

# MODEL 5

## DESCRIPTIVE WRITING

**DESCRIPTIVE WRITING EXERCISE:** Imagine that you are a witness to the fighting in the trenches during World War I. Write a detailed description of the trench system and your reactions to it.

**MODEL:**

April, 1916

I'm Michael Newbury, and I work as a medic here in Belgium. I want to tell you about those poor soldiers fighting in the trenches up on the front line. Somebody needs to tell their story because many of them are getting injured or killed serving the Allies. I'm a good person to tell that story because I see these men nearly every day when I make my run up to the front to pick up the wounded and the dead.

First, I'll give a general description of the trench system. There are three parallel rows of trench lines: the front line, the support line, and the reserve line. Communications trenches have been dug to connect these lines to one another. The other medics and I use these trenches to get from the reserve line, where we are stationed, to the front line, where the heavy fighting goes on. The trenches are usually 6 to 10 feet deep. The support line is usually some 70 to 100 yards behind the front line, and the reserve line is another 400 to 600 yards behind the support line. Each line of trenches has barbed wire running in front of it.

Now I'll tell you about the front-line trenches, where no one would ever want to be. The first thing you notice about them is how muddy they are and how badly they smell. Staying clean and dry in these trenches is impossible. The soldiers must get used to having wet feet and a uniform plastered in mud. It's impossible to escape the horrible smell, which comes from too many soldiers, many of them ill or injured, living too closely to one another for too long a time. Most of the time, these soldiers stay in dug-out sections of the trench walls. Each of these sections has a roof supported by wooden posts on each side. When they are not fighting, soldiers spend a lot of time talking or sleeping.

Beyond the front-line trenches lies an area called no-man's-land. This blasted section of blackened and smoking mud is marked by craters of all sizes and is usually between 100 and 400 yards wide. Just across it are the trenches of the Germans.

Nobody should have to live or die in those wretched trenches, where survival requires both superhuman effort and blind luck. I truly believe that the brave men who serve in the front-line trenches are the war's greatest heroes, as well as its greatest victims.

**ANALYSIS OF MODEL:** The author accomplishes several objectives in the first paragraph: introducing the subject of trench warfare, providing historical background, and establishing the credibility of the narrator. Throughout the assignment, relevant details appeal to the audience's sense of sight, touch, and smell. In the last paragraph, the author conveys the subject's significance by stating a broad conclusion supported by the earlier material.