Revise Fiction to Improve Voice

1. Focus

Explain Revising for Voice

Say: When I finish writing the first draft of a story, I am not really finished. My next step is to revise my writing. Revising a story is one of the most important steps in the writing process. I go back and make my story more interesting for my readers. There may be lots of action in my story. But if I just tell about one event after the other, it is hard for my readers to get to know my characters. So, one way I make the story more interesting when I revise it is to add details that show what my characters are like and what they are thinking. I’m going to show you how to develop the voices of your characters.

Model Revising for Voice

Display the modeling text (without revisions) on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Read aloud the sentences and model revising for voice.

1. “Rats!” Tia said. “I forgot my lunch!”
2. The free sandwich was always peanut butter. Yuck!
3. “M-may I help you?” Can I help?” Tia asked. She was still a little scared.

Modeling Text

Read sentence 1. Say: Tia is having a bad day. How does she feel when she realizes she forgot her lunch? I can add an exclamation to show how she feels. Model revising the text.

Read sentence 2. Ask: Do we know how Tia feels about the sandwich? Does getting a sandwich make her day better or worse? We can’t really tell from this sentence. Adding the exclamation Yuck! shows how much Tia hates peanut butter. Adding this exclamation and the exclamation Rats! in sentence 1 helps make Tia seem like a real girl. It helps the reader picture what she must be like. Model revising the text.

Read sentence 3. Say: Tia broke Mr. Morgan’s flowerpot. She has just told him what she’s done and offered to help replant the flowers. I don’t get a sense of how Tia feels from reading this. Is she angry? Sad? Does she really care about the broken pot? I can make Tia’s voice come through by changing the way she talks. I can make her sound unsure and add that she’s feeling a bit scared. Model revising the text.

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:

- Learn to revise a fictional story to create a character’s voice.
- Revise a section of their own writing and share their revisions with the class.
- Discuss how they can apply this skill to their own 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 (without revisions) and the practice text onto chart paper prior to the mini-lesson. Leave enough space between lines to allow you to insert new text.
2. Rehearse

Practice Revising for Voice

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

1. Tia did not bring her math homework to school.
2. Tia got a zero for the day in math class.
3. Tia had to wait for her friends to finish their homework after school.

Practice Text

Ask students to work with a partner to revise the sentences for voice. Student pairs should write down their sentences and be prepared to read them to the class.

Share Practice Revisions

Bring students together and invite pairs to read aloud their revised sentences and explain how they were able to make the character’s voice come through.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We just learned that we can revise our stories by developing our characters’ voices. We can do this by adding thoughts to the narration and making our characters talk like real people. As you revise your story, remember to make it even more interesting to your readers by giving each of your characters a voice.

Encourage students to focus on the voices of their characters when they revise their stories 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 realistic fiction stories that they revised to improve the characters’ voices.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning

While other students collaborate on the small-group activity or write independently, meet one on one with beginning ELs to support developmentally appropriate writing skills based on their independent writing and language levels. Since this lesson focuses on adding a character’s thoughts and feelings to a text, consider presenting students with a picture of a familiar character and having them brainstorm words to describe what the character is thinking or feeling.

Intermediate and Advanced

Pair ELs with more fluent English speakers during the partner activity.

All Levels

If you have students whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates to help them understand the lesson focus: character/el carácter; revise/revisar.