Choose Descriptive Words

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:

• Learn how to include descriptive words in realistic fiction stories.
• Practice choosing descriptive words.
• Discuss how they can apply this strategy to their independent writing.

Preparation

Materials Needed

• Chart paper and markers
• Interactive whiteboard resources

Advanced Preparation

If you will not be using the interactive whiteboard resources, copy the modeling and practice texts onto chart paper prior to the mini-lesson. If necessary, write the sentence frames from “Strategies to Support ELs” on chart paper to support ELs.

1. Focus

Explain Choosing Descriptive Words

Say: When I write a realistic fiction story, I tell about something that could actually happen in real life. I set the story in a familiar place, such as a home or a school. Then, I choose descriptive words so readers can connect to my story. Words that describe details about scenes, settings, and characters help readers make pictures in their minds. Today I’m going to show you how to choose descriptive words for your realistic fiction stories so you can connect to readers.

Model Choosing Descriptive Words

Display the modeling text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Ask students to listen for descriptive words as you read the text aloud.

Tia and Luke went outside. They went to the apartment courtyard. Tia knew they’d have to be careful with the football. Flowerpots and wind chimes decorated the patios.

Modeling Text

Say: In this paragraph, Tia and Luke go outside to play football. The writer describes the setting as the apartment courtyard, so I have a good picture of where they are. The writer goes on to say that “flowerpots and wind chimes decorated the patios.” These words give me a more complete picture of the place. I can imagine the patios that sit just outside the apartments and the flowers in pots. This tells me people care about the courtyard and take care of it. I’m going to underline the descriptive words I see and label them “descriptive words.” Underline and label the identified words and phrases.
2. Rehearse

Practice Choosing Descriptive Words

Write the practice text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources.

The house looked haunted.

Practice Text

Ask students to work with a partner to add descriptive words to the sentence. Ask students to think about words that help readers imagine seeing, hearing, feeling, and smelling details about the setting. Pairs should write down their sentences and be prepared to read them to the class. They should be able to explain their choices for descriptive words.

Share Practice Sentences

Bring students together and invite partners to read aloud their sentences and explain their word choices. Record students’ sentences and post these as models for students to use as they draft or revise their realistic fiction stories.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We learned that we can choose descriptive words to create a more complete picture of a setting and characters in a story. This helps readers imagine and connect to the scenes we describe. A good realistic fiction story takes place in a familiar setting. Remember to use descriptive words in your stories to help readers visualize the setting.

Ask students to identify a section of their realistic fiction stories where they could use additional descriptive words to describe a place, character, or action. During conferences, reinforce students’ use of this and other strategies using the prompts on your conferring flip chart.

4. Share

Bring the class together. Invite volunteers to read aloud a section of their realistic fiction stories in which they used descriptive words.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning

While the rest of the class works on the partner practice activity, work one on one with beginning ELs to practice using color words in oral sentences to make them descriptive, using sentence frames such as:

This pencil is ______.
This shirt is ______.
My hair is ______.

Intermediate and Advanced

Pair ELs with more fluent English speakers during the partner activity. Supply the following sentence frames to help them rewrite and add to the sentence:

The house was ______.
On the porch, they saw ______.
In the yard, they heard ______.

All Levels

If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates: descriptive/descriptivo(a); fiction/la ficción; realistic/realista.