

Descriptive Essay | Sample answer

Write an essay which captures life in Ireland in 2015 from the point of view of an observant time traveller. This time traveller may be from the past or future.

My eyes gingerly peeled open in response to the intrusive squawking of birds which I sensed flapping somewhere overhead. My head was pounding, and I was met with the familiar feeling of nausea swirling through my body- two of the more unpleasant side effects of time travel. My eyes slowly adjusted to the growing brightness which surrounded me. With a slight grimace, I opened my eyes fully to the breathtaking scene which lay before me. It was dawn. The morning sky was illuminated in glorious technicolour as the golden and brilliant sun made its daily ascent above the clouds. A smile crept across my face as I lay on the cold grass, marvelling in the beauty of a simple sunrise. I ignored the dew-induced dampness that caused my t-shirt to clong uncomfortably to my goosebump-riddled skin. I lay there for some time, watching as the delicate strokes of pink, orange and blue unravelled before me in the morning sky. Each dash of colour seemed random, yet purposeful, as if planned by a gifted artist using the entire sky as his canvas. I had certainly been transported to less awe-inspiring sights before...

I pulled myself up into a sitting position, allowing a contented sigh to escape from my lips. I rested my head in my hands as I took in my surroundings. I was sitting in the middle of a field of tall grass, the blades of which pricked uncomfortably at my skin. The rising sun bounced off each dew-topped grass blade, causing the field to resemble a collection of glimmering emeralds. To my left lay an undulating hilly landscape. Mounds seemed to rise and fall into each other, or climb a steep gradient before tumbling downwards once more. Below the hills lay mismatched fields of varying shades of green, separated only by scatterings of houses or winding country lanes. I placed my hands on the ground to push myself up, and was met with an immediate stinging sensation in the palm of my hand. I yelped and ripped my hand away from the grass before assessing the damage. The meagre pink bumps did little to represent the sharp pain they caused. I recognised the bumps from my history book; they

were caused by a nettle sting. I began to rummage for its cooling antidote, and let out a sigh of relief upon spotting a limp and speckled dock leaf which lay nearby. The unassuming leaf worked wonders. It cooled the pain like water extinguishing a fire. I absently nursed my battle wound as my mind once more admired the beauty of the landscape which surrounded me.

The tranquility was interrupted by a low rumbling in the distance. I squinted ahead and made out a rather battered looking tractor making its way towards me. The sputtering and shaking of its engine seemed to reverberate off the trees which enclosed my field. A perplexed look was etched across the driver's aged and wrinkled face, upon spotting me, a lone stranger in his field. The tractor groaned to a painful sounding halt a few meters before me. The man's four-legged collie companion bounded towards me before the man had completed his shaky descent from the steps of his motor. The sprightly canine sniffed me up and down, against his owners somewhat exasperated commands, before eagerly snuffling at my hands. I rubbed his wiry, dark fur enthusiastically. I attempted to offer the man an explanation as to my appearance in his field, but mustered only some pathetically vague mumbles. The man shook his head in a bemused, if not slightly incredulous manner. After a moment of contemplation, he shrugged his hefty shoulders before offering me a lift to the nearest town. I was stunned- where I come from, selfless acts of generosity were a foreign concept. His eyes were warm and lively. The deep set wrinkles which framed his mouth suggested he has lived a life full of laughter. I expressed my thanks before hauling myself into the tractor.

The tractor journey was filled with easy conversation, as the man happily chatted about seemingly mindless things. The conversation showed little evidence of any structured thought process, and I enjoyed the informality of it all. The art of conversation had long since died where I came from. His voice was low and gravelly, indicative of a few too many cigarettes over the years. The crumpled cigarette butts on the floor and stale smell of smoke confirmed this indication. There was still a musical lilt in his tone, however. His sporadic inflections and bizarre colloquialisms led to more than a few suppressed laughs on my behalf, which were met by somewhat offended looks from him. Outside, the countryside peeled away, as leafy green foliage was replaced with garish shop signs and blinking traffic lights. I thanked him for his transportation. He responded by gently lowering his cap and raising his hand in a nonchalant manner.

In the town, the main street groaned to life as tired looking shopkeepers hauled the rattling shutters upwards. Bypassers shuffled past, anonymously. Some of their eyes were glued to the bright, artificial lights of their phones, causing many to trip and stumble awkwardly as they blindly made their way to work. Their small, handheld devices looked unsophisticated and archaic in comparison to the holographic devices I had grown accustomed to. Others grasped firmly onto steaming coffee cups, their eyes assuming a sleepy gaze as their warm breaths puffed clouds of heat into this crisp morning. I sat myself down on a dampened bench, and watched the world unfold before me, half listening to the cacophony which permeated the air.

A school girl walked past, dragging her feet. Her haphazard shirt collar and mismatched socks, styled with a messy bun on top of her head suggested she had quite literally rolled out of bed that morning. Her arms hugged a few battered textbooks, and her threadbare school bag looked fit to bust. Her eyes were sunken and lifeless, accompanied with grey and puffy bags. I pitied her and her heavy textbooks, which had long since been replaced by a single tablet device for me back home. Her tired eyes lit up as a handsome boy with a sharpened jaw and floppy hair approached her. They exchanged a warm greeting as he pecked her forehead before taking the textbooks from her exhausted arms and carrying them himself. The crooked tie of his school uniform matched his girlfriend's messy aesthetic. The pair chatted and giggled contentedly, revelling in their shared time together before the monotony of school.

I sucked in a long, deep breath of crisp morning air. I had almost forgotten how it felt- fresh air. I was used to a thick, choking smog that even the air pollution masks can't defend my weakened lungs against. I became frustrated looking at the smug faced drivers in their sleek and lethal jeeps. They were entirely oblivious to the toxic fumes that billowed mercilessly out of their exhaust pumps, or perhaps they simply didn't care. Shaking my head and sighing gently, I cast my eyes further down the street from the stealthy vantage point of my bench. I spotted a hooded figure, swaddled in stained and torn blankets lying against a graffiti riddled wall. His dirtied hands hung loosely onto a tattered paper cup. I noticed the dampened piece of cardboard he lay on. What a pitiful and inhumane excuse for a mattress. I watched as throngs of people carefully edged to the side of the footpath, putting as much distance between themselves and this homeless person as possible. Evidently, the generosity

bestowed by my tractor driver was not as commonplace as I had hoped. Eye contact is avoided at all costs, as if the weakened young man has a repulsive force field surrounding him.. To them, he is a blemish, a reminder that all is not well in the world, a reminder that they should be doing more. Those that do deposit their loose change in his pitiful cup do so hastily. They do it to ease their guilty conscience, not out of a sense of empathy. The guilt only lasts a second, of course, it is washed away with the shrug of a shoulder.

Morning passed into afternoon, and soon, apron-clad baristas placed silver tables and chairs in front of their cafes. The deliciously sweet smell of chocolate croissants, muffins and scones wafted temptingly towards my nose. Middle class women draped in bright, cashmere sweaters and delicate jewellery exchanged gossip and giggles over afternoon tea. Across the road, heavy booted workmen topped with safety hats and high-vis vests eagerly scoffed down chicken fillet rolls. The forgettable lyrics of the latest pop songs drifted out from shop windows. Old friends stop and chat, happily engaging in nostalgic conversations. This was life here, a fusion of new aged apathy and old school authenticity.

Night fell, and with it brought crowds of merry revellers toppling out of taxis. Girls flashed their artificially tanned legs, strutting down streets as though they were on high fashion catwalks. One or two catapult to the ground due to the architectural and tallon-like heels they teeter on. Their male counterparts clap their hands together and rub them frantically. They primitively eye up the girls, just as a stag would scout a deer. Burly bouncers fiercely square up to adamant, and most certainly underage, teenagers, who are swiftly hauled away. The nightclub scene carried with it a peculiar scent of aftershave, cheap liquor and a hint of desperation. I could feel the obnoxious bass from the club anthems reverberate off the sweat covered nightclub walls, and ricochet through my body. The night, for them, was only just beginning.

In an unhurried manner, I continued my pilgrimage through the bustling town. Soon, the buildings grew smaller and the glowing streetlamps began to disappear, being replaced instead by leafy bushes and tall trees. The smell of burning turf floated through the sky like a whisper. The occasional sliver of silver moonlight penetrated through the foliage to guide me. The night felt still, as if holding its breath till morning, for the daily cycle to repeat again. The familiar queasiness rose within me. I was ready to return home.

