Writing to Describe

Qu. Describe a visit to a fairground.

In real life, we would never tell a friend about something without there being a reason if there is. Describe a visit to the fair. Would it be visible until we turned the final corner? What were all the expectations and the sheer suspense of it all were building to a peak? Sounds were already beginning to pour through a gale. Boom! Boom! Laser lights were lighting up the clouds making them seem somehow unearthly and weird. We were going to have the time of our lives.

Then we arrived. The first thing we saw, because it was so huge, was the big wheel. The blurb had billed it as the biggest outside of London and wow was it big! It was like a circle of diamonds in the sky, spangled, bright and vivid. Surely the London Eye couldn’t be bigger than this? How can they transport something that huge on the back of a lorry?

Thenex thing that hit us was a gloriously warm smell unique to funfairs: a mingling of frying hot dogs, burgers, fried onions, candy floss, toffee apples and diesel fumes! This was a delight for the senses: lights, sounds, smells, the thought of tastes to come! The very air felt electric as if it was alive and urging us to take part. And take part we were going to do! As we looked to our left we saw the scariest ride we’d ever seen, “Hell’s Door” it was called. We needed it!

As we were strapped into our seats the already electric air became alive with yet more feelings. As the safety restraints descended over our shoulders we felt safer if safe was the right word for this ride! With a jolt our necks were tossed backwards and off we went, twisting, turning, lights flashing like the vast strobes of a pop concert, rock music gushing out of the giant speakers, first right way round then upsidedown. This was living to the full. This was a thrill! This was the beginning of a night to remember.

A sense of tension and energy is always better than a flatness.

Notice how the structure is helping the writer work the scene through in a logical manner: this is helpful both to the writer and the reader.

Sophisticated punctuation is a real mark grabber!

Personification adds an emotional touch to the description.

Always set the scene. Try to get in some description of the outside early on! Create a mood or add an atmosphere by describing the quality of the sky, the air, the light.

Notice the use of sensory description: what can be seen, heard, and so on.

Notice the vivid use of a simile to help your reader imagine the scene for themselves. For example, ‘The London Eye couldn’t be bigger than this!’

Metaphors also help to show rather than tell the reader and help them imagine the scene and what they are like.

Using ‘one that gushed’ adds a precise vocabulary.‘You can be a goody or a goner’. Adjectives help to describe. Precisely chosen words are much more effective. Adjectives are like punctuation: they punctuate the description, of course, but some words seem to come with their own adjectives, such as ‘powerful’ and ‘gain marks!’

Another simile too many would spoil the effect, but two or three are very powerful and gain marks!