

Sensory Writing

Text Example



Text without sensory detail:

Grandmother Workman reached over and grabbed her grandson's arm. He was nervous because the staircase was so steep, but she leaned against him and they began to climb.

Text with sensory detail:

Grandmother Workman lurched over and grabbed the pale skin of Randal's thin forearm with her leathery hand. The folds and creases beneath her skin coiled themselves out like electrical wiring, like the bloated, roughly-textured relief map of the world that his mother just posted above his bedside table.

Randal looked ahead toward the winding spiral staircase, fidgeted with a small hole in his baseball jersey, and bit his lip.

His mouth filled with the sweet, coppery taste of blood as she leaned in closely toward him, breathing her hot breath on the damp hair at the base of his neck. She smelled of wet cigarettes and bacon. As they slowly climbed the long, steep staircase, the only sound was his grandmother's laboured breathing and the mournful creak of the wooden stairs.

Sensory Writing Example: Dying Steppe

Author: Nathan Vanderklippe **Source:** The Globe and Mail **Date:** 18th of May 2016
<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/the-globe-in-mongolia-why-a-herding-culture-is-dyingout/article29791679/>

Mongolia's grasslands have sustained the nomadic people whose long history of raising livestock is legendary. But climate change, urbanisation, and bureaucracy are threatening the very existence of their herder culture, Nathan VanderKlippe reports.

Gantumur rides a stocky white horse out onto the steppe, a choppy trot moving toward two dots in the dry grass. He dismounts next to a sheep and a lamb. They have barely moved from this place since the birth 10 days ago, the mother too weak to walk.

Gantumur, a 51-year-old Mongolian herder, spreads a plastic bag on the ground, offering its contents of bran to the sheep. As she eats, he sits next to his horse, using the animal for protection against a bitter wind that ruffles his knee-length deel overcoat, its thick blue cloth flecked with horse hair.

“I’m bringing food so she can gain enough strength to rejoin the herd,” he says. But even with the additional sustenance, he worries about the mother, her wool falling in clumps off a thin body.

“She’s so weak – and if she can’t make enough milk, both of them will die,” says Gantumur, who like many Mongolians goes by only one name.

He has already lost 60 of his 100 goats and sheep, after a fierce winter that has taken a grim toll on the Mongolian steppe. The spectacular expanse of undulating grassland has long sustained the country, but has come under threat from climate change and overuse, which in recent years has killed huge numbers of animals and propelled a human exodus from the land that is eroding one of the last nomadic cultures on Earth.

Some examples of sensory language from this passage:

“...rides a stocky white horse out onto the steppe, a choppy trot moving toward two dots in the dry grass.”

“...dismounts next to a sheep and lamb...”

“...spreads a plastic bag on the ground, offering its contents of bran...”

“...using the animal for protection against a bitter wind that ruffles his knee-length deel overcoat, its thick blue cloth flecked with horse hair...”

“...spectacular expanse of undulating grassland...”

Originally from: Professor David Wilson from Wright State University

<http://www.wright.edu/~david.wilson/eng1100/sensorydetails.pdf>

