

Gallery of Scents Lesson

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Intention: To expand students' sensory vocabulary to include words associated with smell and to provide stimulating prompts for student writing.

Population: Intermediate level (3/4) English language learners (ELLs) who meet two mornings a week for two hours each time (9:15-11:15 A.M.). Attendance generally varies between eight and thirteen students. The languages spoken by students are Haitian Creole, Spanish, Portuguese, Albanian, Bulgarian, and Nepalese.

Materials:

- Fifteen mystery scents (jars of spices strongly scented items such as various spices and coffee grounds, and a sampling of scented votive candles. Cover the identifying label of each with a number.
- Sheet with five copies of the following sentence starters: # _____ smells like _____ . It reminds me of _____ . (see attached)

Implementation:

1. Set up a "Scent Gallery" in the classroom by placing the jars and candles at various locations or "stations."
2. Remind students of previous lessons on taste and hearing. Write "smell" on the board and explain that it can be both a noun and a verb. Ask students if they know of other nouns or verbs with meanings similar to "smell." If needed, provide the following words under the heading "noun": scent, aroma, odor, fragrance, and under the heading "verb" write sniff, inhale, and breathe.
3. Invite students to go from station to station and sample each scent. Emphasize that they should try all of the scents and then select five that reminds them most strongly of something (an object, person, or memory).
4. Hand out sheet with the sentence starters. Ask students to write about the five scents that were most evocative.
5. As students are writing, move around and help with vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure as needed.
6. Invite students to read aloud from their writing.
7. Identify all of the mystery scents and write them on the board.
8. Collect students' papers and correct errors.
9. Drawing from everyone's contributions, create a class poem to be shared at the following class meeting.

Classroom Snapshot:

Twelve students attended class, and all were fully engaged in the activities. The writing was more challenging for the students whose literacy skills are not strong and who have picked up English more informally than some of the students who have previously studied in a classroom, either in their countries or here in the United States. The students enjoyed visiting the “stations” of the “gallery” and discussing the various scents with each other. Some were uncomfortable with not knowing for certain what a particular smell was before writing about it. I encouraged these students to simply focus on the associations that the scents elicited. Everyone was very intent to write in their notebooks the “real” names of all of the samples.

Scent Memories (written by students as a class)

The smell of peach reminds me of when I visited my grandmother. Her house smelled like peaches.

The smell of cinnamon reminds me of the milk I make every morning. I heat the milk until it's hot and I add cinnamon. It is delicious!

The smell of tea reminds me of when my mother made tea for me when I was sick.

The smell of nutmeg reminds me of the porridge that I cook for my son every night.

The smell of mint reminds me of when I am sick and I drink tea with mint.

The smell of lemon reminds me of when I am sick and I drink Bulgarian tea.

The smell of curry reminds me of when I cook in the kitchen.

The smell of sun reminds me when I took a good shower after a tiring day.

The smell of mint reminds me of when I had a cold and my mother put the Vick's menthol on my face and on my nose.

The smell of lemon reminds me of the lemonade I made when I was thirsty.

The smell of vanilla reminds me of when I bought a delicious ice cream on a summer day.

The smell of cumin powder reminds me of when I cook spicy vegetables.

The smell of chocolate reminds me of baking with my children.

The smell of jasmine reminds me of El Salvador in the wintertime.