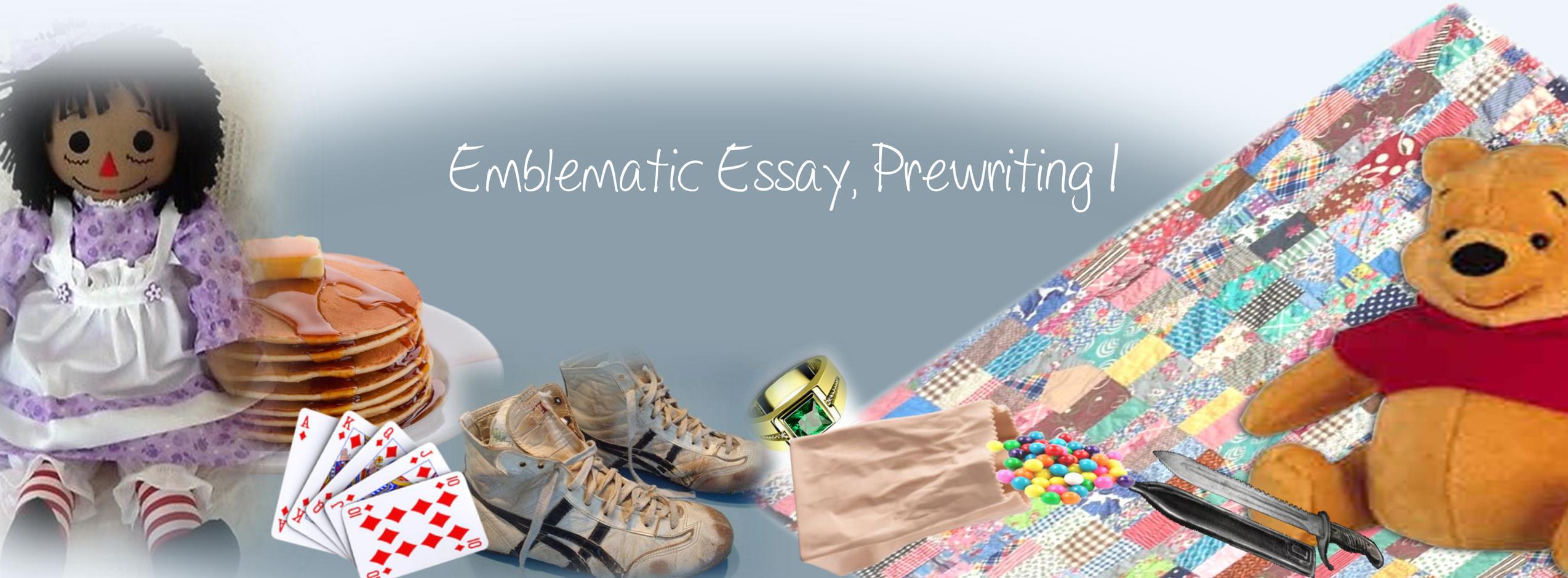


Description:

More than just the facts

Emblematic Essay, Prewriting I



Describing to Show

- When you describe, your aim is to **paint a picture of your object in your readers' minds**. However, when using it in an essay it involves more than just giving the basic details. It is important to think about what you want to describe and **what descriptions will best help communicate your ideas to your readers**.

It's also important to think about **what things you don't have to describe** so that you don't end up condescending to or boring your readers.



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Keys to Description

- Describe the **unique** qualities
- **Avoid** describing the **common or assumed** qualities
- Use **concrete** words
- Use **sensory** details (Not just sight; also use smell, feel, sound, taste)
- Use **figures of speech**
- Describe the **dominant impression** (emotional description)



Giving it a Try

For example, if I say:

My copy of the book, *Elmer Gantry*, is very important to me. It is blue and orange, very old, and was given to me by my friend Amy.

You clearly understand what I mean, but you can't imagine or see this book, nor do you get an understanding of Amy and what she means to me.

Let me try again by describing all of the details I can think of about this book using the criteria I gave before.



My detailed list

- woven cloth covering
- smells like dust and mold
- binding on the left is bright orange
- small wisps of thread are coming off the binding
- Published in 1929
- front and back covers are slate blue
- behind the frayed cloth binding on the outer corners you can see the cardboard
- Between the "r" and the "y" of Gantry, the remnant of a price tag or sticker
- inscribed "To Kelli: From Boston's Brattle Bookstore, Amy"
- the pages are faded to manila and darker around the edges
- the paper has a very course texture, it's thick
- "The Novels Of Grace Livingston Hill" are advertised at the back of the book
- Inside the back, between the cover and the spine
- you can see the netting



The Dominant Impression

I can go beyond the physical descriptions and look at these things too:

The dominant impression

Here, I ask myself, **what does this book really feel like? What is its essence?**

- Old, well loved, fun, permanent

If I'm working to also describe **the person who gave it to me**, I'd ask, how does it represent her?

- Adventurous (travel: Boston)
- Love of old books
- Knows me: I love the movie *Elmer Gantry* and she watched it with me, so she knew I'd love to read the book.



My detailed list

Sample

- woven cloth covering
- smells like dust and mold
- binding on the left is bright orange
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- Old, well loved, fun, permanent
- Amy:
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Tips for description

- Describe the unique qualities
- Avoid describing the common or assumed qualities
- Use concrete words
- Use sensory details (Not just sight; also use smell, feel, sound, taste)
- Use figures of speech
- Describe the dominant impression (emotional description)



Prewriting 1

Write down as many words, phrases, and sentences as you can to describe your object. Use all the senses you can: sight, touch, smell, taste, and sound. Describe size and color, shape and texture. Think about its weight and feel. Consider its emotional tone or vibe (the dominant impression). List the traits or significant things about the person who owns it or whom it represents if that applies. List every detail you can think of.

Your job is to get as many details and descriptions about it down as possible. Use the example I gave you in the slideshow to give you ideas of how to develop your descriptions. You should have a list that is at least $\frac{1}{2}$ - 1 page long.



Description:

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Emblematic Essay, Prewriting I

