Task 5A

Read the following extracts from Katherine Mansfield's famous short story 'At the Bay'. It may give you some tips on how you can turn your notes into a description. It describes a New Zealand seaside village at the beginning of the twentieth century.

These first paragraphs come from the opening of the story. They describe the morning:

*Very early morning. The sun was not yet risen, and the whole of Crescent Bay was hidden under a white sea-mist. The big bush-covered hills at the back were smothered. You could not see where they ended and the paddocks and bungalows began…. A heavy dew had fallen. The grass was blue. Big drops hung on the bushes and just did not fall; the silvery fluffy toi toi was limp on its long stalks and all the marigolds in the bungalow gardens were bowed to the earth with wetness….*

*Round the corner of Crescent Bay, between the piled up masses of broken rock, a flock of sheep came pattering. They were huddled together, a small tossing, woolly mass, and their thin, stick-like legs trotted along quickly as if the cold and the quiet had frightened them. Behind them, an old sheep dog, his soaking paws covered with sand, ran along with his nose to the ground*.

This next extract is the last paragraph in the story. It describes the same scene in the evening:

*A cloud, small, serene, floated across the moon. In that moment of darkness the sea sounded deep, troubled. Then the cloud sailed away, and the sound of the sea was a vague murmur, as though it waked out of a dark dream. All was still.*

Mansfield has taken a scene she knows well and used it to frame her story, showing how the mood changes between morning and night.

Here are some of the techniques she uses to make her writing more effective. Find and underline the examples in the extracts.

* specific nouns to describe places
* fresh and interesting vocabulary
* very detailed description to enable us to see the picture
* short sentences to open and close her description - to leave a strong impression
* sets the scene and then introduces 'characters'