

Descriptive writing

Assessment objectives

- AO5, AO6

How do I write an interesting and engaging description?

When you are writing with the purpose of describing, you should aim to create a highly visual image in your reader's mind. This image needs to be both logical and engaging.

In *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* there are a number of highly effective descriptions, both of places and of people. Think about:

- the descriptions of Mr Hyde himself
- the transformation of Hyde into Dr Jekyll
- the detailed descriptions of London at night
- the descriptions of Jekyll's laboratory.

These descriptions don't just paint a picture. They convey an atmosphere, too; one that is both dark and disturbing for the reader.

In your English Language Paper 1 examination, you may be given a picture to help you bring a description to life.



Gathering ideas

- 1 Look closely at the picture (right). Pay close attention to the order in which your eye takes in the details of the photograph. List all the details in the photograph in the order in which you see them.

Planning

In order to take your reader on a logical journey through the scene and to help them imagine it more clearly, it is helpful to develop a five-paragraph plan.

- 2 Select the five most vivid details you've observed in the photograph and place them in a logical order, from the most obvious to the most subtle. This will form the basis of your paragraph plan.
- 3 For each detail you've selected, write an opening **topic sentence** for the paragraph, to help you build and organise your piece of writing. For example:

Key term

topic sentence: a clear introductory sentence that indicates the place, person or specific aspect to be dealt with within that paragraph

Detail from the picture	Topic sentence
Paragraph 1: The white walls	The sun shone in on the white walls of the old university laboratory, once pristine, now paint peeling and fading with age.
Paragraph 2: The green mould on the ceiling and back wall	Water dripped remorselessly through the decrepit ceiling tiles, and new lifeforms, moss, mould and mildew grew lush and green down the once hygienic laboratory walls.
Paragraph 3:	