**Observation Activity**

What can you see?

What can you hear?

What can you smell?

What can you taste?

What can you touch?

**Teaching Guidelines**

The key to good writing is our ability to observe the world around us. ‘Observe’ sounds visually biased but we actually need to encourage students to observe using all of their senses. This activity is designed to help you do just that.

**Start like this:**

Students write down what they can see, hear, smell, taste or touch in the room or outside the window, or take them outside to do similar. They can also recall a memory or a journey and use all their senses write about it.

**Now do this:**

1. Give out three copies of the observation activity handout.
2. Ask students to fill in the first sheet based on where they are right now.
3. Ask them to fill in the second sheet based on either a memory or a journey.
4. Ask them to fill in the third sheet based on a made up environment.
5. Students swap sheets with each other, or you can collect them in and shuffle then redistribute them. (Anyone who doesn’t like the sheet they end up with can swap as you’ll end up with more than one per student.)
6. Students write a poem or dialogue or story based on what their colleague has written on the sheet.

Because you’re going to ask students to find the person who carried out the observation they are working from, you might want to get them to write their names on the back of the observation sheets, but crucially they shouldn’t write down exactly what they are describing. For example, instead of ‘I was in a supermarket when I heard a trolley with a squeaky wheel’, they simply write ‘squeaky wheel’. This is so that the writers feel they can use any environment they like when they write their stories, poems or dialogues.

**To finish do this:**

Students finish their creative work, find the person who carried out the observation they were working from, and show them the work, or have one or two people read their work out loud. Then discuss the results.

**To extend the work, do this:**

Have students take a second observation sheet from the pile and use it to create the subsequent scene in their story, or to embellish the poem or dialogue they are writing. If you re-use previously distributed observation sheets you can keep this going for quite a while!