

Lesson: Focus revision on a specific element such as: word choice

Fourth Grade Objective: 4.08 enrichment

Lesson

1. Read the following short story about a basketball game. This story is based on the book Swish by Bill Martin Jr and Michael Sampson, but has been changed to a more simple form to demonstrate the process of revising for word choice.

The Cardinals and Blue Jays are playing in a championship game. It is very close game. When there is less than one minute left, the Blue Jays are up by two points. The referee gives the ball to a Blue Jays player who throws it to her teammate. Her teammate takes a shot, but doesn't make it. The Cardinals get the rebound and dribble to their basket. They take a shot and make it! Now the game is tied. The Blue Jays get the ball and one of the players is able to make a shot. Now the Blue Jays are up by two points. The Cardinals take a time out because there are only 7 seconds left. The Cardinals coach shows them a way to try to win the game. The crowd is excited. Cardinals head down to their basket, when a Blue Jays player tries to steal the ball. The Cardinals are able to keep the ball. They make a shot at the 3-point line and it goes in. The Cardinals win 47 to 46.

2. Now that you have read the story, do you think the verbs/action words are clear and precise? If not, what is the problem?
3. Most of the verbs in this story are passive verbs (i.e. are playing, is, are up, are able, is able, etc.) or overused verbs (give, throw, takes, get, head, goes, etc.).
4. One way to make a story more exciting is to revise it for word choice. Read the story Swish by Bill Martin Jr and Micahel Sampson. As you read, look for awesome action words that are very precise and help you picture the character's actions or story events. Make a list of the words you find in the chart below.

Awesome Action Words

Check your answers

Awesome Action Verbs

Leaping
Hustles
Bounds
Rushing
Slowing to a coast
Flying
Gather
Clasp
Driving
Pivots
Spins
Whirling
Swirling
blares

5. Writers use good, strong verbs to make stories interesting and vivid. Look at one of your writing pieces. See if you can find passive verbs or overused verbs. If you can, try replacing them with awesome action words!

Try these on your own!

1. Read Epossumondas Saves the Day by Coleen Salley. Make a list of awesome action verbs you find in the story.
2. Read The Night I Followed the Dog by Nina Laden. Make a list of awesome action verbs you find in the story.
3. Read Bullfrog Pops! By Rick Walton. Make a list of awesome action verbs you find in the story.
4. When you feel comfortable identifying awesome action verbs in stories you read, revise your own stories for awesome action verbs to improve your word choice!

Check Your Answers by asking yourself the following questions:

1. Are the words you selected just the right words to show the actions or events in a way that will help the reader picture what is happening?
2. Have you used precise words instead of over-used words?
3. Have you selected active verbs and eliminated as many passive verbs as appropriate?