Describe a Person’s Impact on the World

1. Focus

Explain Using Words That Describe a Person’s Impact

Say: A biographer tells about a person’s major life experiences and achievements. Most biography subjects are people who had a large impact on the world. Even biographies of less-famous people will tell what it was about those people and their lives that made them important and worth understanding. Writers choose words that highlight the importance of a subject. Sometimes they tell you directly, with words such as most important and crucial. At other times, they simply describe the actions and effects of a person in specific terms and let those effects speak for themselves. Today I’m going to show you how to use word choices to describe a person’s impact on the world in your biographies.

Model How Writers Use Words That Describe a Person’s Impact on the World

Display the modeling text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Ask students to listen for words that show Caesar’s importance as you read the text aloud.

Caesar enacted many important new laws. He reduced taxes for the poor. He began great building projects. He protected the Jews and allowed them to practice their religion freely. He lengthened the calendar to 365 ¼ days.

Modeling Text

Say: This text comes right after the writer describes Caesar as “the most powerful man in the world.” I see that the writer tells me about changes Caesar made that affected Rome and the world. She uses the words important and new to describe the laws Caesar enacted. She uses the word great to describe his building projects. She also tells me that Caesar reduced poor people’s taxes and provided protections for Jewish people—which surprises me because this forceful leader appears to have helped some people who have often been mistreated. Finally, I learn that Caesar lengthened the calendar to 365 ¼ days—not just anyone can do that! I can see that the writer sometimes uses words to stress the importance of effects Caesar had on the world, and in other cases simply describes the effects in clear, specific terms and leaves me to realize how impressive they are. This shows me that biography writers don’t always need to use special words to highlight a person’s impact on the world—sometimes they can describe actions clearly and let these actions speak for themselves.
2. Rehearse

Practice Writing Using Words That Describe a Person’s Impact on the World

Display the practice text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Explain that the sentence is an imagined line from a biography about a teacher who had a large impact on the people around her. Remind students that a biography subject does not always need to be someone who changes history to have an effect on the world.

At the school, students appreciated Ms. Smith for many reasons.

Practice Text

Ask students to work with partners to rewrite and add to the sentence using words that describe the subject’s impact on the world around her. Remind students to use specific words and details about the “many reasons” that other people appreciated the subject. Encourage them to invent details 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 details they added and how they express the impact this person had.

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 their biographies.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We learned that words that describe a person’s impact on the world are a key part of a biography. As you write your biography, remember to include words to highlight and show your subject’s impact on the world.

Ask students to identify a section of their biography in which they can use precise word choices to describe the subject’s impact on the world. 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 from their biographies. Ask each student to read a section in which the words chosen either stress the importance of the subject to the world or describe the subject’s actions clearly, so that readers can realize the subject’s significance.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning

Invite beginning ELs to tell about a person who is important to them. Use the following sentence frames to help them compose oral sentences. Model as necessary:

______ is important to me.
He/She is ______.

Intermediate and Advanced

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

Students thought Ms. Smith was ______.
Ms. Smith was ______.
Ms. Smith changed the school forever because ______.

All Levels

If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates: impact/el impacto; person/la persona.