

Barking Up the Right Tree
(a lesson using the writing trait of voice)

Developed by: by Jane Blaile 2008 Iditarod TOTT™

Discipline / Subject: English, writing

Topic: the 6 + 1 Traits™ for writing -trait of voice

Grade Level: 3-8

Resources / References / Materials Teacher Needs: none

Lesson Summary: Students will practice using the trait of voice in writing about the Iditarod.

Standard's 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:

W3-S2-C3

P02 convey a sense of originality, sincerity, liveliness or humor appropriate to topic and given type of writing

W5-S2-C3

P03 use language appropriate for topic and purpose

W6-S2-C3

P04 choose appropriate voice (e.g., formal/informal) for the audience and its purpose

Learning objectives:

The student will:

- write a non-fiction narrative (comprehension)
- reflect his/her personal style in writing (synthesis)
- convey emotion in writing (evaluation)

Assessment: Use attached or similar rubric to assess voice.

Procedural Activities:

1. Introduce the trait of voice to students.
2. Lead students through voice practice activities. One idea is have each student turn an everyday grocery list item into practice writing with voice by having them write about it with a reaction to how they like or dislike it e.g., coffee or chocolate. Another is to pick familiar places at school such as the gym or a playground and assign each student to write from either a "love it" or "hate it" standpoint.
3. After students have learned about various aspects of the Iditarod, have each one select a topic on which to write. It should be a factual topic.
4. Discuss with students how they can add their own voice to writing and still be factual. For example, a student could report that the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race is always over 1,000 miles long and add a personal comment such as, "Can you believe that? I can't even run 1 mile!"
5. Encourage students to write what comes naturally, almost conversationally.
6. Students can talk to each other about their topics before beginning to write so they accumulate ideas about what they want to say.
7. Read student writing to the class anonymously seeing if others can identify by its style which student wrote it.

Materials Students Need: paper, pencil, or publishing software - ideas!

Technology Utilized to Enhance Learning: possible publishing software

Other Information:

6 traits defines voice as writing that "sounds" like the writer, a trait that makes the writing belong to the writer, a sense that the real person is speaking, imparting a personal flavor to writing

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:

Have students dictate their stories to someone who records them.