Author’s Craft: Word Choice (Adjectives)

1. Focus (15 minutes)

Say: Strong writers choose their words very carefully as they write. They ask themselves, “What is the best word to use to describe this character, setting, or event?” Today I’m going to show you how writers use adjectives to make their descriptions stronger.

Display page 15 of Personal Narratives using the big book or interactive whiteboard resources. Discuss the pictures and read the page together. Say: I like something the writer did on this page. He didn’t just write “Now Sam is my friend.” Instead he wrote “Now Sam is my best friend.” He used the word best to describe his new friend. This tells me that Sam is not just any friend. In the next sentence, the writer didn’t just write “Now I like my town.” Instead he wrote “Now I like my new town.” He used the word new to describe the town his family moved to. Strong writers work hard to use just the right describing word so readers can better visualize and understand experiences. Today we will look at a sentence I wrote earlier. You can help me think of describing words I could add to make my writing better.

Display the following sentence on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources and read it aloud to students:

The dog was lost.

Modeling Text

Say: This sentence could tell readers much more about the dog. It’s hard for me to visualize this lost dog because I haven’t provided any detail about what the dog looks like. Let’s imagine that we are writing this together. Let’s add one or more adjectives to describe the dog. Turn to your partner and tell each other how you could change this sentence so that it’s more descriptive. Give partners about three minutes to generate their ideas. Then bring them together to share the oral sentences they thought of. Record the adjectives they used on chart paper and reread them with the class.

Agree on an adjective to use in the sentence and model inserting it into the text. Reread the sentence and discuss how the addition of the adjective affects readers’ ability to visualize the lost dog.

Say: As you work on your personal narrative today, think about the characters, settings, and events you are writing about. Ask yourself, “Could I improve my description by adding an adjective to help my readers visualize what I’m writing about?”
2. Rehearse (5 minutes)

Distribute students’ writing folders and give a copy of BLM 1 to each student who is ready to prewrite. Ask students to turn to their partners. **Say:** Tell your partner what you will be working on today. If you are planning a new personal narrative, use the graphic organizer to tell the beginning, middle, and end of your story. Move among the pairs of students to monitor and support their efforts.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring (20 minutes)

**Say:** Remember to think about your word choice as you are writing today. Look for opportunities to make your descriptions stronger by adding an adjective to describe a character, setting, or event in your personal narrative.

As students plan, draft, revise, or edit, use the Sample Responsive Conferring Prompts to help you provide differentiated support to individual students based on your observations. **Say:** Point to the characters in your drawings. Point to the setting. Point to the problem. Point to the resolution.

4. Share (5 minutes)

Use the Share time in one of the following ways based on your observations of students during Independent Writing and Conferring:

- Invite volunteers to read aloud their drafts and ask other students to listen for describing words. Invite listeners to tell the adjectives they heard. Encourage students to suggest other describing words that would also work in the drafts.
- After volunteers have read aloud their drafts, encourage them to share the questions they asked to choose describing words they could use in their writing.
- After students share their drafts, ask other students to tell what they liked about the writing. Encourage students to make positive suggestions for ways the writing could be made even better.

Sample Responsive Conferring Prompts to Support and Scaffold Writers

**Goal Oriented**
- I will reread and think about describing words I can add. I know that strong writers use describing words to help readers picture what’s happening in a story.
- I notice that I didn’t put end punctuation on every sentence. I’m going to decide whether to add a period or an exclamation point.

**Directive and Corrective Feedback**
- It’s hard for me to picture this. What describing word could you add to help me?
- Reread this sentence. What’s missing?
- Look at how you wrote the names of your characters. What kind of letter do we use at the beginning of a name?

**Self-Monitoring and Reflection**
- Reread this sentence. Is it a complete thought? How do you know?
- Read what you wrote about your characters and setting. Could you add some describing words to help your readers picture these better?
- Show me something that you fixed in your writing. How did this improve it?

**Validating and Confirming**
- I like the way you went back and added these describing words. Now it’s easier for me to picture what’s happening.
- When you reread, you noticed that you didn’t write about the resolution, so you added that. Great work!
- You tried to make your sentences even better. That’s what strong writers do!

**Teacher Tip**

Model using a primary-level student thesaurus to look up choices for adjectives to use in your personal narratives.