

Of Mice and Men Writing Prompt 1—Setting Description

Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck from chapter 1:

“A few miles south of Soledad, the Salinas River drops in close to the hillside bank and runs deep and green. The water is warm too, for it has slipped twinkling over the yellow sands in the sunlight before reaching the narrow pool. On one side of the river the golden foothill slopes curve up to the strong and rocky Gabilan mountains, but on the valley side the water is lined with trees--willows fresh and green with every spring, carrying in their lower leaf junctures the debris of the winter's flooding; and sycamores with mottled, white, recumbent limbs and branches that arch over the pool. On the sandy bank under the trees the leaves lie deep and so crisp that a lizard makes a great skittering if he runs among them. Rabbits come out of the brush to sit on the sand in the evening, and the damp flats are covered with the night tracks of 'coons, and with the spread pads of dogs from the ranches, and with the split-wedge tracks of deer that come to drink in the dark.”

“There is a path through the willows and among the sycamores, a path beaten hard by boys coming down from the ranches to swim in the deep pool, and beaten hard by tramps who come wearily down from the highway in the evening to jungle-up near water. In front of the low horizontal limb of a giant sycamore there is an ash pile made by many fires; the limb is worn smooth by men who have sat on it.”

Examining Steinbeck's Style:

Instructions: Good writing starts with examining a model of good writing. Before you write a descriptive paragraph, you will be analyzing Steinbeck's writing to understand how he creates vibrant imagery for his readers.

1. Identify words/phrases that appeal to the sense of sight.
2. Identify words/phrases that appeal to the sense of smell.
3. Identify words/phrases that appeal to the sense of touch.
4. Identify words/phrases that appeal to the sense of hearing.
5. Identify words/phrases that appeal to feelings/atmosphere.
6. Identify words/phrases that describe location.

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7. Look over the words you have identified in the previous section. What do these words/phrases have in common? Are there any that stand out as being distinctly different from others (aka: are there unique words/phrases/images)? Are the words concrete or abstract (which have more of an impact)? Explain what Steinbeck does in order to create imagery in these paragraphs.

Writing Prompt:

John Steinbeck is known for his vivid descriptive language. Your task is to write a descriptive paragraph based on a place. Your paragraph must include the following:

- ✓ Identification of the location _____/3
 - Specifically stated
 - Given through relationships to other places
 - Uses context clues to help build a visual
- ✓ Sensory Description _____/5
 - Describes the sights
 - Describes the smell
 - Describes the feeling/atmosphere
 - Describes the sounds
 - Describes the shapes/styles
- ✓ Style and Organization _____/5
 - There is clear organization in the paragraph evident through transitions and a logical progression of thoughts
 - Correct sentence structure and grammar are utilized
 - Writing style is creative and unique
 - Sentence structure varies
