

Mastering the Artistic Writing Voice



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Mastering the Artistic Writing Voice

Preface

We employ voice to turn a well-crafted collection of words and sentences into reading pleasure. All the vocabulary and grammar in the world will not help a piece of writing come alive—we want to hear the author’s voice. When we do hear the author’s voice and we like it, we go in search for more of the same. These lessons will help beginning writers find their individual voices and will enable teachers to present rhetorical devices and specific strategies that enhance voice in writing.



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Writing with Voice

When I call a friend on the phone, it is not usually necessary for me to identify myself by name. Even when my friends do not have Caller ID, they know my voice and respond without hesitation. Each of us has a distinct, recognizable voice, just as we have distinct fingerprints and facial features.

The writer's voice works the same way. Our writing voice is different from anyone else's. The only difference between our speaking voice and our writing voice is that we must struggle to find our own writing voice rather than have it bestowed upon us at birth.

Some writers' voices are so distinct to readers that on hearing one or two lines of a work, the hearer immediately knows who the author is. In fact, understanding voice in writing starts with recognizing voice in reading. Students must learn to "hear" the voice of the author in what they read. Next, they can identify what is unique that makes one author's voice different from another's.

Readers have favorite authors because they like the voice; they are attracted to a particular writer's way of putting words together to convey a picture or meaning. Writers who do this well, do so with a truthful, authentic voice. They are not afraid to show heartfelt honesty. From this, the reader hears the author's true self and relates to the writer's message.

Writing that has energy, passion, and sincerity provides an "emotional afterlife" for the reader. That means that the reader is thinking about and enjoying the insights from his reading for perhaps years after the book is closed and getting dusty on the shelf.

In order to write with voice, authors must understand the complexity, the challenge of communicating emotions and evoking response through the way they convey their experiences and interpret their world.

Lots of ingredients constitute voice, and we have provided many of those in this manual. However, just like in any recipe, the overuse of any one ingredient (think salt) or the inappropriate insertion of an ingredient can contribute to aggravating or distracting the reader rather than providing a pleasurable experience.

Writing with voice is an art. Just as the painter experiments with colors and shading, with texture and form, so does the writer. By playing with words, phrases, and images for sound, humor, visual impact, and meaning, authors learn to create writing that reverberates with their own artistic voices.

To understand and recognize voice, students must receive explicit instruction and collaborative practice. As teachers help students appreciate the richness of precise word choices and figurative language, of patterns of thought like repetition, and other means of providing insight, students begin to see the complexity of good writing.

It is paramount that teachers learn along with students, that teachers write both on their own and collaboratively with students. Voice is a product of experimentation, of revision, of niggling around in the messiness of thinking and constructing meaning, and it takes practice to get there.

Finally, to engage students in writing with voice, we must give students permission to care about their writing by providing them with many chances to write about what they care about. That is the only way that students will be personally invested in finding their own unique voice. Once they have found that voice, perhaps then, they can apply it to the generic prompts with which they are served for assessment purposes.

Purpose of This Manual

This manual is designed to supplement Language Arts instruction by providing lessons that connect reading with writing. By studying models and understanding the techniques authors use to provide meaning through voice, writers can begin to employ those elements in their own writing. The goal of this manual is to build confidence and competence in students' ability to write with voice.

How to Use This Manual

Each lesson is designed to connect reading and writing; however, the emphasis is on the writing term. In-depth exploration of the meaning in the mentor text is left to the teacher.

Each lesson is created to stand on its own and is not dependent on any other lesson as a prerequisite. Consequently, teachers can pick the lessons that support what they are already teaching.

Each lesson can be used by all grade levels, 7-12, and can be modified by the teacher when necessary.

Most lessons have provided opportunity for creative writing experiences which help students practice the artistry of voice. When teachers give scaffolding experiences like brainstorming before setting students free to experiment with the writing assignment, they provide ideas that will help students quickly immerse themselves in the prompt.

Lessons often suggest writing lists on the board (or overhead, or doc cam). This is to cement these ideas in the minds of the visual learners and provide a reference as they are writing.

Each lesson has only one writing skill. The purpose for this is to prevent confusion and to provide focus, so students can thoroughly master that lesson.

Mentor texts range from simple to more complex, with the simpler texts used as the initial mentor text. Texts are taken largely from language arts anthologies and also from assorted novels and nonfiction books. The extra examples can be used as the teacher deems fit to extend the lesson or reinforce the concept.

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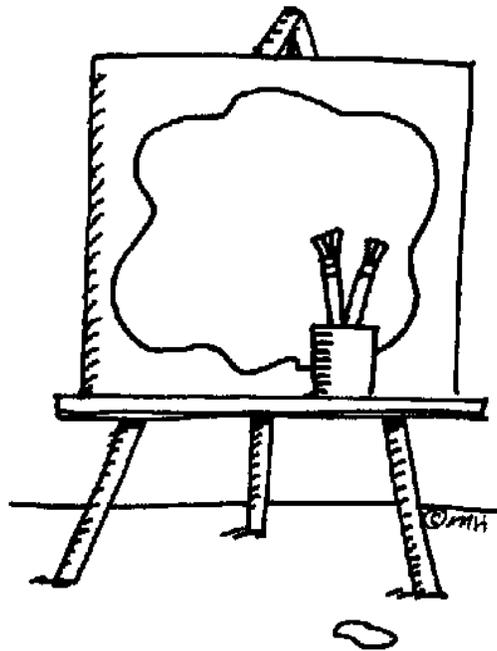
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Word Choice

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Color Words

Definition: Color words add visual imagery and detail to writing.

Mentor Texts

The next day, when Mrs. Shepherd’s students got ready for school, they dressed in green, all shades of green – grassy green, lima-bean green, pickle green, olive green, and leprechaun green.

Lynn Plourde, Teacher Appreciation Day

In the autumn towards the close of day, when the sky was blood-red and the water reflected strange shapes of scarlet clouds which reddened the whole river, and the flowing sun set the distant horizon ablaze, making the two friends look as though they were on fire, and touching with gold the russet leaves which were already trembling with a wintry shudder

Guy de Maupassant, “Two Friends”

Teacher Artistry

Read each mentor text aloud.

After each reading, instruct students to do the following:

- ✂ Underline the words which identify color in each text.
- ✂ With a partner, rewrite the first text without using any color words.
- ✂ Rewrite the second text, substituting the given color words with one or more different color words.
- ✂ Share your writing with the class.
- ✂ Discuss what changes were created in the text when the color words were first eliminated and then changed.

Student Artistry

- ✍ Write a paragraph describing a location. Use at least three colors or shades of colors in your description.
- ✍ Share your paragraph with the class.

Other Examples

This grass is very dark to be from the white heads of old mothers,
Darker than the colorless beards of old men,
Dark to come from under the faint red roofs of mouths.

Walt Whitman, from “Song of Myself”

She took her place in a low stone seat just inside the church door, clothed as usual in her thick red serge petticoat and loose brown serge jacket, such being the apparel which she had found to be best adapted for her hard and perilous work among the waters.

Anthony Trollope, “Malachi’s Cove”

. . . he could feel the innumerable tiny touches of them [minute fish] against his limbs. It was like swimming in flaked silver. The great rock the bog boys had swum through rose sheer out of the white sand – black, tufted lightly with greenish weed.

Doris Lessing, “Through the Tunnel”

She walked in silver-and-samite slippers to a sapphire-and-topaz bathroom and slept in an ivory bed inlaid with rubies.

James Thurber, “The Princess and the Tin Box”



Onomatopoeia

Definition: Onomatopoeia is a device that uses words that sound like the words they mean, such as zoom, whiz, crash, bang, hiss, snap, and pitter-patter. Using this device relates sound more closely to meaning.

Mentor Text

Onomatopoeia

The rusty spigot
sputters,
utters
a splutter,
spatters a smattering of drops,
gashes wider;
slash,
splatters,
scatters,
spurts,
finally stops sputtering
and plash!
Gushes rushes splashes
clear water dashes.

Eve Merriam

Teacher Artistry

Read the mentor text aloud.

- 🔍 Ask students to identify the words that sound like the words they mean. Circle or highlight them on the overhead screen.
- 🔍 Discuss the onomatopoeia and determine how these sounds contribute meaning to the poem.

Student Artistry

✍ Ask students to apply onomatopoeia to their daily lives. Choose one setting or scenario from a normal school day. As a group, list 5-10 things that make sounds and create words that imitate those sounds (e.g., the lunchroom).

✍ Create words that could be the sound of:

a cell-phone ring tone
a garbage truck coming to a stop
a computer starting up
an electronic toy with a dying battery

Other Examples

It went zip when it moved and bop when it stopped,
And whirr when it stood still.
I never knew just what it was and I guess I never will.

Tom Paxton, from “The Marvelous Toy”

“Sammy, have you rung up this purchase?”

I thought and said “No” but it wasn’t about what I was thinking. I go through the punches, 4, 9, GROC, TOT—it’s more complicated than you think, and after you do it long enough, it begins to make a little song, that you hear words to, in my case “Hello (*bing*) there, you (*gung*) hap-py *pee-pul* (*splat*)!—the *splat* being the drawer flying out.

John Updike, “A&P”

Noises

The click of the clock, the creak of the stair,
The squeak of the mouse and the swoosh of air.
The groan of the house as it settles below,
And outside the window, the patter of snow.
The scruff of the dog's paws below where I rest,
The rattle of window that seems to face West.
The jingle of bells from a wind chime next door
The unearthly sounds of a truly loud snore.
The crunching of snow under an animal's feet,
The honk of a horn from right down the street.
So many noises I just want to weep,
Is it too much to ask for some sleep?

Danielle Caryl



Onomatopoeia

Definition: Onomatopoeia uses words whose sounds echo their meaning, such as buzz, whisper, gargle, and murmur.

Mentor Text

Over the cobbles, he clattered and clashed in the dark innyard.
He tapped with his whip on the shutters, but all was locked and barred.
He whistled a tune to the window, and who should be waiting there
But the landlord's black-eyed daughter,
Bess, the landlord's daughter.
Plaiting a dark love knot into her long black hair.

Alfred Noyes, from "The Highwayman"

Teacher Artistry

Read the mentor text aloud.

- ✂ Ask students to identify the onomatopoeia in the poem.
- ✂ Discuss how the use of sound words adds excitement to the poem.
- ✂ Ask for student volunteers to write additional examples of onomatopoeia on the board.
- ✂ Create a list of at least fifteen sound words.

Student Artistry

- ✂ Using onomatopoeia write a newspaper article about a natural disaster (e.g., fire, hurricane, flood, volcano, tsunami).
- ✂ Describe with sensory detail this shocking event. Be sure to include who, what, when, where, and why about the disaster.
- ✂ When students are finished writing their newspaper articles, ask for volunteers to share.

Other Examples

Onomatopoeia

The rusty spigot
sputters,
utters
a splutter,
spatters a smattering of drops,
gashes wider;
slash,
splatters,
scatters,
spurts,
finally stops sputtering
and plash!
Gushes rushes splashes
clear water dashes.

Eve Merriam

Running Water

Water plops into pond
splish-splash downhill
warbling magpies in tree
trilling, melodic thrill

whoosh, passing breeze
flags flutter and flip
frogs croak, birds whistle
babbling bubbles from tap

Lee Emmett



Dialogue: Bringing Text to Life

Definition: Dialogue represents a conversation between two or more characters. Writers use dialogue to bring characters to life and to give readers insight into characters' traits, thoughts, and reactions to other characters.

Mentor Text

Chuchundra wept and begged Rikki-tikki not to kill him. Rikki-tikki scornfully told him that a snake killer does not kill muskrats. Sorrowfully, Chuchundra replied that those who kill snakes get killed by them. He continued on, expressing his fear that Nag may mistake him for Rikki late at night. Rikki assured Chuchundra there was not the least danger because Nag was in the garden, a place Chuchundra never went. Chuchundra began to tell Rikki what his cousin the rat, Chua, told him but stopped short. Rikki demanded to know what Chuchundra was going to say but was told he should have spoken with Chua in the garden. Rikki threatened to bite Chuchundra if he didn't tell him.

Rudyard Kipling, "Rikki-tikki-tavi"

Professional Model

"Don't kill me," said Chuchundra, almost weeping. "Rikki-tikki, don't kill me!"

"Do you think a snake killer kills muskrats?" said Rikki-tikki scornfully.

"Those who kill snakes get killed by snakes," said Chuchundra, more sorrowfully than ever. "And how am I to be sure that Nag won't mistake me for you some dark night?"

"There's not the least danger," said Rikki-tikki, "but Nag is in the garden, and I know you don't go there."

"My cousin Chua, the rat, told me—" said Chuchundra, and then he stopped.

"Told you what?"

"H'sh! Nag is everywhere, Rikki-tikki. You should have talked to Chua in the garden."

"I didn't—so you must tell me. Quick, Chuchundra, or I'll bite you!"

Teacher Artistry

Read the mentor text aloud.

🔍 Ask students how dialogue enhances the professional model and makes it more interesting to read.

🔍 Ask students how dialogue helps the reader visualize the scene.

 Read the following sentences aloud:

Two strangers, one tall and business-like and the other, dressed for a tennis match, walked out of a restaurant. Looking unhappy, they decided to share their opinions of the meal.

 As a class, compose two lines of dialogue the strangers might say.

Student Artistry

 With a partner, use the paragraph below to write a half-page of dialogue between Katie and her mother that might have occurred while they sorted through her father's things after his death. Remember to indent after each new speaker when writing dialogue.

I'm not sure if Mrs. Leonardo wants someone to help or someone to complain to. Between you and me, I feel that listening to complaining and busting dust should earn thirty-five dollars per hour. But, I'm remembering being in our attic after my dad died; trying to go through his things. He had a trunk that his grandfather had given him—inside were all his photos and papers from school. I remember reading some of his essays from high school and just crying. I couldn't throw those out. Mom said going through all that was therapeutic for me because it was like being with him, kind of. He was forty-one years old when he died. Had a heart attack at work and was dead by the time the ambulance came.

Joan Bauer, Clean Sweep

 Share partner dialogues with another group or as a class.

Other Examples

When I was twelve, my mother went to work without telling me or my little sister. She told us that our family didn't need the second income. The lilt of her accent drifted from the kitchen up to the top of the stairs, where Mona and I were listening. My father agreed with her in a barely audible voice and added that the Lee family could really use the extra income.

Gish Jen, "The White Umbrella"

When I was twelve, my mother went to work without telling me or my little sister.

"Not that we need the second income." The lilt of her accent drifted from the kitchen up to the top of the stairs, where Mona and I were listening.

"No," said my father, in a barely audible voice. "Not like the Lee family."

Professional Model



Dialogue: Creating Voice

Definition: Dialogue represents conversation between two or more characters. Writers use dialogue to bring characters to life and to give readers insight into characters' traits, thoughts, and actions.

Mentor Texts

“Let’s go through Georgia fast so we won’t have to look at it much,” John Wesley said.
“If I were a little boy,” said the grandmother, “I wouldn’t talk about my native state that way. Tennessee has the mountains and Georgia has the hills.”

“You said it,” June Star said.

“In my time,” said the grandmother, folding her thin-veined fingers, “children were more respectful of their native states and their parents and everything else. People did right then”

Flannery O’Connor, “A Good Man is Hard to Find”

“What’s the matter, Schatz?”

“I’ve got a headache.”

“You better go back to bed.”

“No. I’m all right.”

“You go to bed. I’ll see you when I’m dressed.”

But when I came downstairs he was dressed, sitting by the fire, looking a very sick and miserable boy of nine years.

Ernest Hemingway, “A Day’s Wait”

Teacher Artistry

Read both mentor texts aloud.

- ✦ Ask students what they notice about the dialogue in both texts.
- ✦ Have students compare the dialogue in the two texts, discussing any similarities and differences either in pairs or together with the class.
- ✦ Ask students the following question: If you were to strengthen Hemingway’s model, what would you add to make it comparable in strength to O’Connor’s text?
- ✦ Using suggestions from the class, add words or phrases to strengthen lines of Hemingway’s dialogue.

Student Artistry

- ✍ Instruct students to create a half-page scenario that includes dialogue, using one of the following scenarios:

A kind person doing a good deed for another person
A mother giving dating advice to her daughter
A police officer giving a speeding ticket
A teacher reprimanding a rowdy student

- ✍ After writing, allow students to share their dialogues with a partner and make suggestions to revise elements that would add strength, emotion, and voice.

Alternate Writing Activity

- ✍ Have students identify a short story plot that would incorporate their dialogues.

Other Examples

“It’s beyond everything. Nothing at all that I know touches it.”

“For sheer terror,” I remember asking.

He seemed to say it was not so simple as that; to be really at a loss how to qualify it. He passed his hand over his eyes, made a little wincing grimace. “For dreadful—dreadfulness!”

“Oh how delicious!” cried one of the women.

He took no notice of her; he looked at me, but as if, instead of me, he saw what he spoke of.

“For general uncanny ugliness and horror and pain.”

“Well then,” I said, “just sit right down and begin.”

Henry James, The Turn of the Screw

“What *kind* of unhappiness do you think he has?” he suddenly asked.

“Who’s that?”

“That man.”

Mrs. Markham looked puzzled.

“The begging man. The one on the street.”

“Oh, could be anything,” his mother said, vaguely. A person can be unhappy for many reasons.” She turned to stare out the window, as if an answer might be there.

“Is unhappiness a sickness you can cure?”

“I wish you wouldn’t ask such questions.”

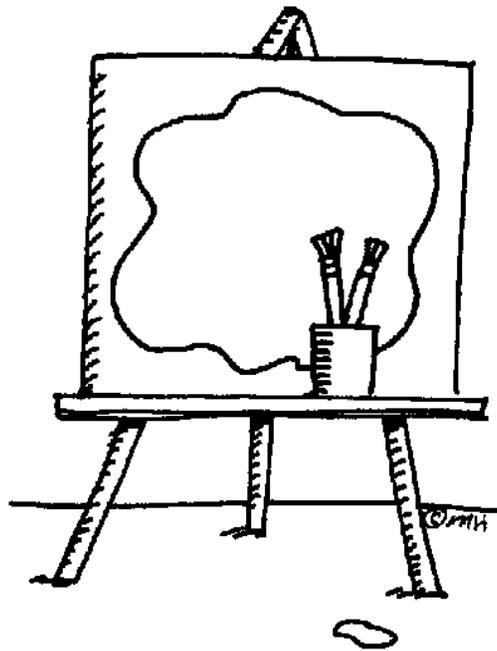
“Why?”

After a moment she said, “Questions that have no answers shouldn’t be asked.”

Avi, “What Do Fish Have to Do with Anything?”

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Word Pictures: Description

Definition: Word pictures are words or phrases that effectively relate description of a person, place, thing, or idea that involves the reader in the writer's experience.

Teacher Artistry

Before students read or discuss the mentor texts, do the suggested writing lesson as it follows here:

- ✿ Brainstorm with students a list of characteristics of poor writing. Ask students to suggest elements they consider flat, boring, incorrect, nonstandard, or weak. These may include dull word choice, short choppy sentences, etc.
- ✿ Instruct students to write a short but boring, poor paragraph (5-7 sentences) about a room they see regularly, like their bedroom, kitchen, or classroom. Remind them to make this paragraph boring, dull, and non-specific.
- ✿ Have students read their paragraphs to a partner and volunteer a partner's especially bland piece for the class to hear.
- ✿ For fun, ask students to praise the "success" of the reader's writing such as, "Wow, that was really awful! Way to go!"

Mentor Texts

The red-brick ranch house that belonged to Mr. Morgan, and the white clapboard two-story house in which Mrs. English lived, and the other homes on the street, with their columned front porches and their back patios, and the tall oaks—all stood curiously still in the warm golden light of the mid-morning sun.

Chaim Potok, "Zebra"

It was an old building with an old elevator—a very small elevator, with a maximum capacity of three people. Martin, a thin twelve-year-old, felt nervous in it from the first day he and his father moved into the apartment. Of course he was always uncomfortable in elevators, afraid that they would fall, but there was something especially unpleasant about this one. Perhaps its baleful atmosphere was due to the light from the single fluorescent ceiling strip, bleak and dim on the dirty brown walls. Perhaps the problem was the door, which never stayed open quite long enough, and slammed shut with such ominous, clanging finality. Perhaps it was the way the mechanism shuddered in a kind of exhaustion each time it left a floor, as though it might never reach the next one. Maybe it was simply the dimensions of the contraption that bothered him, so small that it felt uncomfortably crowded even when there was only one other person in it.

William Sleator, "The Elevator"

Teacher Artistry, cont.

Read the mentor texts aloud.

- ✎ Ask students to create a list of “Good Writing Elements” based on the mentor texts. (Examples include strong verbs, descriptive adjectives, etc.).

Student Artistry

- ✎ Instruct students to write another descriptive paragraph of the same room, but this time use vivid words and phrases. Incorporate elements from the brainstormed list of good writing skills.
- ✎ Share good writing with a partner or as a whole class. Discuss the difference between the students’ bad writing and their good writing.

Other Examples

The Girl Who Loved the Sky

Outside the second-grade room,
the jacaranda tree blossomed
into purple lanterns, the papery petals
drifted, darkening the windows.
Inside the room smelled like glue.
The desks were made of yellowed wood,
the tops littered with eraser rubbings,
rulers, and big fat pencils.

Anita Endrezze

In the apartment my mother and I shared, there were old gas heaters you had to light with a match and which threatened to blow you up every time you did. We didn’t have carpet. We had old green-and-brown linoleum with cigarette burns in it. Every morning there would be at least one spider in the bathtub, and it would take every ounce of nerve I had to look in and check. Once, a really big spider crawled out from under our old couch, and I was too scared to step on him; instead, I dropped a Sears catalog on his head and left it there for a week, just to make sure he was dead.

Cynthia Rylant, “The Best Gift of my Life”



Descriptive Phrases: Setting

Definition: Descriptive phrases are word groups that help a reader picture events, objects, and characters.

Mentor Texts

The long June twilight faded into night. Dublin lay enveloped in darkness but for the dim light of the moon that shone through fleecy clouds, casting a pale light as of approaching dawn over the streets and the dark waters of the Liffey. Around the beleaguered Four Courts the heavy guns roared. Here and there through the city, machine guns and rifles broke the silence of the night, spasmodically, like dogs barking on lone farms.

Liam O’Flaherty, “The Sniper”

Then it [tyrannosaur] moved around the side of the car. The big raised tail blocked his view out of all the side windows. At the back, the animal snorted, a deep rumbling growl that blended with the thunder. It sank its jaws into the spare tire mounted on the back of the Land Cruiser and, in a single headshake, tore it away. The rear of the car lifted into the air for a moment; then it thumped down with a muddy splash.

Michael Crichton, Jurassic Park

Salvador with eyes the color of caterpillar, Salvador of the crooked hair and crooked teeth, Salvador whose name the teacher cannot remember, is a boy who is no one’s friend, runs along somewhere in that vague direction where homes are the color of bad weather, lives behind a raw wood doorway, shakes the sleepy brothers awake, ties their shoes, combs their hair with water, feeds them milk and cornflakes from a tin cup in the dim dark of the morning.

Sandra Cisneros, “Salvador Late or Early”

Teacher Artistry

Read the mentor texts aloud.

- ✦ With the students, reread the passages and locate and list examples of sensory images in the chart below.

Sight	Sound	Taste	Touch	Smell

Student Artistry

- ✍ Write a paragraph about your school cafeteria during lunch time. Include descriptive details that use sensory imagery to focus on the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and textures there.

Other Examples

Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherised upon a table;
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,
The muttering retreats
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:

T. S. Eliot, from “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”

There was music from my neighbor’s house through the summer nights In his blue gardens men and girls came and went like moths among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars. At high tide in the afternoon, I watched his guests diving from the tower of his raft, or taking the sun on the hot sand of his beach....

Every Friday five crates of oranges and lemons arrived from a fruiterer in New York—every Monday these same oranges and lemons left his back door in a pyramid of pulpless halves. There was a machine in the kitchen which could extract the juice of two hundred oranges in half an hour if a little button was pressed two hundred times by a butler’s thumb.

F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby



Word Pictures: Action

Definition: Word pictures present a person, idea, or event to involve the reader in the writer's experience.

Mentor Texts

There was another knock, and another. The old woman with a sudden wrench broke free and ran from the room. Her husband followed to the landing and called after her appealingly as she hurried downstairs. He heard the chain rattle back and the bottom bolt drawn slowly and stiffly from the socket. Then the old woman's voice, strained and panting.

W. W. Jacobs, "The Monkey's Paw"

He saddled up the cat, jumped on his back, and the four of them headed for the canyon, with the mountain lion screeching, the horse neighing, the rattler rattling, and Pecos Bill hollering a wild war whoop.

Retold by Mary Pope Osborne, "Pecos Bill"

Down—steadily down it crept. I took a frenzied pleasure in contrasting its downward with its lateral velocity. To the right—to the left—far and wide—with the shriek of a damned spirit! to my heart, with the stealthy pace of the tiger! I alternately laughed and howled, as the one or the other idea grew predominant.

Edgar Allan Poe, "The Pit and the Pendulum"

Teacher Artistry

Read the mentor texts aloud.

- ✦ Explain that readers form a mental picture while reading; writers form a mental picture and then portray that picture in words.
- ✦ Instruct students to draw a picture portrayed in one of the mentor texts, and have students share pictures with a partner and discuss the details.
- ✦ Project a picture for the class of characters or animals in some kind of action.
- ✦ Discuss together what is going on in the picture and ask students to contribute specific images they would write in a paragraph about this picture. List these ideas on the board or overhead.

Student Artistry

- ✍ Write one paragraph describing the image on display.
- ✍ Students should use precise word choices and strong verbs to show rather than tell about the scene in the picture.
- ✍ Have students share word pictures with a partner.

Other Examples

Another door opened beneath the king, and a priest, followed by a band of choristers and dancing maidens, blowing joyous airs on golden horns and treading an epithalamic measure, advanced to where the pair stood, side by side; and the wedding was promptly and cheerily solemnized. Then the gay brass bells rang forth their merry peals, the people shouted glad hurrahs, and the innocent man, preceded by children strewing flowers on his path, led his bride to his home.

Frank R. Stockton, “The Lady, or the Tiger”

He chased us silently, block after block. He chased us silently over picket fences, through thorny hedges, between houses, around garbage cans, and across streets. Every time I glanced back, choking for breath, I expected he would have quit. He must have been as breathless as we were. His jacket strained over his body. It was an immense discovery, pounding into my hot head with every sliding, joyous step, that this ordinary adult evidently knew what I thought only children who trained at football knew: that you have to fling yourself at what you’re doing, you have to point yourself, forget yourself, aim, dive.

Annie Dillard, “An American Childhood”



Descriptive Phrases: Sensory Imagery

Definition: Descriptive phrases with sensory imagery are word groups that portray events, objects, and characters with specific sensory details.

Mentor Texts

The blazing red paint sparkled with an iridescent cherry glow. The lighting danced across the car like a chorus line. In gold letters, the word "Corvette" seemed to leap out and hypnotize. The glaring chrome hubcaps glistened like a moonlit lake.

Jerry Anderson, "Showroom Fantasy," from Merlyn's Pen

Fear was Miss Bindle's one and only motivator. It was as though she had done her teacher training at Marine boot camp. She would stick her face an inch from yours and, snarling and snapping, rearrange the molecules of your brain to suit her fancy. It was clearly evident to the person whose brain molecules were being rearranged that breath mints either hadn't been invented or hadn't come in a flavor pleasing to Miss Bindle. The oral hygiene of an executioner, however, is scarcely a matter of great concern to the potential victim.

Patrick F. McManus, "The Clown"

Teacher Artistry

Read the **first mentor text** passage aloud.

- 📌 Ask students which words or phrases helped them imagine the scene.
- 📌 On a T-chart list the descriptive words and phrases on the left and the sensory images they evoke on the right.

Descriptive Phrase	Sense

Student Artistry

- ✍ Instruct students to choose one of the following simple sentences and create a descriptive paragraph with sensory details similar to the example which follows.
- ✍ Share paragraphs with a partner and ask for elaboration and revision ideas.

Example: My cat is soft.

Expanded description: My fat tabby cat is round and soft as a teddy bear.

Lovingly she cuddles in my lap, her downy coat exuding warmth. My cheek lightly brushes across the plush velvet of her fur, and her delicate whiskers tickle my chin.

The man was tired.

The wind blew.

The big brown dog barks.

The red rose blooms.

Other Examples

I paused before the doorway, looking at my father lying quietly on the large hospital bed. Colorless fluid in glass bottles slithered through plastic tubes that led to my father. An adjacent window sent streams of sunshine across his pale, pasty face. His cheeks appeared more chiseled and sunken than ever; his hair hung thin and limp. He lay in a motionless lump beneath the scraggly blankets and hard, white sheets.

Jean Lee, "Hospital Visit," from Merlyn's Pen

The sea creeps to pillage,
She leaps on her prey;
A child of the village
Was murdered today.

Elinor Wylie, from "Sea Lullaby"

Yollie's mother, Mrs. Moreno, was a large woman who wore a muu-muu and butterfly-shaped glasses. She liked to water her lawn in the evening and wave at low-riders, who would stare at her behind their smoky sunglasses and laugh.

Gary Soto, "Mother & Daughter"



Imagery: Character Description

Definition: Imagery consists of words and phrases that appeal to a reader's five senses. Writers use sensory details that help the reader imagine how people or things look, feel, smell, sound, and taste.

Mentor Text

Lincoln was a star basketball player, tall but not thin. When he made a fist, his forearm tightened with muscles. His stomach was muscle, his legs muscle, His face was brown, like coffee laced with cream, and his hair black as a chunk of asphalt.

Gary Soto, Taking Sides

Teacher Artistry

Read the mentor text aloud.

- ✿ Ask students to identify the specific words that describe the character.
- ✿ On the board write “basketball player” and have students volunteer additional phrases that describe a basketball player. Students might consider the player’s position, speed, agility, and personality.

Student Artistry

- ✍ Write a colorful character description of a fictional detective from literature, television, or a movie. How would you describe the character?
- ✍ Create a character description through illustrations or words and phrases. Include height, weight, hair color, eye color, body type, and clothing style.
- ✍ Share with the class.

Other Examples

I suffered the most whenever my extended family attended school occasions. For my graduation, they all came, the whole noisy, foreign-looking lot of fat aunts in their dark mourning dresses and hair nets, uncles with full, droopy mustaches and baby-blue or salmon-colored suits and white pointy shoes and fedora hats.

Julia Alvarez, “Names, Nombres”

He was tall and wiry, looked to be about forty years old. In his right hand he carried a bulging brown plastic bag. He wore a khaki army jacket, a blue denim shirt, blue jeans, and brown cowboy boots. His gaunt face and muscular neck were reddened by exposure to the sun. Long brown hair spilled out below his dark-blue farmer’s cap. On the front of the cap, in large orange letters, were the words LAND ROVER.

Chaim Potok, “Zebra”

Rip Van Winkle, however, was one of those happy mortals, of foolish well-oiled dispositions, who take the world easy, eat white bread or brown, whichever can be got with least thought or trouble, and would rather starve on a penny than work for a pound. If left to himself, he would have whistled life away in perfect contentment; but his wife kept continually dinning in his ears about his idleness, his carelessness, and the ruin he was bringing on his family.

Washington Irving, “Rip Van Winkle”



Imagery: Action

Definition: Imagery consists of words and phrases that appeal to a reader's senses. Writers use sensory details to help the reader imagine how things look, feel, smell, sound, and taste.

Mentor Texts

And now the leather-covered sphere came hurtling through the air,
And Casey stood a-watching it in haughty grandeur there,
Close by the sturdy batsman the ball unheeded sped;
“That ain’t my style,” said Casey. “Strike one,” the umpire said.

Ernest Lawrence Thayer, from “Casey at the Bat”

He leaped upon the rail and balanced himself there, to get greater elevation; his pipe, striking a rope, was knocked from his mouth. He lunged for it; a short, hoarse cry came from his lips as he realized he had reached too far and had lost his balance. The cry was pinched off short as the blood-warm waters of the Caribbean Sea closed over his head.

Richard Connell, “The Most Dangerous Game”

Sweat popped out on the boy’s face, and he began to struggle. Mrs. Jones stopped, jerked him around in front of her, put a half nelson about his neck, and continued to drag him up the street. When she got to her door, she dragged the boy inside, down a hall, and into a large kitchenette-furnished room at the rear of the house. She switched on the light and left the door open. The boy could hear other roomers laughing and talking in the large house. Some of their doors were open, too, so he knew he and the woman were not alone. The woman still had him by the neck in the middle of her room.

Langston Hughes, “Thank You, M’am”

Teacher Artistry

Read the **first mentor text** aloud.

- ✿ Have students list examples of imagery that convey action in the passage (e.g., leather-covered sphere, hurtling through, stood a-watching it in haughty grandeur, sturdy batsman, unheeded sped).

Read the **next two mentor texts** aloud.

- ✂ Break students up into partners.
- ✂ On notebook paper, students write examples of imagery that enhance the action in each of the passages.
- ✂ Ask volunteers to share examples.

Student Artistry

- ✍ Instruct students to choose one of the telling sentences below and replace it with three to five sentences which show action through the use of imagery.

The restaurant was busy.

The store clerk was overwhelmed.

Football players think they are so cool.

My teacher does unusual things.

Other Examples

This from Piggy, and the wails of agreement from some of the hunters, drove Jack to violence. The bolting look came into his blue eyes. He took a step, and able at last to hit someone, stuck his fist into Piggy's stomach. Piggy sat down with a grunt. Jack stood over him. His voice was vicious with humiliation.

William Golding, Lord of the Flies

He struggled up to the surface and tried to cry out, but the wash from the speeding yacht slapped him in the face and the salt water in his open mouth made him gag and strangle.

Richard Connell, "The Most Dangerous Game"



Imagery: Setting

Definition: Imagery consists of words and phrases that appeal to a reader's senses. Writers use sensory details that help the reader imagine how things look, feel, smell, sound, and taste.

Mentor Texts

Thirty-five years ago I was out prospecting on the *Stanislaus*, tramping all day long with pick and pan and horn, and washing a hatful of dirt here and there, always expecting to make a rich strike, and never doing it. It was a lovely region, woodsy, balmy, delicious, and had once been populous, long years before, but now the people had vanished and the charming paradise was a solitude.

Mark Twain, "The Californian's Tale"

The winter evening settles down
With smell of steaks in passageways.
Six o'clock.
The burnt-out ends of smoky days.
And now a gusty shower wraps
The grimy scraps
Of withered leaves about your feet
And newspapers from vacant lots;
The showers beat
On broken blinds and chimney-pots,
And at the corner of the street
A lonely cab-horse steams and stamps.
And then the lighting of the lamps.

T. S. Eliot, from "Preludes"

The fabulous smells of hot white chocolate and Mom's perfect cinnamon rolls wafted through the store. There is something primordial about happiness and food and Mom's shop plays right into it. The counters bulged with her Saturday creations: mozzarella and prosciutto bread, fat caramel biscuits, pesto-stuffed raviolis, roasted pork with brandied apples. Mom always says that great food should massage the senses.

Joan Bauer, Thwonk

Teacher Artistry

Read all mentor texts.

- ✂ Instruct students to choose one text and make a list of specific details related to its setting.
- ✂ Have students draw the setting on notebook paper as they perceive it, based on the text.
- ✂ Students share drawings with the class and explain their work.

Student Artistry

- ✂ Instruct students to choose one possible setting from a list on the board and write a paragraph describing it. Use imagery that appeals to the senses in order to portray the scene. (Students may also add to the list by volunteering other possible settings.)
 - Stadium during a sporting event
 - A concert
 - Beach scene
 - Tree house
 - Deserted road
 - Traffic on a highway
 - A kitchen during a busy holiday
 - A library
- ✂ After completing the written description, instruct students to trade papers with a partner and draw on a clean sheet of notebook paper the setting, based on their partner's written description.
- ✂ Have students review their partner's drawing for accuracy.

Other Examples

On December the third, the wind changed overnight, and it was winter. Until then the autumn had been mellow, soft. The leaves had lingered on the trees, golden-red, and the hedgerows were still green. The earth was rich where the plow had turned it.

Daphne du Maurier, "The Birds"

A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

William Wordsworth, from "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud"

Their houses were a thousand years old, clustered beehive-fashion behind ancient walls, stacked and curled and tilting and dark, filled with pictures of unsmiling relatives and small white cloths dangling crocheted edges.

Naomi Shihab Nye, "Going Where I'm Coming From"



Imagery: Scent

Definition: Imagery consists of words and phrases that appeal to a reader's five senses. Writers use sensory details to help the reader imagine how things look, feel, smell, sound, and taste.

Mentor Text

The black stove, stoked with coal and firewood, glows like a lighted pumpkin. Eggbeaters whirl, spoons spin around in bowls of butter and sugar, vanilla sweetens the air, ginger spices it; melting, nose-tingling odors saturate the kitchen, suffuse the house, drift out to the world on puffs of chimney smoke. In four days our work is done. Thirty-one cakes, dampened with whiskey, back on window sills and shelves.

Truman Capote, "A Christmas Memory"

Teacher Artistry

Read the mentor text aloud.

- ✎ Ask students what specific smells are described. What feeling or emotion does the mentor text suggest?
- ✎ On the board write two columns, headed "pleasant smells" and "unpleasant smells".
- ✎ Ask students to suggest ideas for each of the columns.
- ✎ Discuss the feeling and emotions of the smells.

Student Artistry

- ✎ Create a chart of your five favorite smells using the chart below. Jot down the memory that you associate with the smell. List what emotion or feeling the smell evokes.

Favorite Smells		
Smell	Memory	Emotions or Feeling
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

- ✎ Share writing with a partner.

Other Examples

As the saw teeth bit down, the wood released its smell, each kind with its own fragrance, oak or walnut or cherry or pine, usually pine because it was the softest, easiest for a child to work. No matter how weathered and cracked, inside there was this smell waiting, as of something freshly baked. I gathered every smidgen of sawdust and stored it away in coffee cans, which I kept in a drawer of the workbench. It was a landscape that smelled dizzyingly of wood. Even after a bath my skin would carry the smell, and so would my father's hair, when he lifted me for a bedtime hug.

Scott Russell Sanders, "The Inheritance of Tools"

They sat in the ancient wilderness. Far birds' cries blew on a wind, and the smell of tar and an old salt sea, moist grasses, and flowers the color of blood. . . .

It exhaled. The stink of raw flesh blew down the wilderness. . . .

A windstorm from the beast's mouth engulfed them in the stench of slime and old blood.

Ray Bradbury, "A Sound of Thunder"



Imagery: Poetry

Definition: Imagery consists of words and phrases that appeal to a reader's senses. Writers use sensory details to help the reader imagine how things look, feel, smell, sound, and taste.

Mentor Text

May Day

A delicate fabric of bird song
Floats in the air,
The smell of wet wild earth
Is everywhere.

Red small leaves of the maple
Are clenched like a hand,
Like girls at their first communion
The pear trees stand.

Oh, I must pass nothing by
Without loving it much,
The raindrop try with my lips,
The grass at my touch;

For how can I be sure
I shall see again
The world on the first of May
Shining after the rain.

Sara Teasdale

Teacher Artistry

Read the mentor text aloud.

- 🌟 Ask students to find examples of sensory imagery and name the sense each represents.
- 🌟 Brainstorm to create a list of sensory phrases that describe autumn.
- 🌟 Ask students to write a stanza about an autumn day that includes sensory imagery.
- 🌟 Have students share their writing with a partner.

Student Artistry

- ✍ Ask students to design a graphic organizer of their favorite place with examples that appeal to each of the five senses.
- ✍ Draw five separate circles and label the circles: sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. Inside each circle, provide a specific example of each sense.
- ✍ When students finish, ask for volunteers to share.

Alternate Activity

- ✍ If time allows, have students create a contrasting graphic organizer describing an activity or place that evokes a negative image.
- ✍ Discuss which of the graphic organizers is more appealing or less appealing and why.

Other Examples

Trade Winds

In the harbor, in the island, in the Spanish Seas,
Are the tiny white houses and the orange trees,
And day-long, night-long, the cool and pleasant breeze
Of the steady Trade Winds blowing.

There is the red wine, the nutty Spanish ale,
The shuffle of the dancers, the salt's tale,
The squeaking fiddle, and the souging in the sail
Of the steady Trade Winds blowing.

And o' nights there's fire-flies and the yellow moon,
And in the ghostly palm trees the sleepy tune
Of the quiet voice calling me, the long low croon
Of the steady Trade Winds blowing.

John Masefield

Other Examples, cont.

A Parrot

My parrot is emerald green,
His tail feathers, marine.
He bears an orange half-moon,
Over his ivory beak.
He must be believed to be seen,
This bird from a Rousseau wood.
When the urge is on him to speak,
He becomes too true to be good.

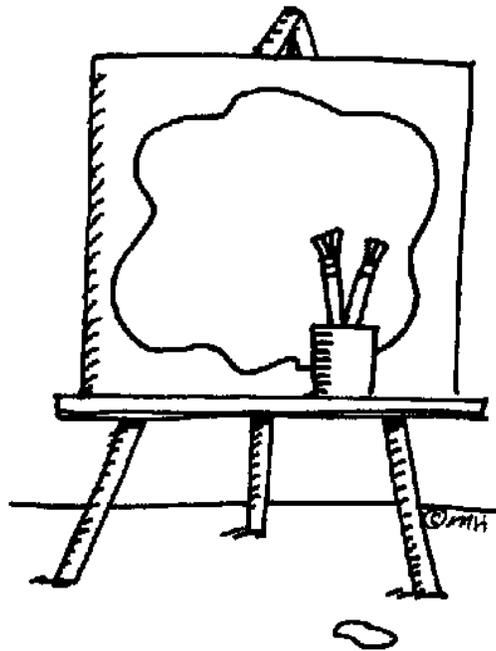
He uses his beak like a hook
To lift himself up with or break
Open a sunflower seed,
And his eye, in a bold white ring,
Has a lapidary look.
What a most astonishing bird,
Whose voice when he chooses to sing
Must be believed to be heard.

That stuttered staccato scream
Must be believed not to seem
The shriek of a witch in the room.
But he murmurs some muffled words
(Like someone who talks through a dream)
When he sits in the window and sees
The to-and-fro wings of wild birds
In the leafless improbable trees.

May Sarton

Specificity

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Specificity

Definition: Specificity uses concrete details through sensory language, exact adjectives and nouns, and vivid verbs.

Mentor Text

The long June twilight faded into night. Dublin lay enveloped in darkness but for the dim light of the moon that shone through fleecy clouds, casting a pale light as of approaching dawn over the streets and the dark waters of the Liffey. Around the beleaguered Four Courts the heavy guns roared. Here and there through the city, machine guns and rifles broke the silence of the night, spasmodically, like dogs barking on lone farms. Republicans and Free Staters were waging civil war.

Liam O’Flaherty, “The Sniper”

Teacher Artistry

Read the mentor text to students, and ask students the following questions:

What concrete details describe the scene in Dublin?
What vivid verbs do you notice?

📖 Read the following example aloud to the students.

Most general: food

More specific: homemade pizza with vegetables and cheese

Most specific: thick, chewy, golden-brown crust layered with red, crisp pepperoni, sliced mushrooms, and caramelized onions bubbling under goeey, mozzarella cheese

📖 Ask students the following questions about the example:

What do you notice about the difference between the general and the more specific?

What do you notice about the difference between the more specific and the most specific?

What words in the mentor text convey the most specific descriptions?

Show the chart to the students and ask them to add details to make the descriptions more and most specific.

Most general	car	teacher	party
More specific			
Most specific			

 Share answers with class.

 Ask student pairs to rewrite these sentences by adding concrete details for specificity.

The little girl was mad that her mother would not let her have a cookie before dinner.
The sophomore's backpack was crammed with food, papers, and office supplies.

 Share answers with class.

Student Artistry

 Instruct students to write a paragraph, using sentences with most specific concrete details about one of the following topics:

He ate like a pig.
I had some bad food for lunch.
I had a lot of homework.
The path was dark and scary.
The first day of school was chaotic.



Specificity with Dialogue

Definition: Specificity with dialogue adds concrete details through a conversation.

Mentor Text

Every night after dinner my mother and I would sit at the Formica kitchen table. She would present new tests, taking her examples from stories of amazing children that she read in *Ripley's Believe It or Not*, or *Good Housekeeping*, *Reader's Digest*, and a dozen other magazines she kept in a pile in our bathroom. My mother got these magazines from people whose houses she cleaned. And since she cleaned many houses each week, we had a great assortment. She would look through them all, searching for stories about remarkable children.

The first night she brought out a story about a three-year-old boy who knew the capitals of all the states and even most of the European countries. A teacher was quoted as saying the little boy could also pronounce the names of the foreign cities correctly.

"What's the capital of Finland?" my mother asked me, looking at the magazine story.

All I knew was the capital of California, because Sacramento was the name of the street we lived on in Chinatown. "Nairobi!" I guessed, saying the most foreign word I could think of. She checked to see if that was possibly one way to pronounce "Helsinki" before showing me the answer.

The tests got harder - multiplying numbers in my head, finding the queen of hearts in a deck of cards, trying to stand on my head without using my hands, predicting the daily temperatures in Los Angeles, New York, and London.

One night I had to look at a page from the Bible for three minutes and then report everything I could remember. "Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honor in abundance and . . . that's all I remember, Ma," I said.

And after seeing my mother's disappointed face once again, something inside of me began to die. I hated the tests, the raised hopes and failed expectations.

Amy Tan, "Two Kinds"

Teacher Artistry

Read the mentor text aloud.

- ✦ Ask students to respond to the following questions:

What is the main idea of the whole excerpt?
Which lines make up the dialogue? (Highlight the dialogue as the student reads it.)
What concrete details are used in the dialogue?
How do the parts of dialogue reinforce the main idea?

- ✦ Brainstorm situations in which pairs of people have a conversation together and write down what they might be talking about (e.g., a mother and daughter discussing a missed curfew).
- ✦ Ask students to list other ideas on the board.
- ✦ When students finish, have them add specificity dialogue to the situations.

Student Artistry

- ✦ Write a dialogue between two people that reveals a personality trait, an emotion, or a behavioral characteristic of one of the individuals. Use one of the examples below, or create your own.

a conversation with your best friend who tells you he or she is moving away
a conversation with a friend about a movie you recently saw together
a conversation between a parent and child about the child's report card grade



Specificity through Questioning

Definition: Specificity through questioning provides concrete details that answer questions a reader might ask while reading a text.

Mentor Text

Ahead of him, silhouetted against the sky, he saw the string of soldiers wading into the flat paddy, the black outline of their shoulders and packs and weapons. He was comfortable. He did not want to move. But he was afraid, for it was his first night at the war, so he hurried to catch up, stumbling once, scraping his knee, groping as though blind; his boots sank into the thick paddy water and he smelled it all around him. He would tell his mother how it smelled: mud and algae and cattle manure and chlorophyll, decay, breeding mosquitoes and leeches as big as mice, the fecund warmth of the paddy waters rising up to his cut knee.

Tim O'Brien, "Where Have You Gone, Charming Billy?"

Teacher Artistry

Read the mentor text aloud.

- ✦ Write the following questions on the board.

Where is he?
What is the situation?
What smells?
What animals or parts of nature exist there?

- ✦ Point out that writers use questions like these to make their descriptions vivid and specific. They write with the reader in mind. They want the reader to picture concrete details and to understand the precise message they want to send.
- ✦ Read the following sentences aloud and ask students to create questions whose answers will add details to make the writing more specific and interesting.

It was a room with a ceiling, and it was crowded.
There were rows and rows of things of all shapes and colors.
There were shelves of cans and bottles filled with liquids.

- ✦ Have 3 groups rewrite one of the sentences adding concrete details to answer the questions they asked.

Student Artistry

- ✍ Instruct students to use concrete details to describe a place.
Suggestions: a closet, pizzeria, locker room, cafeteria, bedroom
- ✍ Brainstorm a list of questions about the place that a reader might want to know.
- ✍ Have each student write a paragraph that describes a place, using concrete details to answer those questions. Arrange the details using some type of spatial organization (top to bottom, left to right, near to far).
- ✍ When students finish, partners exchange papers. Partners create 2-3 questions that would help the writer add more concrete detail on each other's drafts.
- ✍ Have students add concrete details to their descriptions that answer their partner's questions.
- ✍ Share a few examples with the class.

Other Examples

But the house on Mango Street is not the way they told it at all. It's small and red with tight steps in front and windows so small you'd think they were holding their breath. Bricks are crumbling in places, and the front door is so swollen you have to push hard to get in. There is no front yard, only four little elms the city planted by the curb. Out back is a small garage for the car we don't own yet and a small yard that looks smaller between the two buildings on either side.

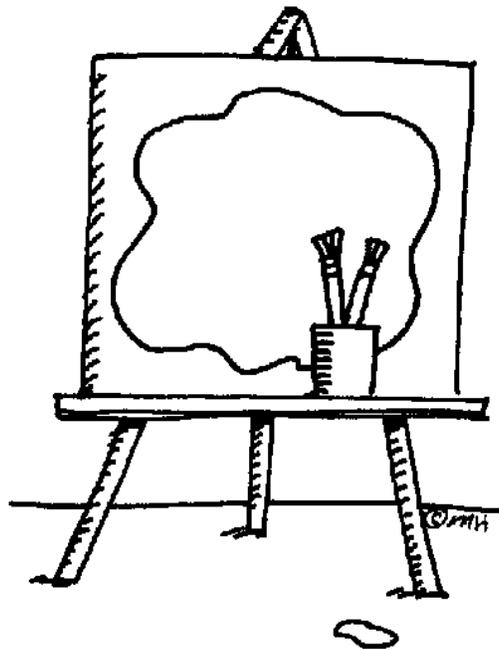
Sandra Cisneros, The House on Mango Street

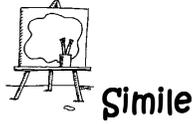
The Yukon lay a mile wide and hidden under three feet of ice. On top of this ice were as many feet of snow. It was all pure white, rolling in gentle undulations where the ice jams of the freeze-up had formed. North and south, as far as his eye could see, it was unbroken white, save for a dark hairline that curved and twisted from around the spruce-covered island to the south, and that curved and twisted away into the north, where it disappeared behind another spruce-covered island.

Jack London, "To Build a Fire"

Figurative Language

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Definition: A simile is a figure of speech which compares two markedly different objects, concepts, or experiences using the word “like” or “as”.

Though every simile is a comparison, not every comparison is a simile. If you write “Tony looks like a fighter,” you’ve written a simple comparison. However, if you write “Tony looks like a bulldog,” you have written a simile.

Mentor Texts

The sea was as flat as a plate-glass window.

Richard Connell, “The Most Dangerous Game”

We were down in Old Woman Swamp and it was spring and the sick-sweet smell of bay flowers hung everywhere like a mournful song.

James Hurst, “The Scarlet Ibis”

That afternoon it [a hurricane] roared back out of the west, blew the fallen oaks around, snapping their roots and tearing them out of the earth like a hawk at the entrails of a chicken.

James Hurst, “The Scarlet Ibis”

This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., “I Have a Dream”

Teacher Artistry

Read each mentor text aloud, and after each reading, instruct students to do the following:

- ✦ List on their paper the two things being compared in each of the texts.
- ✦ Identify the element that is common to both objects.
- ✦ Share their findings with a partner.
- ✦ Ask for volunteers to share their ideas with the rest of the class.

Note: King’s text contains more than one simile and will require more direction/help from the teacher.

Student Artistry

✍ Write an original simile based on each of the following descriptions:

people running for shelter during a sudden thunderstorm
an airplane disappearing into the clouds
a cat watching birds through a window
a flag on the top of a building on a windy day
a young boy hitting a pitched baseball for the first time

Other Examples

The door to the building slammed and a gust of wind sent dead leaves soaring and dipping like crazy kites.

Roni Schotter, Nothing Ever Happens on 90th Street

Both my grandmother and Ethel Barrymore have these great craggy faces like the side of a mountain and wonderful voices like syrup being poured. Slowly.

Robert Cormier, “The Moustache”

I watched in horror as an army of round, middle-aged women stepped from the bus and headed toward the restaurant like hungry lionesses stalking prey.
It was natural selection – I was as good as dead.

Joan Bauer, “Pancakes”

Even though it was cold, I took off the jacket during lunch and played kickball in a thin shirt, my arm feeling like Braille from the goose bumps.

Gary Soto, “The Jacket”

Amber lived on a mountain so high, it poked through the clouds like a needle stuck in down. Trees bristled on it like porcupine quills.

Tony Johnson, Amber on the Mountain



Metaphor

Definition: A metaphor is a figure of speech that compares two markedly different objects, concepts, or experiences without stating an explicit comparison. While a simile uses the word “like” or “as,” a metaphor does not.

Mentor Text

Life

Life is but a toy that swings on a bright gold chain
Tickling for a little while
To amuse a fascinated infant,
Until the keeper, a very old man,
Becomes tired of the game
And lets the watch run down.

Naomi Long Madgett

Teacher Artistry

Read the mentor text aloud.

- ✿ Ask students to identify the metaphor the poet uses to describe life. Discuss how this comparison leads to new understanding of what life means to the author.
- ✿ Write the following sentences on the board:
 - Life is a song.
 - Life is a teenager.
 - Life is a car.
 - Life is a pet.
- ✿ Ask students to think about the sentence, “Life is a song.”
- ✿ Brainstorm genres of songs (e.g., country).
- ✿ As a class, write metaphors about life as a song (e.g., Life is a country music song: everything can go wrong, but your dog still loves you.)

Student Artistry

- ✍ Ask students to choose one of the four metaphors on the board that best describes their individual life and write about its meaning to them. Suggest that they prewrite, brainstorming ideas with details to support what they say.
- ✍ When students finish writing, ask for volunteers to share their work.

Other Examples

Charm is the ultimate weapon, the supreme seduction, against which there are few defenses.

Laurie Lee

“Be careful. I am Death!” It was Karait, the dusty brown snakeling that lies for choice on the dusty earth; and his bite is as dangerous as the cobra’s.

Rudyard Kipling, “Rikki-tikki-tavi”

Fog

The fog comes
on little cat feet.

It sits looking
over harbor and city
on silent haunches
and then moves on.

Carl Sandburg



Metaphor

Definition: A metaphor is a figure of speech that compares two markedly different objects, concepts, or experiences without stating an explicit comparison. While a simile uses the word “like” or “as,” a metaphor does not.

Mentor Texts

All the world’s a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;

William Shakespeare, “The Seven Ages of Man”

. . . she kept bragging: “I’m a streak of lightning set up edgeways and buttered with quicksilver.”

Retold by Mary Pope Osborne, “Sally Ann Thunder Ann Whirlwind”

. . . the warmth of the tortilla factory is a *sarape* [blanket] in the chilly morning hours . . .

Robert Ramirez, “The Barrio”

She was very old and small and she walked slowly in the dark pine shadows, moving a little from side to side in her steps, with the balanced heaviness and lightness of a pendulum in a grandfather clock.

Eudora Welty, “A Worn Path”

Waving her arms in the air, she was a windmill of worry.

Julius Lester, John Henry

Teacher Artistry

Read each mentor text aloud, and after each reading, instruct students to do the following:

-  List the two things being compared in each of the texts.
-  Identify the element that is common to both objects.
-  Share findings with a partner.
-  Ask for volunteers to share their ideas with the class.

Student Artistry

✍ Write original metaphors based on the following descriptions:

a teenaged girl getting ready for her first dance

a rusted truck sitting in the front yard of a house

an old man sitting on a park bench, saying nothing, staring straight ahead

a snake stalking a field mouse

a football player walking back to the locker room after losing the game in overtime



Extended Metaphor

Definition: An extended metaphor is a comparison that continues throughout a series of sentences in a paragraph or lines in a poem.

Mentor Texts

In a sense we've come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was the promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

It is obvious that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked "insufficient funds."

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "I Have a Dream"

Mother to Son

Well, son, I'll tell you:
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
It's had tacks in it,
And splinters,
And boards torn up,
And places with no carpet on the floor –
Bare.
But all the time I've been a-climbin' on,
And reachin' landin's,
And turnin' corners,
And sometimes goin' in the dark
Where there ain't been no light.
So boy, don't you turn back.
Don't you set down on the steps
'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.
Don't you fall now –
For I've still goin', honey,
I've still climbin',
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

Langston Hughes

Teacher Artistry

Read the excerpt from “I Have a Dream” aloud while students read their own copies silently.

- ✦ Instruct students to underline or highlight each time King mentions “check,” uses a synonym for “check,” or describes a characteristic of a check.
- ✦ Ask students to discuss how the check is similar to the promises King mentions that are guaranteed by the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.
- ✦ Discuss why King has marked this “check” as one with “insufficient funds.”
- ✦ Ask students to explain whether or not this comparison is effective and why.

Read “Mother to Son” aloud while students read their own copies silently.

- ✦ Ask students to identify the two ideas that are being compared.
- ✦ Have students list the various characteristics of the stair stated in the poem.
- ✦ Ask students how each of these characteristics also describes the mother’s life.
- ✦ Instruct students to list the mother’s instructions to her son and explain what she is actually telling her son to do or not to do in life.
- ✦ Share responses with the class.

Student Artistry

Read the following text:

No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend’s or of thine own were . . .

John Donne, “No Man Is an Island”

- ✦ Using Donne’s text as a model, write an original extended metaphor. Compare a person or an animal to an element of nature such as a hurricane, a tree, a rainbow, a season, etc.

Other Examples

Miss Bindle was the Jesse James of sarcasm: she could quick-draw a sarcastic remark and drill you between the eyes with it at thirty paces. She once hit Mort Simmons with a slug of sarcasm that spun him around half out of his desk. Then she walked over and coolly finished him off with two shots to the head. Mort recovered, but he was never the same afterward. His was a sad case.

Mort had always been dumb. The reason Miss Bindle drilled him was that he had been sneaking a look at one of my answers during a test; that's how dumb he was, or so Miss Bindle remarked, catching me with a ricochet from her shot at Mort.

Patrick F. McManus, "The Clown"

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"Hope" is the thing with feathers –
That perches in the soul –
And sings the tune without the words –
And never stops – at all –

And sweetest – in the Gale – is heard –
And sore must be the storm –
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm –

I've heard it in the chilliest land –
And on the strangest Sea –
Yet, never, in Extremity,
It asked a crumb – of Me.

Emily Dickinson



Personification

Definition: Personification attributes human qualities or behaviors to objects, abstract ideas (honesty, bravery, courage, loss, faith, hope, etc.), emotions, or animals.

Mentor Texts

Fear knocked on the door. Faith answered. There was no one there.

Proverb

Hunger stole upon me so slowly that at first I was not aware of what hunger really meant. Hunger had always been more or less at my elbow when I played, but now I began to wake up at night to find hunger standing at my bedside, staring at me gauntly.

Richard Wright, “The Rights to the Streets of Memphis”

Teacher Artistry

Read the proverb aloud.

- ✦ Instruct the students to identify the two abstract ideas found in the text.
- ✦ Ask students what human characteristics these ideas suggest.

Read the Richard Wright mentor text aloud.

- ✦ Instruct students to highlight or underline the human characteristics he attributes to hunger.
- ✦ Ask students to respond to the following questions:
 - What does Wright mean when he says, “Hunger stole,” “hunger standing at my bedside,” and “[hunger] staring at me gauntly”?
 - Why is Wright’s text better than simply saying, “I was really hungry”?
- ✦ Ask students to work in pairs and choose a special day that might be filled with joy for a small child.
- ✦ Instruct students to do the following:
 - Use Wright’s text as a model to describe how joy would come upon this child on that day.
 - Create another sentence that describes how joy continued to influence the child in the following days. Require them to include one strong adverb (as Wright used “gauntly”) in their descriptions.

Student Artistry

Lesson 1

- ✍ Use the following sentence as a model for using personification:
The puppy (made noise) when I went to school becomes “The puppy complained loudly when I left for school.”
- ✍ Instruct students to work in pairs to convert the word in parenthesis in the following sentences to words that would describe human action.
The leaf (fell) from the tree.
The space shuttle (took off).
Silence (made a noise) throughout the room.
The flashlight (went on).
- ✍ Share the sentences with the class.

Lesson 2

- ✍ Instruct students to write an original paragraph describing their bedrooms. In their descriptions, they must personify at least one object, abstract idea, emotion, or animal found in their rooms. They may choose from the following or use an idea of their own:
hope
a bed
books
a hamster
exhaustion
the closet
- ✍ Have students share their writing first with a partner and then with the class.

Other Examples

Summer grass aches and whispers
It wants something; it calls and sings;

Carl Sandburg, from “Summer Grass”

. . . I waited for the ground to open up and swallow me . . .

Maya Angelou, I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings

The Summer had died peacefully in its sleep, and Autumn, as soft-spoken executrix, was locking life up safely until Spring came to claim it.

Kurt Vonnegut, “Confido”



Personification

Definition: Personification attributes human qualities to an animal, object, or idea.

Mentor Text

The Rider

A boy told me
if he rollerskated fast enough
his loneliness couldn't catch up to him,

the best reason I ever heard
for trying to be a champion.

What I wonder tonight
pedaling hard down King William Street
is if it translates to bicycles.

A victory! To leave your loneliness
panting behind you on some street corner
while you float free into a cloud of azaleas,
luminous pink petals that never felt loneliness,
no matter how slowly they fell.

Naomi Shihab Nye

Teacher Artistry

Read the mentor text aloud.

- ✂ Ask students what is being personified in this poem.
- ✂ Ask students to identify specific lines that illustrate personification.
- ✂ Instruct students to complete the chart below:

Noun	Personified verb
car	squealed
mountain	echoed
football	
hurricane	
wolf	

✂ Discuss the first two examples in the chart. Instruct students to add personified verbs to complete the chart.

✂ Have students share with the class.

Student Artistry

✂ Share the following with students:

In the movie, *Beauty and the Beast*, Mrs. Potts, the teacup, gives Belle motherly advice, and all of the kitchen utensils sing and dance.

In *Alice in Wonderland* the White Rabbit exclaims, “Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be too late!” as he takes his watch out of his waistcoat pocket and hurries away.

✂ With students, make a list of carpenter tools (e.g., hammer) and a list of kitchen utensils (e.g., can opener).

✂ Ask students to choose one implement and write a poem or paragraph which personifies it.

Other Examples

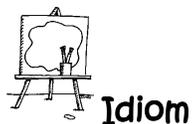
I thought the earth
remembered me, she
took me back so tenderly, arranging
her dark skirts, her pockets
full of lichens, and seeds. I slept
as never before, a stone
on the riverbed, nothing
between me and the white fire of the stars
but my thought, and they floated
light as moths among the branches
of the perfect trees

Mary Oliver, from “Sleeping in the Forest”

Primer Lesson

Look out how you use proud words.
When you let proud words go, it is not
easy to call them back.
They wear long boots, hard boots; they
walk off proud; they can't
hear you calling—
Look out how you use proud words.

Carl Sandburg



Definition: An idiom is a common figure of speech whose meaning is different from the literal meaning of its words. For example, the phrase “in a pickle” does not literally mean one is in a pickle; it means one is in a difficult situation.

Mentor Text

He said he was trying to get Miss Maudie's goat, that he had been trying unsuccessfully for forty years, that he was the last person in the world Miss Maudie would think about marrying, but the first person she thought about teasing, and the best defense to her was spirited offense, all of which we understood clearly.

Harper Lee, To Kill a Mockingbird

To “get one's goat” is to make a person irritated or angry.

Teacher Artistry

As a group, research idioms.

(<http://www.usingenglish.com/reference/idioms/> or www.idiomsite.com)

- ✿ To make the research interesting, instruct students to look for idioms that relate to a certain subject. For example, money: A day late and a dollar short. If something is a day late and a dollar short, it is too little, too late. A fool and his money are soon parted means people who are careless with their money spend it quickly.
- ✿ Instruct students to choose an idiom from the list and explain its literal and figurative meanings to the class.

Student Artistry

- ✍ Choose an idiom from the following list. Write a paragraph that will logically end with the idiom used as the concluding sentence.

A leopard can't change his spots.
Fortunately, we were all in the same boat.
There's no use in crying over spilt milk.
Don't put all your eggs in one basket.
He hit the nail on the head.
If it's not one thing, it's another.
Darn, I let the cat out of the bag!
Never bite the hand that feeds you.
Rome was not built in one day.
When it rains, it pours.

- ✍ Share writing with a partner.

Other Examples

The other animals, which came in all shapes and sizes, continued to mill around the ship, evidently very curious about the newcomer to their world. I could see Davison's eyes thirsty with the desire to take the whole kit and caboodle back to Earth with him.

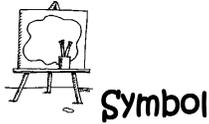
Robert Silverberg, "Collecting Team"

Jem pulled out his grandfather's watch that Atticus let him carry once a week if Jem were careful with it. On the days he carried the watch, Jem walked on eggs.

Harper Lee, To Kill a Mockingbird

She hurt my feelings and set my teeth permanently on edge, but when I asked Atticus about it, he said there were already enough sunbeams in the family and to go on about my business, he didn't mind me much the way I was.

Harper Lee, To Kill a Mockingbird



Definition: A symbol is a person, place, or thing that suggests meaning beyond its literal sense.

Mentor Text

The Courage That My Mother Had

The courage that my mother had
Went with her, and is with her still:
Rock from New England quarried;
Now granite in a granite hill.

The golden brooch my mother wore
She left behind for me to wear;
I have no thing I treasure more;
Yet, it is something I could spare.

Oh, if instead she'd left to me
The thing she took to the grave!-
That courage like a rock, which she
Has no more need of, and I have.

Edna St. Vincent Millay

Teacher Artistry

Read aloud the mentor text.

- 🔗 Ask students what concrete elements in the poem represent something abstract.
- 🔗 Discuss how the poet compresses ideas into a very few words, forcing the readers to draw conclusions based on the details in the poem.
- 🔗 Ask students to respond to the following questions:

Why would the speaker rather have her mother's character than the physical item that she left her?

What is the symbol of strength?

What qualities of granite suggest courage?

- ✂ Draw two columns on the board. Label the left column “character traits” and the right column “objects in nature.”
- ✂ Ask students to name character traits they admire in their parents to list on the board.
- ✂ Ask students to suggest objects in nature that might symbolize each trait.
For example: flowers might represent kindness, a cat or dog might represent empathy, bees might represent a work ethic, a mountain might represent commitment.
- ✂ List the objects in nature next to the character traits they represent.

Student Artistry

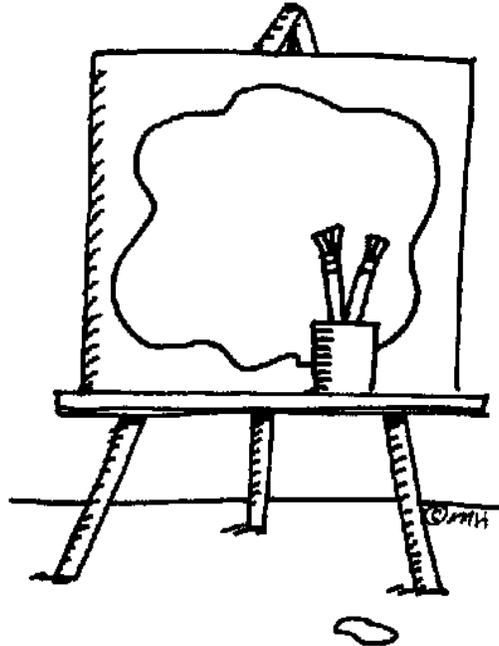
- ✂ Choose an admirable character trait and select an object in nature that would symbolize that trait.
- ✂ Write a short poem or paragraph about a person's most admired trait and an object in nature to symbolize that particular trait.
- ✂ Ask students to share their examples.

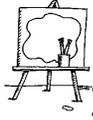
Other Examples

- A dove represents peace and harmony.
- A blindfolded woman holding a balanced scale represents justice.
- A crown suggests royalty or authority.
- A heart could represent love of a friend, parent, sibling, or relative.
- A heart could also represent light, warmth, kindness, and health.
- A sunrise represents a new beginning.
- A cross represents faith or suffering.
- A lion represents strength and courage.
- Winter represents aging, decay, or death.
- Spring represents energy, birth, and hope.
- Summer represents childhood, fun, and laughter.
- Autumn represents maturity, wisdom, and fulfillment.

Emotion

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Emotion: Suspense

Definition: Words are used to show rather than tell how characters are feeling.

Mentor Text

Presently I heard a slight groan, and I knew it was the groan of mortal terror. It was not a groan of pain or grief—oh, no!—it was the low stifled sound that arises from the bottom of the soul when overcharged with awe. I knew the sound well. Many a night, just at midnight, when all the world slept, it has welled up from my own bosom, deepening, with its dreadful echo, the terrors that distracted me. I say I knew it well. I knew what the old man felt, and pitied him, although I chuckled at heart. I knew that he had been lying awake ever since the first slight noise, when he had turned in the bed. His fears had been ever since growing upon him. He had been saying to himself—“It is nothing but the wind in the chimney—it is only a mouse crossing the floor,” or “it is merely a cricket which has made a single chirp.” Yes, he had been trying to comfort himself with these suppositions: but he had found all in vain. All in vain; because death, in approaching him had stalked with his black shadow before him, and enveloped the victim. And it was the mournful influence of the unperceived shadow that caused him to feel—although he neither saw nor heard—to feel the presence of my head within the room.

Edgar Allan Poe, “The Tell-Tale Heart”

Teacher Artistry

Read the mentor text aloud.

- ✂ Write the word “fear” on the board.
- ✂ Find words and phrases in the mentor text that reveal fear. List them on the board.
- ✂ Discuss the ways that the author uses the words and phrases to build suspense in the reader’s mind.
- ✂ Brainstorm some common fears people have (e.g., public speaking). Brainstorm words or phrases that a writer might use to show some of the fears (e.g., sweaty palms).

Student Artistry

- ✍ Write a suspenseful scenario about a time someone experienced fear. Build suspense to make the reader feel concern about the outcome.

Other Examples

Christina sat stiffly, staring out the side window, her hands tightly knotted in her lap. Her hair was disheveled. Several long curls had fallen over her eyes, but she made no attempt to brush them aside.

“Where are you taking us?” she asked in a soft, trembling voice, breaking several minutes of silence.

R.L. Stine, The Hitchhiker

“Hey!” she screamed. “Hey, someone, do you hear me? Do you hear me? Hey!” She paused, praying for an answer to come back, but no answer came and so she brought the worst out at last: “Help me, I’m lost! Help me, I’m lost!” Now the tears began to come and she could no longer kid herself that she was in charge of this situation. Her voice trembled, became the first wavery voice of a little kid and then almost the shriek of a baby who lies forgotten in her pram, and that sound frightened her more than anything else so far on this awful morning, the only human sound in the woods her weepy, shrieking voice calling for help, calling for help because she was lost.

Stephen King, The Girl Who Loved Tom Gordon



Emotion: Imagery

Definition: Imagery consists of words and phrases that appeal to a reader's five senses. Writers use sensory details to imagine how things look, feel, smell, sound and taste.

Mentor Text

Great rosebushes of red bloomed on Victor's cheeks. A river of nervous sweat ran down his palms. He felt awful. Teresa sat a few desks away, no doubt thinking he was a fool

He turned and headed to his class. The rosebushes of shame on his face became bouquets of love.

Teresa is a great girl, he thought. And Mr. Bueller is a good guy.

Gary Soto, "Seventh Grade"

Teacher Artistry

Read the mentor text aloud.

- 🌟 Ask students to volunteer words and phrases that show Victor's contrasting emotions.
- 🌟 Explain how the imagery intensifies the author's description of Victor's emotion.
- 🌟 Ask students to share examples of contrasting moods or emotions on holidays, weekdays, weekends, and special days.

Student Artistry

- ✍️ Tell students to create a diary entry about an experience when they felt a strong emotion, similar to Victor's feelings of embarrassment or love (e.g., happiness, frustration, elation, relief, sadness, etc.). Be specific about how you felt and how you reacted.
- ✍️ When students finish writing, ask volunteers to share from their diary entries.

Other Examples

The 1st

What I remember about that day
is boxes stacked across the walk
and couch springs curling through the air
and drawers and tables balanced on the curb
and us, hollering,
leaping up and around
happy to have a playground;

nothing about the emptied rooms
nothing about the emptied family

Lucille Clifton

Across the jetty was a wharf, and some stevedores were loading and unloading the barges. I don't know why seeing that struck me so, but suddenly a wave of strong feeling came over me, and my heart swelled with a great gladness as the words "I shall never see this again" spilled out inside me. But then, just as quickly, my heart shriveled up and the words "I shall never see this again" stabbed at me. I don't know what stopped me from falling in a heap at my parents' feet.

Jamaica Kincaid, "A Walk to the Jetty"



Emotion: Positive

Definition: Words are used to show rather than tell how characters are feeling.

Mentor Text

He worshiped this new angel with a furtive eye, till he saw that she had discovered him; then he pretended he did not know she was present, and began to show off in all sorts of boyish ways, in order to win her admiration. He kept up this grotesque foolishness for some time; but by and by, while he was in the midst of some dangerous gymnastic performances, he glanced aside and saw that the little girl was wending her way toward the house. Tom heaved a great sigh as she put her foot on the threshold. But his face lit up, right away, for she tossed a pansy over the fence a moment before she disappeared. The boy ran around and stopped within a foot or two of the flower, and then shaded his eyes with his hand and began to look down the street as if he had discovered something of interest going on in that direction. Presently he picked up a straw and began trying to balance it on his nose, with his head tilted far back; and as he moved from side to side, in his efforts, he edged nearer and nearer toward the pansy; finally his bare foot rested, his pliant toes closed upon it, and he hopped away with the treasure and disappeared round the corner. But only for a minute—only while he could button the flower inside his jacket, next to his heart

Mark Twain, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer

Teacher Artistry

Read the mentor text aloud.

- ✚ Underline text as students suggest words and phrases that reveal characters' emotions.
- ✚ Reread the passage, omitting the underlined areas.
- ✚ Discuss how the passage changes.
- ✚ Brainstorm emotions revealed in the text.
- ✚ As a class, choose one of the emotions listed and create sentences that show an emotion (e.g., Tom heaved a great sigh as she put her foot on the threshold.)

Student Artistry

- ✍ Write a paragraph about a time you experienced strong emotion, perhaps excitement or happiness. In the paragraph try to show but do not specifically identify the emotions you felt.

Other Examples

Mr. Murry was running across the lawn, Mrs. Murry running toward him, and then they were in each other's arms, and then there was a tremendous happy jumble of arms and legs and hugging, the older Murrays and Meg and Charles Wallace and the twins, and Calvin grinning by them until Meg reached out and pulled him in, and Mrs. Murry gave him a special hug all his own. They were talking and laughing all at once, when they were startled by a crash, and Fortinbras, who could bear being left out of the happiness not one second longer, catapulted his sleek black body right through the screened door to the kitchen. He dashed across the lawn to join in the joy, and almost knocked them over with the exuberance of his greeting.

Madeleine L'Engle, *A Wrinkle in Time*

“Yes, I like corridos [ballads],” I answered. He then picked up the trumpet, blew on it and handed it to me. The sound gave me goose bumps. I knew that sound. I had heard it in many corridos. “How would you like to learn how to play it?” he asked. He must have read my face because before I could answer, he added, “I’ll teach you how to play it during our lunch hours.”

That day I could hardly wait to get home to tell Papa and Mama the great news. As I got off the bus, my little brothers were yelling and screaming. I thought they were happy to see me, but when I opened the door to our shack, I saw that everything we owned was neatly packed in cardboard boxes.

Francisco Jimenez, “The Circuit”

Antonio Cruz and Felix Vargas were both seventeen years old. They were so together in friendship that they felt themselves as brothers. They had known each other since childhood, growing up on the lower east side of Manhattan in the same tenement building on Fifth Street between Avenue A and Avenue B. Antonio was fair, lean and lanky, while Felix was dark, short, and husky. Antonio's hair was always falling over his eyes, while Felix wore his hair in a natural Afro style.

Each youngster had a dream of someday becoming lightweight champion of the world. Every chance they had, they worked out, sometimes at the Boys Club on 10th Street and Avenue A and sometimes at the pro's gym on 14th Street. Early morning sunrises would find them running along the East River Drive, wrapped in sweatshirts, short towels around their necks and handkerchiefs Apache style around their foreheads. While some youngsters were into street negatives, Antonio and Felix ate, rapped, and dreamt positive.

Piri Thomas, “Amigo Brothers”



Emotion: Negative

Definition: Words are used to show rather than tell how characters are feeling.

Mentor Text

Suddenly it was deathly quiet. We had all frozen. Nobody in my family had ever hit me. Nobody. Soda was wide-eyed. Darryl looked at the palm of his hand where it had turned red and then looked back at me. His eyes were huge.

S. E. Hinton, The Outsiders

Teacher Artistry

Read the mentor text aloud.

- ✦ Identify three different emotions the author has revealed through the characters' actions.
- ✦ Explain which words and phrases reveal these characters' emotions.
- ✦ As a class rewrite the passage, telling what happened but using no emotion.
- ✦ Discuss how the passage changed.

Student Artistry

- ✍ Brainstorm a list of negative emotions.
- ✍ Think of an ordinary activity like riding a bike or washing dishes.
- ✍ Write a paragraph about a character performing the activity and feeling one of the negative emotions from the brainstormed list.

Other Examples

“You signing up for the May Day races?” smiles Mary Louise, only it's not a smile at all. A dumb question like that doesn't deserve an answer. Besides, there's just me and Gretchen standing there really, so no use wasting my breath talking to shadows.

“I don't think you're going to win this time,” says Rosie, trying to signify with her hands on her hips all salty, completely forgetting that I have whopped her behind many times for less salt than that.

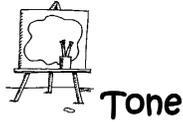
Toni Cade Bambara, “Raymond's Run”

Victor lingered, keeping his head down and staring at his desk. He wanted to leave when she did so he could bump into her and say something clever.

He watched her on the sly. As he turned to leave, he stood up and hurried to the door, where he managed to catch her eye. She smiled and said, “Hi, Victor.”

He smiled back and said, “Yeah, that's me.” His brown face blushed. Why hadn't he said, “How was your summer?” or something nice?

Gary Soto, “Seventh Grade”



Definition: Tone describes the author’s attitude toward the reader and his subject as reflected in his “voice”. Some descriptors include the following: subjective, objective, formal, informal, serious, playful, humorous, sympathetic, and ironic.

Read the following sentence four different times, four different ways. Each time emphasize a different word to change the tone of the sentence.

WHY are you here?
Why ARE you here?
Why are YOU here?
Why are you HERE?

Mentor Text

The substitute was weird. He sauntered into the busily chattering classroom, appearing nonchalant and oddly unhurried after the bell had rung to begin class. His sandy-colored hair had the look of a violent wind tunnel experience. Even his gold-rimmed Ben Franklin spectacles perched slightly askew atop the bridge of his ruddy nose. From his left earlobe dangled a sparkling pentagram.

Professional Model

Teacher Artistry

Read the mentor text aloud.

- ✦ Ask the class to identify the words that show rather than tell the writer’s attitude toward the substitute.
- ✦ Ask student volunteers to explain why a specific word is a good choice for the writer’s purpose (like saunter rather than walk in the first sentence).
- ✦ Discuss how the writer uses specific words to build an understanding of his attitude.
- ✦ Ask students to identify the attitude of the writer toward his subject.
- ✦ Brainstorm the common characteristics of a burglar (e.g., sneaky).
- ✦ Change the tone and brainstorm a list of characteristics not usually associated with burglars (e.g., silly or playful).
- ✦ Have students work in small groups to create a paragraph in which the burglar behaves in character with one of the new tones.

Student Artistry

- ✍ On the overhead, have the class create a list of characteristics of a dentist. Have students individually write a paragraph about a dentist that reveals a specific attitude towards dentists. Students should use words and phrases that show rather than tell.

Other Examples

At the gate he heard his mother's voice raised in a storm of anger. She had discovered the shotgun where he had leaned it against the smoke-house wall. She had discovered Flag. She had discovered, too, that the yearling had made the most of the early hours and had fed, not only across the sprouting corn, but across a wide section of the cow-peas. He went helplessly to her to meet her wrath. He stood with his head down while she flailed him with her tongue.

Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, The Yearling

When our bus turned a corner and we no longer had to smile and wave, we settled back gravely in our seats. Everyone was quiet except for a chattering group of university students, who started singing unique college songs. A few people turned and glared at them, which only served to increase the volume of their singing. Then suddenly a baby's sharp cry rose indignantly above the hubbub. The singing stopped immediately, followed by a guilty silence.

Monica Stone, "Camp Harmony"

We Real Cool

The Pool Players.
Seven at The Golden Shovel.

We real cool. We
Left school. We

Lurk late. We
Strike straight. We

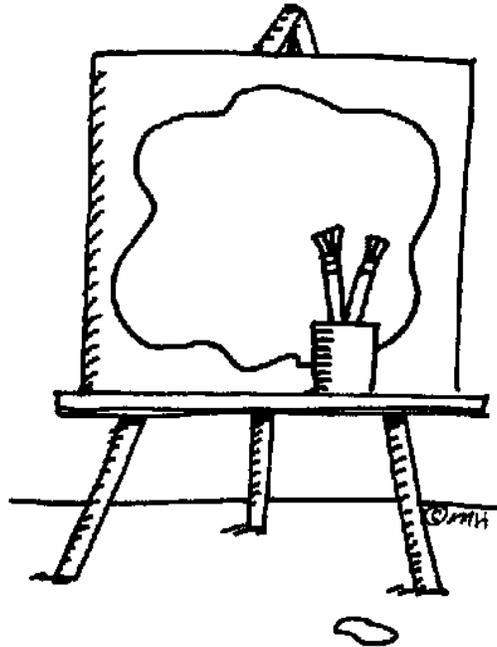
Sing sin. We
Thin gin. We

Jazz June. We
Die soon.

Gwendolyn Brooks

Thoughtshots

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Thoughtshots

Definition: Thoughtshots help a reader understand a character, his thoughts or actions. This writing strategy adds depth, realism, and/or insight by showing what a character thinks. Thoughtshots provide a vivid picture of a memory or an emotion, or reveal how a character felt previously, in-the-moment, or will feel about a future event.

Mentor Text

His eyes were of no use to him in the foam-streaked blackness. He closed them tight, and at once an insane sequence of pictures flashed through his mind. He saw his wife sitting in their living room, reading, waiting calmly for his return. He saw the mullet he had just caught, gasping its life away on the floorboards of the skiff. He saw all these things and many others simultaneously in his mind as his body fought silently and tenaciously for its existence. His hand touched something hard and closed on it in a death grip, but it was only the sharp-edged helmet of a horseshoe crab, and after an instant he let it go.

He had been underwater perhaps fifteen seconds now, and something in his brain told him quite calmly that he could last another forty or fifty and then the red flashes behind his eyes would merge into darkness, and the water would pour into his lungs in one sharp painful shock, and he would be finished.

Arthur Gordon, "The Sea Devil"

Teacher Artistry

Read the mentor text aloud to identify the thoughtshots in the passage.

- ✿ Label them as flashback, flash-forward, in-the-moment, or reflection. Flashbacks trigger memories of related events or causes. Flashforwards predict outcomes of actions or anticipate what may be said or thought. In-the-moment or reflection reveals internal dialogue.
- ✿ Using the following sentence, ask students for suggestions on adding a flashback (e.g., I thought back to the time...), flashforward (e.g., I should have known it would go badly...), or reflection (e.g., if I had to do it over again...).

I wandered deep into the woods with my dog Sparky.

Student Artistry

- ✍ Brainstorm to create a list of annoying situations or events involving two individuals.
- ✍ Choose one and describe it in 5-10 sentences either as a personal narrative or as a fictional story.
- ✍ After writing for 10 minutes, add thoughtshots that show flashback, flashforward, or reflection.
- ✍ Insert phrases that show a thoughtshot: (I, he, she) thought, wondered, imagined, said to (myself, himself, herself). Notice how these changes improve writing.

Alternate Writing Activity

- ✍ Assign students a brief narrative or memoir about a time when they or someone they know:
was caught red-handed,
was forced to make an important choice, or
was aggravated waiting in line at a store checkout.

Other Examples

Mrs. Turpin remained standing. The only man in the room besides Claud was a lean stringy old fellow with a rusty hand spread out on each knee, whose eyes were closed as if he were asleep or dead or pretending to be so as not to get up and offer her his seat. Her gaze settled agreeably on a well-dressed gray-haired lady whose eyes met hers and whose expression said: if that child belonged to me, he would have some manners and move over—there's plenty of room there for you and him too.

Flannery O'Connor, "Revelation"

Unpacking even just the few things in her brown suitcase, always seemed a waste of time to Gilly. She never knew if she'd be in a place long enough to make it worth the bother. And yet it was something to fill the time. There were two little drawers at the top and four larger ones below. She put her underwear in one of the little ones, and her shirts and jeans in one of the big ones, and then picked up the photograph from the bottom of the suitcase.

Katherine Patterson, The Great Gilly Hopkins



Anecdote

Definition: An anecdote is a brief account or narration of an interesting or amusing incident in a person's life which illustrates or supports a particular point.

Mentor Text

From my father I inherited a love of wandering. He was born in Mexico City, but as a young man he traveled into the U.S. vagabonding. He eventually was drafted and thus became a citizen. Some of the stories he has told about his first months in the U.S. with little or no English surface in my stories in The House on Mango Street as well as others I have in mind to write in the future.

Sandra Cisneros, "Straw into Gold:
The Metamorphosis of the Everyday"

I never learned hate at home, or shame. I had to go to school for that. I was about seven years old when I got my first big lesson. I was in love with a little girl named Helene Tucker, a light-complected little girl with pigtails and nice manners. She was always clean and she was smart in school. I think I went to school mostly to look at her

Dick Gregory, "Shame"

In the days before athletes had learned how to incorporate themselves, they were shining heroes to American kids. In fact, they were such heroes to me and my friends that we even imitated their walks. When Jackie Robinson, a pigeon-toed walker, became famous, we walked pigeon-toed, a painful form of locomotion unless you were Robinson or a pigeon.

"Why you walkin' like that?" said my mother one day.

"This is Jackie Robinson's walk," I proudly replied.

"There somethin' wrong with his shoes?"

"He's the fastest man in baseball."

"He'd be faster if he didn't walk like that. His mother should make him walk right."

Bill Cosby, "Was Tarzan a Three-Bandage Man?"

Teacher Artistry

Read each mentor text aloud.

- ✦ Ask students to determine what points each of the three anecdotes is illustrating.
- ✦ Brainstorm a list of expectations adults have about young people. Some examples might include “teachers expect students to do homework” and “parents expect their children to keep their rooms clean.” Write these on the board.
- ✦ Ask students to choose one expectation from the list and share an anecdote which would support the expectation.

Student Artistry

- ✦ Instruct the students to write a paragraph that includes an anecdote illustrating a personal experience with one of the following situations:

Why you won't eat a particular food
How someone taught you a certain skill
Why it's a bad idea to talk to strangers
How you became friends with a person while you were both in elementary school

Other Examples

A lot of old Italians lived around me, which suited me just fine because I was the granddaughter of old Italians. Their own children and grandchildren had moved to Long Island and New Jersey. All they had was me. All I had was them.

I remember sitting on a corner with a group of half a dozen elderly men, men who had known one another since they were boys sitting together on this same corner, watching a glazier install a great spread of tiny glass panes to make one wall of a restaurant in the ground floor of an old building across the street.

Anna Quindlen, “Melting Pot”

If you own things, what's their effect on you? What's the effect on me of my wood?

In the first place, it makes me feel heavy. Property does have this effect. Property produces men of weight, and it was a man of weight who failed to get into the Kingdom of Heaven. He was not wicked, that unfortunate millionaire in the parable, he was only stout; he stuck out in front, not to mention behind, and as he wedged himself this way and that in the crystalline entrance and bruised his well-fed flanks, he saw beneath him a comparatively slim camel passing through the eye of a needle and being woven into the robe of God.

E. M. Forster, “My Wood”



Example

Definition: An example represents or illustrates an idea or a term.

Mentor Texts

An Indian, falling sick, would send for a medicine-man, who would apply his cure
The medicine-man makes incisions over the point of the pain, sucks the wound, and cauterizes it.

Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca, La Relacion

The prince had provided all the appliances of pleasure. There were buffoons, there were improvisatori, there were ballet-dancers, there were musicians, there was Beauty, there was wine.

Edgar Allan Poe, “The Masque of the Red Death”

We worked in all weathers. It was never too hot or too cold; it could never rain, blow, hail, or snow too hard for us to work in the field.

Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass

I am the way my daughter would want me to be: a hundred pounds lighter, my skin like an uncooked barley pancake. My hair glistens in the hot bright lights. Johnny Carson has much to do to keep up with my quick and witty tongue.

Alice Walker, “Everyday Use”

Teacher Artistry

Read each mentor text aloud.

- ✿ Ask students to identify the examples that illustrate or clarify the idea which precedes them.
- ✿ List these ideas or situations on the board:

He was the funniest man I ever met.
After watching (movie) _____, I was inspired.
It was December and oh, so wonderful.
The seriousness of the situation was all too apparent.

- ✿ Have students choose one or more of the statements and give examples to illustrate the ideas.

Student Artistry

Instruct students to do the following:

- ✍ In pairs, using the mentor texts as models, choose one of the following sentences and add one or more examples to illustrate an idea or claim found in the original sentence.

The storm was frightening.

My mother prepared all of my favorite foods for my birthday meal.

This room was the most beautiful I've ever seen.

- ✍ Share your new sentences with the class.

Other Examples

There are angels on this earth and they come in subtle forms, and I decided La Trice Haney was one of them. Outwardly, she looked like just another efficient, clipboard-and-syringe-wielding nurse in a starched outfit. She worked extremely long days and nights, and on her off hours she went home to her husband, Randy, a truck driver, and their two children, Taylor, aged seven, and Morgan, four. But if she was tired, she never seemed it. She struck me as a woman utterly lacking in ordinary resentments, sure of her responsibilities and blessings and unwavering in her administering of care, and if that wasn't angelic behavior, I didn't know what was.

Lance Armstrong, *It's Not About the Bike*

Because Mrs. Donovan, among her other widely ranging interests, was an animal doctor. In fact I think it would be safe to say that this facet of her life transcended all the others.

She could talk at length on the ailments of small animals, and she had a whole armory of medicines and remedies at her command, her two specialties being her miracle-working condition powders and a dog shampoo of unprecedented value for improving the coat. She had an uncanny ability to sniff out a sick animal, and it was not uncommon when I was on my round to find Mrs. Donovan's dark Gypsy face poised intently over what I had thought was my patient while she administered calf's-foot jelly or one of her own patent nostrums.

James Herriot, "Haven't I Made a Difference!"



Quotations in Writing

Definition: Quotations are reproduced passages used in writing to develop authority, voice, and logic.

Mentor Text

“It's not you; it's me,” John whispered just before he waltzed out of my life forever. He was in a “bad place” and wasn't ready for a commitment. I'm sure in his mind he was letting me down easy. As I watched John's image become smaller with each curt step he took, a Mark Twain quote came to mind, “Don't cry because it's over; smile because it happened.” I blinked, shook my head, and immediately felt the need to give both Mr. Twain and that life-wrecking John a swift kick in the backside.

Professional Model

Teacher Artistry

Read the mentor text aloud.

- ✎ Ask the students the following questions:

How does the quote contribute meaning to the piece?
If the quote was removed, how would the piece change?

- ✎ Read the following passage aloud to use as a basis for a writing that incorporates a famous quote.

“Miss Hasselberger, a second-grader could do this problem,” my seventh grade math teacher hissed as I stood frozen at the board. “Please, Miss Hasselberger,” she continued her assault, “any idiot could figure this problem out. Do you quit? Do you give up?”

I'm not going to quit! I'm not going to quit! I kept thinking. It was no use; I couldn't do the problem. My eyes welled with tears, so I hung my head. “I give up,” I mumbled.

“Take your seat; I told you this class was too hard for you.”

Right after class, I went to my guidance counselor and asked to be transferred to a lower math class. Miss Klein had won, and my battle with math had just begun.

Professional Model

- ✎ Ask students to select the quote that works best with the preceding passage. Group students based on the quote they chose, and ask them to incorporate it into the preceding passage. Have a group leader read the final product to the class.

Wherever there is a human being, there is an opportunity for kindness.—Seneca

It's not whether you get knocked down that counts;

it's whether you get up.—Vince Lombardi

If a man does his best, what else is there.—General George S. Patton

Student Artistry

✍ Choose one quote from the list below and incorporate it into a paragraph about one of the following topics:

embarrassing moment
being rejected
being loved
procrastination
hard choices

Serious Quotes:

Don't cry because it's over; smile because it happened. —Mark Twain

Nobody can make you feel inferior without your consent. —Eleanor Roosevelt

Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever. —Mahatma Gandhi

The question isn't who's going to let me; it's who's going to stop me. —Ayn Rand

Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. —Martin Luther King, Jr.

If you don't stand for something, you will fall for anything. —Malcolm X

Without music, life would be a mistake. —Friedrich Nietzsche

If you judge people, you have no time to love them. —Mother Teresa

If you want to know what a man's like, take a good look at how he treats his inferiors, not his equals. —J.K. Rowling

Humorous Quotes:

I am so clever that sometimes I don't understand a single word of what I'm saying. —Oscar Wilde

Never put off until tomorrow what you can do the day after tomorrow. —Mark Twain

Two things are infinite: The universe and human stupidity; and I'm not sure about the universe. —Albert Einstein

You only live once, but if you do it right, once is enough. —Mae West

It is better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to open one's mouth and remove all doubt. —Abraham Lincoln

In three words I can sum up everything I've learned about life: it goes on. —Robert Frost

I love deadlines. I like the wooshing sound they make as they fly by. —Douglas Adams



Allusion

Definition: An allusion is a brief, sometimes indirect reference to a prior text, an historical event, a place, a myth, a work of art, a person, etc. that operates as a literary shorthand to enrich the meaning of a work or passage.

Mentor Texts

Some likened her [Harriet Tubman] to Joan of Arc for her charisma and simple faith. . . . To her own people she was, simply, “Moses,” and their haunting spirituals – veiled messages – enlarged the metaphor to sing of Jordan and the Promised Land.

Margaret Barton Driggs, “They Called Her Moses: Harriet Tubman”

What a year that was. No matter how much we budgeted, no one could have prepared us for the Ides of May. No one ever told us that in May, your child wakes up in the morning with her hand outstretched, and every sentence is prefaced by “I need.”

Erma Bombeck, Family—The Ties That Bind . . . and Gag!

Teacher Artistry

Read each mentor text aloud.

- ✦ Ask students to identify the allusions in each text.
- ✦ Discuss how each allusion enriches the meaning of the texts.
- ✦ Brainstorm together a list of characters in movies and literature. Beside each character’s name, write a representative characteristic or trait.

For example,

Hamlet in Hamlet is a procrastinator.

Charlotte in Charlotte’s Web is loyal.

Heathcliff in Wuthering Heights is intense.

Student Artistry

- ✍ Think of a friend who has a unique talent and a celebrity or historical person who shares that same talent to complete the following sentence:

My friend _____ (name) _____ is the _____ (celebrity or historical person) _____ of our class.

- ✍ Use this sentence as the topic sentence of a paragraph you will write to explain what your friend does to merit the allusion you have created.
- ✍ Share your paragraphs with the class.

Other Examples

Often it does seem a pity that Noah and his party did not miss the boat.

Mark Twain

Caesar was right. Thin people need watching. I've been watching them for most of my adult life, and I don't like what I see.

Suzanne Jordan, "That Lean and Hungry Look"

Why did I feel like the woman in the fairy tale who was locked in a room and ordered to spin straw into gold?

Sandra Cisneros, "Straw into Gold: The Metamorphosis of the Everyday"



Allusion: Mythology

Definition: An allusion is a reference to a famous person, place, or thing, often drawn from history, the Bible, mythology, or literature. Understanding what a writer is saying often depends upon recognizing the allusion.

Mentor Text

And tomorrow I'm subject to run the quarter-meter relay all by myself and come in first, second, and third. The big kids call me Mercury* cause I'm the swiftest thing in the neighborhood. Everybody knows that-except two people who know better, my father and me.

Toni Cade Bambara, "Raymond's Run"

*Roman mythology, the messenger of the gods, known for his great speed.

Teacher Artistry

Read the mentor text aloud.

- 📌 Ask students to identify the allusion.
- 📌 Read the elements from the chart below with students.
- 📌 After discussing the elements, have students provide additional words or phrases.

Word or Phrase	Origin	Meaning
Achilles heel	Achilles, a great Greek warrior, was known to be weak only in his heel.	a weakness
Herculean effort	The Greek hero Hercules was known for his strength and for completing difficult tasks.	a difficult task requiring great strength

- 📌 Review the definition of allusion and write the student-generated examples on the board.

Student Artistry

- ✍ Design an ad for a new product and incorporate an allusion to mythology to encourage the consumer to purchase the product. Make the allusion understandable for the reader.

Examples of products:

surfboard, skateboard, football, shampoo, soap, toothpaste, cookies, candy bar, soft drink, etc.

Examples of mythological allusions:

as strong as Hercules, as athletic as Nike, as beautiful as Aphrodite, as stormy as Poseidon, as powerful as Zeus, as wise as Athena, as jealous as Hera, etc.

- ✍ Instruct students to share their new products with classmates, drawing attention to the mythological allusion.

Other Examples

Other common allusions found in literature.

Hamlet was a character from Shakespeare who had difficulty making decisions.

The Three Stooges were a comedy team of not-too-bright buffoons.

Benedict Arnold was an American traitor.

Judas betrayed Jesus.

Mother Teresa was a nun who selflessly devoted her life to caring for the poor and sick.

Don Quixote was a dreamer who went on journeys attempting impossible tasks.



Foreshadowing

Definition: Foreshadowing is a technique a writer uses to place hints or clues to suggest events that will occur later.

Mentor Text

“So be careful. Stay on the Path. Never step off!”... “People say the shortcut is cursed and that using it will bring serious consequences,” Carlos chuckled. “But I don’t believe them.”

Ray Bradbury, “A Sound of Thunder”

Teacher Artistry

Read the mentor text aloud, and instruct students to do the following:

- ✂ Reread the mentor text to predict how Carlos’s comments might foreshadow a future event.
- ✂ Share ideas with the class.
- ✂ Have students volunteer examples of movies and literature that contain elements of foreshadowing. For example, in Charlotte’s Web Charlotte tells Wilbur that all living things eventually die. This foreshadows her own death which occurs after she creates amazing webs and produces many children.

Student Artistry

- ✂ Write a brief scene using dialogue to foreshadow conflict after a verbal exchange. Create your own situation or use one of the following:

a coach talking to the team captain before a game

a parent talking to his or her child before handing over the car keys

two teenagers planning an overnight camping trip

two students on a scavenger hunt or shopping excursion

Other Examples

“What island is it?” Rainsford asked.

“The old charts call it ‘Ship-Trap Island,’” Whitney replied. “A suggestive name, isn’t it? Sailors have a curious dread of the place. I don’t know why. Some superstition—”

“Can’t see it,” remarked Rainsford, trying to peer through the dank tropical night that was palpable as it pressed its thick warm blackness in upon the yacht.

Richard Connell, “The Most Dangerous Game”

Towards the end of her day in London, Mrs. Drover went round to her shut-up house to look for several things she wanted to take away. Some belonged to herself, some to her family, who were by now used to their country life. It was late August; it had been a steamy, showery day: at the moment the trees down the pavement glittered in an escape of humid yellow afternoon sun. Against the next batch of clouds, already piling up ink-dark, broken chimneys and parapets stood out. In her once familiar street, as in any unused channel, an unfamiliar queerness had silted by; a cat wove itself in and out of railings, but no human eye watched Mrs. Drover’s return. Shifting some parcels under her arm, she slowly forced round her latchkey in an unwilling lock, then gave the door, which had warped, a push with her knee. Dead air came out to meet her as she went in.

Elizabeth Bowen, “The Demon Lover”

First Witch: When shall we three meet again / In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

Second Witch: When the hurly-burly’s done / When the battle’s lost and won?

Third Witch: That will be ere the set of sun /

First Witch: Where the place?

Second Witch: Upon the heath.

Third Witch: There to meet with Macbeth.

William Shakespeare, from Macbeth Act 1 Scene 1

It should have been a perfect summer. My dad helped me build a treehouse in our backyard. My sister was at camp for three weeks. And I was on the best baseball team in town. It should have been a perfect summer. But it wasn’t.

Derek Munson, Enemy Pie



Definition: Flashback is an account of a conversation, episode, or event that happened before the beginning of the story, or at an earlier point.

Mentor Text

But the aircraft a year ago had been different. It was not a squat, fat-bellied cargo plane but a needle-nosed single-pilot jet. Jonas, looking around anxiously, had seen others—adults as well as children—stop what they were doing and wait, confused, for an explanation of the frightening event.

Lois Lowry, The Giver

Teacher Artistry

Read the mentor text aloud.

- ✦ Ask students to contrast the plane from the narrator’s memory with the plane in the present, and have students infer why the differences are significant.
- ✦ Have students brainstorm events or objects that make them think about the past (e.g., every time I put on my favorite band’s t-shirt, I think about the time I went to the concert with my best friend).
- ✦ Create a T-chart and list events or objects and the memory they evoke.

Current event or object	Past event

- ✦ Read the following sentences that trigger flashbacks.

I stared at the tattered posters, suddenly remembering my first trip to the circus.
As Marcus strode into the ballpark for his first major-league game, he thought about the first time his dad had pressed a baseball into his hands.
Looking at Charla, no one could have imagined the gangly, awkward girl she had been.
(From McDougal-Littell Literature Gr. 9)
- ✦ Use the introductory word groups to create three sentences that could introduce a flashback.

In better times...
When I was twelve...
Long before...

Student Artistry

- ✍ Think about someone you know who tells anyone who will listen a tale about one of his or her past personal exploits. Write a paragraph in which a character flashes back to a memory of his or her past.

Other Examples

Not Waving But Drowning

Nobody heard him, the dead man,
But still he lay moaning:
I was much further out than you thought
And not waving but drowning.

Poor chap, he's always loved larking
And now he's dead
It must have been too cold for him his heart gave way,
They said.

Oh, no no no, it was too cold always
(Still the dead one lay moaning)
I was much too far out all my life
And not waving but drowning.

Stevie Smith

I was saved from sin when I was going on thirteen. But not really saved. It happened like this. There was a big revival at my Auntie Reed's church. Every night for weeks there had been much preaching, singing, praying and shouting, and some very hardened sinners had been brought to Christ, and the membership of the church had grown by leaps and bounds. Then just before the revival ended, they held a special meeting for the children, "to bring the young lambs to the fold." My aunt spoke of it for days ahead. That night I was escorted to the front row and placed on the mourner's bench with all the other young sinners, who had not yet been brought to Jesus.

Langston Hughes, The Big Sea

Ralph leaned against a tree and at once the daydreams came swarming up...

Once following his father from Chatham to Devonport, they had lived in a cottage on the edge of the moors. In the succession of houses that Ralph had, this one stood out with particular clarity because after that house he had been sent away to school. Mummy had still been with them and Daddy had come home every day.

William Golding, Lord of the Flies



Suspense

Definition: Suspense is the excitement or tension that readers feel as they become involved in a story.

Mentor Text

And so the house came to be haunted by the unspoken phrase: *There must be more money! There must be more money!* The children could hear it all the time, though nobody said it aloud. They heard it at Christmas, when the expensive and splendid toys filled the nursery. Behind the shining, modern rocking-horse, behind the smart doll's house, a voice would start whispering: "There *must* be more money! There *must* be more money!" And the children would stop playing, to listen for a moment. They would look into each other's eyes, to see if they had all heard. And each one saw in the eyes of the other two that they too had heard. "There *must* be more money! There *must* be more money!"

D.H. Lawrence, "The Rocking-Horse Winner"

Teacher Artistry

Read the mentor text to cite places where the writer has created suspense by repetition of key phrases and use of varied sentence forms.

✿ Explain why the writer's word choices and patterns proved effective in creating suspense.

✿ Put the following writing prompts on the board:

They were late, and they knew they were in big trouble. That's why they took the shortcut through the cemetery.

I never expected her to say that. I never expected that to be the last thing she would ever say.

Not one person in the neighborhood knew what really went on in the basement.

It was weird. One day she just....

I knew something strange was going on the minute I walked through the door.

✿ In round-robin style as a whole class or in small groups, have students choose one of the prompts and create sentences that add to the suspense of the chosen prompt.

Student Artistry

Read the sample paragraph which follows, and do one of the writing activities below.

Professional Model:

Paralyzed by fear, Tomas knew that if the gas vapors continued to fill the warehouse, he could never escape. He struggled to find the sources of the toxic leak, hoping against hope to save himself or to signal someone outside for help. He was alone. Until he felt his leg gripped by a powerful claw.

- ✍ Write an ending which brings a sense of finality to the suspense this paragraph begins.
- ✍ Copy change these sentences from the professional model into a new paragraph which imitates the sentence patterns, sentence parts, and lengths. Imitate all the phrases as they appear in the original passage. Just change your topic and setting.

Other Examples

“There he is again!” the cry went up.

They surrounded me quickly and began to grab for my hand.

“I’ll kill you!” I threatened.

They closed in. In blind fear I let the stick fly, feeling it crack against a boy’s skull. I swung again, laming another skull, then another. Realizing that they would retaliate if I let up for but a second, I fought to lay them low, to knock them cold, to kill them so that they could not strike back at me. I flayed with tears in my eyes, teeth clinched, stark fear making me throw every ounce of my strength behind each blow. I hit again and again, dropping the money and the grocery list. The boys scattered, yelling, nursing their heads, staring at me in utter disbelief. They had never seen such frenzy. I stood panting, egging them on, taunting them to come and fight. When they refused, I ran after them and they tore for their homes, screaming. The parents of the boys rushed into the streets and threatened me, and for the first time in my life I shouted at grownups, telling them that I would give them the same if they bothered me. I finally found the grocery list and the money and went to the store. On my way back I kept my stick poised for instant use, but there was not a single boy in sight. That night I won the right to the streets of Memphis.

Richard Wright, “The Rights to the Streets of Memphis”

During the following silence they could hear the faint sound of the child wildly shrieking in the dark vault in a panic of terror.

“My precious darling!” wailed the mother. “She will die of fright! Open the door! . . . The child—she can’t stand it long in there. There isn’t enough air, and besides, she’ll go into convulsions from fright.”

O. Henry, “A Retrieved Reformation”



Suspense

Definition: Suspense is a growing tension or excitement that readers feel as they become curious about the story.

Mentor Text

I was never kinder to the old man than during the whole week before I killed him. And every night about midnight, I turned the latch on the door and opened it—oh, so gently! And then, when I had made an opening sufficient for my head, I put in a dark lantern, all closed, closed, so that no light shone out, and then I thrust in my head. Oh, you would have laughed to see how cunningly I thrust it in!

Edgar Allan Poe, “The Tell-Tale Heart”

Teacher Artistry

Read the mentor text aloud.

- ✦ Ask students to identify specific words and phrases that create suspense.
- ✦ Describe the narrator's fear and anxiety.
- ✦ What words suggest terror or suspense?
- ✦ Choose one of the following prompts and ask a volunteer student to verbally create the next sentence. Encourage another student to add a sentence that creates more suspense.

The screen door had been ripped from the frame.
Footsteps stopped outside my window.

Student Artistry

- ✦ Design and illustrate a haunted house that will leave those who enter cowering in suspense and fear. Include vivid images of the following: staircase, closet, basement, and attic. Add details to create suspense. For example: cobwebs, locked rooms, black cat, broken windows, etc.
- ✦ When students have completed their haunted houses, share with partners.
- ✦ If time allows, have students vote for the top three haunted houses to display on the class bulletin board.

Other Examples

Captain Smith now made his way to the radio room and told Harold Bride and Jack Phillips to save themselves. “Men, you have done your full duty,” he told them. “You can do no more. Abandon your cabin. Now it is every man for himself.”

Out in the safety of the lifeboat, Ruth Becker also witnessed the end of the Titanic. Then as Ruth recalled, “there fell upon the ear the most terrible noise that human beings ever listened to—the cries of hundreds of people struggling in the icy cold water, crying for help with a cry we knew could not be answered.”

Robert D. Ballard, “Exploring the Titanic”

Each word was like a large black eye staring at him through the glass, holding him, compelling him, forcing him to stay where he was and not to walk away from that house, and the next thing he knew, he was actually moving across from the window to the front door of the house, climbing the steps that led up to it, and reaching for the bell.

Roald Dahl, “The Landlady”



Appositive

Definition: An appositive is a noun or noun phrase that adds identifying information to a preceding noun.

Mentor Texts

In his far-off home Beowulf, Higlac's
Follower and the strongest of the Geats – greater
And stronger than anyone anywhere in this world –
Heard how Grendel filled the nights with horror

Anonymous, from Beowulf

Many men know me, the Knight of the Green Chapel;
Therefore if you seek to find me, you shall not fail.

Anonymous, from Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

A very worthy person, a true lover of his country, and whose virtues I highly esteem, was
lately pleased in discoursing on this matter to offer a refinement upon my scheme.

Jonathan Swift, "A Modest Proposal"

After we ate, I ordered Lope de Oviedo, our strongest man, to climb one of the trees not
far off and ascertain the lay of the land.

Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca, La Relacion

. . . I shall not see on earth a place more dear,
though I have been detained long by Calypso,
loveliest among goddesses, who held me
in her smooth caves . . .

Homer, The Odyssey

Teacher Artistry

Read each mentor text aloud.

- 🔍 Ask students to name the appositive and the noun that it describes.
- 🔍 Discuss the effect of the appositive on the passage.

✂ Together with students, generate a list of famous people. Some examples might include John F. Kennedy, Edgar Allan Poe, Hilary Clinton, and Taylor Swift. Try to include a mix of popular historical and contemporary figures.

✂ Select ten of the names and write appositives for those people.

Student Artistry

✂ Instruct students to combine the two sentences below into a single, clear sentence. Turn the “B” sentence into an appositive that describes the underlined noun in the “A” sentence. Remind the students to set off the appositives with commas.

For example,

A. The boy fell down.

B. The boy was exhausted from running a mile.

New sentence: The boy, exhausted from running a mile, fell down.

A. Nakita smiled sweetly for the camera.

B. Nakita is our homecoming queen.

New sentence:

A. The old hunter fought the wind as he struggled to reach shelter.

B. The wind was howling and trying to destroy everything in its path.

New sentence:

A. The bald eagle landed on a fence post to eat his breakfast.

B. The bald eagle was changing direction in mid flight and snatching a bird out of the air.

New sentence:

✂ Have students partner with another student, and write an appositive to describe the underlined nouns in the following sentences

The girl ran toward her new puppy.

New sentence:

Even though they were hungry, the students left the pizza sitting on the table.

New sentence:



Reader Awareness Phrases

Definition: Reader awareness phrases are words a writer uses to draw the reader into the text.

Mentor Text

Believe me, I listened intently, more with my mind than with my ears, as if the bear were telepathizing and—I know you're not going to believe this, but it's true, I am normally not what you would call an egomaniac with an inflated self-esteem such that I imagine that every bear which walks out of the woods falls in love with me—but I really did truly believe now that this Ms. Bear was expressing feelings of, well, affection. Really, I think she kinda liked me.

Robert H. Abel, “Appetizer”

Teacher Artistry

Read the mentor text aloud.

- ✿ Ask students to find phrases which invite the reader to identify strongly with the writer's experience. Write them on the board.
- ✿ Ask students why these phrases make the passage effective.
- ✿ Share examples of words or phrases we say but don't necessarily use when we write creatively.

For example:

You know what I mean?
Get it?
You see, it's like this.
Sort of/kind of
I know what you're thinking.
It's important you understand what I'm talking about.

Student Artistry

- ✍ Instruct students to write a “one-sided” conversation (dramatic monologue) as if they were talking to a friend about a recent movie they saw, or an event or attraction they witnessed. Include reader awareness phrases to personalize the narratives.

Alternate Writing Activity

- ✍ Write an internal monologue in which you imagine you are very hungry and on your way to a favorite restaurant. Use reader awareness phrases to reassure yourself about how you are feeling, and what you will do and feel when you arrive.

Other Examples

Imagine a morning in late November. A coming of winter morning more than twenty years ago. Consider the kitchen of a spreading old house in a country town.

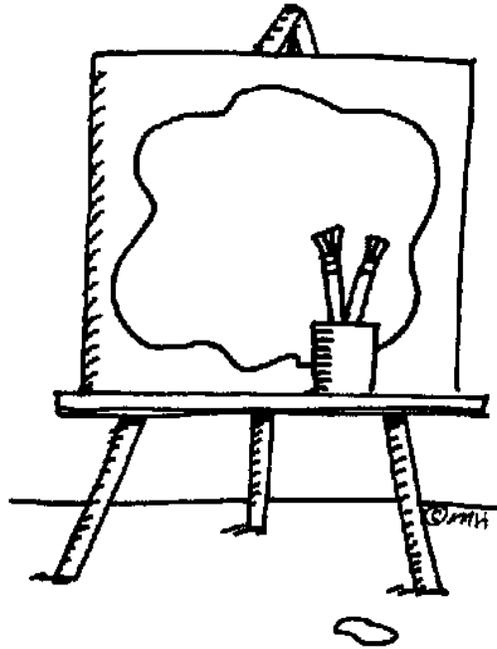
Truman Capote, “A Christmas Memory”

Ms. Bear rejoins me. You may or may not believe me, and perhaps after all it was only my imagination worked up by terror, but two things happened which gave me a particle of hope.

Robert H. Abel, “Appetizer”

Humor

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Humor: Hyperbole

Definition: Hyperbole is exaggeration used for emphasis or humorous effect.

Mentor Text

We lived for 11 years in a house with a light fixture that we both agreed was less attractive than if we had simply suspended a urinal from the ceiling. But of course we never did anything about it until we moved, just as in our current house we waited until now to clear out the giant tropical spiders who live next to the front door, subsisting on Federal Express men; or to eliminate the violently pink carpet that made our bedroom look as though an Exxon tanker had run around there and spilled millions of gallons of Pepto-Bismol.

Dave Barry, The World According to Dave Barry

Teacher Artistry

Read the mentor text aloud.

- ✦ Ask the class to underline the exaggerations in the paragraph as students identify them.
- ✦ Ask students how the exaggerations emphasize Barry's point.
- ✦ Read the paragraph, omitting the underlined hyperbole.
- ✦ Ask students what happened to the writing when they omitted the hyperbole.
- ✦ Discuss how using hyperbole helped create a picture in the reader's mind and humorously overstated the light fixture, the spiders, and the carpet.

Extended Activity

Have students underline the hyperbole in the following examples, and then change the passages without using any exaggeration to express the author’s literal meaning.

Example 1: Our teacher is so busy, we have to make an appointment three weeks in advance just to say “Good morning.”

Example 2: The amount of knowledge he has lodged in his brain is unbelievable—computers come to him for answers.

Example 3: Dad was in another world, holding two boxes of ChocoMallow Chunks cereal—the cherished new product of his biggest client, ChocoChunks International—holding them like a wary father would cradle newborn twins. He was carving out a new ad campaign and reaching into the core of his creative volcano to find something important to say about a children's breakfast cereal that contained enough refined sugar to seriously alter a generation's SAT scores.

Joan Bauer, Thwonk

Student Artistry

- ✍ Using hyperbole for humorous effect, write a sentence or two about one of the following topics: cafeteria food, cell phone(s), or video game(s). Share your writing with a partner.
- ✍ Have volunteers read their sentences for the class.

Other Examples

Today I want to talk to you about dating. This subject was raised in a letter to me from a young person named Eric Knott, who writes: I have got a big problem. There's a girl in my English class...I want to ask her out, but I'm afraid she will say no. . . . What should I do? . . . You have sent your question to the right mature adult. . . . The most sensible way to ask a girl out is to walk directly up to her on foot and say, “So you want to go out? Or what?” I never did this. I knew, as Eric Knott knows, that there was always the possibility that the girl would say no, thereby leaving me with no viable option but to leave Harold C. Crittenden Junior High and go into the woods and become a bark-eating hermit whose only companions would be the gentle and understanding woodland creatures.

Dave Barry, “Breaking the Ice”

As there are more embarrassing situations than can be noted in one chapter (an independent research company that I made up and then hired puts the figure of possible embarrassing situations somewhere between a gazillion-and-one and a half-bazillion), I have chosen five at random. And by random I mean, of course, the ones that have happened to me within the last hour.

Ellen DeGeneres, The Funny Thing Is . . .

Mort did, too, but it was a terrible strain on him, dumb as he was. When he got to multiplying and dividing fractions, his fingers moved so fast he had to keep a glass of ice water on his desk to cool them off. It was a good thing we didn't do algebra in 7th grade, because somebody would have to stand next to Mort with a fire extinguisher.

Patrick F. McManus, “The Clown”



Humor: Understatement

Definition: Understatement is a writing device in which the force of a statement or a situation is less than what one would normally expect.

Mentor Text

My Lady Baroness, who weighed three hundred and fifty pounds, consequently was a person of no small consideration.

Voltaire, Candide

Teacher Artistry

Read the mentor text aloud.

- ✦ Ask students to respond to the following questions:
 - What part of the text is understated?
 - Why does the understatement make the text humorous?
- ✦ Use the following scenarios to discuss how saying or writing less than what is expected can be humorous:
 - You finally get to go out with someone you've had a crush on for years. Use understatement to describe how you feel about it.
 - You win \$10,000,000. Use understatement when the local newspaper interviews you.

Student Artistry

- ✍ Create humorous sentences or dialogue using understatement for the following scenarios:
 - Your town gets 10 inches of rain in one day.
 - You get all As on your report card.
 - Someone cooks you the best meal you've ever had.
- ✍ Share your favorite scenario with the class.

Other Examples

After the Grim Reaper visits a dinner party, a dinner guest says, “Well, that's cast rather a gloom over the evening, hasn't it?”

from Monty Python's The Meaning of Life

You total your mom's car. You call her and say, “Mom, I got into a little fender-bender.”

In perpetrating a revolution, there are two requirements: someone or something to revolt against and someone to actually show up and do the revolting. Dress is casual and both parties may be flexible about time and place but if either faction fails to attend the whole enterprise is likely to come off badly.

Woody Allen, in Models for Writers, Short Essays for Composition

I had clerked in a drug store part of a summer, but my prescriptions were unlucky, and we appeared to sell more stomach pumps than soda water.

Mark Twain, “Roughing It”



Humor: Sarcasm

Definition: Sarcasm for emphasis or humorous effect presents the opposite meaning of the word or words used.

Mentor Text

The last thing I wanted to see taped to my bathroom mirror at five-thirty in the morning was a newspaper article entitled “Are You a Perfectionist?” But there it was, courtesy of my mother, Ms. Subtlety herself.

Joan Bauer, “Pancakes”

Teacher Artistry

Read the mentor text aloud.

✿ Ask students to respond to the following questions:

Where is the sarcasm in this text?

How do you know the daughter is using sarcasm?

What does the daughter really mean?

✿ Break the class into three groups. Assign each group one of the following situations, and have them underline the sarcasm, then write what they feel the sarcasm really means in this context.

Example 1: Joel, without a worry in the world, courtesy of being the boss' son, sauntered into the 9 o'clock meeting at 9:30. “Wow, thanks for blessing us with your presence,” remarked Mr. Lang, the company manager.

Example 2: “Well, aren't you a ray of sunshine,” Dan chuckled as his wife slammed the front door, hurled her purse on the couch, and complained that he hadn't taken out the trash that morning.

Example 3: We're getting into Wedding Season again. This is good for America. We may be falling behind Japan in other areas, such as being able to produce cars or televisions or high school graduates capable of reading rest-room symbols without moving their lips, but we still have the world's largest and most powerful wedding industry.

Dave Barry, The World According to Dave Barry

Student Artistry

- ✍ Choose one of the following three scenarios; create humorous sentences or dialogue using sarcasm.

You and your sibling are supposed to clean the house together, but you do all the work. What is your response?

You get all Fs and a D in English on your report card. What is your parent or guardian's response?

Your best friend has a 104% average in geometry. What is your response to your friend?

Other Examples

[Dad's] most famous pupil was Warren Bowler, a rotten accountant....Mr. Bowler believed in himself so much after listening to Dad's tape series that he ran for treasurer of Rock River and won. Dad respected Mr. Bowler's spunk but didn't vote for him. Only God could turn Mr. Bowler into a decent accountant, Dad said, and God had easier things to work on, like world peace.

Joan Bauer, Squashed

Mom loves the business, but feels guilty about the long hours she spends at work and compares herself too often with other mothers who are always around for breakfast.

"I'm nothing like the other mothers!" she wails.

I nod.

"Do you feel deprived, A.J., because we never did little sewing projects together?"

"You can't sew, Mom."

"I never painted stencils of ballerinas in your bedroom!"

"I'm sure that's why I can't get a decent date, Mother. Ballerina stencils would have turned the tide for me, but it's too late now..."

Joan Bauer, Thwonk

"My, you've certainly made a mess of things!" could be said in congratulations to someone who's just graduated *summa cum laude*, or to a hostess who presents a spectacular dish prepared with obvious care and skill.

"Glossary of Critical Concepts: Verbal Irony,"

www.k-state.edu/english/baker/.../cc/verbal_irony.htm

A mother comes into the TV room and discovers her 11-year-old watching TV instead of doing his homework, as he was set to do a dozen minutes ago. Pointing to the screen she says, "Don't let me tempt you from your duties, kiddo, but when you're finished with your serious studies there, maybe we could take some time out for recreation and do a little math."

"Glossary of Critical Concepts: Verbal Irony,"

www.kstate.edu/english/baker/.../cc/verbal_irony.htm



Humor: Superiority

Definition: Humor with superiority is a writing device that pokes fun at the writer which allows the reader to feel superior.

Mentor Text

Have you ever really embarrassed yourself? Don't answer that, stupid. It's a rhetorical question. Of course you've embarrassed yourself. Everybody has. . . . My own personal brain is forever dredging up the time in 11th grade when I took a girl, a very attractive girl on whom I had a life-threatening crush, to a dance. I was standing in the gym next to her, holding her hand, thinking what a sharp couple we made. . . . when one of my friends sidled up to me and observed that, over on the other side, my date was using her spare hand to hold hands with another guy. . . . Several of my friends gathered to watch. I thought: What am I supposed to do here? Hit the guy? That would be asking for a lifetime of dental problems. . . . The ideal move would have been to spontaneously burst into flames and die. . . . But you never get a break like that when you need it. . . . Finally I turned to my date, dropped her hand, looked her square in the eye, and said: "Um." Just like that: "Um." My brain absolutely loves to remember this. "Way to go, Dave!" it shrieks to me, when I'm stopped at red lights, 23 ½ years later.

Dave Barry, The World According to Dave Barry

Teacher Artistry

Read the mentor text aloud.

✚ Ask students to respond to the following:

How does Dave Barry poke fun at himself?

Why does this create a sense of superiority for the audience?

✚ Ask students to create a list of five to seven common shortcomings most people have. Begin with disorganization and add four to six more.

✚ When the list is complete, ask students to share examples of how being disorganized can be a humorous shortcoming (e.g., I'm so disorganized, I took my daughter to a birthday party on the wrong day.)

Student Artistry

- ✍ Group students in 2s or 3s; assign each group a different shortcoming from the class list.
- ✍ Ask each group to create a paragraph using the concept of humor that shows superiority.
- ✍ Share paragraphs with the class.

Other Examples

I used to be so fun-loving, so impetuous, so impractical. I'd wash my hair at midnight and go outside in the winter without socks. Now I tell my kids that an unmade bed gives you bad skin!

Erma Bombeck, Family—The Ties That Bind. . . . And Gag!

Having spent a fair amount of time and money in therapy, debating my every move with a licensed and supposedly caring professional, I was under the impression that I had a pretty good idea of what I was all about. At least until I started taking personality quizzes on the Internet. . . . I came to know of this one day when, quite by accident, I encountered a quiz at a site called QuizBox.com that promised to tell me how “attractive” I was. . . . After my scores were tallied, the quiz passed judgment. It said, in no uncertain terms, that I needed to improve my personality. I also needed to be more optimistic and smile more. I could be attractive if I would try, it sighed, but clearly it didn't think I was trying hard enough. . . . So there I was, alone in my house and suddenly a lot less attractive than I had been a few minutes earlier. I wasn't going to take this lying down. To recoup my losses, like a woman feverishly play slot machines, I continued to take more quizzes.

Instantly I was able to wrest myself from the jaws of low self-esteem via the “What kind of personality do you have?” quiz. This time, when asked to answer the question, “If you could wish for anything what would it be?” I chose, “Become a beauty queen.” (After all, my health was already pretty good, my eyes are already pretty nice, and being clever was apparently getting me nowhere.)

Merrill Markoe, “Who Am I?”



Humor: Surprise

Definition: Surprise is a sudden or unexpected event used to emphasize or to create a humorous situation.

Mentor Text

No one in this family has ever taken my illnesses seriously. Just once I'd like to get a virus that everyone else in town doesn't have. I seem to be the last adult female in North America to get it. I don't ask for Mother Teresa, but I deserve a little compassion, especially from my husband.

"I don't feel well," I said to him one morning. "I feel like my chest has been wound too tight."

"Nonsense," said my husband, "you're just bored. Everyone in the office has what you have. There's a lot of it going around and the diagnosis is they probably just need a career change."

"You could be right," I said. "I don't want to be married anymore."

Erma Bombeck, Family—The Ties That Bind. . . . And Gag!

Teacher Artistry

Read the mentor text aloud.

- ✦ Ask students what element of surprise occurs in the last line.
- ✦ Ask the students what makes it humorous.
- ✦ Reread the mentor text replacing "I don't want to be married anymore" with predictable responses like "It's probably nothing." or "You never listen to me!"
- ✦ Discuss the differences and the way the element of surprise improves the writing.
- ✦ Have students read the text below silently, and identify the element of surprise. Discuss then create other examples of surprise that could replace the original version.

Mrs. Worthington was the richest woman in town and expected to be catered to. "That's twelve dollars," I said.

She blistered: "I have an account, dear!" . . . I kept smiling because Mrs. Worthington was Mom's best customer and extolled Mom's gastronomic virtues to everyone she knew in the Tri-State area. I wrote her order in the charge account book: Old Bat/Twelve bucks! Mom glared at me and slapped the book shut.

Joan Bauer, Thwonk

Student Artistry

- ✍ The following examples need a humorous ending. Using the element of surprise, add a word or a phrase that is either the opposite of what is expected or a change that will catch the reader off guard.

Example 1: We need workman because we're trying to make our current house look domestic so that somebody will want to buy it. We're making a lot of simple, obvious improvements that never would have occurred to us to make while we actually lived here . . . [we need] to replace the electrical ceiling-fan switch that has three positions, “Low,” “Medium,” and “_____.”

Dave Barry, The World According to David Barry

Example 2: Horrible Golfer: What do you think I should do about my horrible golf game?
Caddy: Well, sir, first I'd relax, then stop playing for six months, _____.

Mel Helitzer, Comedy Writing Secrets

Note: These are the original line endings.

Ending of Example 1: “Burn Down House.”

Ending of Example 2: then give it up entirely.

Other Examples

I won't sprout a lot of meaningless clichés . . . “reach for the stars,” “follow your dreams,” . . . No, you guys are too smart for clichés, so I'm going to give you some real, concrete advice that will get you through the next four years of college. . . . Some of you guys will be tempted to grow a goatee. Do not grow a goatee. A goatee is just a beard with low self-esteem. On the same note, some of you girls will be tempted to get a lower back tattoo. I just want to say—that's totally awesome.

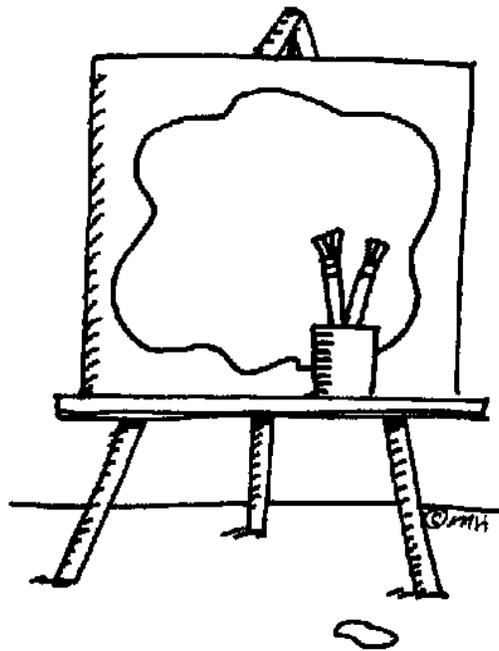
Conan O'Brien, Commencement Speech 2006—Stuyvesant High

Tell me tales of moon-pale sprites
Whose beauty none may know.
Tell me of secret, silver nights
When great red stars are low.
Tell of the virgin Spring, the fair,
Who roams the circling years.
Rain-drops strung in her fragrant hair,
Her eyes a-mist with tears.
Tell me of elves, who leap to kiss,
Who trip the velvet sward.
Tell me stories of things like this,
And, boy, will I be bored!

Dorothy Parker, from “Song for an April Dusk”

Repetition

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Alliteration

Definition: Alliteration is the repetition of consonant sounds in two or more words in a line of poetry or prose.

Mentor Texts

This berserk bacteria had bulldozed me badly.
I am defective and delirious, and soon I will dwindle away.
Can't you hear my gloomy groans and gruesome wails?

Debra Frasier, Miss Alaineus: A Vocabulary Disaster

He came plodding up to the palace of the princess on a plow horse and he brought her a small tin box filled with mica and feldspar and hornblende which he had picked up on the way.

James Thurber, "The Princess and the Tin Box"

Teacher Artistry

Read the **first mentor text** aloud.

- ✦ Instruct students to mark the repeated beginning letter sounds they hear in each line.
- ✦ Say aloud each example of alliteration.
- ✦ Ask students to share examples of alliteration from brand-name products, tongue-twisters, nursery rhymes, or advertisements, and list them on the board

Read the **second mentor text** aloud.

- ✦ Instruct students to write the alliterative words from the second mentor text. Examine the rewrite of the second text below and answer the questions that follow.
- ✦ Write this sentence on the board:

He came riding up to the castle of the princess on a horse and he brought her a small tin box filled with mica and feldspar and hornblende which he had picked up on the way.

- ✦ Ask students to respond to the following questions:
 - How does the absence of the alliteration affect the piece?
 - Why is the sentence with the alliteration more effective?

Project the following graphic on the board and have students suggest various alliterative words to fill in the blanks.

1. down in the _____	5. head over _____	9. road _____
2. fact or _____	6. mind over _____	10. pet _____
3. too close for _____	7. live and _____	
4. fast and _____	8. rock and _____	

Student Artistry

✍ Instruct students to add another sentence with alliteration to the following:

Jerry swam out to the big barrier rock, adjusted the goggles, and dived. The impact of the water broke the rubber-enclosed vacuum, and the goggles came loose.

Doris Lessing, "Through the Tunnel"

Syrup, I tried explaining to Hugo, the busboy, must be poured slowly from the huge cans into the plastic pourers on the tables because if you pour it fast, you can't control the flow and you get syrup everywhere, which never really cleans up. It leaves a sticky residue that always comes back to haunt you.

Joan Bauer, "Pancakes"

Other Examples

Crafty crimson cats carefully catching crusty crayfish.

Lazy lions lounging in the local library.

Victor V. Vulture the vaudeville ventriloquist: versatile virtuoso of vociferous verbosity: vexatiously vocalizing at the Valhalla Variety Venue.

Graeme Base, Animalia

But Princess Prunella did not notice, because she saw her prize puppydog, Pug, being pursued by a poisonous puff-pig.

One April day, a white-haired wrinkly-wristed Wise Woman, in a sparse but pristine pleated petticoat, paper slippers, and an imperfectly patched wrap, tapped at the door.

Margaret Atwood, Princess Prunella and the Purple Peanut



Anaphora

Definition: Anaphora is a writing device that uses repetition by purposefully placing the same group of words at the beginning of successive clauses.

Mentor Text

We shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender.

Winston Churchill

Teacher Artistry

Read the mentor text aloud.

- ✦ Have students write the repeated words in Churchill’s quote.
- ✦ Ask students the following questions:
 - What did Churchill emphasize by repeating “We shall” at the beginning of the sentences?
 - What did Churchill emphasize by repeating the word “fight”?
- ✦ Divide the class into groups of 2-4 students, and give each group one of the following paragraphs from Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech (see next page).
- ✦ Have students identify the examples of anaphora in their assigned paragraphs and explain how the use of the anaphora adds power to the speech.
- ✦ Ask groups to present their findings orally.

Sample 1:

But one hundred years later, the Negro still is not free; one hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination; one hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity; one hundred years later, the Negro is still languishing in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land.

Sample 2:

We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy; now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice; now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood; now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children.

Sample 3:

But there is something that I must say to my people, who stand on the worn threshold which leads into the palace of justice. In the process of gaining our rightful place, we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred. We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again, we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force.

Sample 4:

There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, "When will you be satisfied?" We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality; we can never be satisfied as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities; we cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro's basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one; we can never be satisfied as long as our children are stripped of their self-hood and robbed of their dignity by signs stating For Whites Only; we cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote. No! No, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until "justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream."

Sample 5:

I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and tribulations. Some of you have come fresh from narrow jail cells. Some of you have come from areas where your quest for freedom left you battered by the storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality. You have been the veterans of creative suffering. Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive. Go back to Mississippi. Go back to Alabama. Go back to South Carolina. Go back to Georgia. Go back to Louisiana. Go back to the slums and ghettos of our Northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed.

Sample 6:

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed, "We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal." I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood. I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice. I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a *dream* today!

I have a dream that one day, down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of "interposition" and "nullification" -- one day right there in Alabama little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.

I have a *dream* today!

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, and every hill and mountain shall be made low. The rough places will be made plain and the crooked places will be made straight, "and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together."

Sample 7:

So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire; let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York; let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania; let freedom ring from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado; let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California. But not only that. Let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia; let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee; let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi. "From every mountainside, let freedom ring."

Student Artistry

- ✍ Have students individually brainstorm a personal list of beliefs (e.g., I believe...all men are my brothers, we do not live alone, actions are what matters, friendship is a passport).
These ideas are from the National Public Radio "This I believe" project
- ✍ Ask students to write "I believe" paragraphs that incorporate anaphora.
- ✍ Tell students to explain the effect of their anaphora in a statement at the end of their essays.
- ✍ Project the professional model, below.

I believe in helping the environment. Heaps of discarded cans, labels half-peeling, randomly dot the landscape. Heaps of jagged glass shards glint threateningly in the sunshine. Heaps of paper waste blow over open fields and catch in trees. We must eliminate these piles of trash by saving our recyclables. We must look for nearby trash cans instead of carelessly tossing aside our refuse. One day we should be able to look into the panorama of nature and see only the waving grass bordered with clusters of colorful flowers and towering trees.

Effect: The repetition of "heaps" emphasizes the amount of trash while the repetition of "We must" emphasizes that all of us share responsibility.

Professional Model

For suggestions about I believe topics go to <http://thisibelieve.org/>.



Anadiplosis

Definition: Anadiplosis is a rhetorical device that repeats the last word of one phrase, clause, or sentence at or very near the beginning of the next.

Mentor Texts

“Fear is the path to the dark side. Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to hate. Hate leads to suffering. I sense much fear in you.”

Yoda in Star Wars

“The general who became a slave. The slave who became a gladiator. The gladiator who defied an emperor. Striking story!”

Commodus in Gladiator

Teacher Artistry

Read the **first mentor quote** aloud.

- ✦ Highlight the words that recur.
- ✦ Ask students to respond to the following questions:
 - What do you notice about the repetition of the words?
 - What is the author emphasizing by using the last word of the sentence as the first word of the next sentence?

Read the **second mentor quote** aloud.

- ✦ Instruct students to identify the words of the anadiplosis. Write the words the students volunteer.
- ✦ Ask students what the author was emphasizing by using the last word in each sentence as the first word of the next sentence.
- ✦ Write this sentence on the board:
 - The general became a slave and a gladiator who defied an emperor. Striking story!
- ✦ Ask students to respond to the following questions:
 - Does the essential meaning of the quote change? How?
 - How did anadiplosis affect the text?

- ✂ Divide the students into pairs, assigning each pair one of the quotes that follow.
- ✂ Instruct each pair to read their quote and to cite the repeated words that make up the anadiplosis. Each pair must explain what they think the author is emphasizing by using anadiplosis. Then have students write their own anadiplosis using those same words.

At six o'clock we were waiting for coffee,
waiting for coffee and the charitable crumb . . .
—Elizabeth Bishop, "A Miracle for Breakfast"

When I give, I give myself.
—Walt Whitman

All service ranks the same with God,
With God, whose puppets, best and worst,
Are we.
—Robert Browning, Pippa Passes

The years to come seemed waste of breath,
waste of breath the years behind.
—William Butler Yeats, "An Irish Airman Foresees his Death"

Aboard my ship, excellent performance is standard. Standard performance is sub-
standard. Sub-standard performance is not permitted to exist.
—Herman Wouk, The Caine Mutiny

The laughter had to be gross or it would turn to sobs, and to sob would be to realize, and
to realize would be to despair.
—Howard Griffin, Black Like Me

The land of my fathers. My fathers can have it.
—Dylan Thomas

Student Artistry

- ✂ Instruct students to choose a favorite holiday or birthday experience and brainstorm items associated with that day. Write a paragraph or two about that day and include sentences that use anadiplosis.

I stood with my neck bent back, eyes lifted to the sky, feet firmly planted in the soft sand of the lagoon beach as the fire department launched fireworks; these fireworks burst brilliant blues, greens, reds, and yellows repeatedly like twinkling shooting stars that quickly faded into the night sky. The night sky swallowed the particles of light into its darkness. The darkness remained.

Professional Model



Epistrophe

Definition: Epistrophe is a writing device that uses repetition by purposefully placing the same word or words at the end of phrases, clauses, or sentences.

Mentor Texts

When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child.
I Corinthians 13:11

What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny compared to what lies within us.
Ralph Waldo Emerson

She's safe, just like I promised. She's all set to marry Norrington, just like she promised.
And you get to die for her, just like you promised.
spoken by Jack Sparrow in Pirates of the Caribbean

Teacher Artistry

Read the **first mentor text** aloud.

- ✦ Instruct students to name the words that are repeated as the epistrophe device.
- ✦ Ask students the following questions:
 - Where does the repetition occur in each clause?
 - What does the author mean by emphasizing the word “child”?

Read the **second mentor text** aloud.

- ✦ Instruct students to identify the words that function as the epistrophe.
- ✦ Ask students to explain what Emerson means in this quote.
- ✦ Cross out the word “lies” in all three phrases. Replace the first “lies” with “rests”; replace the second “lies” with “sleeps”; replace the third “lies” with “exists”.
- ✦ Ask the students the following questions:
 - How does using rests differ from lies?
 - How does using sleeps differ from lies?
 - How does using exists differ from lies?
 - How does using a different synonym in all three places alter Emerson’s meaning?
 - Where does the emphasis of ideas shift?

Read the **third mentor text** aloud.

- ✂ Ask students to name the words that function as the epistrophe.
- ✂ Ask students what Jack Sparrow means in this quote by using the epistrophe “promise.”
- ✂ As a class rewrite the quote into three separate sentences without the epistrophe. Keep the original meaning.
- ✂ How did the change affect what Jack Sparrow said?

Student Artistry

- ✂ Instruct students to read the following advertisement using epistrophe, and create an original advertisement for a product (real or imagined) of their choice (e.g., a beauty product, a drink, a specific food, a car, an event).

What your skin needs now: Smart Summer Products!

Get 11 age-defying, beautifying benefits from the Timewise cleansing collection—an essential smart summer product.

Enjoy instant gratification with an advanced exfoliator—an essential smart summer product.

Spend time in the sun after using our must-have sunscreen—an essential smart summer product.

Moisturize, color, and protect with tinted lip balm—an essential smart summer product.

adapted from a Mary Kay Cosmetics' advertisement



Epizeuxis

Definition: Epizeuxis is a writing device that uses repetition of the same word(s) two or more times one right after the other.

Mentor Texts

You wanna know what I make? I make kids wonder. I make 'em question. I make 'em criticize. I make 'em apologize—and mean it. I make 'em write, write, write. And then I make 'em read. I make 'em spell: definitely beautiful, definitely beautiful, definitely beautiful—over and over and over again, until they will never misspell either one of those words again.

delivered in a speech by Taylor Mali, poet and former teacher

I undid the lantern cautiously—oh, so cautiously—cautiously.

Edgar Allan Poe, "The Tell-Tale Heart"

"Oh you need fluff, fluff, fluff
To make a fluffer nutter,
Marshmallow fluff and lots of peanut butter.
First you spread, spread, spread
Your bread with peanut butter,
Add marshmallow fluff and have a fluffernutter."

advertising jingle

Teacher Artistry

Read the **first mentor text** aloud.

- 🌟 Highlight the words or phrases that make up the epizeuxis, and ask students how the repetition of the words affects the message.
- 🌟 Ask the students why they think Mali repeats particular words.

Read the **second mentor text** aloud.

- ✂ Ask students to highlight the words that make up the epizeuxis and discuss the effect Poe creates with the repetition of the word “cautiously.”
- ✂ Suggest that lanterns could be undone other ways: hurriedly, carelessly, irresponsibly.
- ✂ Have students cross out the words “cautiously” and substitute one of these words.
- ✂ Ask students to share their new versions and explain the effect their adverb choices made.

Read the **third mentor text** aloud.

- ✂ Ask students to identify words that make up the epizeuxis.
- ✂ Ask students to discuss why they think the advertisers have chosen to repeat certain words.
- ✂ In groups, have students explain how to make a S’more, imitating the patterns of the fluffernutter commercial.
- ✂ Share responses.

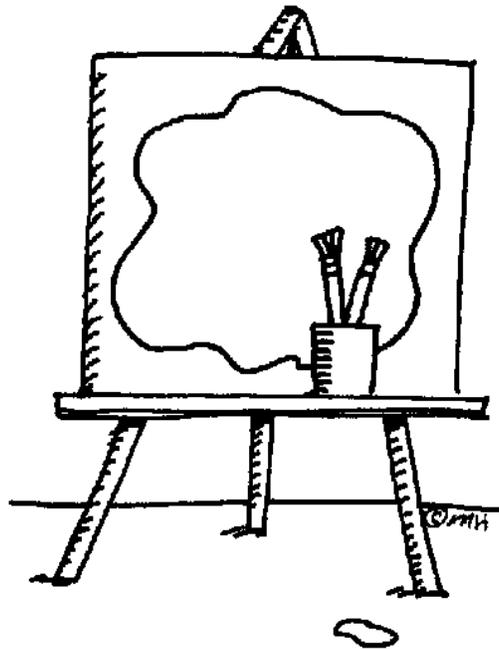
Student Artistry

- ✂ Instruct students to draft a paragraph which includes the writing technique of epizeuxis to create a very negative or extremely positive reaction in the reader. Possible topics include but are not limited to the following:

- an angry person
- a beloved relative
- an out-of-place object
- a treasured item
- something ugly and decrepit
- something brand new

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Hooks

Definition: A hook is the beginning of a writing that catches the reader's attention. Writers use a variety of hooks, such as describing a person/character or the setting, developing a flashback, building suspense, asking questions, or creating dialogue between characters.

The mentor texts that follow illustrate six different types of hooks.

Mentor Texts

Describing a Person/Character:

She was one of those pretty and charming girls, born, as if by an accident of fate, into a family of clerks. With no dowry, no prospects, no way of any kind of being met, understood, loved, and married by a man both prosperous and famous, she was finally married to a minor clerk in the Ministry of Education.

Guy de Maupassant, "The Necklace"

Describing the Setting:

It was in the clove of seasons, summer was dead but autumn had not yet been born, that the ibis lit in the bleeding tree. The flower garden was stained with rotting brown magnolia petals, and ironweeds grew rank amid the purple phlox. The five o'clocks by the chimney still marked time, but the oriole nest in the elm was untenanted and rocked back and forth like an empty cradle. The last graveyard flowers were blooming, and their smell drifted across the cotton field and through every room of our house, speaking softly the names of our dead.

James Hurst, "The Scarlet Ibis"

Developing a Flashback:

Jean Piaget, a Swiss psychologist noted for his studies of childhood development, believed for many years that he remembered something that had happened when he was just two years old. He wrote, "I can still see, most clearly, the following scene, which I believed until I was about fifteen; I was sitting in my pram, which my nurse was pushing in the Champs Elysees, when a man tried to kidnap me. . . ."

Pat Murphy and Paul Doherty, "Messing With Your Mind"

Building Suspense:

It's dark out, and you're home alone. The house is quiet other than the sound of the show you're watching on TV. You see it and hear it at the same time: The front door is suddenly thrown against the door frame.

Julia Layton, "How Fear Works"

Mentor Texts, cont.

Asking Questions:

Is your handwriting so distinctly different from anyone else's that an expert could tell whether you – and you alone – scrawled a note that you may not even remember writing? Could a computer do the same thing by simply “looking” at a few simple features?

Lee Dye, “Dissecting Handwriting: Computer Test Proves Handwriting Analysis Is Legitimate”

Creating Dialogue:

“Off there to the right – somewhere – is a large island,” said Whitney. “It’s rather a mystery—”

“What island is it?” Rainsford asked.

“The old charts call it ‘Ship-Trap Island,’” Whitney replied. “A suggestive name, isn’t it? Sailors have a curious dread of the place. I don’t know why. Some superstition—”

“Can’t see it,” remarked Rainsford, trying to peer through the dank tropical night that was palpable as it pressed its thick warm blackness in upon the yacht.

Richard Connell, “The Most Dangerous Game”

Teacher Artistry

Read each mentor text aloud.

- ✦ Ask students which of the six types of hooks they liked best. Have them explain why.
- ✦ Give students the following scenario:

Imagine that a teenager has lost a baseball glove that he or she borrowed from a friend who has just come by to get it for tonight’s game.
- ✦ Facilitate a discussion about which type of the six sample hooks could effectively begin the scenario.
- ✦ Put students into groups of 3 or 4. Assign each group a type of hook, and have them write an introduction for the scenario.
- ✦ Ask students to share their paragraph with the rest of the class and then discuss which paragraph has the most effective beginning.

Student Artistry

- ✍ Instruct students to write two different hooks to introduce the following persuasive essay topic:

Convince a fellow student to manage his or her time better.

- ✍ Share your writing with a partner.

Other Examples

Describing a Person/Character:

Miss R. was born in New York City in 1905, the youngest child of a large, wealthy, and talented family. Her childhood and school days were free of serious illness, and were marked, from their earliest days, by love of merriment, games, and jokes. High-spirited, talented, full of interests and hobbies, sustained by deep family affection and love, and a sure sense of who and what and why she was, Miss R. steered clear of significant neurotic problems or “identity-crises” in her growing-up period.

Oliver Sacks, “Rose R.”

There was a woman who was beautiful, who started with all the advantages, yet she had no luck. She married for love, and the love turned to dust. She had bonny children, yet she felt they had been thrust upon her, and she could not love them. They looked at her coldly, as if they were finding fault with her. And hurriedly she felt she must cover up some fault in herself. Yet what it was that she must cover up she never knew.

D.H. Lawrence, “The Rocking-Horse Winner”

The “Red Death” had long devastated the country. No pestilence had ever been so fatal, or so hideous. Blood was its Avatar and its seal – the redness and horror of blood. There were sharp pains, and sudden dizziness, and then profuse bleeding at the pores, with dissolution.

Edgar Allan Poe, “The Masque of the Red Death”

Describing the Setting:

I will wait for her in the yard that Maggie and I made so clean and wavy yesterday afternoon. A yard like this is more comfortable than most people know. It is not just a yard. It is like an extended living room. When the hard clay is swept clean as a floor and the fine sand around the edges lined with tiny, irregular grooves, anyone can come and sit and look up into the elm tree and wait for the breezes that never come inside the house.

Alice Walker, “Everyday Use”

The puddle had frozen over, and me and Cathy went stompin in it. The twins from next door, Tyrone and Terry, were swingin so high out of sight we forgot we were waitin our turn on the tire. Cathy jumped up and came down hard on her heels and started tap-dancin. And the frozen patch splintered every which way underneath kinda spooky. “Looks like a plastic spider web,” she said.

Toni Cade Bambara, “Blues Ain’t No Mockin Bird”

Developing a Flashback:

Elizabeth Barret was a candidate for homecoming queen in her small Kentucky town in 1967 when she heard about the killing. A local man, respected but eccentric, had fatally shot a Canadian man for taking pictures of an impoverished miner and his baby.

Some 30 years later, Ms. Barret could not remember what she thought then about the killing itself, but she did remember this: “I didn’t want the rest of the world to think of us as hillbillies, to see us as ignorant, backward or violent.”

Julie Salamon, “He Turned His Camera on Appalachia, and One Man Wouldn’t Stand for It”

I look at all of you today and I cannot help but see myself 25 years ago, at my own Barnard commencement. I sometimes seem, in my mind, to have as much in common with that girl as I do with any stranger I might pass in the doorway of a Starbucks or in the aisle of an airplane. I cannot remember what she wore or how she felt that day. But I can tell you this about her without question: she was perfect.

Anna Quindlen, “Commencement Address, Mount Holyoke College, May 1999”

Building Suspense:

The platoon of twenty-six soldiers moved slowly in the dark, single file, not talking.

One by one, like sheep in a dream, they passed through the hedgerow, crossed quietly over a meadow and came down to the rice paddy. There they stopped. Their leader knelt down, motioning with his hand, and one by one the other soldiers squatted in the shadows, vanishing in the primitive stealth of warfare. For a long time they did not move. Except for the sounds of their breathing, . . . the twenty-six men were very quiet: some of them excited by the adventure, some of them afraid, some of them exhausted from the long night march, some of them looking forward to reaching the sea where they would be safe.

Tim O’Brien, “Where Have You Gone, Charming Billy?”

The thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as I best could; but when he ventured upon insult, I vowed revenge. You, who so well know the nature of my soul, will not suppose, however, that I gave utterance to a threat. *At length* I would be avenged; this was a point definitively settled – but the very definitiveness with which it was resolved, precluded the idea of risk. I must not only punish, but punish with impunity.

Edgar Allan Poe, “The Cask of Amontillado”

“Hey, we’ve got a problem here.”

The day was April 13, 1970. The voice was that of astronaut Jack Swigert, speaking from aboard the spacecraft *Odyssey*.

Almost immediately, NASA’s Mission Control queried back: “This is Houston. Say again, please.”

Astronaut and mission commander James Lovell responded this time: “Houston, we’ve had a problem.”

For flight director Eugene Kranz, the message from *Apollo 13* presaged the test of a lifetime.

Michael Useem, “The Race to Save Apollo 13”

Building Suspense, cont.

The main thing Brad Haugh remembers about his escape was the thunderous sound of his own heart. It was beating two hundred times a minute, and by the time he and the two smoke jumpers running with him had crested the steep ridge in Colorado, everyone behind them was dead.

Sebastian Junger, “Blowup: What Went Wrong at Storm King Mountain”

Asking Questions:

I came to feminism the way some people come to social movements in their early years: out of self-interest. As a teenager, I was outspoken and outraged, which paired with a skirt was once considered arrogance. When I was expelled from convent school I was furious. Now I am more understanding. Would you have wanted to be the nun teaching me typing?

Anna Quindlen, “Everyday Equality”

Creating Dialogue:

And where's Mr. Campbell?” Charlie asked.

“Gone to Switzerland. Mr. Campbell's a pretty sick man, Mr. Wales.”

“I'm sorry to hear that. And George Hardt?” Charlie inquired.

“Back in America, gone to work.”

“And where is the Snow Bird?”

“He was here last week. Anyway, his friend, Mr. Schaeffer, is in Paris.”

F. Scott Fitzgerald, “Babylon Revisited”

One day my mother told me we were going to Memphis on a boat, the *Kate Adams*, and my eagerness thereafter made the days seem endless. Each night I went to bed hoping that the next morning would be the day of departure.

“How big is the boat?” I asked my mother.

“As big as a mountain,” she said.

“Has it got a whistle?”

“Yes.”

“Does the whistle blow?”

“Yes.”

“When?”

“When the captain wants it to blow.”

Richard Wright, “Black Boy”

Writers may use other ways to begin a piece of writing. Students may use one of the following or create another of their own.

An arresting statistic or shocking statement

A quotation or literary allusion

A relevant story

A factual statement

An analogy or contrast

A personal experience

A catalogue of relevant examples

A statement of a problem or a popular misconception

A paradoxical or intriguing statement



Conclusions

Definition: Conclusions are sentences or paragraphs that bring writing to a satisfying and logical end. An effective conclusion is fresh and original, not just a repetition of the introduction or a summary of the events.

The mentor texts that follow illustrate nine different types of conclusion.

Mentor Texts

Creating a Dialogue:

The following text concludes a story about a dinner party where people are discussing whether men or women have more self control. One guest realizes from his hostess's behavior that a cobra must be in the room. In an attempt to keep everyone safe while the snake is enticed outdoors, he begins the following conversation:

“I want to know just what control everyone at this table has. I will count to three hundred – that’s five minutes – and not one of you is to move a single muscle. The persons who move will forfeit 50 rupees. Now! Ready!”

The 20 people sit like stone images while he counts. He is saying “. . . two hundred and eighty . . .” when, out of the corner of his eye, he sees the cobra emerge and make for the bowl of milk. Four or five screams ring out as he jumps to slam shut the verandah doors.

“You certainly were right, Colonel!” the host says. “A man has just shown us an example of real control.”

“Just a minute,” the American says, turning to his hostess, “there’s one thing I’d like to know. Mrs. Wynnes, how did you know that cobra was in the room?”

A faint smile lights up the woman’s face as she replies. “Because it was lying across my foot.”

Mona Gardner, “The Dinner Party”

Asking Questions:

So when he [Phil] finally worked himself to death, at precisely 3:00 A.M. Sunday morning, no one was really surprised.

By 5:00 P.M. the afternoon of the funeral, the company president had begun, discreetly of course, with care and taste, to make inquiries about his replacement. One of three men. He asked around: “Who’s been working the hardest?”

Ellen Goodman, “The Company Man”

Suggesting Results or Consequences:

The parents of the boys rushed into the streets and threatened me, and for the first time in my life I shouted at grownups, telling them that I would give them the same if they bothered me. I finally found my grocery list and the money and went to the store. On my way back I kept my stick poised for instant use, but there was not a single boy in sight. That night I won the right to the streets of Memphis.

Richard Wright, “The Rights to the Streets of Memphis”

Looking to the Future:

And when this happens, and when we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God’s children—black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics—will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, “Free at last. Free at last. Thank God Almighty, we are free at last.”

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., “I Have a Dream”

Calling for Action:

George Eliot wrote, “It is never too late to be what you might have been.” It is never too early, either. And it will make all the difference in the world. Take it from someone who has left the backpack full of bricks far behind. Every day I feel light as a feather.

Anna Quindlen, Commencement Address at Mount Holyoke College, May 1999

Ending with a Surprising Statement:

The following text concludes a story that focuses on one character telling a presumed stranger of his agreement with his childhood friend to meet exactly twenty years later. He is handed a note which reads:

Bob: I was at the appointed place on time. When you struck the match to light your cigar I saw it was the face of the man wanted in Chicago. Somehow I couldn’t do it myself, so I went around and got a plainclothes man to do the job. Jimmy.

O. Henry, “After Twenty Years”

Stating a Startling Fact:

Today, all over the world, the conditions *are* right for slavery. Although it is against the law almost everywhere, although the world is smaller and less of it is hiddern [*sic*] than ever before, slavery grows.

Kevin Bales, “The Rise of the New Slavery”

Mentor Texts, cont.

Ending with a Quotation:

It may be true that money for its own sake means nothing. It may also be true that those who measure themselves by the things they own will never be satisfied. And, as far as we know, you still can't take it with you. But as Gertrude Stein said, "I've been rich and I've been poor. It's better to be rich."

Steve Maich, "Money Really Can Buy Happiness"

Echoing the Introduction:

The following text concludes a story that begins by describing the morning of the first day of school.

He raced to the metal shop. After metal shop there was biology, and after biology a long sprint to the public library, where he checked out three French textbooks.

He was going to like seventh grade.

Gary Soto, "Seventh Grade"

Teacher Artistry

Read the mentor texts aloud.

- ✦ Ask students which of the nine types of conclusions they liked best. Have them explain why.
- ✦ Write the following summary of Tim O'Brien's "Ambush" on the board or project it on the screen:

In this short story, the narrator's young daughter, knowing that her father writes war stories, asks him if he has ever killed anyone. He says no, but resolves to tell her the truth one day. He then recalls when he did kill someone in Vietnam. While he was standing guard in the jungle, a young Vietnamese soldier approached. Instinctively, the narrator threw a grenade, killing the soldier. The narrator realizes that he could have let the man pass unharmed. Years later, the incident still haunts him.

- ✦ Have students read the summary and discuss how the narrator felt by the end of his musings. Think beyond what is stated.
- ✦ Using the mentor texts as a guide, ask the class to brainstorm 3 different ways the summary could effectively be concluded.

Student Artistry

- ✍ Instruct students to imagine that they have written a short story about a young child who did not follow his or her mother's instructions to arrive home on time and is now in trouble.
- ✍ Ask students to write a conclusion to the story, using one of the nine conclusion techniques. Have the child respond to the mother's questions about why her instructions were ignored. Explain what lesson the child has learned from the experience.
- ✍ Instruct students to find a piece of writing they have already completed. Revise the ending using one of the nine concluding techniques.

Other Examples

Creating a Dialogue:

Much later, Teddy, as a schoolboy, would come into the kitchen and say: "You old rascal, Gideon! Do you remember that time you tricked us all by making us walk miles all over the veld for nothing? It was so far my father had to carry me!"

And Gideon would double up with polite laughter. After much laughing, he would suddenly straighten himself up, wipe his old eyes, and look sadly at Teddy, who was grinning mischievously at him across the kitchen: "Ah, Little Yellow Head, how you have grown! Soon you will be grown up with a farm of your own..."

Doris Lessing, "No Witchcraft for Sale"

The old man claimed the hummingbird lived through that winter, but I never knew for sure. I saw hummingbirds again when summer came, but I couldn't tell one from the other.

One day in the summer I asked the old man.

"Did it live?"

"The little bird?" he said.

"Yes," I said. "That we gave the honey to. You remember. The little bird that was dying in the winter. Did it live?"

"Look about you," the old man said. "Do you see the bird?"

"I see hummingbirds," I said.

"Each of them is our bird," the old man said. "Each of them, each of them," he said swiftly and gently.

William Saroyan, "The Hummingbird That Lived Through Winter"

"There's this story I'm goin to write one day," say Cathy dreamer. "About the proper use of the hammer."

"Can I be in it?" Tyrone say with his hand up like it was a matter of first come, first served.

"Perhaps," say Cathy, climbin onto the tire to pump us up. "If you there and ready."

Toni Cade Bambara, "Blues Ain't No Mockin Bird"

Asking Questions:

Are the dearest friends and relations now rendered more dear by their separation from their kindred, still to be parted from each other and thus prevented from cheering the gloom of slavery, with the small comfort of being together, and mingling their sufferings and sorrows? Why are parents to lose their children, brothers their sisters, or husbands their wives? Surely, this is a new refinement in cruelty, which...thus aggravates distress, and adds fresh horrors even to the wretchedness of slavery.

Oludah Equiano, Of the Life of Olaudah Equiano

She crawled through bits of glass and brick,
then lifted out a shoe.
O here's the shoe my baby wore,
but, baby, where are you?

Dudley Randall, from “Ballad of Birmingham”

In your hand is the brown bag. On the ground before you is the jumble it held – so much like the heap and the bags refilled without altering the content of any greatly. A bit of colored glass more or less would not matter. Perhaps that is how the Great Stuffer of Bags filled them in the first place – who knows?

Zora Neale Hurston, “How It Feels to Be Colored Me”

What my dentist cried out one day after finally removing an unsuspected fourth nerve from one of my molars comes to mind each time I try to understand myself as a writer. Do I, as a writer, have what he called a “hidden nerve”?

Andre Aciman, “A Literary Pilgrim Progresses to the Past”

Suggesting Results or Consequences:

And now was acknowledged the presence of the Red Death. He had come like a thief in the night. And one by one dropped the revelers in the blood-bedewed halls of their revel, and died each in the despairing posture of his fall. And the life of the ebony clock went out with that of the last of the gay. And the flames of the tripods expired. And Darkness and Decay and the Red Death held illimitable dominion over all.

Edgar Allan Poe, “The Masque of the Red Death”

I began to weep, and the tear-blurred vision in red before me looked very familiar. “Doodle!” I screamed above the pounding storm and threw my body to the earth above his. For a long long time, it seemed forever, I lay there crying, sheltering my fallen scarlet ibis from the heresy of rain.

James Hurst, “The Scarlet Ibis”

Is it so bad then to be misunderstood? Pythagoras was misunderstood, and Socrates, and Jesus, and Luther, and Copernicus, and Galileo, and Newton, and every pure and wise spirit that ever took flesh. To be great is to be misunderstood.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Self-Reliance”

Looking to the Future:

I hope this letter finds you strong in the faith. I also hope that circumstances will soon make it possible for me to meet each of you, not as an integrationist or a civil-rights leader but as a fellow clergyman and a Christian brother. Let us all hope that the dark clouds of racial prejudice will soon pass away and the deep fog of misunderstanding will be lifted from our fear-drenched communities, and in some not too distant tomorrow the radiant stars of love and brotherhood will shine over our great nation with all their scintillating beauty.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail"

My brothers and sisters don't have the opportunities that I do. Today it is September, and I am starting university. I am a very lucky person. And when my family gets here and we are together again, we will make such a celebration!

Janet Bode, "'Von,' a Vietnamese youth as interviewed by Janet Bode"

Rikki-tikki had a right to be proud of himself; but he did not grow too proud, and he kept that garden as a mongoose should keep it, with tooth and jump and spring and bits, till never a cobra dared show its head inside the walls.

Rudyard Kipling, "Rikki-tikki-tavi"

Calling for Action:

But they were men who built the city, not gods or demons. They were men. I remember the dead man's face. They were men who were here before us. We must build again.

Stephen Vincent Benet, "By the Waters of Babylon"

Returning fire to ecosystems is our only hope of reducing the long-term risk of catastrophic burns, and the only way to restore and sustain wildlands.

Jane Braxton Little, "The Paradox of Wildland Fire"

Ending with a Surprising Statement:

The following text concludes a story about a young boy who tells a woman all about his mother and what he does with her when she visits him and what the woman discovers from a conversation with someone else.

Her stupidity annoyed me.

"What I mean," I said, "is that I don't want to duplicate things his mother sends him. I might have chosen skates if I didn't know she had already given them to him."

She stared at me.

"I don't understand," she said. "He has no mother. He has no skates."

Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, "A Mother in Manville"

The following text concludes a story about an elderly woman who appears to be a well-respected pillar of her community.

Miss Strangeworth was a Strangeworth of Pleasant Street. Her hand did not shake as she opened the envelope and unfolded the sheet of green paper inside. She began to cry silently for the wickedness of the world when she read the words: LOOK OUT AT WHAT USED TO BE YOUR ROSES.

Shirley Jackson, "The Possibility of Evil"

Stating a Startling Fact:

The finding stunned the researchers, says Alan Beck, director of the Center for Applied Ethology and Human-Animal Interaction at Purdue University and a pioneer in companion animal research. Even after they eliminated dogs from the study – to ensure that exercise from dog-walking wasn't skewing the results – patients who owned iguanas, fish, and gerbils had the same survival advantage. Subsequent studies found that pet owners tended to have lower cholesterol, triglycerides and blood pressure than their petless peers.

Beth Baker, "Happy by Nature: Fondness for Plants and Animals May Be Hard-Wired, Healthy"

The ultimate irony is that a quilt made in 1886 by an ex-slave who out of financial desperation sold it for \$5 was the major catalyst for all of this.

April Austin "Sewn with Love – and Sweat: Quilts made by Descendants of Slaves from Gee's Bend, Ala., Confound the Art World – and Delight the Eye."

Ending with a Quotation:

Finally, remember that love takes many forms, and that connection is more than romantic love. Expand your circle of love into a friendship toward all living things.

"I used to feel loved because I am loved and because I can love."

Jill Neimark, "All You Need Is Love"

Meanwhile, though, even scientists who are researching rip currents agree that the most important way to reduce rip-current deaths is to teach people how to swim, and how to swim their way out of a current.

"The biggest thing is not to panic," Dr. Jamie MacMahan said. "The more we can educate, the better."

Cornelia Dean, "Stalking a Killer That Lurks a Few Feet Offshore"

Echoing the Introduction:

The following text concludes a story that is written as a series of journal entries by a man named "Charlie" who is part of an experiment to see if a person's intelligence can be increased through a series of scientific experiments.

Goodbye Miss Kinnian and Dr. Strauss and everybody. And P.S. please tell Dr. Nemur not to be such a grouch when pepul laff at him and he woud have more frends. Its easy to make frends if you let pepul laff at you. Im going to have lots of frends where I go. P.P.S. Please if you get a chanse put some flowers on Algernons grave in the bak yard. . . .

Daniel Keyes, "Flowers for Algernon"

Other ways to conclude a piece of writing:

- a warning
- a universal statement
- a definition
- an ironic statement or situation
- a challenge to the reader



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