

Class Passages

Passage #1: From Kerry Madden's *Gentle's Holler*

Mama does make the best buttermilk biscuits. Why, when Daddy gets a paycheck, Mama hits the kitchen at dawn and pretty soon the whole house smells of buttery brown biscuits and black strap molasses and hot black coffee laced with honey. I wish our house could smell like that all the time. I feel safe when biscuits are baking in the oven. (pp. 26–27)

Smell: Note how the narrator connects these scents to feelings of safety.

Passage #2: From Sarah Dooley's *Free Verse*

On Sunday it is pouring down sun. The kind of sun you can't get away from even if you want to; it's so bright, like orange juice, and it splashes into everything. (p. 106)

Sight: Note how the narrator uses metaphor—it is “pouring down sun” the way the sky might pour down rain in different weather. She elaborates further to bring the reader into the image (“the kind of sun YOU can't get away from”), as if she expects the reader to recognize this type of sunshine. Describing the sun's brightness as “splashing” into everything is another metaphor comparing it with water.

Small Group Passages

Passage #3: From Lisa Lewis Tyre's *Last in a Long Line of Rebels*

We pulled up to Franklin's house, with its neat front porch and glossy black shutters. Even the landscaping was perfect, with a large water fountain in the middle of the yard. It was the opposite of my house, with its peeling paint and rickety handrails. . . .

I watched the countryside speed by the window as we drove home. There were no streetlights, and the inky-black sky was full of bright stars. I knew from science class that their light was just now reaching us, some of them were already dead. We just lived too far away to know any better. (p. 121)

Sight: There are many adjectives in this passage that help the reader visualize what is being described: *neat, glossy, large, peeling, rickety, inky-black, bright*. You might talk with the students about how the imagery helps the reader understand the contrast between the narrator's home and Franklin's. Also, when she mentions the night sky, you might discuss how it might be different in a non-rural place (one that does have streetlights). Finally, you might bring students' attention to the metaphor of the countryside speeding by the window (when it is actually the car that is moving) and the way it is followed immediately by a description of the stars, which, as the narrator explains, isn't quite as it appears visually either.

Passage #4: From Sarah Dooley's *Free Verse*

Spring comes to Caboose in patches. First, there are three or four days at a time of warm weather, followed by snowstorms that keep my pockets fat from all the walkways I'm shoveling for Hubert. The April weather is all mixed up. There are flower petals scattered across snow while thunder rumbles over the mountains, like the weather just can't make up its mind what season to be. For the most part, I'm settling in at Phyllis's, but my moods are a lot like the weather. Some days I'm springtime warm and hopeful, lying on the porch with the sun on my face. Other days, grief for Michael blows through me like a cold wind, thundering for me to get out, to *move*.

The first summer-warm day comes on a Thursday in April, too early to be convincing, but welcome anyway. It's over eighty and so nice that they ought to let us skip school to enjoy it, but no such luck. (pp. 58–59)

Sight: flower petals scattered across snow

Sound: thunder rumbles over the mountains

Touch: "lying on the porch with the sun on my face" makes the narrator "springtime warm"

You can talk with the students about the metaphors used in the excerpt, like the money the narrator earns shoveling snow keeping her pockets "fat", and the metaphor of the grief for her brother (he has recently passed away) "thundering" in her mind or heart. She also compares grief to a cold wind using a simile, which is slightly different from a metaphor in that it uses "like" or "as." Discuss how the changing, sometimes tumultuous, weather reflects the narrator's changing, sometimes tumultuous, moods as she copes with a difficult loss.

Passage #5: From Cynthia Rylant's *Missing May*

Then, there it was, and I know it was better than all three of us figured it would be. The capitol building sprawled gray concrete like a regal queen spreading out her petticoats, and its giant dome glittered pure gold in the morning sun. I felt in me an embarrassing sense of pride that she was ours. That we weren't just shut-down old coal mines and people on welfare like the rest of the country wanted to believe we were. We were this majestic, elegant thing sitting solid, sparkling in the light.

Ob kept running the car off the road as he tried to drive and look at the same time.

"Sure is a beauty," he said as he pulled the car back into the lane for the third time.

"Sure is," I heard Cletus answer. The boy looked like he was just swallowing up the sight, gulping that capitol down as fast as he could as we moved on past it, on toward I-64. I knew he wanted to stop right then and stay there, maybe forever. (pp. 70–71)

Sight: the capitol building's "giant dome glittered pure gold in the morning sun"

The narrator uses simile to compare the concrete sides of the capitol building to a regal queen spreading out her petticoats; this is also a form of personification because it assigns human characteristics to an inanimate object. The narrator also uses metaphor to describe Cletus "swallowing" and "gulping" the sight of the capitol building. Talk to the students about what the characters are feeling when they see the West Virginia capitol building for the first time. Why does it make the narrator feel "an embarrassing sense of pride"? Why did Ob keep "running the car off the road," and why did Cletus seem to be drinking in the sight?