

Word Choice Targeted Write

Words, Words, Words Targeted Write

The difference between the almost right word and the right word is really a large matter—'tis the difference between the lightning-bug and the lightning.

—Mark Twain

The brilliance of the following description of a hot summer day in Chicago by Nella Larsen lies largely in its word choice.

“Chicago. August. A brilliant day, hot, with a brutal staring sun pouring down rays that were like molten rain. A day on which the very outlines of the buildings shuddered as if in protest at the heat. Quivering lines sprang up from the baked pavements and wriggled along the shining car-tracks. The automobiles parked at the curbs were a dancing blaze, and the glass of the shop-windows threw out a blinding radiance. Sharp particles of dust rose from burning sidewalks, stinging the seared or dripping skins of wilting pedestrians. What small breeze there was seemed like the breath of flame fanned by slow bellows.”

—Nella Larsen in *Passing*

Your task is to use it as inspiration and write your own description—equally as brilliant in its word choice—of a fall day in a location of your choice. Please start your paragraph below with “_____ [Fill in location]. September. A _____ day, . . .” and take it from there. This is worth 10 points graded on the following criteria:

CRITERIA	CRITERIA DETAILS	POINTS ASSIGNED	CRITERIA MET?
Precise	Are the words largely precise (like “blinding radiance”), as opposed to general (like “bright”)?	3	
Interesting	Are the words unique (like “molten rain”) ? Do they make the reader feel something (like “breath of flame fanned by slow bellows”) ? Are they unexpected at times (like “wilting pedestrians”) ?	3	
Directions and Expectations	Were the directions followed? Was effort put in? Were expectations met?	4	

_____ [Fill in location]. September. A _____ day, . . .