Descriptive Essay Technique Identification Checklist

Purpose:
Quickly identify and track essential descriptive writing techniques in examples or your own drafts. Use this checklist to ensure essays engage senses, show rather than tell, and maintain strong structure.

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1. Dominant Impression

- ☐ Central feeling/mood clearly established in introduction
- ☐ Reinforced consistently throughout the essay
- ☐ No contradictory details weaken the impression

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2. Sensory Details

Check which senses are effectively used in the essay:

- ☐ Sight (colors, shapes, lighting, movement)
- ☐ Sound (voices, background noises, music)
- ☐ Smell (specific scents, odors)
- ☐ Taste (flavors, food, drink)
- ☐ Touch (textures, temperature, movement)

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3. Show vs. Tell

- ☐ Observable actions/behaviors shown rather than stated
- ☐ Emotions conveyed through detail, not adjectives
- ☐ Vague or generic statements replaced with specific examples

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4. Figurative Language

- ☐ Similes (e.g., "like a balloon ready to burst")
- ☐ Metaphors (e.g., "cast-iron beast" for stove)
- ☐ Personification (e.g., "steam promises Sunday dinner delights")
- ☐ Original, creative comparisons, avoiding clichés

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5. Specific Language

- ☐ Precise vocabulary (e.g., "crimson" vs "red")
- ☐ Strong verbs replacing generic ones (e.g., "thundered" vs "made noise")
- ☐ Details build clear, vivid mental images

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6. Organization & Structure

- ☐ Spatial, chronological, or thematic organization evident
- ☐ Paragraph progression logical and smooth
- ☐ Reader guided clearly through the subject

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7. Revision Indicators

- ☐ Before-and-after improvements evident (vague → specific, telling → showing)
- ☐ Language and details refined for clarity and impact

Instructions:

1. Use this checklist while reading examples or reviewing your own essay.
2. Tick techniques you observe or plan to implement.
3. Identify gaps to focus on during revisions.
4. Combine with the Example Analysis Worksheet for active skill-building.