

## **A WORD IS WORTH A THOUSAND PICTURES**

From *Teaching Writing Skills: A Global Approach*.

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**Introduction:** Almost everyone is familiar with the old cliché about a picture being worth a thousand words. It is also true that a single word can conjure up numerous images all on its own. The same word can mean different things to different people based on several factors the listener brings to that word, such as background, experience, perception, and context. In this exercise, students will illustrate global terms to express their meanings in creative ways.

**Objectives:** To express the different meanings that words can have based on the context in which they are used  
To visually define several global terms and concepts

**Grade Level:** 6-12

**Time:** One to two class periods

**Materials:** Paper  
Colored pencils or crayons  
Handout #4, “A Word is Worth A Thousand Pictures”

**Procedure:**

1. Ask students if they can visualize or imagine what a written word might look like if it was based on its sound, shape, or meaning. Ask them if they can think of any examples that might fit this description.
2. On a blank sheet of paper, have students draw an example of such a word and then share the results with the class (You might have some, or all, of the examples drawn for the benefit of the class on the chalkboard so all can see it better). If the students are having a hard time getting started, you might give them an example. Words such as squeeze, pull, or knot can be easily drawn to look like or emphasize the action the word represents. A simple example might be the word “telephone” with wires drawn in connecting the “t” and “h” to visually describe the nature of the word.
3. After students understand how to visually portray the meaning of a word, give them each a copy of Handout #4. Tell them you would not like them to visually demonstrate, through their drawings, the meaning of this list of global terms and concepts. Their examples should look like the meanings of the words as they understand them.
4. Again, share the students’ responses and ask for volunteers to draw their examples on the chalkboard. See if the other students can guess the meanings of the words by just using the drawings themselves. Let

them use dictionaries if necessary, but encourage them to rely on the drawings themselves.

5. Have students bring in other examples to class the next day. Structure the assignment to deal with certain categories of words such as people, cultures, global concepts, humor, etc.