

Choose Your Words Wisely
(a lesson in using the trait of Word Choice)

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Discipline / Subject: language arts - writing

Topic: the trait of Word Choice

Grade Level: 2-8

Resources / References / Materials Teacher Needs:

rubric, menu of 2007 First Musher Off the Yukon 7-course dinner award, possible resources on 6 Traits writing

Lesson Summary: Students will practice the trait of good Word Choice in writing about the Iditarod.

Standards Addressed:

national standards:

NL-ENG.K-12.5 Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

Alaska state standards:

English/language arts A

A student should be able to speak and write well for a variety of purposes and audiences. A student who meets the content standard should:
apply elements of effective writing and speaking; these elements include ideas, organization, vocabulary, sentence structure, and personal style

Arizona state standards:

W5-S2-C4

PO 1 Use a variety of specific and accurate words that effectively convey the intended message.

PO 2 Use descriptive words and phrases that energize the writing.

PO 3 Apply vocabulary and/or terminology appropriate to the type of writing.

Learning objectives:

The student will:

- use precise language to clarify writing (application)
- decide which words best convey the meaning of the writing (analysis)
- revise unclear writing for better word choice (evaluation)
- select specific words to move the reader (evaluation)

Assessment:

Use attached or similar rubric to evaluate word choice.

Procedural Activities:

1. Introduce the trait of Word Choice to students.
2. Lead students through Word Choice practice activities. This can be as simple as brainstorming different ways to say something is "good". Have students tell as many ways as they can to say "cold". Or have students rewrite sentences about the Iditarod, improving word choice.
3. Discuss how/why different situations call for specific words.
4. Explain the First Musher off the Yukon dinner and monetary award.
5. Instruct the students to read the menu of the 2007 First Musher Off the Yukon Award meal. Point out the specific describing words.
6. Let the students work in groups following the categories on the menu to create their own 7 course award dinner.
7. Tell them to include exact describing words for each item.
8. Share menus with class and have them vote on which one they would like to enjoy if they were the winning musher.

Materials Students Need:

publishing tools such as paper and pencil or computer for word processing, dictionaries and thesauruses

Technology Utilized to Enhance Learning: publishing software would make this more creative for example, Microsoft Publisher

Other Information:

The menu is in an article on the Iditarod website. Under 2008 Iditarod, scroll down to the article dated March 9, 2007, "Buser Reaches the Yukon First".

6 Traits Writing defines the trait of Word Choice as using beautiful, rich, precise language that moves the reader. It is choosing the right word for the writing situation.

There are many good 6 Traits handbooks for teachers. Here are some suggestions:

6 + 1 Traits of Writing The Complete Guide Grades 3 and Up by Ruth Culham
Creating Writers Through 6-Trait Writing Assessment and Instruction by Vicki Spandel

40 Reproducible Forms for the Writing Traits Classroom by Ruth Culham and Amanda Wheeler

Modifications for special learners/ enrichment opportunities:

Invite students to prepare parts of the "winning" menu and enjoy them as a WINNING class!