

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, Iditarod sentences for revising, 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. Assign students a type of writing such as:
persuasive - convincing someone to attend the start of the Iditarod
narrative - tell about the race from a musher's or dog's point of view, write a descriptive paragraph about a picture from the Iditarod website
functional - a travel brochure on Alaska

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

Other Information:

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:

Rewrite a story leaving blanks where descriptive words go. Read the story to your students and have them list words that would complete the blank.

Hold a contest to see which students can find the most synonyms for overused words such as good, bad, nice, etc.

Teach your students about overly extravagant and impressive vocabulary - that every day words are good Word Choice, too.