Revise Your Memoir for Word Choice

1. Focus

Explain Revising for Word Choice

Say: We have spent time drafting our personal narratives. Now it’s time to reread them and revise them to make them the best they can be. When we revise a draft, we read it carefully and then make changes to improve it. We decide whether we have used the right words to help the reader fully appreciate the story we have to tell about our lives. We ask ourselves whether we have vividly described the people and places so our readers feel like they’ve met them or been to the place we’re writing about. Today I’m going to show you how to revise your memoir by making stronger word choices to describe emotions, people, and places.

Model Revising for Word Choice

Display the modeling text (without revisions) on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Read aloud each sentence and model how you revise to include more vivid descriptions.

1. Trying to forget her mournful expression, I opened a stack of presents in colorful wrappings that were piled high on the piano.
2. I stood there in my yellow party dress, frozen in time, unable to hear what he was saying.
3. I begged and implored my parents to change their plans and stay right where we were.

Modeling Text

Reread sentence 1. Say: I can make this sentence more visual by describing what her expression is like. I can also add more details to help readers get a picture of the many presents. I can add an emotion word like mournful to describe the expression. Also, let’s give the reader a sense of the setting. Where were the presents? Perhaps they were “piled high on the piano.” I’ll insert those words at the end of the sentence. Model the suggested revisions.

Reread sentence 2. Say: I get a sense that the narrator is shocked because of the way she says she was unable to hear what he was saying. To make this more effective, I can add the words “frozen in time” to emphasize her shock at what she’s hearing. Model the suggested revisions.

Reread sentence 3. Say: It is obvious that the narrator does not want to move to a new country. She begs her parents to stay. Imploring is also a form of begging, but it has a more dramatic meaning. I’ll add implored to my sentence for emphasis. Model the suggested revisions.
2. Rehearse

Practice Revising for Word Choice

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

1. I asked why this would be my last birthday with my grandmother.
2. I asked my parents to change their plans.
3. Boy, was I unhappy then.

**Practice Text**

Ask students to work with a partner to revise the sentences adding words that describe emotions, people, and places. Students should write down their sentences and be prepared to read them to the class and explain how they revised the sentences to describe emotion, people, and places.

**Share Practice Revisions**

Bring students together and invite partners to read aloud their revised 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 memoirs.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

**Say:** We learned that adding words that describe emotions, people, and places can help us tell our memoirs in a way that connects to readers. When you revise your memoirs, remember to include strong emotion words and to describe the people and places so that readers can understand why they are important to you.

Encourage students to focus on word choice when they revise their 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 memoirs that they revised for word choice by adding words that describe emotions, people, and places.

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**Strategies to Support ELs**

**Beginning**

Invite beginning EL students to draw a picture of a favorite person, place, or thing. Help them write descriptive words on self-stick notes to add to their pictures. Help students use the descriptive words in a sentence by providing simple sentence frames such as:

- This picture is ______.
- My grandmother has ______.

**Intermediate and Advanced**

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner activity. Support oral language by providing simple sentence frames such as:

- This was a special day because ______.
- I felt ______ because ______.

**All Levels**

If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates: emotion/la emoción; memoirs/las memorias.