1. Focus

Explain Revising for First Person Voice

Say: An essential element of any memoir is the writer’s use of the first person voice. Remember, the first person voice is told as if the narrator is in the story. A memoir is about a short time in the author’s life and is focused on the author’s thoughts and feelings during that time. When a writer uses the first person voice well in a memoir, that writer’s audience will be able to connect with and enter into the experiences the writer is describing.

Model Revising for First Person Voice

Display the modeling text (without revisions) on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Read the sentences aloud, before modeling how to revise for first person voice.

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:

- Learn to revise a memoir to strengthen the use of the first person voice.
- Revise a section of their own writing and share their revisions with the class.
- Discuss how they can apply this strategy to their own independent writing.

Preparation

Materials Needed

- Chart paper and markers
- Interactive whiteboard resources

Advanced Preparation

If you are not using the interactive whiteboard resources, copy the modeling text (without revisions) and practice text onto chart paper prior to the mini-lesson. Leave enough space between lines to allow you to insert new text.

I’m in Jump School at Fort Benning, Georgia, 15,000 feet in the air. I go to the door of the plane. He’s ready to make his first jump. I look out the front of the aircraft. All he can see is fire coming out of the front engine, smoke out the back.

Modeling Text

Say: This passage is from “What Comes Before Wings,” a memoir about the 1960s by Efrain Hernandez. In these sentences, Efrain recalls his first jump from a plane. I think about whether the text is written from the point of view of someone taking part in the story or observing it from outside the story. At first, I see the events through Efrain’s eyes. He tells me directly where he is and what he’s doing, using the pronoun I. But then the text shifts. Now it’s an outside narrator telling about Efrain. This is jarring, and it doesn’t have the same effect as when Efrain is telling the story. This sentence needs to be revised to make it first person instead of third person. The verb and the pronoun need to be revised so they agree. Model revising the text. Then reread it to show students how the paragraph now flows better and sounds like it is Efrain who is telling us about his experiences.
2. Rehearse

Practice Revising for Voice

Write the practice text onto chart paper or use the interactive whiteboard resources.

| 1. Efrain’s family moved to a nice working-class area in the South Bronx. |
| 2. He attended second grade at P.S. 62. |
| 3. Within eight months of starting school, his English is up to grade level. |
| 4. His parents work in factories and are gone by the time the children get up. |

Practice Text

Invite students to work with partners to revise the sentences so that all of them are written in the first person. Each pair should write down their sentences and be prepared to read them to the class. Students should be able to explain their decisions.

Share Practice Revisions

Bring students together and invite pairs to read aloud their revised sentences. Discuss how using the first person changes the tone of the writing.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We just learned how writing a memoir in the first person makes us feel as if the narrator is talking directly to us. Remember, a good memoir brings the audience close to the writer’s feelings and thoughts during an important time in the writer’s life. Write your memoir in the first person voice to bring your reader close to the experiences you want to share.

Encourage students to focus on voice as they revise their own memoirs during independent writing time. During conferences, reinforce students’ use of this and other strategies using the prompts on your conferring flip chart.

4. Share

Bring students together. Invite students to read aloud a section of their memoir that they revised for voice.

4. Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning and Intermediate

Beginning and intermediate ELs are not ready to work on this writing process skill. While other students collaborate on the small-group activity or write independently, meet one on one with students to support developmentally appropriate writing skills based on their independent writing and language levels. Since this lesson focuses on point of view, you might want to provide simple sentence frames so students can work on pronouns.

Intermediate and Advanced

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner activity.