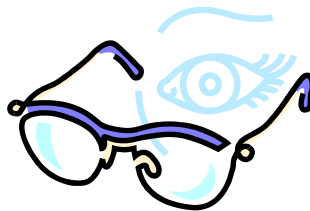


Revision: Seeing Our Writing with New Eyes

Presenter

Connie Lindsey
Brownwood, Texas
Website: www.texaschoolmarm.net



Grade Band

7-12 (younger with adaptations)

Estimated Lesson Time

One 45-50 minute class meeting

Overview

This lesson teaches students “to read with a writer’s eye” to understand how professional writers choose words to create tone and add power to their writing. Students will select a piece of their own writing from their working portfolio to revise.

From Theory to Practice

One of the hardest jobs writing teachers face is motivating and equipping our students to revise their writing.

- “Writing is rewriting.” Donald Murray
- “Revision isn’t just about rearranging words—it’s about rethinking your whole argument, and making sure you’re really saying what you want to say.” M. Harvey, *The Nuts and Bolts of College Writing*.
- “But real revision is more than making a few changes here and there. Real revision requires that you open yourself up to the possibility that parts of your paper—and even your entire paper—might need to be re-thought, and re-written.” Karen Gocsik, “Revision: Cultivating a Critical Eye.”
- “The point of learning about revision is not necessarily to make changes on every piece of writing nor to write dozens of drafts. Students need to be able to bring the tools of revision to their writing the way a carpenter comes equipped for the job with a toolbox full of tools.” Georgia Heard, *The Revision Toolbox*.

Student Objectives

Students will

- analyze strategies that professional writers use to compose.
- revise a draft of their writing by refining style to suit occasion, audience, and purpose.
- demonstrate control over grammatical elements such as subject-verb agreement, verb forms, and parallelism.

Resources

- Cisneros, S. (1984). “Four Skinny Trees.” *The House on Mango Street*. New York: Vintage Books, pp. 74-75.
- Individual student writing (self-selected) for revision
- Colorful highlighters
- EXIT slips

Instructional Plan

Preparation

1. Make a copy for each student of the chapter “Four Skinny Trees” from *House on Mango Street*.
2. Prepare and make copies of EXIT slips for students to fill out at the end of the lesson.
3. Have highlighters ready for students to use.
4. The class period before the lesson, have each student select a piece of their writing to revise from their working portfolios.

Activities

1. Ask students to read “Four Skinny Trees” from *House on Mango Street* and highlight every action verb they can find. Then have them make a list of all the action verbs that relate to the trees.
2. Have them discuss with a partner what they notice about the verbs they listed. Then, have them write a sentence or two about what these verbs contribute to the tone of the piece.
3. Have students highlight the verbs in several paragraphs of their self-selected piece and list them. Ask students to consider what tone these verbs create and what other verbs that might replace the listed ones (using a thesaurus or dictionary, if needed).
4. Have volunteers read their original sentences and then the revised ones. Discuss as a class the effect the changes have made.
5. Ask students to complete an EXIT slip by responding the following stems:
 - One thing I learned about my writing today
 - One idea I will use in my own writing
 - One question I have about revising my writing

Student Assessment / Reflections

- Responses from opening activity
- Revised sentences from draft
- EXIT slip (1-1-1)



Standards (English 3 TEKS)

Students will

- analyze strategies that writers in different fields use to compose (4G).
- develop drafts both alone and collaboratively by organizing and reorganizing content and by refining style to suit occasion, audience, and purpose (2B).
- proofread writing for appropriateness of organization, content, style, and conventions (2C).
- demonstrate control over grammatical elements such as subject-verb agreement, pronoun-antecedent agreement, verb forms, and parallelism (3B).

Resources for Teaching Revision

- Gocsik, K. (2005). *Writing the academic paper: Revision: The critical eye*. Retrieved July 1, 2005, from http://www.dartmouth.edu/~writing/materials/student/ac_paper/revise.shtml
- Harvey, M. (2003). The Nuts and Bolts of College Writing. Retrieved July 1, 2005, from <http://www.nutsandboltsguide.com/process.htm#learning>
- Heard, G. (2002). *The revision toolbox: Teaching techniques that work*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Kittle, P. (2003). Reading practices as revision strategies: The gossip reading model. *The Quarterly* 25(3), pp. 32-33+.
- Noskin, D.P. (2000). Teaching writing in the high school: Fifteen years in the making. *English Journal* 90(1), pp. 34-38.
- Nowacek, R.S. (2005). *Teaching students to make meaningful revisions*. Retrieved July 1, 2005, from http://Mendota.english.wisc.edu/~WAC/printPage.jsp?id=27&c_type=article&c_id=4
- O'Shaughnessy, K. (2001). Everything I know about teaching language arts I learned at the office supply store. *The Quarterly* 23(2), pp. 13-18. Retrieved July 5, 2005, from <http://www.writingproject.org/cs/nwpp/print/nwpr/147>
- Saddler, B. (2003). "But teacher, I added a period!" Middle schoolers learn to revise. *Voices from the Middle* 11(2), pp.20-26.
- Tchudi, S., Estrem, H., & Hanlon, P. (1997). Unsettling drafts: Helping students see new possibilities in their writing. *English Journal* 86(6), pp. 27-33.
- Teaching rigorous and reflective thinking*. (nd). Retrieved July 1, 2005, from <http://www2.nea.org/he/advo-new/feature.html>
- Thomas, P.L. (2000). The struggle itself: Teaching writing as we know we should. *English Journal* 90(1), pp. 39-45.
- Williams, R.B. (2003). It's never written in stone: The agony of revision. *The Voice*, 2003(4), p. 8. Retrieved July 5, 2005, from <http://www.writingproject.org/pub/nwpr/voice/2003no4/williams.html>

Four Skinny Trees

They are the only ones who understand me. I am the only one who understands them. Four skinny trees with skinny necks and pointy elbows like mine. Four who do not belong here but are here. Four raggedy excuses planted by the city. From our room we can hear them, but Nenny just sleeps and doesn't appreciate these things.

Their strength is their secret. They send ferocious roots beneath the ground. They grow up and they grow down and grab the earth between their hairy toes and bite the sky with violent teeth and never quit their anger. This is how they keep.

Let one forget his reason for being, they'd all droop like tulips in a glass, each with their arms around the other. Keep, keep, keep, trees say when I sleep. They teach.

When I am too sad and too skinny to keep keeping, when I am a tiny thing against so many bricks, then it is I look at trees. When there is nothing left to look at on this street. Four who grew despite concrete. Four who reach and do not forget to reach. Four whose only reason is to be and be.

(Cisneros, S. (1984). "Four Skinny Trees." *The House on Mango Street*. New York: Vintage Books, pp. 74-75.)

Directions:

- ✓ Read the passage above twice.
- ✓ The second time you read, highlight every action verb you can find.
- ✓ Next, list below the verbs that relate to the trees. If you find a verb repeated, write it again each time it is.
- ✓ Talk with your partner and decide what effect these verbs have on the meaning of the passage. Together, write a few sentences explaining what you found.

Verbs:

Effect: _____

