



Sense-Impression (4) **Observing the Commonplace**

LEVEL	Intermediate
AIMS (Aspect of Pestalozzi)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To encourage learning that takes place through sense-impression, involving direct observation and use of all the senses, using real objects and involving concrete experience• To improve students' observation of their immediate surroundings• To practise drawing based on detailed observation
FURTHER AIMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To encourage interest in everyday surroundings, however commonplace<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To increase students' descriptive powers
MATERIALS NEEDED	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Whatever is in the vicinity (see below)• Sheets of paper and colouring pens

The teacher asks the students to look closely at something in the room which all the students are able to see, the more ordinary and overlooked the better, for example a hole in the wall of the room, or a tear in the curtain or any other small, seemingly insignificant detail of the room.

The students describe the hole or the tear or whatever has been chosen in ever-increasing detail, giving a sentence turn by turn and gradually moving from describing whatever has been chosen to describe its immediate surroundings. For example:

'I see a hole in the paper.'

'I see a long hole in the paper.'

'Through the hole I see the wall.'

'Through the long narrow hole I see the wall.'

And going on to describe the surrounding paper,

'I see figures on the paper.'

'I see black figures on the paper.'

'I see round black figures on the paper.'

(NB: This example is taken from an actual lesson taught by Pestalozzi. Refer to 'The Teaching of Language' in 'Examples of Pestalozzi's Method in Specific Subject Areas' in 'Pestalozzi and Education' also available from <https://www.jhpestalozzi.org/>.

Where necessary the teacher or other students ask prompt questions.

Having finished the description, the students draw and write about whatever has been described and then read and look at each other's work.

Following this approach of Pestalozzi, the children learn through sense-impression. For an explanation of 'sense-impression' refer to the section in bold typeface at the end of the Teaching Idea 'Sense-Impression (1)'.

The children learn first to closely examine an object, however dull it may seem. They then learn to talk about it in simple words, recounting all the impressions they receive from the objects surrounding them. After this they write about the object, and finally read what they have written. As a result, the children's words and sentences, which can of course be corrected by the teacher if necessary, are to a great extent the children's own expression of their own thoughts.

Pestalozzi wanted learning to be initiated by the child in this way and believed that an understanding of an object gained through sense-impression is the best way to make sure the child is able to describe the object accurately.

For Pestalozzi, language lessons are also general knowledge lessons and *vice versa*. This is because children gain sense-impression through direct observation and engagement of the senses; the sense-impression thus gained forms the concepts of general knowledge and ensures the development of accurate speech.