

Menus



PREPARE

Prepare: Gather sample menus from a wide variety of local restaurants, including drive-through, upscale, ethnic, and take-out eateries. Bring the menus you collected to class and pass them around for your students to view.



DISCUSS

Discuss: Once students have had the chance to look over each menu, ask them to pick the food items they find most appealing and note any adjectives, adverbs, or metaphors used to describe those items. Encourage students to identify which menu descriptions sound accurate and which seem exaggerated or embellished. Does the class notice that the pricier menus tend to feature more vivid food descriptions?

In addition, discuss the layout and design of the menus, focusing on the colors, font styles, and graphics used in each. Ask students to note how the menu designs differ between expensive restaurants and more casual venues. For instance, are students more likely to see elegant script in the menu for a fancy French restaurant or a pizza parlor? Finally, point out any additional information included on the menus, such as prices and contact information, as well as how different menu options are categorized (“Appetizers,” “Entrées,” “Desserts,” “Kids Menu,” etc.).

Invite a speaker: Invite a local restaurateur to your class to discuss how menu items are chosen.

Writing skill: Practicing the use of hyperbole

This activity exercises students’ creative writing skills by developing their knowledge and use of adjectives, adverbs, and metaphors. In addition, students can use humor to mimic the hyperbolic writing style characteristic of most menu descriptions. Young writers will find that relying on their sense of humor gives them the freedom to be more outrageous, imaginative, and vivid in their descriptions.

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WRITE

Write: Students will work in small groups to create menus for bizarre or outlandish restaurants. “Unusual” restaurants might serve the following:

- Exotic (but not endangered) birds, fish, or reptiles
- Food for creatures from another planet
- Food that only grows underground (yams, peanuts, potatoes, etc.)
- Food that only grows on trees (pecans, oranges, almonds, olives, etc.)
- Road kill (yucky, but funny!)

Descriptions of menu items should include adjectives, adverbs, and metaphors that are “over the top.” Here’s an example:

“The Armadillo Soufflé Grande is an angelic symphony of the most tender, motor oil-marinated filets of recently demised, worm-fed, free-range armadillo suspended within a moist cloud of air-infused, gravity-defying eggs.”

Groups should create at least four menu items and display them in different categories (e.g., one appetizer, one entrée, one dessert, and one kids’ menu item). Remind students to provide a restaurant name, contact information, and prices for their menu items.



DRAW

Draw: Each group will create an original layout and design for their menu, including illustrations and attractive fonts. Discourage the use of clip art, but prompt students to lay out their words and graphics in interesting or unusual ways. Menu designs should reflect the formality or informality of their menu descriptions as well.

ASSESSMENT

- ✓ Did the student participate in the class discussion?
- ✓ Did the student contribute to the group?
- ✓ Did the group’s menu descriptions include adjectives, adverbs, or metaphors that exaggerated the characteristics of the dish?
- ✓ Did the group create at least four menu items and include prices, contact information, and a restaurant name on their menu?
- ✓ Did the group create an attractive menu that included interesting design elements such as unusual font styles and graphics?