Use Side Comments to Connect with Your Audience

1. Focus

Explain Using Side Comments to Connect with Your Audience

Explain. Say: When we write a personal narrative, we want to make a connection with our readers. We want to make our audience feel like they are a part of the event or action—almost as if they are two steps away and we are having a side conversation with them about what is happening. One way to do this is to step away from the text and add a side comment. A side comment is a statement or two, maybe a question, in the text that you might use in an everyday conversation. Today I’m going to show you how to include this type of voice in your personal narrative so that you can make a connection to your readers.

Model How Writers Use Side Comments to Connect with Their Audience

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

Say: I noticed something interesting about the writer. She’s telling her personal narrative as if it were a story. Then all of the sudden, she bursts through and tells us what she feels about the situation. She expresses her frustrations about the garage sale. She says, “After all the times I slept with Maya on the kitchen floor. All the time I spent making up a silly song for her. Was it all for nothing?” This is an example of making a connection with the audience by taking a few steps away from the storyline and adding feelings. I really feel the writer’s frustration. And her story reminds me of a time when my parents gave away one of my favorite toys without asking me. I still remember how I felt when that happened. Wow! The author helped me make a connection to my life. I’m going to underline those sentences and label them voice side comments. Underline and label the identified sentences.

One day my mom put her arm on my shoulder. “We’re going to have a garage sale…and we’re going to give away the puppies.”

“What? No, not Maya!” I shouted, feeling a piece of my heart break. I couldn’t believe it! After all the times I slept with Maya on the kitchen floor. All the time I spent making up a silly song for her. Was it all for nothing?

Modeling Text
2. Rehearse

**Practice Writing Side Comments**

Write the practice text on chart paper or the whiteboard.

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Our teacher stood in front of the class. She did not look happy.
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**Practice Text**

Ask students to work with a partner to add voice to this sentence. Remind students that they want to step away from the text and add a side comment that connects with the audience. Each pair should write down their sentences and be prepared to read them to the class and explain how they made a connection to their readers through side notes.

**Share Practice Sentences**

Bring students together and invite pairs to read aloud their sentences and explain how they made a connection with their audience. Have pairs identify their side notes. Record students’ sentences and post these as models for students to use as they write their own personal narratives.

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**3. Independent Writing and Conferring**

**Say:** We just learned that adding side notes to our personal narratives is one way to make connections with our audience. Remember, a good personal narrative has a strong voice that readers can connect to. As you write your personal narrative, remember to let your voice come through.

Ask students to identify a section of their personal narrative where they could add a side comment to connect with the audience. During conferences, reinforce students’ use of this and other strategies using the prompts on your conferring flip chart.

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**4. Share**

Bring the class together. Invite volunteers to read aloud a section of their personal narrative in which they added a side comment that helped them establish a connection to their audience.

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**Strategies to Support ELs**

**Beginning**

Work one on one with beginning ELs to practice expressing feelings orally using sentence frames such as:

- *I feel ______.*
- *I am ______.*

**Intermediate and Advanced**

Pair ELs with more fluent English speakers during the partner activity. Supply the following sentence frames to help them create side comments for the practice sentence:

- *I was thinking ______.*
- *Oh no! ______.*
- *You can imagine ______.*

**All Levels**

If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates: connect/conectar/formar una conexión, voice/la voz.