

Diction

Consider:

Abuelito under a **bald** light bulb, under a ceiling **dusty** with flies, puffs his cigar and counts money soft and wrinkled as old Kleenex.

— Sandra Cisneros, “Tepeyac,” *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories*

Discuss:

1. How can a ceiling be *dusty* with flies? Are the flies plentiful or sparse? Active or still? Clustered or evenly distributed?
2. What does Cisneros mean by a *bald* light bulb? What does this reveal about Abuelito’s room?

Apply:

Take Cisneros’s phrase, *under a ceiling dusty with flies*, and write a new phrase by substituting the word *dusty* with a different adjective. Explain to a partner the impact of your new adjective on the sentence.

Syntax

Consider:

He slowly ventured into the pond. The bottom was deep, soft clay, he sank in, and the water clasped dead cold round his legs.

— D. H. Lawrence, “The Horse-Dealer’s Daughter”

Discuss:

1. What effect does sentence length have on this passage?
2. Examine the second sentence. How does the structure of the sentence reinforce the meaning?

Apply:

Write a sentence in which you make an inanimate object active by using an active verb. Remember that your verb is not just an action verb (like *talk* or *flow*). The verb must make your inanimate object into an actor, a doer. Share your sentence with the class.