

Inside writing Communities

Grades 3-5

Lesson on Word Choice

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Background

By the end of the school year, Christine wants her third-graders to be familiar with the “six traits of good writing.” Thus far, the students have learned about ideas and organization, and Christine feels the students are ready to learn about a third trait: word choice.

Instruction and Activities

At the beginning of writing workshop, Christine and her students gather on the rug. First, she reviews the lesson on effective word choice from the previous day: using a variety of words in writing.

Next, Christine reads a passage from *Farmer Boy* by Laura Ingalls Wilder that describes a sumptuous Christmas dinner. After reading the passage, she asks the students to name the descriptive words they remember.

Christine shares her own story web in which she uses a variety of words to describe pickles. She has written the web on chart paper so all the students can see it. She then reads her rough draft, which includes many of the descriptive words from her web.

Christine asks the students to return to their desks and do the same exercise using Cheetos instead of pickles. Before they begin, she guides them in developing a story web, encouraging them to describe the way Cheetos smell, sound, and taste and to remember some of the times they have eaten them. The students work in pairs, first developing a story web, and then writing a rough draft. Christine offers individual guidance and help while the students work.

After the students have written their story webs and rough drafts, Christine gathers the class on the rug again and has each pair share what they wrote.

The next day, after a review, Christine has the students repeat the activity from the previous day, but this time, each pair of students writes about a food of their own choosing.

The following day, Christine plans to share a web and draft of a story she is writing about her mother’s cooking, but first she shares where she got the idea for her story — from an entry in her writer’s notebook. She presents her story web to the students, with the addition of two writing considerations: audience and purpose. After sharing her story web, her purpose and audience, and the thinking she did during prewriting, Christine reads her first draft, connecting the words in the draft to the words on the web.

Then Christine asks the students to think of a favorite meal and the people they shared it with and write a story web and draft describing the food and the feelings associated with those memories. Christine makes sure that the students have an idea for a story before they leave the rug, and she provides support for the students who need help choosing a topic. She continues to provide support as needed while the students are writing.

Again, Christine’s writing workshop ends where it began — on the rug — with students sharing what they created during independent writing time.