

Guiding Question:

HOW DO ADJECTIVES IMPROVE WRITING?

Lesson Overview: In this lesson, students learn how to identify words as adjectives and discover adjectives to use for strong word choice. As a culmination, students write using descriptive adjectives.

Resources:

- “Adjective Test” handout (provided)
- “Excerpt from *The Lost and Found* by Mark Teague”: #1, #2, #3 (provided)
- *Many Luscious Lollipops: A Book About Adjectives* by Ruth Heller (1998, Putnam).
- *Hairy, Scary, Ordinary: What Is an Adjective?* by Brian Cleary (2001, First Avenue Editions)
- Schoolhouse Rock video: *Unpack Your Adjectives* <http://www.school-house-rock.com/Adj.html>.

Lesson Details:

- 1. Focus the lesson.** Tell students that the focus for this lesson is on descriptive adjectives. Writing that includes specific adjectives allows a reader to get a clearer picture about what is written. Therefore, this lesson is about using adjectives for strong word usage.
- 2. Define adjectives.**
 - On the white board, write the phrase: “the very _____ cat.” Ask volunteers to fill in the blank with words that make sense in this phrase.
 - Make a list of these words on butcher paper. Verify with the whole class that all the words make sense grammatically even if they might seem a bit strange in the context.
 - Ask students to name the part of speech of these words – answer: *adjectives*. Explain that adjectives are words that modify nouns. In other words, adjectives give us more information about people, places, things (nouns) to help us understand and picture them more.
 - Make a transparency of the sheet entitled “Adjectives” along with a handout for each student. Instruct students to complete this sheet individually or in pairs. Ask volunteers to share their adjectives and add them to the class list.
 - As a class, review the entire list of adjectives and circle those that are particularly descriptive. Make a clean copy of these strong adjectives and post them in the room for students to see and use in their writing. Students might also write a list of these adjectives in their writing journals or elsewhere.
- 3. More about adjectives.** To augment this lesson, you might read one of the books listed below or play the Schoolhouse Rock video as options.
 - Read Ruth Heller’ *Many Luscious Lollipops: A Book About Adjectives* (1998, Putnam).

- Read Brian Cleary's *Hairy, Scary, Ordinary: What Is an Adjective?* (2001, First Avenue Editions)
- Both authors have several books on all parts of speech: nouns, prepositions, etc. As you read, discuss the content as needed.
- You might also choose to play the Schoolhouse Rock video entitled *Unpack Your Adjectives*. The lyrics to the video and ordering information can be found on this link <http://www.school-house-rock.com/Adj.html>.

4. **Cloze procedure.**

- Distribute the three handouts with excerpts from the picture book *The Lost and Found* with missing adjectives. Students fill in the blanks with adjectives for each sheet. You might have them complete excerpt #1 in groups, excerpt #2 in pairs, and then the final excerpt individually. For struggling learners, have them complete all three sheets with the assistance of others.
- Encourage students to enter the strongest adjectives they can for each sheet.
- Once they've done this, read the story *The Lost and Found* and see how their adjectives compared with Mark Teague's. Discuss who had the stronger adjectives – students or the author.
- **Option:** Repeat or replace this exercise with an excerpt from a story you are reading that is rich with adjectives so this exercise is tied to your literature.

5. **Record more descriptive adjectives.**

- Invite students to enter additional descriptive adjectives on the class list that they discovered during the cloze exercise. These could be words students discovered or those the author used.

6. **Write using strong adjectives.** Assign students the task of writing using strong adjectives. Encourage them to use the class list of adjectives. Choose any of the writing assignments below or choose your own:

- Write a description of a character's personality or a person you know using strong adjectives.
- Write a physical description of a character in a book or a person you know using strong adjectives.
- Use strong adjectives to write about a historical setting from our current social studies unit.
- Write a letter to your teacher about your very best or worst day using descriptive adjectives.

Extension: Ask students to search for strong adjectives from their favorite reading books and add these words to the class list. Or students can go on a scavenger hunt of a reading book (core novel or independent reading book) to find strong adjectives to add to the class list.

Assessment:

- student participation
- generated list of quality adjectives
- writing assignment with an emphasis on using strong adjectives

Name: _____

ADJECTIVE TEST

Directions: Fill in the missing words in the paragraph below with adjectives.

Adjectives modify nouns; they describe them. Here's a test: If a word can fit into the following phrase, then it's an adjective –

the very _____ cat



dirty	spotted
naughty	frisky
golden	black
helpful	

These words are all adjectives. They can fit into the phrase because they sound right. Numbers like **forty** and **three** are also adjectives, but don't fit into the phrase above.

Write some adjectives that you can think of on the lines below:



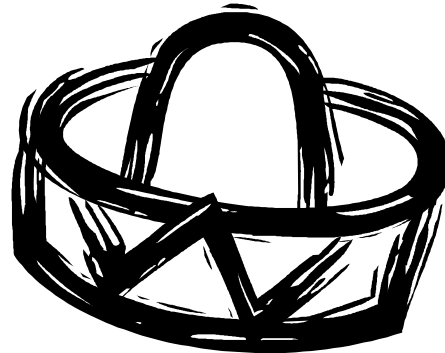
Name: _____

**Excerpt #1 from *The Lost and Found*
by Mark Teague**

Wendell and Floyd were in trouble. That morning a _____ squid had trapped them in the boys' restroom for almost an hour, causing them to miss a math test. Their teacher, Ms. Gernsblatt, had been _____.

Just then, Mona Tudburn entered the office. Mona was the _____ girl in their class.

“I’m trying to find the Lost and Found,” she said. “I lost my _____ hat.”



Name: _____

**Excerpt #2 from *The Lost and Found*
by Mark Teague**

On the _____ side of the lake were
_____ tunnels. “Which way do we go
now?” asked Floyd.

“We could flip a coin,” Wendell suggested.
Mona frowned. “That only works if there are
_____ choices...”

The boys thought about that for a while. Finally
Wendell threw up his hands, “Let’s try the
_____ one.”



Name: _____

**Excerpt #3 from *The Lost and Found*
by Mark Teague**

The tunnel became a _____ hallway full of doors. They opened each one without finding a _____ hat.

“I knew we would get lost,” Floyd muttered.

“You can’t get lost in the Lost and Found,” Mona and Wendell told him, but they no longer sounded so sure.

They came to one _____ door. Mona turned the knob and pulled...

“The _____ Room!” cried the boys.

