

Title: The Future Is

By: Sophie Daws

Grade level: 3rd grade

Time frame: 60 minutes

Objective: To express our hopes for the future in terms of the five senses. Can we imagine how our visions for the future might manifest in the tangible world? Ideally, in this exercise, we process the present through expectations of the future.

Prior knowledge and skills: N/A

Required materials: Pencil and paper; PowerPoint or Google slides if teaching virtually

Literary model: N/A

In this exercise, we imagine the future using our five senses. We reflect on our ideas and hopes for the future in terms of physical sensations—what objects will we touch, what sounds will we hear, what will we see in our future?

This exercise was created as a complement and warm-up to Lisa O’Neill’s lovely exercise “Writing Into Scary Times #4: Letter to Future Me.” “The Future Is” is a fill-in-the-blank prompt based on an exercise in Jack Collom’s *Poetry Everywhere*—a guide to poetry prompts and activities for kids. Working with younger students, I found the fill-in-the-blank form offered a helpful framing to the epistolary format of O’Neill’s “Letter to Future Me,” which we did in the following session.

Warm Up Part I: *15-20 minutes*

Start off the workshop with collaboration and discussion. When you ask students to name the five senses (instructions below) write their contribution on the board or in a shared virtual space. The same goes for asking students to describe a concrete thing in terms of the senses—this should also be a collaborative effort.

1. Ask students to name the five senses.
2. Ask students to describe something **concrete** with the five senses. I did two examples with students. The first was apple pie; food is straight forward and can be explored easily with all five senses. Second, I asked students to describe something environmental (like grass in the park or a tree or the sidewalk) using all five senses.

Warm Up Part II: *20 minutes*

This warm-up is individually based and transitions the workshop to a meditative space. Since the first question is personal and deeply observant (we think of all that we’ve sensed in a day), I asked the students to close their eyes before I read the questions aloud. Let the students know that you’ll be giving them instructions, and that for each instruction you’ll want them to write their response. Once they’re done, ask them to wait for the next instruction/question. Emphasize that although we’ll be writing our responses, this is just a warm up and we don’t have to worry about spelling or grammar.

3. Think of your day so far, from when you woke up until now.

- What is a smell you've smelled?
- A sound you've heard?
- What is something you've touched?
- What objects or images have you seen?
- What is something you've tasted on your tongue?

Feel free to go through all the five senses or, if you're strapped for time, just do a few to get the gears moving. The main objective of question three is to shift our thinking to the abstract while still maintaining a hold on the five senses and concrete observation.

4. When you are feeling sad, lonely, or angry what makes you feel okay?
5. What gives you hope right now?

Prompt *15 minutes*

Similar to Warm Up Part II, I gave the students instruction orally and then time to write between sections. If you prefer, feel free to give the students a print-out with the fill-ins below and have them complete the sheet at their pace. I enjoyed reading each fill-in aloud, however, as it created a real-time rawness to the workshop and maintained the meditative quality from the warm-ups before.

- The future__
- The future sounds like__
- The future smells like__
- The future tastes like__
- When I touch the future__
- When I look to the future__

Share *5-10 minutes*

Always share if there is time! This exercise can generate some very personal and expressive responses so it's worth opening up the space. The prompt itself doesn't require a whole lot of time, you may notice the students are answering the fill-ins quickly and that's okay. A swifter prompt leaves more time for sharing!