Describing Words: A Lesson Plan on Adjectives

In this lesson, students will practice identifying and using adjectives, as well as distinguishing shades of meaning among closely related adjectives. In the summative assessment, students will create their own narrative to describe a real or fictional person and will practice using precise, as well as vivid adjectives throughout their writing.

Learning Objectives: What should students know and be able to do as a result of this lesson?

- Be able to correctly identify adjectives.
- Be able to distinguish shades of meaning among closely related adjectives.
- Be able to use adjectives correctly in their writing.
- Be able to create or select vivid adjectives to enhance their writing as they write and revise.

Prior Knowledge: What prior knowledge should students have for this lesson?

- Based on grade 1 language standards, students should have some background knowledge on what adjectives and nouns are and how they are used.
- Students should be able to compose a sentence using correct end punctuation.
- Students should have prior experience with creating and writing a narrative. This practice should include creating a beginning, middle, and end, and using a few details to describe people or events.
- With teacher and peer support, students should be able to develop ideas for a narrative.

Guiding Questions: What are the guiding questions for this lesson?

- What is an adjective?
- What effect do adjectives have on writing?
Teaching Phase: How will the teacher present the concept or skill to students?

Day 1

1. Conduct the beginning of lesson formative assessment. (See formative assessment section for specifics.) Afterward, the teacher can discuss/review that adjectives are used to describe nouns: people, places, and things.

2. Read aloud teacher selected sections from Many Luscious Lollipops: A Book about Adjectives by Ruth Heller. (The book is 49 pages. Preview the book in advance to select the most appropriate sections based on the needs of your students.) Stop frequently during the reading of the book to point out important information in the book and to ask questions to check students’ understanding. Record on chart paper or on the board definitions from the book about what adjectives are and how they are used, and also record examples of adjectives that students can refer back to later in the lesson. (For the summative assessment, students will write a short narrative to describe a real or imaginary person, so examples of adjectives that could be used to describe a person would be particularly helpful for students.)

Day 2

In order to help students distinguish between shades of meaning among closely related adjectives, and to help them select more precise words for the narrative they will write in the summative assessment, please use the following handout provided by Reading Rockets for this next activity. (When you click on the Reading Rockets link, scroll down and click on the orange line titled semantic gradients handout to access the handout.)

** It is encouraged that you write or type each word from a topic that you will use from the list onto index cards, sticky notes, or printer paper for the teacher and students to manipulate.

Guided Practice: What activities or exercises will the students complete with teacher guidance?

Day 3:

1. Using the semantic gradients handout, the teacher will select one topic from the list and model placing the words in order from least to greatest in terms of degrees. The teacher can spread the words out horizontally or vertically either on the board using magnets or tape, under a document camera, or on an overhead projector. The teacher should model thinking aloud as they try to determine which word goes first (which is the least strong word), which next, and so forth, by thinking aloud about what each word means and which words are lesser or stronger in terms of their meaning. The final word in the list should be the strongest.

   **Note:** Depending on the topic you select and the words given for that topic on the handout, the teacher may need to select the two antonyms at the opposite ends of the spectrum and place the remaining words between them, moving from one end of the spectrum to the other.

2. After the teacher has modeled one topic through a think aloud, pick another topic and set of corresponding words from the handout and have students work with you to place the words in the appropriate order.

3. Next, have students work with partners to complete several topics and corresponding words from the handout. Monitor students as they work and provide feedback and support as needed. After students are done, come back together as a class and provide any whole group clarification as needed. If students show widespread difficulty, the teacher can provide additional modeling by selecting a few more topics from the handout and model placing the words in the correct order through more think alouds for the class.

Independent Practice: What activities or exercises will students complete to reinforce the concepts and skills developed in the
The Independent Practice is the Summative Assessment for the lesson: Students will write a short narrative to describe a real or imaginary person. They will correctly use precise, as well as vivid adjectives to describe this real or imaginary person.

1. Before students begin writing, work together to brainstorm ideas for who students might want to write about. Encourage them to pick someone, real or imaginary, that they can vividly describe. Note: Students may wish to use the activity from yesterday (the activity describing the teacher, or whomever the class chose to describe) for ideas on whom they might like to write about.

2. Remind students that their narrative will have a beginning, middle, and end. Depending on the needs of your students, you might want to provide students with a graphic organizer, outline, or planning frame to help them construct and write their story.

3. Have students begin writing. Circulate the classroom, monitor students as they work, and provide support as needed.

4. When students’ drafts are complete, depending on your available curriculum time you could:
   - Conference with individual students to help point out areas in their story where they could use adjectives to describe their real or fictional person in more detail, or select different adjectives that are more precise.
   - Collect students’ drafts and provide individual written feedback to help point out areas in their story where they could use adjectives to describe their real or fictional person in more detail, or select different adjectives that are more precise.
   - Collect students’ drafts, provide written feedback, and then place students in small groups depending on the kind of revision assistance the students need. As students work on revising, you can provide feedback to each small group to provide further support without taking as much curriculum time as you would by conferencing with individual students.

5. As students work on revising their draft, depending on students needs, you might use the following questions to prompt their thinking:
   - Describe what you already have tried in your writing. What might you revise in order to be more descriptive?
   - What does the person or character look like? How do they act?
   - What could you describe to help your reader picture the person or imaginary character in your story? Think about colors, size, shape, words that describe feelings, words that describe personality. For example, is the character tall or short? What color hair does he/she have? What color are their eyes? Is he/she funny, angry, cool? Are they quite or very talkative?

6. As students are revising, if they are having trouble creating adjectives for their narrative, have them stop and conduct this quick activity: Have the students write adjectives on their own sheet of paper. After 2-3 minutes, each student will pass their sheet to the next student for them to add more adjectives to their sheet to build off what the others wrote on the paper. Continue until everyone has written on everyone else’s sheet. You might wish to be the final participant in this chain in order to cross off any words that students wrote that are not adjectives before passing the paper back to the original student. Then, have students use this list of adjectives to help them select adjectives to use in their story.

7. Students will turn in their final drafts as the summative assessment for the lesson. Teachers can create their own rubric or use the one attached to this lesson.

**Closure: How will the teacher assist students in organizing the knowledge gained in the lesson?**

Students will share the final drafts of their narratives with a partner and ask their partner to identify the adjectives in their partner’s writing.

The teacher can show the class (using a document camera or overhead projector) a few examples of well written student narratives and ask the class to identify the adjectives. The teacher could replace a few of the adjectives with adjectives with a slightly different shade of meaning and ask students how that change impacts the sentence.

**Summative Assessment**

The summative assessment will require that students create their own short narrative to use adjectives to describe a real or fictional person. Please see the independent practice section for further information.

Teachers can develop their own rubric to assess students’ writing or use the attached rubric.

**Formative Assessment**

**Before the Lesson Begins:**

Individually, ask students to write down what they know or think they know about adjectives. The teacher can use student responses to make adjustments to their teaching instruction as the lesson progresses.

**During the Lesson:**

The following activities serve as formative assessments during the lesson:

- **Teaching Phase**: Day 2 - semantic gradients activity
- **Guided Practice**: Day 3 - revising the sentence strips to add adjectives activity, Day 4 - using adjectives to describe the teacher activity

The teacher will use these activities to measure students’ understanding of correctly identifying adjectives in a sentence, using adjectives correctly in a sentence, and distinguishing the shades of meaning among closely related adjectives. The teacher will want to make sure that students have grasped these concepts before having students begin the summative assessment.

**Feedback to Students**

The teacher will provide on the spot oral feedback and help students correct any misunderstandings they have acquired during the activities in the teaching phase (day 2 semantic gradients activity) and guided practice (day 3 revising the sentence strips to add adjectives activity and day 4 using adjectives to describe the teacher activity).

Independent Practice: As students write and revise their narrative for the summative assessment, the teacher will provide feedback on students’ use of adjectives. Recommendations for providing feedback to students is given in the independent practice section in the lesson.

**Accommodations & Recommendations**
**Accommodations:**
The teacher can provide students with a list of adjectives prior to the lesson to help them add appropriate adjectives to their summative assessment narrative. Modeling and think alouds have been built into the lesson activities which will help provide additional support for all students.

For students struggling to write their narrative, the teacher can provide a graphic organizer, outline, or story frame to help them construct and organize their story.

**Extensions:**

**An idea for a follow-up lesson:**

1. Students can work independently to illustrate a self-portrait and write six different adjectives to describe themselves. The adjectives will be written on index cards and glued around their self-portrait. They will then use the adjectives to write descriptive sentences about themselves.
2. Students can present their completed portrait to the class and read their sentences. The class will respond by recalling the adjectives used. If needed, the class can help the student select different adjectives that are more precise using the examples they have gathered from previous activities about adjectives with varying degrees.
3. To assess whether students can identify the adjectives in context, the teacher may ask each student to trade papers with a friend and use the teacher's special highlighters to highlight the adjectives used in their friend's paragraph (if all students are comfortable with sharing their work).

**Other follow-up lesson ideas:**

- Students can create character trait charts or illustrations describing (using adjectives) main characters of stories being read in class as whole group, from their individual library books, fairy tales, or movie characters they choose.
- Students can also create a fictional character of their own using construction paper strips of various colors and write a paragraph using adjectives to describe it.

**Suggested Technology:** Computer for Presenter, Interactive Whiteboard, LCD Projector, Overhead Projector

**Further Recommendations:**

- Give a personal cue to begin work.
- Give work in small chunks.
- Provide immediate reinforcement and feedback.
- Introduce the assignment in sequential steps.
- Check for student understanding of instructions.
- Check on progress often in the first few minutes of work.
- Provide suggestions for how long students have to complete each task.
- Provide a checklist for long, detailed tasks.

**Additional Information/Instructions**

**By Author/Submitter**

This lesson addresses subpart B for LAFS.2.L.3.5.

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**Source and Access Information**

**Contributed by:** Lianne BatlleBaez  
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**Aligned Standards**

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| LAFS.2.L.3.5 | Demonstrate understanding of word relationships and nuances in word meanings.  
  a. Identify real-life connections between words and their use (e.g., describe foods that are spicy or juicy).  
  b. Distinguish shades of meaning among closely related verbs (e.g., toss, throw, hurl) and closely related adjectives (e.g., thin, slender, skinny, scrawny). |
| LAFS.2.L.3.6 | Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts, including using adjectives and adverbs to describe (e.g., When other kids are happy that makes me happy). |
| LAFS.2.W.2.5 | With guidance and support from adults and peers, focus on a topic and strengthen writing as needed by revising and editing. |