Use Descriptive Words That Fit the Genre

1. Focus

Explain Using Descriptive Words That Fit Science Fiction

Say: Writers of stories often use a set of descriptive words that fit well in their genre. In science fiction, writers often write about subjects such as the future, different universes, space and time travel, aliens, and unusual inventions. They may create a world that is somewhat like our own or very different, and they may also often link stories to current science. Writers can use descriptive words that sound scientific, futuristic, and related to space. Sometimes, they make up words that sound believable. Today I'm going to show you how to include descriptive words in your science fiction story.

Model How Writers Use Descriptive Words That Fit Science Fiction

Display the modeling text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Ask students to listen for descriptive words unique to the science fiction genre as you read from “Earth Is All the Home We Have.”

For almost a year, I’ve had to wear air-purifier buds in my nose when I go out. . . . People once needed air to live, but now air is a killer trying to strangle us. I hear stories of how grass, flowers, and trees were everywhere. They were gone by the time I was born, all but the mellek trees. Scientists created them in the 2930s to survive in the bad air . . .

Modeling Text

Say: In this passage, the main character, Jim, is describing his life in 3012. In the first sentence, I notice the term air-purifier buds. Jim says he wears them in his nose when he goes outside. I know we don’t have anything like that in our world. The writer has created a term that sounds like futuristic technology. This is a term appropriate to science fiction that helps define this new world for readers. Then, Jim talks about “the mellek trees.” That is not a tree I’ve ever heard of. The word mellek is another descriptive term that the writer made up to describe futuristic trees. I learn that scientists created the trees in “the 2930s,” a number that describes a decade clearly in the future. The writer’s use of descriptive terms, which are often imagined, is appropriate to the genre of science fiction that presents imagined worlds.
2. Rehearse

Practice Writing Using Descriptive Words in Science Fiction

Display the practice text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Explain that this is a sentence for a science fiction story that could be improved with descriptive words that fit the genre.

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My brother and I waited to board the ship.
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**Practice Text**

Ask students to work with a partner to rewrite this sentence using descriptive words appropriate to the science fiction genre. Invite them to make up details—and even futuristic words—as necessary. Pairs of students should write down their sentences and be prepared to read them to the class. They should be ready to explain the word choices they made to use descriptive words appropriate to science fiction.

**Share Practice Sentences**

Bring students together and invite students to read aloud their sentences and explain the word choices they made. Record students’ sentences and post these as models for students to use as they revise their own science fiction stories.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

**Say:** We learned that using descriptive words unique to science fiction can help you depict a new world for your readers. Remember that a science fiction story may be about topics such as parallel universes or space and time travel. When you write your science fiction story, you may need to make up new terms to describe your topic to your readers.

Ask students to identify a section of their story in which they can use descriptive words appropriate to science fiction. 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 stories in which they chose descriptive words that fit the science fiction genre.

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**Strategies to Support ELs**

**Beginning**

Work one on one with beginning ELs to practice using simple descriptive words, orally using sentence frames such as:

*The desk is _____.* (smooth, hard, brown, etc.)
*My hair is _____.* (a color, wavy, straight, etc.)
*The pencil is _____.* (dull, sharp, yellow, etc.)

**Intermediate**

Work with small groups of students to find other descriptive science fiction words in the text “Earth Is All the Home We Have.” Help students make up or look up a definition for each unusual word they find.

**Advanced**

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the group activity.

**All Levels**

If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates: *descriptive/descriptivo(a); science fiction/la ciencia-ficción; space/el espacio.*