Revise Your Biography for Word Choice

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:

- Learn to revise a biography to strengthen the word choice to increase reader interest and comprehension.
- Revise a section of their own writing and share their revisions with the class.
- Discuss how they can apply this skill to their own 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 and practice texts onto chart paper prior to the mini-lesson.

Explain Revising for Word Choice

Say: Sometimes when we complete our drafts, we assume we’re done, but we’re not. One of the most important parts of writing is revising the text—or making changes to it—to make it stronger. In fact, professional writers often do several revisions to a work before they publish it. In a biography, one thing we want to focus on is word choice. We need to make sure we describe the places and events that are important to the life of the person we are writing about. We need to describe the subject’s personality and the impact this person had on the world. Today I’m going to show you how to revise a biography to include stronger descriptions.

Model Revising for Word Choice

Display the modeling text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Ask students to listen for descriptive language as you read aloud.

**Modeling Text**

1. Cleopatra was getting old, and though still living well, she was not free.
   
   **Revised:** Cleopatra was now 39 years old, and though still living in her palace, she was a virtual prisoner of Octavian.

2. She thought she would be taken to Rome and displayed in front of the people.
   
   **Revised:** She was convinced she would be taken to Rome and paraded before the people as a conquered queen. To spare herself such humiliation, she killed herself.

Reread sentence 1. Say: As I looked at this original text, it seemed boring. I needed to revise the word choice to make it more interesting. Cleopatra **getting old** doesn’t tell much, but I added words to provide more details. Instead of the words **living well**, I added words to show that she was still living as a queen. This is important information. I also rewrote the part about not being free. **Listen as I read my revised version.** Read the revised version aloud, and ask students which version they think sounds better.

Reread sentence 2 and the revised sentence. Say: **Listen as I read the original and my revised sentence.** Again, I needed to make changes to my word choices to make this text sound more interesting and to provide more relevant information. I added words to describe how Cleopatra killed herself. And using words like **convinced**, instead of **thought**, and **paraded**, instead of **displayed**, makes the text much more interesting.
2. Rehearse

Practice Revising for Word Choice

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

1. Octavia, Antony’s wife, took in Antony and Cleopatra’s children.
2. Octavian did not want to execute Cleopatra.
3. Cleopatra’s story lives on to this day.

Practice Text

Ask students to work with partners to revise word choice and make the sentences more detailed and interesting. Partners should write their revised sentences and be prepared to read them to the class and explain how their revisions improved each sentence.

Share Practice Revisions

Bring students together and invite partners to read aloud their revised sentences and explain how they changed the text to make their sentences more descriptive. Record students’ sentences and post these as models for students to use as they revise their own biographies.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We learned how to revise our biographies to include descriptions of the places and events that were important to the subject, the subject’s characteristics or personality, and the subject’s impact on history. Remember to add these key details to your biographies.

Encourage students to focus on word choice when they revise their biographies 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 biographies that they revised for word choice.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning and Intermediate

Beginning and intermediate ELs are not ready to work on this writing process skill. While other students collaborate on the partner activity or write independently, meet one on one with students to support developmentally appropriate writing skills based on their independent writing and language levels. Since this lesson focuses on adding descriptions, you might want to work with students on using adjectives.

Intermediate and Advanced

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner activity.

All Levels

If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates: biography/la biografía; descriptive/descriptivo(a).