

Grade: 4th

Target Area: Writing personal narratives

Core Practice: mini lessons

Issue from unit:

A major issue I discovered within my student's personal narratives is that students were "telling" events in their experience rather than "showing" their experiences. Students were not using the lively details needed to make their personal narratives interesting to a reader. When looking back at the state standard, Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences, I felt that descriptive details was one of three major components to fully mastering the standard.

My thinking through the unit:

I first started to notice the lack of details in their narratives when we moved from introducing our narratives to thinking about the sequenced events that happened throughout their experiences. I began trying to give them guidance through mini lessons. I began one day writing a couple sentences I found in their narratives (not mentioning where whose narrative I found them in) and examining them as a class. For example, one of the sentences within a narrative was "Next we went and got food." I let students think about the statement and then asked them what kinds of questions they had about the sentence. Students asked questions like: what did you eat? Where did you go? Was it expensive? I then tried to get them to see that as someone who was not there during their experience, it is important to provide these kinds of details to paint a picture for their reader. Other mini lessons focused on what emotions they felt during different parts of their experience and what kinds of sensory details took place in their narratives. These mini lessons included anchor charts giving examples of different emotions and sensory details.

Analysis for future implications:

After my unit I started to think about ways I could have made it more clear as to the importance of descriptive details and how to use them in writing. I think there were aspects I could have added to my unit to make my students better writers.

Students need to see more examples of how personal narratives look.

- This could be done before students to begin to write by incorporating read aloud. I was thinking that I could read short personal narratives such as "Owl Moon", "Thank You, Mr. Faulkner," or "Fireflies," that students could listen to and hear descriptive details. This would make it easier for me to reference what these details look like by being able to relate back to these stories.

Students need more modeling from the teacher.

- I think I could have done a better job modeling how to write with descriptive details. I would do this by creating my own personal narrative with my students as well as having one already created. I could also color code details by highlighting emotions in blue, sensory details in green and descriptions of places and things in purple.

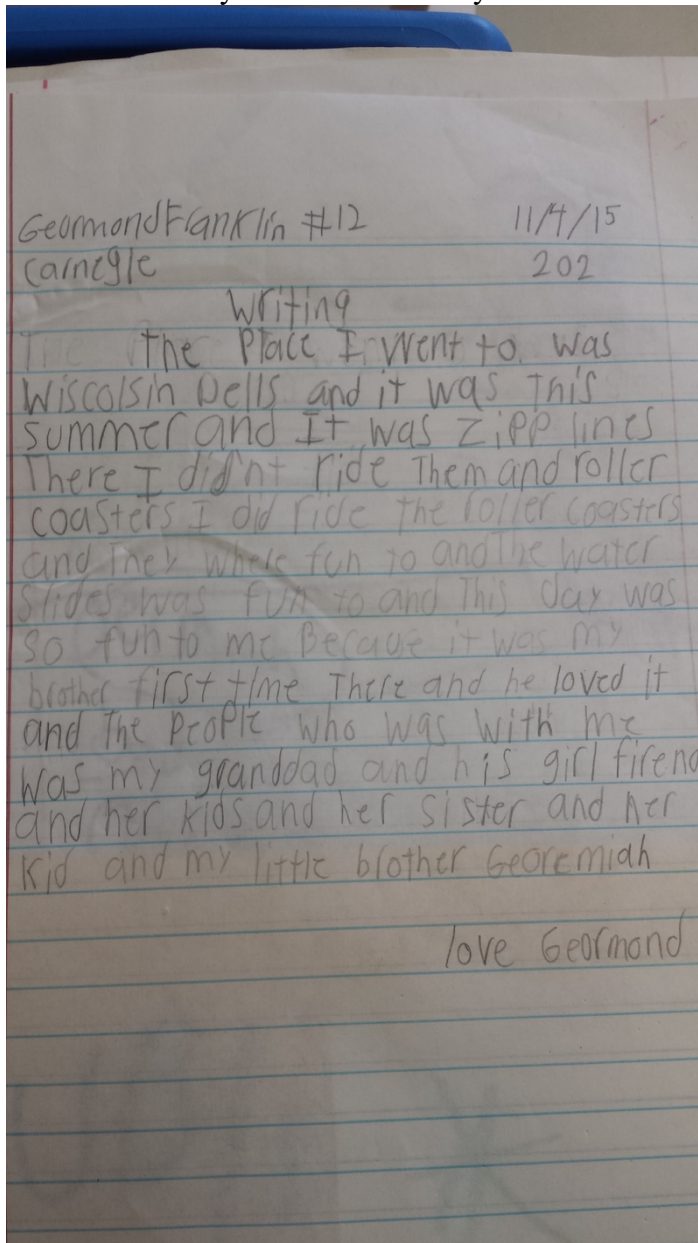
"Strategies that work" reading about visualizing from a vivid piece of text: Another way for students to visualize details is to have students close their eyes while the teacher reads them a

short passage. Students will then describe the scene. This allows students to paint a movie in their minds by hearing vivid details.

Below are student examples from a student who was progressing towards meeting expectations and another example from a student meeting expectations.

Student A: Describes a personal experience but leaves a lot of questions unanswered due to a lack of details. Student A also did not sequence in chronological order.

- Notice how he writes about different events like riding roller coasters and water parks but leaves a lot of unanswered questions like: which roller coaster? How did you feel riding it? How many rollercoasters did you ride?



Student B: Meets expectations in their personal narrative. Includes many lively details and even includes literacy elements not discussed (similes).

- This student shows evidence of emotional and sensory details. The story is a small moment as well.

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Stove Memories

Have you ever felt the pain of a turned on stove? I have in my house with my mom on a Saturday night. I could smell the smoke in the air and the pain of my mom putting a safety pin in my hand. A eight year olds worst nightmare. My family and I were eating a regular dinner burgers and I was full and I know they were going to eat it so I put it in the cabinet and when I went back to get it I was too short and I thought since I was eight I could do it by my self. So I had an idea to get on top of the stove. So when I put my hand on the part that was on As soon as she she heard my scream she said "Don't put water on your hands". But it was too late! My hands were already swollen filled with water. It felt like 200 hammer on my hands at once! My mom had to put a safety pin to get it out