

Brush Strokes Part One: Painting with Appositives



About Brush Strokes

Just as a painter combines brush strokes to create an image, the writer combines “brush strokes” to create sentence structures. Five basic brush strokes used by writers are: (1) the appositive, (2) the participle, (3) the absolute, (4) adjectives shifted out of order, and (5) action verbs.

Painting with Appositives

To “paint” with an appositive, use a noun that adds a second image to a preceding noun to expand details in the reader’s imagination. For example, adding a second image to the noun *raccoon* in the sentence “The raccoon enjoys eating turtle eggs,” the writer/artist can enhance the first image with a new perspective:

The raccoon, **a scavenger**, enjoys eating turtle eggs.

Scavenger follows *raccoon* in the sentence, set off with commas, and enhances the image of the painting. To add more vivid details, writers frequently expand the appositive to an appositive phrase with details such as:

The raccoon, **a midnight scavenger who roams lake shorelines in search of food**, enjoys eating turtle eggs.

Students painted the following examples using appositive phrases:

The volcano, **a ravenous God of fire**, spewed forth lava and ash across the mountain.

The old Navajo woman, **a weak and withered lady**, stared blankly.

The fish, **a slimy mass of flesh**, felt the alligator’s giant teeth sink into his scales as he struggled to get away.

Guided Practice: Identifying Appositives

In the following paragraph, underline three appositives or appositive phrases used to expand details in the reader’s imagination.

A craze as old as Roman chariots, the need for speed led to the Muscle Car Era. Many believe muscle cars, the best cars in history, hit the scene in the 1960s. The term was first used in the sixties; however, America’s youth began converting automobiles into souped up Muscle Cars as early as the late 1940s. After the war, many young soldiers returned home and started putting loads of cash in their cars—the ultimate symbol of freedom and independence.

Guided Practice: Sentence Combining with Appositives

Combine each set of sentences below, creating a new sentence in which you point with appositives. Underline the appositive or appositive phrase in each sentence.

Example: (a) The first man on the moon was born in Wapakoneta, Ohio.
(b) He was Neil Armstrong.

Sample Combination: Neil Armstrong, the first man on the moon, was born in Wapakoneta, Ohio.

1. (a) Mr. and Mrs. Kelly have bought a new car.
(b) They're our neighbors.

2. (a) Meteors are often called shooting stars.
(b) Meteors are chunks of metal or stone.

3. (a) Graceland is in Memphis, Tennessee.
(b) Graceland is the home of Elvis Presley.

4. (a) The house stood on a bare hill.
(b) The house was a mansion with 35 rooms.

5. (a) The Missouri River flows from southwestern Montana to St. Louis, Missouri.
(b) It is the longest river in the United States.

6. (a) Sarah is six feet two inches tall.
(b) She is our star basketball player.

Guided Practice: Writing with Appositives

In response to each of the following photographs, write a sentence in which you paint with appositives. Underline the appositive or appositive phrase in each sentence.



1. _____



2. _____



3. _____



4. _____

