Title of lesson: Describe a Room, Describe a Person

Suggested grade/age: High School, but the overall strategy could be used in MS

Approximate time needed to complete lesson: One 45-60 minute class period (plus a day or two for kids to write outside of class)

Learning objective(s) and significance of lesson: (Why is this lesson important in the development of your students’ skills or knowledge? What do you want students to learn or be able to do? What “best practice” does this lesson incorporate?)

This lesson takes a difficult text and presents one passage as a mentor text for students’ own writing. We look at what the author is doing as an writer and how multiple literary devices come together to create mood and character. This lesson starts with a common text and then gives students choice in their writing topic, which personalizes it. Students should be able to identify literary devices at work in the passage, discuss how they work together and use them in a piece of their own writing that has the same purpose as the writer’s.

Brief summary/outline of lesson: (What steps do you take to implement this lesson in your classroom? Where is this lesson located in the school year or unit—beginning, middle, end? Does this lesson scaffold or build to a culminating assessment or demonstration of learning?)

This lesson comes in the middle of reading Great Expectations by Charles Dickens, but the strategy could be applied to the analysis of any piece of text, especially ones students have a harder time connecting with. This book is usually read during the second semester of Advanced 9th Grade Language Arts because of its difficulty. Students are already familiar with literary devices. After reading the passage describing Mr. Jaggers’ office as homework (in their books), students are given a paper copy in class the next day. They use highlighters to identify different literary devices. We discuss how Dickens uses setting for characterization (he describes Jaggers by describing his office) and mood. We discuss how we often get a sense of a person from a space they’ve created (bedrooms, offices, etc.). Then, for homework, I have students write a description of a place that creates a mood and suggests the person whose space it is.

Related Resources: Just some highlighters or colored pencils!

Possible extensions or adaptations for different purposes/student needs: When students have submitted their pieces, come back and students do the highlighting process on their peers’ paragraphs and then have them revise with an eye for using more figurative language, and showing instead of telling.