

## **Writing a description:**

Descriptive passages play an important role in many kinds of writing especially when dealing with visual media. For example, you might need to describe a painting you intend to analyze. Readers will be more responsive if you include specific details rather than page after page of generalities. The best descriptive writing combines showing and telling:

Telling:

It was 95 degrees in the shade.

Showing:

I felt my skin liquefy as I stood unprotected in the Mojave sun.

The best descriptive writing combines showing and telling, using strong verbs, evocative adjectives and adverbs (in small doses), and lots of sensory details. As you write a description, keep in mind the following:

- In an analysis, describe the image/painting as if the reader has not seen it.
- A short description near the opening of the analysis usually helps to orient readers. Use images, too, to supplement or clarify your words.
- Think about the particulars of a description. List the details unique to that work.
- Decide which of these details you want to show and which you want to tell. These details will depend upon your purpose, amount of space you have, and, in some cases, your audience.
- Keep your descriptions lean and accurate. Don't pile on the adjectives or fall back on the obvious cliché.
- Make sure readers can follow the movements within your descriptions. Be directional if it helps— left-to-right, top-to-bottom. Or make it clear that you have focused on a few arresting details.

