Choose Strong Adjectives

1. Focus

Explain Choosing Strong Adjectives

Say: A writer of a personal narrative re-creates a meaningful experience from his or her life. The writer describes the experience so that readers feel like they were there, too. Strong adjectives help writers tell about people, places, and events. Writers use them to describe what happened in an interesting way. An adjective is a word that describes something. For example, in the phrase “the skinny dog,” the word skinny is the adjective. It describes the dog. It’s easy to use common adjectives—such as the words nice, good, and bad—to much. You can make your writing much more descriptive by using stronger, more-specific adjectives such as tiny, huge, and awful. Today I’m going to show you how to choose strong adjectives to use in personal narratives.

Model Choosing Strong Adjectives

Display the modeling text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Ask students to listen for strong adjectives as you read the text aloud.

Modeling Text

Dad had on his customary overalls. Mitch had on jeans and untied shoes.

“Keep an eye on the cows, Mitch!” Dad called. Mitch did as he was told—then he got bored. He began to play with his whip. He was making fancy patterns in the grass.

Say: In the first sentence, the writer describes the overalls using the word customary, which means “usual.” This adjective helps me see that Dad always wears the same thing. It’s an interesting detail that shows us something about his character. Then I see the adjective untied in the phrase untied shoes. This adjective shows me something about Mitch, the writer’s brother. It tells me that he’s not particularly careful about his clothes and this also makes me wonder if he’s careless about other things, too. In the last sentence, I notice the adjective fancy. This is another strong adjective that describes the patterns Mitch was making. I know these weren’t just simple patterns in the grass. I’m going to underline these words and label them “adjectives.” Underline and label the identified words.
2. Rehearse

Practice Choosing Strong Adjectives

Display the practice text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Explain that this text could be found in a personal narrative.

| The day was _____ | The weather was _____ | We saw ______ |

Ask students to work with a partner to add to the sentence prompts using adjectives to describe an important day. Students can take turns describing days that were important to them. Remind students to use strong, descriptive adjectives. Encourage them to add descriptive details about the days and events that happened. Each pair should write down their sentences and be prepared to read them to the class. They should be ready to explain the adjectives they chose.

Share Practice Sentences

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

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We learned that we can use strong adjectives to help us describe the places, people, and events in our personal narratives. A good personal narrative describes an experience in a way that makes readers feel as though they were there, too. Remember to use strong adjectives to bring your personal narrative to life for your readers.

Ask students to identify a section of their personal narratives where they could use strong adjectives to describe an event. 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 personal narratives in which they used strong adjectives.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning

While the rest of the class works on the partner practice activity, you may wish to support the language development of beginning ELs. Introduce students to several simple adjective opposites—for example, happy/sad, good/bad, hot/cold, and so on. Help students create pairs of drawings showing opposite adjectives.

Intermediate and Advanced

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner activity.

Ask: What was the best day? Why was it best? Was it warm? Cold? Sunny? Snowy? Did something smell sweet? What did you see?

All Levels

If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates: adjective/el adjetivo; experience/la experiencia; narrative/la narración; personal/personal.