aloud the text from “Mission Beach, San Diego.” You may wish to display the text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources.

Say: Listen as I read aloud the author’s actual personal narrative about snorkeling in the ocean.

Modeling Text

Say: This example contains many vivid descriptive details that help me visualize the scene in my mind. Not only does the writer help me see the fish—the dazzling colors, the stripes, the dots—she also helps me imagine what it was like...
to touch the fish. After visualizing, the writer was able to use sensory details to help create in words that picture she had visualized in her mind.

### 2. Rehearse

**Practice Visualizing Before Drafting**

Distribute BLM 5 and display it on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visualizing</th>
<th>Chocolate ice cream</th>
<th>A kitten</th>
<th>The sun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What I see</td>
<td>rich, dark brown color</td>
<td>tiny ball of gray fur</td>
<td>golden yellow ball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What I hear</td>
<td>clink of spoon against the dish</td>
<td>purring, like a little engine</td>
<td>birds chirping as sun rises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What I smell</td>
<td></td>
<td>lingering smell of fish on its breath</td>
<td>fresh spring air</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What I taste</td>
<td>cold, sweet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What I feel</td>
<td>tongue tingles</td>
<td>warmth, softness</td>
<td>warm rays on my skin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample Sensory Description Chart (BLM 5)

Ask students to work with a partner to visualize each object and add as many sensory details as they can to their charts. Students can write down adjectives, but they can also write down similes, metaphors, and phrases that create a picture for readers.

**Share and Discuss Visualizing**

Invite students to share their visualizations. Ask listeners to close their eyes as they listen to the descriptions and try to see the pictures in their mind. Invite them to share which images made the biggest impression on them and why.

### 3. Independent Writing and Conferring

**Say:** We just learned that writers use visualizing to help them draft. They watch a scene in their head like a movie. They remember the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches they experienced. Then they try to put all of that on paper.

Encourage students to visualize as they draft their personal narratives during independent writing time. During conferences, reinforce students’ use of this and other strategies using the prompts on your conferring flip chart.

### 4. Share

Bring students together. Invite two or three students to read aloud a section of their personal narrative in which visualizing the sensory details helped them create effective multisensory descriptions.

### Strategies to Support ELs

**Beginning**

Invite beginning ELs to imagine in their mind something they would like to write about. Then suggest they draw some of the images they imagined. Encourage them to describe their pictures using words or gestures. Record descriptive words on self-stick notes and place them on the pictures. Read aloud the descriptions with students.

**Intermediate**

Pair students with fluent English speakers to complete the visualization practice activity. Provide the following sentence frames to help ELs talk about their visualizations.

- I see ______.
- I feel ______.
- I taste ______.
- I smell ______.
- I hear ______.

**Advanced**

Pair students with fluent English speakers to complete the visualization practice activity.

**All Levels**

If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates: describe/describir; details/los detalles; imagine/imaginar; visualize/visualizar.