

Essay on Scents and Smells

If you walk along a typical busy street in town, how many different scents or smells can you discern? None? If you are one of the unfortunate people who has caught a cold, I can understand your inability to smell. Otherwise, you have not been using your nose properly. There are a thousand things to smell. All you have to do is to be a bit more aware.

Walking past a sundry shop, you might smell the aroma of salted fish, spices, open sacks of rice, vinegar, garlic, onion, and other goods all together in one big whiff. It is quite an experience, this combination of smells. It is the mark of a well-stocked sundry shop, unmistakable, unavoidable and always, unforgettable. It is no use running past the shop and holding your breath as you run. The smell will cling to your clothes, there is no escape.

Further down the street, you walk past a clinic. What do you smell? It is the smell of medicine and sick people. You do not have to look into the clinic. The typical smell of chemicals exuding from the clinic is enough to remind you that illness and disease were still among us. It makes you glad you are not one of the sick.

If you wander into a bookshop then the scents coming to your nose is different again. The smell of new books and magazines combined with the coolness of the air-conditioner give the shop a unique atmosphere. You probably end up buying more books than you intend to. Such is the power of a good bookshop. It pleases your senses and makes you spend your money.

So you keep walking down the street and you walk past all sorts of shops selling all sorts of things. Each shop has a unique smell. It gives the shop an identity. If you were to be blindfolded and the led

into different shops I am sure you will have no problems identifying the type of goods the shops sell simply by smell. There is no way you can mistake the smell of cloth in a tailor shop, or the nose-tickling scent of curry in a restaurant, or the sterile coolness of an air-conditioned office. if you were to be left standing by the roadside I am sure you have no trouble picking up the unpleasant smell of petrol and diesel fumes from the vehicles on the street.

Also if you were led anywhere near a public toilet, there is no doubt that you will identify the universal stench so typical of a public toilet. if you cannot identify the place then your nose needs repairing.

Scents and smells play a big role in our enjoyment of food. This is made very obvious when you catch a cold and you cannot smell a thing. Suddenly the food becomes tasteless and bland. You have no appetite.

How often have you been led to the kitchen by the smell of food being cooked? The smell of fish and “belacan” being fried is quite something. It invariably makes my stomach rumble and my mouth salivate.

Similarly, if any food is burnt, it is our nose that tells us first. You surely would have experienced the time when you almost put food in your mouth but was stopped in time by the smell that told you that the food was stale. How wonderful our noses are!

Some scents and smells are predominant in my consciousness. The smell of freshly cut grass tells me that my neighbor is mowing his lawn. The smell of wood-smoke drifting into the house tells me that my father is burning dry leaves. The smell of cow-dung tells me that the cows have strayed into my garden again. I can even smell the stench of rotting flesh coming from a corner of the garden. It probably

means that there is a dead rat or a dead frog there. I will have to get rid of it. My nose will guide me to it, or my dog, who has a far superior smelling organ, will get at it first.

These are some of the scents and smells that I know. There are many others. too numerous Or impossible to describe. They have to be experienced to be known. Right now I can smell the approach of recess time. The smell of mee from the tuckshop is calling me there.