

## Descriptive Writing: Who, What, When, & Where?

As a writer of description, you will need to zoom in on the details to develop your scene for your reader.

### 1. WHO is describing the scene?

Establish a perspective from which to describe your subject (**point of view**).

- ❖ Point of view shows the writer's relationship to the subject, thereby establishing the perspective from which the subject is described.
- ❖ The example below conveys the personal experience of the writer and the point of view is first person through his use of "I."

### 2. WHAT is the writer trying to say about this topic?

Emphasize a single point (**dominant impression**).

- ❖ The dominant impression emerges from a pattern of details, often involving repetition of one idea with different particulars.
- ❖ The details in the example below all surround and emphasize the experience of eating the *ultimate form of food* (dominant impression).

### 3. WHEN and WHERE is this scene taking place?

Position the details for coherence (**order**).

- ❖ Order the details so that the descriptive account develops spatially as well as chronologically (meaning in space and time).
- ❖ In the example below, we are grounded in the experience because of the details about where and when the scene is taking place (i.e.; Sitting here in Harold's Hefty Burger at midnight, I am convinced that I am eating the ultimate form of food).

**Descriptive Writing Example: Sitting here in Harold's Hefty Burgers at midnight, I am convinced that I am eating the ultimate form of food. The buns are feathery soft to the touch but heavy in the hand and soggy inside. As I take a full-mouth, no-nonsense bite, the melted cheese and juices cascade over my fingers and make little oil slicks on the vinyl table below. I stop chewing occasionally to flush down the rich, thick taste of animal fat with a swig from a chilled mug of fizzing root beer.**

Brandon, Lee. Paragraphs and Essays. 8th Ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001.