

# My Personal Oasis

**Genre:** Writing about a place

Five Features of Descriptive Writing

- Description
- Organization of ideas
- Writer's voice
- Language: Sentences and Vocabulary
- Mechanics: Spelling and Grammar

## A Personal Oasis

Most of us are very busy. With school and work, we have a lot to do, but we all need places to go in our worlds and in our minds where we can feel calm and comfortable. These places help us with the stress of a busy life.

An oasis is a place in a desert with water and trees. In other words, it's a pleasant place. Some of us have literal oases, places where we go to relax. Some of us have figurative oases, activities we do or thoughts we have to relax. We all need to escape sometimes. Sometimes we escape by playing a game or watching the TV show. Other times we escape by thinking of imaginary people places or events. Sometimes we have special places where we go to have time to ourselves. This lesson gives you an opportunity to imagine a special place, and then practice your writing skills by describing it.

## Getting started

To begin, visualize a real or imaginary place that could be your own personal oasis. What does it feel like? Where is it located? What do you hear and see there? How does this place make you feel? If it helps, draw a picture of the place.

## Reading

Read the poem "I have an Oasis" by Colin McNaughton. As you read, look for details, and think about how the oasis in the poem is similar or different from the one you imagined.

## **I Have an Oasis**

By Colin McNaughton

I have an oasis,  
It's up in the clouds,  
Away from the rush  
And the roar of the crowds,  
Away from the pushing  
And pulling and pain,  
Away from the sadness  
And anger and strain,  
Away from the envy  
And cheating and greed,  
Away from the pressure -  
What more could I need?  
I grow my geraniums  
And let us that's curled,  
In my little garden  
On top of the world.

## **Thinking**

After reading, complete the following questions.

1. Where is Colin's oasis?
2. What is something you will find in Colin's oasis?
3. What are three things you won't find in Colin's oasis?
4. Why do you think Colin has an oasis?
5. Put a checkmark next to the questions that Colin answers:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Where is this special place?
- \_\_\_\_\_ When or why does the writer go to this place?
- \_\_\_\_\_ What or who is in this place?
- \_\_\_\_\_ What or who is not in this place?
- \_\_\_\_\_ What does the writer do here?
- \_\_\_\_\_ How is the writer comforted in this place?
- \_\_\_\_\_ What sounds, sites, or sensations does the writer find here?
- \_\_\_\_\_ What does the writer think about here?

### **Writing Prompt**

Write about a personal oasis. A place that helps you relax and that you know well. It can be real, or it can be a place in your mind. Write about what you see and hear and feel in this place. Describe this place so that the reader can easily imagine being there and give the reader a sense of when you like to go there.

### **Planning**

Use the following questions to help your writing plan (you will recognize them from the thinking section). Extend and develop your ideas by adding examples, comparisons, and vivid descriptions of what you see, here, and feel. Remember to include “showing” language (using the 5 senses) so that the reader will have a true sense of what it looks like, feels like, sounds like, and perhaps smells like in your oasis. (I don’t think taste applies here!)

- Where is this special place?
- How did you create or discover this place?
- When or why do you go to this place?
- What or who is in this place?
- What or who is not in this place?
- What do you do here?
- How are you comforted in this place?
- What sounds, sights, or sensations do you find here?
- What do you think about here?

## Revising and Editing

After writing, review this checklist and make necessary changes.

- ☐ Did you present a place by using some of these descriptive strategies: specific details about what you see, here, or feel; images; anecdotes?
- ☐ Did you include specific description (facts, images, dialogue, actions, behavior, comparison)?
- ☐ Did you include what you think about and how you feel in your Oasis?
- ☐ Did you include why this is a personal Oasis?
- ☐ How about the ending? Did you close your piece?
- ☐ Did you vary your sentence types and use vivid and precise vocabulary?
- ☐ Check your punctuation. Did you use capital letters, commas, periods, and quotation marks where they belong?
- ☐ Review your grammar: do subjects and verbs agree? Check for other grammar trouble spots you want to correct.
- ☐ Did you title your essay to give the reader an idea of what to expect?

## Self-Assessment

Congratulations on completing this process. Look at the rubric and score yourself on this piece:

- ☐ 4 – Extending
- ☐ 3 – Proficient
- ☐ 2 – Developing
- ☐ 1 – Emerging

## **Rubric: A Personal Oasis**

Genre: Writing about a place

### **4 Extending**

- Description is vivid and well elaborated through a variety of descriptive strategies such as images, anecdotes, and illustrative details that enable the reader to clearly imagine the place.
- Beginning is engaging and description is presented in a clever or unusual way, conclusion ties elements of description together.
- Writing reflects author's thoughts and feelings through commentary, interior monologue, dialogue, description of thoughts or feelings, or by directly addressing the reader.
- Language is lively and expressive; sentences are varied; vocabulary is rich and precise.
- Writing shows mastery of mechanics, though there may be a few errors.

### **3 Proficient**

- Description is clear and elaborated; the reader has a complete picture of the place, so there may be more "telling" than "showing".
- There is a clear beginning, middle, and conclusion, and writing includes transitions from one part to another.
- Writing reflects author's thoughts and feelings directly or indirectly.
- Language is clear; some sentence variety; vocabulary is general rather than specific.
- Writing shows control of conventions; errors do not interfere with the meaning.

### **2 Developing**

- Description is underdeveloped and may not be clear; reader has questions.
- Place is introduced but writing moves too fast; conclusion may be abrupt or missing.
- Writing may not seem connected to writer through any sense of voice.
- Language is simple; sentence types are mostly the same or simple; vocabulary is limited.
- Writing shows limited control of convention; errors are distracting.

### **1 Emerging**

- Description is vague or incomplete, writing maybe only a list without elaboration.
- Introduction, middle, or conclusion may be unclear or missing; extremely brief.
- Writing does not show writer's personality or tell why places meaningful.
- Language may be general or vague, or there may be incomplete or run-on sentence is. Errors may make it difficult for reader to understand ideas.