Comparatives and Superlatives

1. Focus

Explain Comparatives and Superlatives

Say: Adjectives describe people, places, animals, and objects. They tell us answers to questions such as, “Which one?” “What kind?” and “How many?” Comparative adjectives are adjectives that writers use to compare two things or two groups of things. If we are forming a comparative for a one-syllable adjective, or some two-syllable adjectives, we usually change the ending of the adjective to add the letters -er. For example, we might say, “I am wise, but you are wiser than I am.”

Say: Superlative adjectives are adjectives that writers use when comparing one thing to everything else. If we are forming a superlative for a one-syllable adjective, or some two-syllable adjectives, we usually change the ending of the adjective to add the letters -est. For example, “He was the cleverest king.” Comparatives and superlatives are particularly useful to writers of biography because they help the writers describe their subjects.

Model Identifying and Choosing Comparatives and Superlatives

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

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:

- Identify comparatives and superlatives that use -er and -est endings.
- Form comparatives and superlatives using -er and -est endings.
- Use comparatives and superlatives in sentences.

Preparation

Materials Needed

- Chart paper and markers
- Comparatives and Superlatives (BLM 6)
- 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, copy the sentence frames from “Strategies to Support ELs” onto chart paper.

Comparatives and Superlatives

1. Rome was probably the greatest empire the world had ever known.
2. Cleopatra was wealthier than Julius Caesar.

Modeling Text

Read sentence 1. Say: The word greatest, in this sentence, is a superlative adjective that the writer uses to compare Rome with all other empires in the world. Because it compares one thing to many or all other things, it uses the -est ending. If the writer had wanted to compare Rome to just one other empire—maybe the British one—she might have used the comparative greater (with an -er ending).

Read sentence 2. Say: In this sentence, the writer uses the word wealthier to compare Cleopatra with Julius Caesar. When writers compare two things, they change the ending of the adjective to add the ending -er. Writers of biographies and other texts use comparative and superlative adjectives when they want to show comparisons.
2. Rehearse

Practice Identifying and Choosing Comparatives and Superlatives

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

Ask students to form pairs. Invite pairs to decide between the comparative and the superlative forms of the adjective in parentheses to use in each sentence. (Students do not need to copy sentences.)

1. Crassus was the (rich) ______ man in Rome.
2. The (poor) ______ classes of freemen enjoyed more leisure time than slaves did.

Practice Text

If your class includes English learners or other students who need support, use “Strategies to Support ELs.”

Share Practice Sentences

Invite pairs to share their sentences with the class. Ask students the following questions:

- Which word ending shows a comparison between two things?
- Which ending shows a comparison of one thing to all other things?
- Which ending did you choose for each sentence? Why?

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We learned that comparative adjectives compare two things and superlative adjectives compare one thing to all others. These forms of adjectives are useful in biographies for comparing the people we write about to other people. To form a comparative adjective, we can often change the ending of an adjective to add -er. We use an -est ending to form a superlative adjective. We’ll use comparatives and superlatives when we want to show comparisons in our writing.

If you would like to give students additional practice forming comparatives and superlatives, ask them to complete BLM 6.

4. Share

Bring students together. Review and provide corrective feedback based on students’ answers to BLM 6.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning
Help beginning ELs “see” when to use -er and -est in forming comparative and superlative adjectives. Choose several students of obviously different heights. Pointing to various students, Say: Jimi is taller than Martine. Martine is taller than Rafa. Jimi is the tallest student.

Intermediate and Advanced
Pair ELs with fluent English speakers to identify comparative and superlative adjectives. Read the sentences from the practice activity with students and make sure they understand them.

Provide the following sentence frames to guide oral language:

Words with an -er ending compare ______.
Words with an -est ending compare ______.

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers to complete BLM 6.