

Lesson Plan

Sensory Language

Author, artist, and T&W writer-in-residence Jason Leahey invites students into an experience of [synesthesia](#) in this exercise, where “the smell of lavender sounds like the flutter of butterfly wings.” This lesson offers great multi-modal strategies for engaging a variety of learning styles.

Grade(s) Taught: 4th

Genre(s) Taught: Poetry

Materials Needed:

- Seven small jars with different scents (can use essential oil, fruits, spices, etc.)
- Copies of “Ears Hear” poem
- Copies of graphic organizer

Common Core State Standards:

(Refer to [English Language Arts Standards > Writing > Grade 4](#))

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.3
Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.3.d
Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.

Guiding Questions:

- What is sensory language?
- How can we explore the relationship among our senses in order to create rich imagery in our writing?



LESSON

Introduction:

Display the “**Ears Hear**” poem on the SMART Board or pass out copies. Read or ask a student to read the poem aloud. Ask students to listen for sensory words that jump out to them as they listen to the poem. Now, read the poem aloud a second time, and this time ask students to raise their hands any time they hear a sensory word spoken. Circle all of these words, and then ask students to come up with synonyms, adding the new words in the margin so that students are creating a language palette of multiple ways to say something.

Main Activity:

Part 1: Group (20 minutes)

- Say, “Now we’re going to do a lesson I call ‘Insane in the Smell Brain.’ I have seven small jars, each with drops of essential oils inside.”
- Begin by asking one table of students, or one student, to smell a selected jar and determine what that smell would sound like if smells had sounds. For example, *Lavender sounds like the flutter of butterfly wings.*
- Now pass the same jar around and determine the following:
 - What does lavender taste like?
 - What does lavender look like?
 - What does lavender feel like?
 - What kind of emotion or feeling does lavender inspire in you?
 - If lavender were an animal, what would it be?
 - If lavender were the weather what would it feel like?
- Students and teaching artist/teacher collaborate to write model an “Insane in the Smell Brain” poem.

Part 2: Group (20 minutes)

- Distribute other jars to tables. Using a **graphic organizer**, students write their own poems. Volunteers share.

Part 3: Group (10 minutes)

- Tell students that now they are going to write descriptions of what somebody might see, smell, hear, taste, and touch when they first set foot in their new countries. Have the class read an excerpt from *The BFG*.

Part 4: Independent (20 minutes)

- Students write paragraphs describing their country.

Closing:

Invite a few students to share the country description paragraphs with the group.

This lesson engages students with several learning styles, including **kinesthetic** (engaging students senses with the different jars), **aural** (listening to “Ears Hear” and the “BFG”), and **interpersonal** (group writing activity and discussion), **intrapersonal** learners (independent writing exercises), **visual** learners with Smart Board display of selected text.