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Active Reading SkillBuilder

Visualizing with Stage Directions

Visualizing is an attempt to imagine what something looks like based on written or spoken information. To visualize while you are reading a play, look for the following in the stage directions:

- details about the sets, furniture, props, and lighting
- descriptions of the characters’ appearances and actions

As you read the stage directions in this play, pause to visualize the scenes being described. Choose one and then draw or sketch it in the box below. Then write a few words to describe how you might feel if you were in such a scene.

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How I might feel:

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**Literary Analysis SkillBuilder**

**Historical Drama**
A play set in the past is a **historical drama**. In drama, plot and character are developed through dialogue and action, which is described in the stage directions. Dialogue is written conversation between characters. Stage directions are notes included in the script to help performers put on the play or to provide information to the reader. Use the chart below to record the major points you learned from the dialogue and stage directions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Through Dialogue</th>
<th>Through Stage Directions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What I learned about Stone’s character</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What I learned about Webster’s character</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What I learned about plot events</strong></td>
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Words to Know SkillBuilder

Words to Know

bias               discordant               feigned               insinuatingly               oppressor
contemptuously     fanaticism               homage               intimidation               placidly

A. Decide which word from the word list belongs in each numbered blank. Then write the word on the blank line on the right.

The trumpets sounded sour and their tunes were all (1),
As if they'd gone to war, each with the other.
Then there were boring speeches showing (2) to the guest,
One speech and then another and another.
The people seemed attentive, but their interest was (3).
They faked concern so they would not seem rude.
They all were sitting (4), as still as blocks of wood,
And watching waiters carry in the food.
Then, at the end of all the speeches, there was wild applause.
The people whistled, clapped, and stamped their feet.
Did this show their (5) for the speaker's cause?
No, they were glad that it was time to eat!

B. Fill in each blank with the correct word from the word list.

1. If you hint that someone is dishonest without actually accusing that person, you are speaking _______________________.

2. If you describe only the good things about something and skip over any bad things, your description shows your _______________________.

3. People who have used force to get their way in the past can often get their way in the present just through _______________________.

4. If you refer to someone as a worm or a toad or an insect, you are describing that person _______________________.

5. A ruthless boss, a political dictator, and a schoolyard bully—each is just a different type of _______________________.

C. Write a short newspaper article describing Daniel Webster's defense against Scratch (the devil). Use at least four of the Words to Know.
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Grammar SkillBuilder: Contractions

Key Concept: To make prose or dialogue seem like natural speech, writers often use contractions, which create an informal tone.

Contractions

A contraction is formed by joining two separate words and substituting an apostrophe for letters left out of one of the words.

Contractions are used throughout this excerpt of dialogue from The Devil and Daniel Webster. Read the excerpt through as it is, and then reread it substituting the original words for the contractions. Notice how the language becomes more formal.

"And meanwhile—well, there's Mary and me (takes her hand)—and, if you folks don't have a good time, well, we won't feel right about getting married at all. Because I know I've been lucky—and I hope she feels that way, too. And, well, we're going to be happy or bust a trace."

Activity

A. Rewrite the following sentences, replacing the contractions with the words from which they were formed.

Example: Jabez isn't completely honest with Mary before the wedding.

Rewritten: Jabez is not completely honest with Mary before the wedding.

1. He doesn't tell her of his deal with the devil.
2. He's hoping for a reprieve.
3. He worries that he'll lose her forever.
4. Suddenly the fiddler can't play a note.
5. "I'm afraid that the devil's in this fiddle," he cries.
7. "Let's hear what he has to say."
8. "I'd like to hear that, too," says Scratch.
9. Daniel Webster tells Scratch they'll need a trial with an American judge and jury.
10. There's no worse judge to be found than Judge Hathorne.

B. Rewrite each sentence, using a contraction whenever possible.

Example: He would hang anyone who came before his bench.

Rewritten: He'd hang anyone who came before his bench.

1. I have asked for an exception.
2. You had better answer the questions truthfully, Stone.
3. You are sure that that is your signature?
4. What is the verdict?
5. They have let Stone go free.
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Selection Quiz

Recall the events in Benét's play. Then answer the questions in phrases or sentences.

1. As the play opens, neighbors are gathered at Jabez Stone's house. Why?

2. What does Mr. Scratch have in his metal box?

3. How did Jabez become wealthy?

4. What main point does Webster make that influences the jury's verdict?

5. What does Webster make the devil promise?
I Have a Dream
Martin Luther King, Jr.

Summary

Setting: Washington, D.C., 1963
In his speech, King says that slavery has been against the law for a long time. But African-American people are still not free. They are separated from the rest of society. They are often poor. The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution promise equal rights to all, but that promise has not been kept. King wants America to live up to its promise—not gradually, but right now. He tells African-Americans not to hate or to be violent. He says they should work with white people. However, he also urges people not to be satisfied until they have won complete equality. King asks those who have suffered not to give up. He has a dream that someday Americans of all races and religions will live in brotherhood.

Glory and Hope
Nelson Mandela

Summary

Setting: South Africa, 1994
In his speech, Mandela celebrates a new freedom. The people of South Africa are now free because laws separating blacks and whites are gone. The laws, says Mandela, made people fight. They caused other nations to ignore South Africa. Now South Africa has been welcomed back by those nations. Mandela hopes that the world will help South Africa as it builds democracy. He thanks people for the help they have already given. His goal is complete freedom and peace for South Africans of all races. As a first step toward that goal, he says he will free certain political prisoners. Mandela says he knows that the road to freedom will not be easy. He tells South Africans to work together for justice and peace.
**Selection Test**

A. Think about how the dialogue and stage directions reveal information about the plot and the characters. For each character listed below, write notes describing something you have learned about the character and the character's role in the plot of this drama. (6 points each)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>What You Have Learned About the Character</th>
<th>Character's Role in the Plot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Jabez Stone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mary Stone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Scratch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Daniel Webster</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Write the letter of the best answer. This exercise is continued on the next page. (6 points each)

1. The crowd's gossip during the square dance does all of the following **except**
   a. explain Jabez's good fortune.
   b. create a feeling of expectation.
   c. cast doubt on Jabez's accomplishments.
   d. suggest that people may be jealous of Jabez.

2. When Mary expresses her pride in Jabez, he feels uncomfortable **mainly**
   because he
   a. doesn't believe her.
   b. is a very humble person.
   c. is embarrassed by her love.
   d. hasn't told her the truth about himself.

3. The first sign that the devil (Scratch) is at the wedding occurs when
   a. the dancing begins.
   b. the old couple starts arguing.
   c. there is trouble with the fiddle.
   d. Daniel Webster walks in the door.
4. Scratch agrees to a trial when Webster
   a. offers money to break the contract.
   b. offers to let Scratch choose the jury.
   c. says that Scratch isn’t an American.
   d. challenges the signature on the contract.

5. To prove that he is an American, Scratch mentions all of the following
   except
   a. slavery.
   b. church beliefs.
   c. the Declaration of Independence.
   d. wrongs that were committed against Indians.

C. Words to Know. Write the letter of the best answer. (4 points each)

   1. You would be most likely to pay homage to a
      a. cashier.       b. hero.       c. blackmailer.

   2. A smile that was feigned would be
      a. fake.        b. friendly.    c. fierce.

   3. A boat floating placidly would be most likely to
      a. tip over.    b. move quickly. c. move slowly.

   4. Intimidation usually involves
      a. threats.      b. favors.      c. hints.

   5. An oppressor controls people’s behavior by using
      a. power.       b. persuasion.   c. reason.

D. Answer one of the following questions based on your understanding of the play.
   Write your answer on a separate sheet of paper. (13 points)

1. Do you think Daniel Webster’s speech to the jury would be as appropriate for
   an ordinary criminal as it is for Jabez Stone? Explain your opinion.

2. The writer uses poetic language in the repetition of phrases by the crowd and jury,
   in Scratch’s song and his summoning of the jury, in Webster’s speech to the jury,
   and so on. How do you think this poetic language contributes to the effect of the
   play? Support your answer with reference to the play.

E. Linking Literature to Life. Answer the following question based on your own
   experience and knowledge. Write your answer on a separate sheet of paper. (13 points)

   Is there anything that you would trade for your freedom? If so, what would you trade
   it for, and why? If not, why not?