

Let Readers Taste and Smell Every Word

Exemplar: Let Readers Taste and Smell Every Word

Introduction

Engaging a reader's senses of taste and smell can create a deeply immersive reading experience. These often-overlooked senses have the power to evoke strong memories and emotions, making your writing more vivid and memorable.

Narrative Outline

1. Understanding Gustatory Descriptions
2. Mastering Olfactory Imagery
3. Combining Taste and Smell
4. Using Taste and Smell for Characterisation
5. Evoking Emotion Through Taste and Smell

Breakdown

1. Understanding Gustatory Descriptions

What It Means:

- Describing flavours beyond basic tastes (sweet, sour, salty, bitter, umami)
- Using texture and temperature in taste descriptions
- Connecting tastes to memories or emotions

Exemplars:

1. "Instead of simply writing 'The soup was delicious,' try 'The soup was a velvety cascade of flavours – the earthy richness of mushrooms giving way to a subtle hint of thyme, all embraced by a warm, peppery finish that lingered on the tongue.'"
2. "Incorporate unexpected taste combinations for impact. 'The first bite of the experimental dessert was a shock – the sweet creaminess of vanilla ice cream colliding with the fiery burst of wasabi, creating a culinary rollercoaster that left him breathless.'"
3. "Use taste to evoke memories. 'As the familiar tang of her grandmother's lemonade hit her taste buds, Emma was instantly transported back to lazy summer afternoons on the porch, the sound of cicadas filling the air.'"

2. Mastering Olfactory Imagery

What It Involves:

- Describing scents in detail, beyond simple adjectives

- Using smell to set the scene or mood
- Connecting smells to characters or plot points

****Exemplars:****

1. "Create a vivid scene through smell. 'The moment she stepped into the old library, the musty perfume of aging paper and leather bindings enveloped her, underscored by a faint whiff of lemon polish and the ever-present dust that danced in the sunbeams.'"
2. "Use smell to foreshadow or create tension. 'A sickly-sweet odour permeated the air, growing stronger as they approached the abandoned warehouse. It was cloying, almost suffocating – the unmistakable scent of decay.'"
3. "Describe complex scents in layers. 'The aroma of the market was a symphony – the bright citrus notes of fresh oranges playing counterpoint to the deep, earthy smell of coffee beans, all underpinned by the salty tang of the nearby sea.'"

****3. Combining Taste and Smell****

****How to Blend Senses:****

- Describing how aromas enhance or contrast with flavours
- Using the interplay of taste and smell to create fuller sensory experiences
- Exploring how one sense can influence the perception of another

****Exemplars:****

1. "Highlight the connection between smell and taste. 'The fragrance of the freshly baked bread was so intoxicating that she could almost taste the buttery, yeasty flavour on her tongue before taking a single bite.'"
2. "Show how smell can enhance or detract from taste. 'The wine's bouquet was a promise of summer – hints of ripe peach and honeysuckle wafting from the glass. But the first sip was a shocking betrayal, the taste sharp and acidic, like vinegar masquerading as nectar.'"
3. "Use the absence of smell to affect taste. 'With his nose congested from the cold, the once-vibrant flavours of his favourite curry were muted, reduced to mere textures and temperatures in his mouth. He might as well have been eating sand.'"

****4. Using Taste and Smell for Characterisation****

****Techniques:****

- Associating characters with specific tastes or smells
- Revealing character traits through their reactions to tastes and smells
- Using a character's preferences in taste and smell to deepen their portrayal

****Exemplars:****

1. "Create a signature scent for a character. 'Madame Rousseau swept into the room, trailing a cloud of gardenia and sandalwood. Her perfume, like her personality, was overwhelming and impossible to ignore.'"
2. "Reveal character through taste preferences. 'While others at the table grimaced at the pungent blue cheese, Alexei closed his eyes in bliss, savouring the complex, sharp flavour. He had always been drawn to life's stronger experiences, both on the palate and off.'"
3. "Use smell memories to develop backstory. 'The acrid smell of gunpowder took Jack right back to his days in the service. His hands began to shake, and he fought to stay in the present, reminding himself that the fireworks weren't a threat.'"

****5. Evoking Emotion Through Taste and Smell****

****Strategies:****

- Using tastes and smells associated with strong emotions
- Describing how emotions can alter the perception of taste and smell
- Crafting scenes where tastes or smells trigger emotional responses

****Exemplars:****

1. "Link smell to comfort and nostalgia. 'The scent of cinnamon and apples filled the kitchen, wrapping around her like a warm hug. In that moment, all her worries melted away – she was a child again, safe in her mother's kitchen.'"
2. "Show how emotion affects taste. 'The news of his father's death turned the celebratory champagne to ash in his mouth. What had moments ago been crisp and effervescent now tasted flat and bitter, like broken promises.'"
3. "Use taste to underscore a moment of realisation. 'As the strange, metallic taste filled her mouth, Sarah's eyes widened in horror. She recognised it now – the same taste she'd experienced during her first seizure. It was happening again.'"

Exercise/Activity

Write a short scene (250-300 words) set in a bustling food market. Focus on creating a rich sensory experience for the reader, particularly emphasising tastes and smells. Include at least three distinct taste descriptions and three unique smell descriptions. Try to link these sensory details to characters' emotions or memories.

Vocabulary List

1. Gustatory: Relating to the sense of taste
2. Olfactory: Relating to the sense of smell
3. Pungent: Having a sharply strong taste or smell
4. Aromatic: Having a pleasant and distinctive smell
5. Palatable: Pleasant to taste

6. Savoury: (of food) Salty or spicy; not sweet
7. Zesty: Having an enjoyably strong, sharp taste or smell
8. Malodorous: Smelling very unpleasant
9. Fragrant: Having a pleasant or sweet smell
10. Tangy: Having a sharp taste or smell
11. Redolent: Strongly reminiscent or suggestive of something
12. Appetising: Stimulating one's appetite
13. Acrid: Unpleasantly sharp, pungent, or bitter to the taste or smell
14. Bouquet: The characteristic scent of a wine or perfume
15. Sapid: Having a strong, pleasant taste
16. Ambrosial: Fragrant or delicious; worthy of the gods
17. Fetid: Smelling extremely unpleasant
18. Piquant: Having a pleasantly sharp or spicy taste
19. Umami: A category of taste in food corresponding to the flavour of glutamates
20. Petrichor: A pleasant smell that frequently accompanies the first rain after a long period of warm, dry weather

Example Sentences

1. In Marcel Proust's "In Search of Lost Time," the taste of a madeleine cake famously triggers a flood of memories: "No sooner had the warm liquid mixed with the crumbs touched my palate than a shudder ran through me and I stopped, intent upon the extraordinary thing that was happening to me."
2. George Orwell's "1984" uses the scent of coffee to highlight the contrast between scarcity and luxury: "The smell of coffee -- real coffee, not Victory Coffee -- came floating up from the street."
3. In Joanne Harris's "Chocolate," taste becomes almost magical: "The bitter chocolate scent was so familiar, so tantalising, I could almost taste it. The realisation of that craving jolted through me like electricity."
4. Gabriel García Márquez in "Love in the Time of Cholera" uses smell to characterise a moment: "A thin thread of blood came out under the door, crossed the living room, went out into the street, continued on in a straight line across the uneven terraces, went down steps and climbed over curbs, passed along the Street of the Sleeping Beauty, turned a corner to the right and another to the left, made a right angle at the Buendía family's house, went in under the closed door, crossed through the parlour, hugging the walls so as not to stain the rugs... and came out in the kitchen, where Úrsula was preparing to crack thirty-six eggs to make bread."
5. In "Perfume: The Story of a Murderer" by Patrick Süskind, scent becomes the central focus: "Odours have a power of persuasion stronger than that of words, appearances, emotions, or will. The persuasive power of an odour cannot be fended off, it enters into us like breath into our lungs, it fills us up, imbues us totally. There is no remedy for it."

Exemplar Response: A Market Symphony

The Riverside Market burst with life, a cacophony of sights, sounds, and most importantly, tastes and smells. Maya wove through the crowded aisles, her senses overwhelmed in the most delightful way.

She paused at a cheese stall, where an elderly vendor offered her a sample. The sharp, nutty aroma of aged cheddar tickled her nostrils, a prelude to the explosion of flavour on her tongue. As the cheese melted in her mouth, its bold tanginess gave way to subtle, caramel-like undertones. Maya closed her eyes, savouring the taste that reminded her of picnics with her late father.

Moving on, she was enveloped by the intoxicating perfume of fresh herbs and flowers. Bunches of lavender released their soothing, floral scent as she brushed past, mingling with the bright, citrusy notes of lemon thyme. The combination transported her to her grandmother's garden, a haven of tranquillity in her turbulent childhood.

At a bustling bakery stand, the yeasty aroma of freshly baked bread made Maya's mouth water. She bit into a warm, crusty baguette, relishing the contrast between the crisp exterior and the pillowy inside. The taste was a perfect balance of salt and wheat, with a subtle sourdough tang that lingered pleasantly.

Suddenly, a pungent odour assaulted her senses – the unmistakable scent of durian fruit. Its creamy, custard-like flavour was an acquired taste, but the smell never failed to turn her stomach. Maya hurried past, her nose wrinkling in distaste.

She found refuge at a coffee roaster's stall. The rich, earthy smell of freshly ground beans enveloped her like a warm embrace. Maya inhaled deeply, the aroma simultaneously invigorating and comforting. She sipped the offered espresso, its intense bitterness blooming on her palate, chased by notes of dark chocolate and a hint of cherry.

As Maya left the market, her basket full and her senses satiated, she realised that this vibrant tapestry of tastes and smells had woven itself into a new memory – one she would cherish for years to come.