

Detail ③

NAME: _____

DATE: 11 / 11 / 11

PERIOD: # _____ WEEK: _____

Consider:

CHARLEY (to WILLY): Why must everybody like you? Who liked J. P. Morgan? Was he impressive? In a Turkish bath he'd look like a butcher. But with his pockets on he was very well liked. Now listen, Willy, I know you don't like me, and nobody can say I'm in love with you, but I'll give you a job because - just for the hell of it, put it that way. Now what do you say?

— Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman*

Discuss:

1. Who was J. P. Morgan? What is a Turkish bath? What picture comes to mind when someone is said to look like a butcher? How do these details contribute to the point Charley is trying to make?
2. How would the passage be different if Charley said J. P. Morgan would look like a *baker* in a Turkish bath?

Apply:

3. Think of someone famous and powerful. Use detail to create an unflattering but accurate description of the physical appearance of this famous person. Model your description on Miller's description of J. P. Morgan. Share your description with a partner.

Detail ④

Consider:

To those who saw him often he seemed almost like two men: one the merry monarch of the hunt and banquet and procession, the friend of children, the patron of every kind of sport; the other the cold, acute observer of the audience chamber or the Council, watching vigilantly, weighing arguments, refusing except under the stress of great events to speak his own mind.

— Winston Churchill, "King Henry VIII," *Churchill's History of the English-Speaking Peoples*

Discuss:

1. Churchill draws attention to the contrasting sides of Henry VIII through detail. How is the impact of this sentence strengthened by the *order* of the details' presentation?
2. What is Churchill's attitude toward Henry? What specific details reveal this attitude?

Apply:

3. Think of someone you know who has two strong sides to his/her personality. Using Churchill's sentence as a model, write a sentence which captures – through detail – these two sides. Share your sentence with a partner.

Detail ⑤

Consider:

The truck lurched down the goat path, over the bridge and swung south toward El Puerto. I watched carefully all that we left behind. We passed Rosie's house and at the clothesline right at the edge of the cliff there was a young girl hanging out brightly colored garments. She was soon lost in the furrow of dust the truck raised.

— Rudolfo Anaya, *Bless Me, Ultima*

Discuss:

1. Circle the words that provide specific detail and contribute to the power of the passage.

2. Contrast the third sentence with:

We passed Rosie's house and saw a girl hanging out the clothes.

Explain the difference in impact.

Apply:

3. Rewrite the passage eliminating the specific detail. Read your rewrite aloud to the class. How does the elimination of detail change the meaning of the passage? Discuss this with a partner.

Detail ⑥

Consider:

He went on till he came to the first milestone, which stood in the bank, half-way up a steep hill. He rested his basket on the top of the stone, placed his elbows on it, and gave way to a convulsive twitch, which was worse than sob, because it was so hard and so dry.

— Thomas Hardy, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*

Discuss:

1. How do the details in this passage prepare you for the *convulsive twitch* at the end of the passage?
2. This passage does not describe the character's face at all. What effect does this lack of detail have on the reader?

Apply:

3. Plan a pantomime of the scene described in this passage and perform it for the class. After several people have performed their pantomimes, discuss the facial expressions they used in their pantomimes. Discuss the similarities and differences and how they relate to the use of detail in the passage.

*There's no room in here.
Sketch it instead.*