

Brush Strokes Part Three: Painting with Participles



So far we have practiced painting with adjectives shifted out of order and appositives. Now we will practice another basic brush stroke used by writers: painting with participles.

Painting with Participles

To “paint” with a participle, tag an *ing* or *ed* verb onto a sentence. For example, picture in your mind’s eye a nest of snakes curling around some prey. One writer/artist might describe this with, “The diamond-scaled snakes attacked their prey.” This image captures a little of what might be happening, but watch the effect when the writer adds a few participles (*ing* and *ed* verbs) to the beginning of the sentence:

Hissing, slithering, and coiling, the diamond-scaled snakes attacked their prey.

The participles help us see action. Suddenly, we can see the snakes coiling and slithering. The sound of their hissing makes us feel that we are part of the experience.

You can also add modifiers to complete the image. Visualize how this works when two participial phrases (*ing* and *ed* phrases) are added to the original sentence:

Hissing their forked red tongues and coiling their cold bodies, the diamond-scaled snakes attacked their prey.

Here are a few examples written by student writers who used participles to enhance the action and add visual detail:

Flying through the air on the wings of a dream, the Olympic long jumper thrust the weight of his whole body forward.

Melody froze, **dripping with sweat, hoping with all her might that they wouldn’t hear the noise**. A beam of light swung out into the darkness, **searching**.

The rhino, **tangled in the net**, struggled to break free.

Identifying Participles

In the following paragraph, underline six (6) participial phrases (*ing* and *ed* verb phrases) used to help complete the image.

Hurling rocks at passing cars, the neighborhood bully took off as the patrol car turned onto the block. As he rounded the corner, he hopped Mr. Moody’s fence, catching his shoestring on a post and falling face first onto the sidewalk. He rolled, writhing in pain, hoping the officer did not hear him. His face, covered in blood, soaked the pavement.

Sentence Combining with Participles

Combine each set of sentences below, creating a new sentence in which you paint with participles. Underline the participle (*ing* and *ed* verbs) or participial phrase in each sentence.

Example: (a) St. Valentine is the patron saint of lovers.
(b) St. Valentine was never married.

Sample Combination: St. Valentine, considered the patron saint of lovers, never married.

1. (a) I looked up.
(b) I was stunned that he was speaking to me.

2. (a) Students hurried to eat a good breakfast.
(b) Students had to take the 7th grade math test.
(c) Students hoped to earn a passing score.

3. (a) Argon heaved a massive sigh.
(b) Argon rested his hands on both knees.

4. (a) I hug the rocks.
(b) I move slowly in the direction of the blood.
(c) I search for him.

Writing with Participles

In response to each of the following photographs, write a sentence in which you paint with participles. Underline the participle (*ing* and *ed* verbs) or participial phrase in each sentence.



1. _____



2. _____



3. _____



4. _____

Quickwrite: *In your Writer’s Notebook or on a sheet of Notebook Paper, choose one of your sentences (above) to fill ½ to 1 page, letting your sentence lead your thinking.*