**Use Words That Describe Places**

**Objectives**

In this mini-lesson, students will:

- Learn about using words that describe places.
- Practice using words that describe places.
- 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 text and practice text 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 Using Words That Describe Places**

**Say:** When I write a memoir, I tell my story in a narrative form. I include elements often found in fiction, such as plot, character development, and setting. When I describe the setting, I want readers to see and feel what it was like to be there. I want to use words that tell not only what the setting looks like, but also how it sounds and smells. Today I’m going to show you how to use words to describe places in your memoirs so you can bring those places to life for your readers.

**Model How Writers Use Words That Describe Places**

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

“We lived in San Juan, the biggest city in Puerto Rico, squeezed together in a one-room apartment with cracking walls and peeling paint. There was one bathroom and shower in the building, which all the tenants shared. As bad as this sounds, I thought everybody lived like that.”

**Modeling Text**

**Say:** In this paragraph, the writer vividly describes his home in San Juan. I can visualize the place based on the description. He begins by saying he lived in the biggest city, so I’m already seeing many people. Then he says that they lived “squeezed together” in one room. **Squeezed** is a great word. I see the family closely packed into their one-room apartment. The writer’s description of the apartment’s **cracking walls** and **peeling paint** helps me visualize his home further. And when the writer says they had **one bathroom and shower** shared by everyone in the building, it helps me understand more about his life at the time. I’m going to underline these phrases and label them **describing place**. Underline and label the identified phrases.
2. Rehearse

Practice Using Words That Describe Places

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

This is the street where I live.

Ask students to work with a partner to rewrite and add to the sentence using words to describe the place where one of the partners lives. Encourage one partner to share details about the place he or she lives. The other partner will ask questions about the place and help think of descriptive language. Encourage students to use not only words about how the place looks, but also words that explain how it sounds and smells. Students may add as many sentences as they wish. Students should write down their sentences and be prepared to read them to the class. They should be ready to explain the words they chose to describe the place.

Share Practice Sentences

Bring students together and invite partners to read their sentences aloud and explain their word choices. Record students’ sentences and post these as models for students to use as they write or revise their own memoirs.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We learned that words that describe places are important to include in a memoir. These words help readers see, smell, and feel the places we remember. A good memoir includes elements found in stories, such as character development and setting. Remember to use words that vividly describe the places in your memoirs.

Encourage students to think about using vivid words to describe places as they draft or revise their memoirs during independent writing time. During student conferences, reinforce students’ use of this and other strategies using the prompts on your conferencing flip chart.

4. Share

Bring the class together. Invite volunteers to read aloud a section of their memoirs in which they used descriptive words to help readers visualize a place.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning

Invite beginning ELs to draw pictures of the street where they live and to tell you about their streets or homes orally. Ask them to write and then read aloud the sentence “This is my street.”

Intermediate and Advanced

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner activity. Supply the following sentence frames to help them rewrite the sentence This is the street where I live.

The street where I live has ______.
It has ______.
It smells like ______.
On this street, I hear ______.

All Levels

If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates: describe/describir; visualize/visualizar.