

*MINNESOTA WRITING PROJECT  
DEMONSTRATION LESSON  
by JeanMarie Z. Burtness*

**Title: “Combining sensory details with visual images,”  
or “Potpourri, Everything but the Kitchen Sink.”**

**Grade appropriate:** High School and probably middle school

**Approximate length of time to complete lesson:** One to two class periods, depending on the length of class periods.

**Objective (s) to be covered:** Students will examine one object and one photograph; students will generate descriptive words and phrases based on their observations. This multi-genre creative writing activity is preparation for a nonfiction and novel reading unit whose settings are unfamiliar to students.  
(This can be also be a stand-alone creative writing prompt which may lead to students creating a poem, a creative letter, or a short fictional piece.)

**Specific standards addressed:**

High School Standard practice for Read, Listen, and View Complex Information. This multi-genre creative writing activity is preparation for independent reading assignments. This activity is sometimes used in student’s academic writing. “A student shall demonstrate ability to write using grammar, language mechanics, and other conventions.....that A. describe, narrate, or explain observations of human events or situations.”

Minnesota Academic Standards, Arts K-12

“Creative Writing” A student shall demonstrate an understanding of the integration of components of creative writing: such as, ...a.elements of... setting, imagery...and c. vocabulary.”

**Brief summary/outline:**

This creative writing lesson is an introduction to a tenth grade memoir/novel unit called “Windows or Mirrors?”

1. Introduction to sensory writing and images activity (candy & photographs/travel brochures/postcards)

2. Later students will be asked to note sensory words and phrases as they read independently. In that sense, this activity emphasizes how writers use literary language. Students are asked to interpret and analyze the author’s ideas.

**Resources:**

Burk, Jim. *Tools for Thought, Graphic Organizers for Your Classroom.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2002.

Galt, Margot Fortunato. *The Story in History, Writing Your Way into the American Experience.* New York: Teachers & Writers Collaborative, 1992.

“Thinking Skills, Observational Chart.” Blue Level, McDougal, Littell & Company.

**Contact for additional information: JeanMarie Z. Burtness, [jzb@burtness.com](mailto:jzb@burtness.com)**