Use a Drawing Before Drafting

1. Focus

Explain Using a Drawing Before Drafting

Say: When I draft historical fiction, I want to make sure the reader can really visualize the setting. It’s especially important to create strong visual images for the reader. To help me do this, I sometimes draw important scenes in my story before I begin my drafting. Looking at my drawings helps me think of good descriptive words and phrases. Today I’ll show you how drawing before drafting can help you find strong words to describe the settings in your story.

Model Drawing to Draft

Model using a drawing of the setting for the historical fiction story you selected during the narrowing-the-focus lesson. You can also display a sketch of a cabin in a clearing in a heavily wooded area on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources.

Say: My historical fiction story is about a family in the early 1600s who settled in an area that is now New England. My drawing shows the setting of their cabin. I’m going to make a list of descriptive words and phrases that I can incorporate into my draft when I describe the setting.

Begin a list of words on chart paper and add to it as you model.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forest</th>
<th>Snow</th>
<th>Cabin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dense</td>
<td>thick</td>
<td>dwarfed by the trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>menacing</td>
<td>high snow drifts</td>
<td>small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oppressive</td>
<td>pure white</td>
<td>plain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dark</td>
<td>sun glints off the snow</td>
<td>made of wood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sinister</td>
<td></td>
<td>windows boarded over</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dangerous</td>
<td></td>
<td>smoke rising from chimney</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample Descriptive Words List

After “Forest.” Say: How do I want to describe this forest? I want to convey how hard it was for the colonists to be in such a new, strange place. They were the first European settlers there. There were dangers in the forest. I think the forest might seem menacing and oppressive to them. It would be dark because the trees are so dense, with little sunlight getting through in some spaces. I’ll add these words to my list.
After “Snow” and “Cabin.” Say: The snow would be piled thick on the ground and there would be drifts of snow in some places. The snow would be very white and sparkle in the sunlight. The cabin would be made of wood and very plain, and it would be dwarfed by the dense forest. It wouldn’t have glass windows, but to keep out the cold, I think they would be boarded up. There would be some kind of a fire inside so I could describe a chimney with smoke coming out. I’ll add these words to my list.

2. Rehearse

Practice Drawing to Choose Words

Invite students to draw a picture of one of the important settings in their historical fiction stories. Then invite students to work with partners to talk about the pictures and together list words and phrases to describe the setting.

Share and Discuss Drawing to Choose Words

Bring students together and invite volunteers to share their drawings and the descriptive words they can use to describe their settings.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We just learned how drawing before drafting can help us visualize a setting we’re going to describe in a historical fiction story. Then we practiced choosing words that describe the scene and would help our readers visualize the setting. As you get ready to draft your story, try drawing to help you choose words that will make the reader see and feel the setting.

Encourage students to draw their settings and think of descriptive words as they draft their stories. 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 share their drawings and descriptions of an important setting in their historical fiction drafts.