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Expository Writing 100

10 September 2014

Positive

While lounging on the balmy sand of the beach, I peer out across the crystal-clear water and watch the seagulls circle like hungry children hovering over the dinner table. As the gulls swoop down for their next meal, the anglers begin to gather because their catch is just below the flock. The angler's motors purr in the distance as they point their boats towards their goal. A boat whizzes across the lake as faint laughter arises from a distant inner tube. Leaves on the trees sway from the slight, yet refreshing, wind as it combs through my hair. The light breeze creates ripples across the water as the glistening sun dances across the surface of the water and warms my face as a wave of comfort washes over me. The natural beauty of my surroundings overwhelms me and allows my mind to escape to utter bliss.

Negative

Walking on the sandy beach gives me the sensation that I am walking on broken glass. Grainy sand between my toes grates like sandpaper scraping across my skin. I stare across the water. The slimy algae covering it sickens me as the intense sunlight glaring from its mirrored surface blinds me. Seagulls screech, their piercing squeals attacking my ears as the ugly birds dip into the filthy water. The anglers, knowing that the dipping seagulls signal plentiful prey to kill below the depths of the muddy water, gun their boats' rumbling motors and speed across the lake, muffling the obnoxious laughter of an inner tube rider who quiets as he dodges desperately to abandon their path. In the wake of the speeding angler, a strong gust of wind rushes through my hair, tangling it as blood-sucking mosquitos dive-bomb me. Sweat, forced by the humid, hot air, drips down my back and the hot sand sticks to my skin like glue. The atrocity of my surroundings makes me nauseous, and my heart sinks in despair.

Analysis

For several weeks in my Expository Writing 100 class, we have been talking about the subject of angle of vision. Through our discussions, I have observed that many people, especially politicians and advertisers, use angle of vision to persuade. To learn how such masters of “spin” show their readers and listeners a narrow angle of vision, we practiced using their propaganda techniques through a writing assignment. Our assignment that followed our readings and discussion about angle of vision was to write two paragraphs, one positive and one negative, describing a scene on the same day and at the same time. I chose to portray the lake in this assignment because I have always loved the lake’s natural beauty. Nevertheless, by showing instead of telling and by using figurative language, word connotations, sentence structure, and addition or omission of details, I was able to show the lake not only in a positive light but from a negative perspective as well.

This angle of vision assignment not only challenged myself but also challenged my writing abilities. At first, I struggled with the concept of showing the image I wanted to portray and I found myself telling to describe the surroundings of the lake. For example, I wrote, “I can see the anglers gathering,” and “I faintly hear their laughter.” Rewriting the sentences to show rather than tell was very difficult for me, but once I mastered the concept, showing proved to be a very important tool in establishing the two angles of vision.

Another tool that helped me show rather than tell the positive and negative surroundings of the lake is figurative language. For example, I used similes to paint the picture of my surroundings. In my positive paragraph, I described the seagulls circling “like hungry children hovering over the dinner table.” In my negative paragraph, I said that the “grainy sand between my toes grates like sandpaper scraping across my skin.” Using similes allowed me to show the scene in a light that I desired to be portrayed. Another example of figurative language I used in this assignment is alliteration. In my negative paragraph, I used alliteration describing how “seagulls screech” and, in my positive paragraph, described the water as “crystal-clear.”

Other than figurative language, choosing precise words with just the right connotations proved to be one technique that helped me to show rather than tell. In my positive paragraph, I used the words, “balmy sands of the beach,” and in my negative paragraph, I compared the sandy beach to walking on broken glass. Similarly, in my positive paragraph, I described the water as “crystal-clear” and then, in my negative paragraph, described the water as covered in “slimy algae.” Changing the words caused the description to go from a positive viewpoint to a negative viewpoint, which caused the lake to be seen in a different light.

Along with word connotations, sentence structure was another tool I used to manipulate angle of vision. One way I modified sentence structure was by placing certain words at the beginning or end of sentences to emphasize images. For example, in my positive paragraph I began a sentence with “light breeze” and another sentence with “natural beauty” to emphasize calming images. I also ended the paragraph with “utter bliss” for the same reason. In my negative paragraph, I began a sentence with “seagulls screech” and another sentence with “sweat.” I also ended the paragraph with “my heart sinks in despair.” Another way I modified sentence structure was by controlling sentence length. In my positive paragraph, I tried to use longer, more flowing sentences and in my negative paragraph, I used shorter sentences.

Finally, I used addition or omission of details to write my angle of vision paragraphs. In my positive paragraph, I did not include anything negative. For example, even though there were mosquitoes present, I did not include them in the positive paragraph because it is hard to show mosquitoes in a positive light. In my negative paragraph, I did not include positive images such as the “light breeze creates ripples as the glistening sun dances across the surface of the water.” I did not include the beautiful sights of the lake because it was impossible to present those images in a negative light. Adding and omitting details helped me serve the readers only the positive or negative feelings I wanted them to experience.

This angle of vision assignment required me to use word connotation, figurative language, sentence structure, and addition or omission of details, techniques that are likely to be important later in

life when I will have to persuade people to see my point of view. Because of my understanding of angle of vision, I will also be more able to resist the persuasion of others who are using the techniques we have learned. For this reason, this angle of vision assignment not only improved my writing skills but also provided me with valuable lessons that might be useful in the future.