

# Place – observation and analysis

Business



First Description The sun is shining; the water sparkles; the people's laughter fills the summer air; children, frolic freely in the water, while their parents sit lazily and soak up the sun's rays - a giant, gleaming beach ball that shines down on all the world. In the water children laugh as fathers play the fool; lovers flirt and splash each other; babies are shocked by the smooth embrace of the water. This is my favourite place in all the world. Traffic hums in the distance for this is an outdoor swimming pool in the heart of the city, but if you close your eyes, you can hear the sound of the birds singing like angels to heaven in the trees at the edge of the park.

What bliss! What peace! On the gentle wind comes a curious mixture of smells - suntan oil and ice cream, tobacco smoke and the sizzling of barbecues. And look around, my friend, look around and you will see the whole world in this pool or at its edges - laughing, eating, splashing, swimming; families, lovers, the young, the old, the poor and the not-so-poor - all equal under this bright and shining, sun and water, summer-filled wonderland. Second Description Ice. Hard ice. Ice everywhere. Everywhere whiteness.

Everywhere death. The deserted dregs of autumn have been thrown out and the blank gray sheet of winter lies over the park and the pool. Winter, a pale, frightening ghost, has placed his dead hands on nature and all life has departed, left, gone, and might well be dead for all we know. The water's surface is a blank pane of glass, clouded, misty glass - winter has breathed on the living water and made it dead. The birds are silent.

The people are gone. The leaves are gone from the trees: the naked black branches reach up to a sun that is no longer there. The sound of distant traffic dominates along with the screaming sirens that howl through the bleak winter day. In the distance a lone, stray dog wanders aimlessly, lost in this winter wasteland. The chairs and benches that surround the pool have disappeared; the barbecues and ice cream vendors have disappeared; stay too long here, I think to myself, and I too will disappear.

Analysis The ways my descriptions start is to create a deliberate contrast. The first begins with a long sentence in which I use semi-colons and words with positive connotations such as 'shining', 'sparkling', 'laughter'. My second description begins with five short, elliptical sentences which suggest immediately how different the park and pool are in winter. The long sentence is to suggest the longer days of summer, while the short sentences suggest the abrupt shortness of winter days. In the first description lots of things are happening, but the second is dominated by 'ice' - a word I have repeated three times in my first line.

My choice of simile is different too: in the first the sun is a 'gleaming beach ball', but in the second winter is a 'blank grey sheet'. It is very important that in my first description 'the sun shines down on all the world'. The first description deliberately focuses on giving an impression of all the different people at the pool united in their enjoyment of the sun, but the second description deliberately has no-one in it - everyone has gone. The only living things in the second description are the stray dog and the observer of the scene. There is another person in the second description - winter - because I

have used personification to suggest that winter is like death and is a ‘ pale, frightening ghost’.

My first description used only two similes and they both have very positive connotations – the sun as a beach ball and the birds ‘ singing like angels to heaven’. In the second description I used more metaphors: and the winter as ‘ a blank gray sheet’ and the water as ‘ a blank pane of glass’ with the word ‘ blank’ deliberately repeated for emphasis. The personification of winter in the second description also allows me to write that ‘ winter has breathed on the living water and made it dead’ – this is a deliberate paradox because we associate breath with life, but here it brings death. My first description has long, relaxing sentences which reflect the mood of the place in summer and which mention all the people in the park – it is deliberately inclusive and, from a descriptive point of view, it includes all the senses. My second description omits the sense of smell deliberately.

In the first description there are a lot of sounds; in the second only the traffic and ‘ screaming sirens that howl’ – ‘ screaming’ and ‘ howl’ being onomatopoeic. Most importantly, in the first description the observer/narrator uses exclamations (‘ What peace!’) and addresses the reader as ‘ my friend’. In the second the observer is alone and can only think to himself because he is depressed by what he sees. Even my choice of ‘ wonderland’ in the first description contrasts with the ‘ wasteland’ of the second.