Use Words That Describe People

**Objectives**

In this mini-lesson, students will:

- Learn about using words that describe people.
- Practice using words that describe people.
- 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 People**

**Say:** When I write a memoir, I describe a period in my life and why it is important to me. I want readers to understand the setting, the events, and the people who made an impact on me. Like the characters in a novel, the people are the characters in my memoir. I need to be able to describe these people in a way that brings them to life for readers. Today I’m going to show you how to use words to describe people so you can help your readers know your characters, too.

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

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

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Her name was Amalia and she told me that she was one of four sisters who lived in the apartment next to ours. Her family was also from Colombia. Her parents had moved to New York ten years ago. Amalia and I became fast friends. I also met Sasha, a girl my age from a Russian family who lived on the second floor, and Marie, from the top floor, a year older than me, who had recently moved from Jamaica. Things were starting to look up for me and my “foreign” friends.
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**Modeling Text**

**Say:** In this passage, the writer describes the new friends she made after moving to New York. She describes each girl by telling her name and how old she was. That’s important information, because it reveals something to me about how the writer saw herself in relation to the new girls. The writer also tells where each girl came from, which shows me how diverse her new neighborhood was. Finally, she tells where each girl lived in the building, showing that her community of friends all lived nearby. In the end, I see the word foreign in quotation marks to describe the friends, which I think is a small joke, because the writer was foreign herself. The author has used a lot of detail to describe the people in her memoir, which helps me get a sense of the people important to her while growing up. I’m going to underline these phrases and label them **words describing people**. Underline and label the identified phrases.
2. Rehearse

Practice Using Words That Describe People

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

In [insert year or grade], I met a new friend.

Practice Text

Ask students to work with a partner to rewrite and add to the sentence using words to describe a friend. Students may add as many sentences as they wish. Remind students that their readers don’t know this character, so they should make the description as complete as possible. Students should write down their sentences and be prepared to read them to the class. They should be ready to explain the words they used to describe the person.

Share Practice Sentences

Bring students together and invite them 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 describing the people in your memoirs is a good way for readers to get to know them. A good memoir includes narrative elements, such as plot, setting, and characters. Remember to describe the people, or characters, in your memoirs by choosing words that bring them to life for your readers.

Ask students to identify a section of their memoirs to which they could add descriptions of a person who made an impact on them. 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 two or three students who used vivid language to describe a person to read aloud those sections of their memoirs.

Strategies to Support ELs

**Beginning**

Invite beginning ELs to draw a picture of an important person in their lives. When they are finished, work one on one with students to write words on their pictures to describe the person. Encourage students to name details that go beyond a person’s visual appearance, if possible.

**Intermediate and Advanced**

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner activity. Supply the following sentence frames to help them complete the practice text:

- My new friend’s name was ______.
- He/She had ______.
- He/She was ______.
- We both liked ______.

**All Levels**

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