

Sample Essay of Description

The prompt to read this essay appears on p. 149 of *Acting on Words*.

The fact that Lenny Halfe wrote this in limited time as part of an examination, in one quick draft from a simple outline, is testimony that vivid description lives in the mind. Study questions follow the essay.

My Dream Home

Lenny Halfe

I was raised in the confines of a beautiful home (my stepfather is a carpenter). My parents were not wealthy by any means, but they did manage to keep our house looking sharp. I feel fortunate and blessed to have grown up in such a home.

Today, I am an "apartment rat." I am twenty-nine years old and I have been living in one rental apartment or another for the past seven years. When I moved into my first apartment, I thought it was the coolest thing ever; I felt so independent, so grown up. Only after seven years, a marriage, and one child later do I realize that I want a house of my own. I want privacy. I want a permanent dwelling with a yard where I can raise my son and teach him how to play hockey or something. Anything.

I began thinking about getting my own house shortly after my son was born, and I have thought about it many times since. My dream house would be located in the country, but not too far from a large town or a city. It would be decorated by large pine trees on one side and small willows on the other with a large, open front lawn.

The house itself would be fairly simple, but not small. It would have a main floor and a basement and would measure fifty feet long by thirty feet wide. The front door would have to be facing south and have a large, slightly elevated balcony. The back door would thus face north, would function as the "main" door, and would have a small deck to greet visitors.

The internal layout of my dream home is very specific. The east side of the main floor contains a large master bedroom with a walk-in closet, a smaller second bedroom, and a large bathroom. The living room/den is located in the southwest corner, while the kitchen sits in the northwest corner. A large closet greets people as they enter through the back door along with a doorway that leads to the stairs to the basement.

The first room encountered upon entering the basement is the laundry room, which sits in the northwest corner. It isn't very big, but it does contain a nice assortment of shelves. Next to the laundry room, on the west side of the basement, is a combination of a storage room and another bathroom. You have to enter the storage room to get to the bathroom, which is located on the southwest corner of the house. The south side of the basement is occupied by two rooms of equal size, one of them an office, the other a bedroom. Since the basement is fairly shallow, there are three foot by five foot sliding windows along the front and back of the house.

Finally, we arrive at the most important part of my dream home: the northeast corner of the basement. This, my friend, is where I spend countless hours practicing and teaching my son about the game of pool. This area of the basement is open and contains a regulation-sized nine ball pool table. That's one thing I could never fit in an apartment.

Study Questions

1. Along the lines of outlines demonstrated in Chapters 6 and 9, design an outline for the essay “My Dream Home.” Be sure to recognize the controlling idea—in this case a dominant impression—and the principle of movement from one part of the description to the next.
2. In what way does each paragraph contain a specific example in support of the dominant impression?
3. Does the house—in its entirety, as a compound of all its examples—represent an example of something larger than the house itself? If so, what does the house exemplify?