

LESSON PLAN: PRACTICE / APPLICATION

Preparation

1. During this lesson three students demonstrate the sentence "*She walked into the room.*" Before you begin the lesson, prepare these students by asking them to walk into the room in a particular manner:
 - o Ask one student to walk in quickly, as if she is late. She's not to run, but she should seem rushed and hurried.
 - o Ask another student to walk in at a fairly normal speed, but as if she is very happy and pleased. She might bounce in or float in dreamily.
 - o Ask the last student to walk in very slowly, as if she really isn't interested in the class and has plenty of time to get into her seat.

Instruction and Activities

1. Write the following sentence on the board or overhead projector, "She walked into the room."
2. Discuss the meaning of the sentence. What can we really tell about what the student did? Point out to students that the sentence is rather bland, because we cannot visualize anything about the action.
3. Send the three students you've prepared into the hallway, and ask them to enter one at a time, following your instructions.
4. Think aloud as you revise the sentence—write your new version under the original as each student enters so that you have four sentences on the board once all the students have entered:

How could we replace the verb, so that we get a better understanding of the person entering the room? If I change the sentence to "She rushed into the room," how do the verb's connotations help to see not only what she looked like, but also what type of person she is? Or maybe I should say that "She hurried into the room"? I'm not sure. Maybe I'll write both.

Okay, here comes another student. "She walked into the room" doesn't really capture what she's doing either. Hmm. What about "She bounced into the room." Or instead of just the verb, maybe I should add an adverb that tells the reader more: "She bounced happily into the room." Okay. That's better.

Last student. Wow. She's walking very slowly. Looks like she doesn't even want to be here. I wonder if I should revise the sentence to say "She meandered into the room." Or maybe add an adverb and leave the verb alone: "She walked slowly into the room."

5. Once you've created three revised sentences, ask students to think about the differences between the original sentence and the new versions. Pay particular attention to the way connotation and word choice changed the meaning.
6. Ask students to suggest other verbs for the sentence and discuss the related connotations. Possible words include the following: strutted, slithered, pranced, oozed, and marched. Ask students to consider how the verb choice affects the mental image that we form of this person and how effective word choice can affect writing. If time allows, students might dramatize some of these word options as well.
7. When you are confident that students are prepared to consider the word choice in their own writing, ask students to choose a paragraph in their writer's journals or a paper that they are working on to revise, paying particular attention to connotation.

APPLICATION

If students need more examples before revising their own writing, work as a whole class or in small groups to revise several paragraphs for more vivid detail. You can either use the Connotation Revision handout (ATTACHED), or ask a student to volunteer a passage from his or her writing for the class to consider.

8. Ask students to rewrite the paragraph to create a vivid effect, so that the reader can see what is happening and see the setting where the action occurs.
9. Monitor student progress to ensure that writers are comfortable with the task.
10. Once the mini-lesson is complete, ask students to explore the pieces that they are writing (RESOURCE: READER'S/WRITER'S NOTEBOOK) for additional places where they can add more vivid details. Students may work during their in-class writing time or complete the revisions as homework.

