Use Striking Words and Phrases

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:

• Learn to use striking words and phrases.
• Practice using striking words and phrases.
• Discuss how they can apply this strategy to their 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 and practice text onto chart paper prior to the mini-lesson. If necessary, write the sentence frames from “Strategies to Support ELs” on chart paper to support ELs.

1. Focus

Explain Using Striking Words and Phrases

Say: Writers use striking words and phrases to get readers’ attention and sometimes to help readers imagine unusual characters and scenes. For example, I could describe my friend’s new puppy as “small” or “cute,” but if I said her puppy is “roly-poly” or “has fluffy, soft fur and never stops wiggling,” you would have a much better picture of what that puppy looks and acts like. In science fiction stories, writers use striking words and phrases to help readers imagine the unusual characters, settings, and themes these stories describe. Today I’m going to show you how to use striking words and phrases to bring your science fiction stories to life.

Model How Writers Use Striking Words and Phrases

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

“But they look like cuddly, little baby dinosaurs,” his mother said, examining the Dino-Pal images onscreen. “They aren’t much bigger than bunny rabbits.”

Modeling Text

Ask students to listen for striking words and phrases as you read the text aloud.

Say: The mother in this scene from the story uses some interesting phrases to describe the “Dino-Pals.” She says they look like “little baby dinosaurs” and that they “aren’t much bigger than bunny rabbits.” I’ve seen pictures of young dinosaurs, and I know that they’re still fairly big and don’t look much like rabbits. I don’t usually think of dinosaurs as “cuddly,” like bunnies. So it’s striking that the writer makes this comparison. Still, it gives me some idea of what these toys look like—and tells me that they are unusual. It is very important to the story that readers focus on these Dino-Pals, so I think the writer has used striking language to grab my attention and help me understand these odd creature-toys. This is a good example of a science fiction writer using striking words and phrases to describe something that is far from normal.
2. Rehearse

**Practice Using Striking Words and Phrases**

Display the practice text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Explain that the sentence is part of a science fiction description that could improve with the addition of striking language.

The planet’s clouds were gray.

ʻPractice Text ʻ

Ask students to work with a partner to rewrite and add to the sentence using striking words and phrases. Invite them to imagine details about the strange planet 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 word choices they made and how their striking words and phrases might add to this story.

**Share Practice Sentences**

Bring students together and invite partners to read aloud their sentences and explain the word choices they made. Record students’ sentences and post these as models for students to use as they revise their own science fiction stories.

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### Strategies to Support ELs

**Beginning**

Beginning ELs are not likely to have the rich vocabulary necessary to create striking descriptions. Instead, work with these students to describe a picture of a planet or a dinosaur in any way they can. Ask questions about characteristics such as color, size, and shape to help them think of descriptions. Model as necessary. Write down example sentences for students to read.

**Intermediate and Advanced**

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner activity. Supply the following sentence frames to help them write their sentences:

- The gray clouds are like ______.
- The clouds huddle together like ______.
- The clouds are the color of ______.

**All Levels**

If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates: phrases/las frases; science fiction/la ciencia-ficción.

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3. Independent Writing and Conferring

**Say:** We learned that using striking words and phrases can grab a reader’s attention and bring a science fiction story to life. As you write your science fiction stories, remember to use striking words and phrases to get your readers’ attention and help them understand the world you’ve created.

Ask students to identify a section of their science fiction stories in which they can use striking words and phrases to describe unusual things, settings, or events. 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 two or three students who used particularly striking words and/or phrases to read aloud a section of their science fiction draft.