

Unit 2 Describing Places/Buildings

6 Look at the following list of phrases and match them with the pictures, then identify each sense used. Finally read the example and write short descriptions for any two of the pictures.

crowded streets, glossy green peppers, burning sand, icy cold air, colourful shop signs, snow-covered mountains, whistle of cold wind, crystal-clear water, tall buildings, car horns beeping, fresh scent of pines, swaying palm trees, acrid smell of old tomatoes, hurrying passers-by, colourful stalls, exotic plants, towering peaks, shrill cries of tropical birds, soft snow, cheerfully shouting stallholders, salty sea smell



.....

icy cold air (touch)

.....



.....



7 Look at the following tables, then listen to this person describing what her home town used to be like and what it is like now and complete the missing information. How does the author feel about the changes? Looking at the notes, talk about how the writer's home town has changed. Then write a description of what your town was like forty years ago and what it is like now.



THEN

- fields she used to play in
- small road on the outskirts
- house she grew up in
- old stone bridge
- old houses

NOW

- huge supermarket
- major
- new
- wider..... bridge
- new

e.g. *The icy cold air blew around the towering peaks of the snow-covered mountains. The fresh scent of pines filled the air. I heard the whistle of the cold wind as the soft snow fell around us. No view on earth could be more wonderful.*

e.g. *A huge supermarket has been built in the fields the author used to play in. A motorway has been ...*

Descriptions of places can be found in travel brochures, letters, magazine articles and stories. They can be written in a formal or informal style depending on whom they are addressed to and how the writer wants to present the description. For example, a description of a place you visited in a letter to a friend would be informal, while a description of a place in a travel brochure could be written in a formal style. It could also be written in a less formal style when the writer wants to sound more persuasive. This can be achieved by writing in a more personal style, addressing the reader directly.

Characteristics of Formal and Informal Style

Formal Style: impersonal style, frequent use of passive voice, complex sentences, use of participles, non-colloquial English, no descriptions of feelings/emotions, short forms acceptable only in quotes, advanced vocabulary

Less Formal Style: personal style, use of idioms, address the reader, chatty descriptions, variety of adjectives, use of short forms, non-colloquial English

Informal Style: personal style, use of colloquial English (idiomatic expressions), use of idioms, use of short forms, chatty descriptions

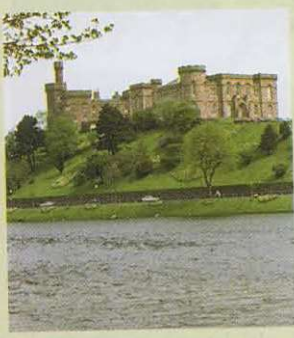
8 Read the following extracts and say: a) what style of language has been used for each one, justifying your answers; b) where each extract has been taken from; and c) what the content of each extract is.



C Take a trip up the Eiffel Tower to witness the spectacular view, and if you are an art lover you should spend at least a day in the famous Louvre Art Museum. Evenings can be spent in one of the great number of cafés and bistros, where you can sample delicious French cuisine.



D We both feel so relaxed after our holiday in Switzerland, I don't know why we have never been there before. I'd recommend it to anyone who wants to get away from the hustle and bustle of the city and breathe some fresh air. We'll definitely be going back next year.



A A visit to the Scottish Highlands is recommended to those who are in search of a peaceful holiday and the opportunity to enjoy some of the most beautiful scenery in the world. One place especially worth visiting for those who are interested in folklore is Loch Ness, famous for its monster.

(formal: impersonal style, complex sentences - part of a travel brochure or magazine article - reasons for visiting)

B The smell of the air, the colours, the bustle of the people and the sound of their excited voices all told Jim he was in Venice. Venice was Jim's favourite city, but this time he wasn't here on holiday. He knew that sooner or later they would find him here. Jim chose a quiet little hotel, tucked away in a back alley. In his room he drew the curtains and sat back, planning his next move.



Unit 2 Describing Places/Buildings

Narrative techniques can be used when you describe a place or building. You can start or end your description by:

- using your senses to describe the weather, surroundings, etc.
- asking a rhetorical question (a question which expects no answer)
- using direct speech
- describing people's feelings or reactions about the place or building
- using a quotation (e.g. *As Dr Samuel Johnson once said, "When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life."*)
- creating mystery, anticipation or suspense
- addressing the reader

9 The following sentences are beginnings or endings for a description of a cottage. Read them and say which are beginnings and which are endings, then identify the narrative techniques which have been used each time.

1 Have you ever wanted to live in an old cottage by the Atlantic, with granite walls more than a metre thick, built to withstand the ocean gales? That's where my grandparents live.

2 As I got onto the ferry I repeated to myself, "A mother's love is a blessing no matter where you roam," thinking of the family I was leaving behind in their cosy stone cottage by the sea.

3 I shivered in the chilly drizzle as I turned off the main road past the harbour, heading for my grandparents' cottage. The house, built of granite, seemed to suffer nothing from the strong wind.

4 "Good luck, and may God be with you," said the old man in Gaelic as I glanced back at my grandparents' stone cottage and then walked towards the harbour.

5 I turned off the main road past the harbour and headed for my grandparents' cottage. There it was, its granite walls standing proudly. There was something strange, though. There was no smoke coming from the chimney and it looked abandoned. I shivered as I approached it.

6 As I prepared to leave, I realised that something about visiting my grandparents' cottage always makes me feel safe and secure. Perhaps it's those solid granite walls, or maybe I never feel quite at home or at peace until I'm standing by the old house by the harbour. Whatever it is, that house means more to me than any treasure on earth.

10 Your teacher has asked you to describe a) a visit to a castle, b) a famous holiday resort in your country. Write possible beginnings and endings for each description, using as many narrative techniques as possible.

- When you describe places, you may use prepositional phrases and verbs. Prepositional phrases such as *all around, to the left of, at the top of, as far as the eye can see*, etc are used to describe static features. Verbs such as *flow, run, stretch, wind, curve, rise*, etc are used to describe features which suggest movement.

11 Underline the words or phrases which describe moving features and circle those which describe static features.



The grand old house is situated at the end of a long country lane which runs through a small wood. To the left of the house is the coachman's lodge, and as far as the eye can see there is green grass and tall, spreading trees. Beyond the house is a grey rocky mountain and on the other side of it lies a small village with old cottages and a little church in the village square.

- 12** Read the following description given in a jumbled order and put the paragraphs in the correct order. Then underline the phrases which involve the senses. Which tenses have been used and why?

The House of my Dreams

A My house would have a large, bright kitchen where I could sit quietly at a wooden table admiring the view of the garden through the window. My living room would be simple, with basic furniture like a long soft sofa and two large armchairs. It would also have a fireplace so I could keep warm on cold windy nights. There would also be several wooden bookcases full of books to keep me company. My bedroom would have a four-poster bed with a white linen bed cover and the walls would be painted a soothing pale blue.

B It would be a small wooden cottage surrounded by a neat green lawn stretching all the way down to a river. There would be colourful flowers gently swaying in the cool breeze and an orchard at the back of the house with trees full of sweet and juicy oranges, apples and pears.

C If I could choose, I would live in a house just like this with its beautiful natural surroundings and peaceful atmosphere.

D Imagine waking up to the sound of birds singing in the trees outside and warm sunlight shining through your bedroom window. This is what I dream of when I imagine my ideal house.



- 13** Read the model below and correct the mistakes. Write **S** for spelling, **WO** for word order, **G** for grammar, **P** for punctuation or **WW** for wrong word. What is the topic of each paragraph?

G "of" omitted

A visit to a Museum

Standing outside ~~of~~ the British Museum last week, I **had ignored** the pouring rain as I gazed up at the **marble tall** columns, unprepared for the dignified beauty of the famous building. Ms Green, our teacher, **she hurried** us inside, impatient to **show to us** all the artefacts of the ancient **greek and egyptian** civilizations which we **had studying** in our history class.

Inside, the museum was **quiet** impressive. The gentle hum of voices echoed through huge halls with polished marble floors and sweeping staircases as we **were followed** Ms Green on tiptoe to the section with the Greek exhibits.

We **in admiration gasped** at the beautiful sculptures displayed there. The delicate features and graceful bodies of the figures were **such** lifelike that they looked more **as** actual people turned to stone than carvings from thousands of years **before**.

The Egyptian display was even more breathtaking. Huge statues towered above us, gleaming with gold, and beautiful **jewellery** filled the display cases.

It was like waking from a lovely dream when Ms Green whispered that it was time for us to go. I **saw** a long, final look, reluctant to **live** these magical rooms, before I **had followed** my classmates to the **bus waiting** and the real world outside.

- 14** Write one of the topics below in the appropriate style using 120-180 words.

- 1 The town council is running a competition entitled "The house I like most in my neighbourhood". Write a description for the competition.
- 2 A travel magazine is running a competition and has asked its readers to submit descriptions of a place they think is ideal for holidays. Write your description for the competition.
- 3 Your teacher has asked you to write about a visit to the zoo. Write your description for your teacher.