

Tasty nouns and adjectives



1. Sort these words into adjectives and nouns. (If you are not sure what any of the words mean, look them up in a dictionary.)

fat	mountains	platters	rich
stacks	thick	tureens	

Adjectives	Nouns

2. Now use the seven words to complete this descriptive sentence:

A hundred _____, roast turkeys; _____ of roast and boiled potatoes; _____ of chipolatas; _____ of buttered peas, silver boats of _____, _____ gravy and cranberry sauce – and _____ of wizard crackers every few feet along the table.

3. Based on the nouns and adjectives you filled in, what effect is the writer trying to create? Which other details in the sentence add to this effect?

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4. The sentence comes from a longer passage in a well-known book. What is the book, or what event is taking place?

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Comprehension activities



First, read the extract, then answer the questions that follow.

Harry had never in all his life had such a Christmas dinner. A hundred fat, roast turkeys; mountains of roast and boiled potatoes; platters of chipolatas; tureens of buttered peas, silver boats of thick, rich gravy and cranberry sauce – and stacks of wizard crackers every few feet along the table. These fantastic crackers were nothing like the feeble Muggle ones the Dursleys usually bought, with their little plastic toys and their flimsy paper hats inside. Harry pulled a wizard cracker with Fred and it didn't just bang, it went off with a blast like a cannon and engulfed them all in a cloud of blue smoke, while from the inside exploded a rear admiral's hat and several live, white mice. Up at the High Table, Dumbledore had swapped his pointed wizard's hat for a flowered bonnet, and was chuckling merrily at a joke Professor Flitwick had just read him.

Flaming Christmas puddings followed the turkey. Percy nearly broke his teeth on a silver Sickle embedded in his slice. Harry watched Hagrid getting redder and redder in the face as he called for more wine, finally kissing Professor McGonagall on the cheek, who, to Harry's amazement, giggled and blushed, her top hat lopsided ...

... After a meal of turkey sandwiches, crumpets, trifle, and Christmas cake, everyone felt too full and sleepy to do much before bed except sit and watch Percy chase Fred and George all over Gryffindor Tower because they'd stolen his prefect badge.

It had been Harry's best Christmas day ever.

From *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* by J.K. Rowling, (p149-150, Bloomsbury paperback edition 1997)

5. How close was your completed sentence to the way the author actually wrote it? Did you guess correctly where the passage comes from?
6. The author has structured the narrative (story) chronologically. However, each paragraph could also be said to be on a different 'topic'. Working with a partner, write a sub-heading for each paragraph that states what the paragraph is about.
7. Read again, carefully, the description of the wizard crackers in paragraph 1. Highlight the words/phrases used to describe the wizard crackers in one colour and then, in a different colour, the bits that refer to the Muggle crackers. Use your highlighted words to help you write a paragraph explaining how J.K. Rowling suggests that this Christmas day is so much better than Harry's Christmas with the Dursleys.

8. a) Using information in the first two paragraphs, complete this table to show which teachers are present and what the author tells us about them.

Teacher/adult	Behaviour
Professor Dumbledore	has put on a silly hat - 'flowered bonnet' - out of a cracker. Is laughing at jokes.
	reading a joke to Professor Dumbledore
	kissed Professor McGonagall on the cheek
Professor McGonagall	

b) In your own words, write a sentence or two that summarises how the adults are behaving. What kind of mood or atmosphere does this description help to create? Can you explain how?

9. The passage ends with the sentence 'It had been Harry's best Christmas day ever.' What helped to make it just a great day? Make a list of the details that made it the best Christmas day ever.

Now it's your turn ... write about *your* best Christmas day ever



Your aim is to write a narrative of a perfect Christmas Day, using Harry's 'best Christmas day ever' as a model. Try to:

- Follow the same paragraph structure (that you identified in question 5), with at least one extra paragraph about what you did between lunch and tea!
- Choose (original) interesting adjectives and nouns to describe the food, how it is served and what the table looks like.
- Create a happy, cheerful atmosphere.

If you don't celebrate Christmas, choose another 'feast day' as the occasion for your writing. Try to choose one that will help you meet the aims (the bullet points about structure, description and atmosphere).