

Good, BETTER, ***BEST***

A Language Strategy

Overview: This strategy helps students engage with word choice as a tool through which meaning is conveyed. It also engages students with genre and how to choose sentences that best fit the genre within which the sentence is placed. This strategy could be useful in revising written pieces, in teaching genres of writing and in asking students to expand their descriptive writing.

Goal: To promote metacognitive awareness in students that sentences are constructed with a purpose; to help students work together to justify their assertions; to help promote student understanding of multiple genres of writing; also can promote an understanding of run-on sentences

Suggested Materials: Sentence Strips, Envelopes with cut out sentences or index cards

Activity:

- 1) Model the activity for the class by placing three large sentence strips on the board and asking students to put the three sentences in order from good to better to best, with no further explanation. Students can individually think and you can call on them to justify their answers, manipulating the sentence strips as they explain which is good, better and best or they can work in groups to come up with an order and each group can share their order, with you manipulating strips to show good, better, best.
- 2) Usually, students tend to put the simplest sentence as the good sentence, then order them in terms of length. To get them to think differently, you can ask them to now reorder the sentences based on which would be good, better, best for a summary. (This is an example, but you can also use a more sophisticated genre like a textbook, a story, etc. depending on what your sentences are)
- 3) After modeling a round of sentences, divide students into groups (if they are not already in groups) and give them an envelope where they do another open good, better, best sort of a set of different sentences. Have them write those sentences in the order they chose and justify their reasoning. Then have them do a genre good, better, best sort and write the sentences in order for the second sort, explaining why their order changed or did not change based on their genre.

Note: This activity can be made into a mini-lesson, with posters and students explaining how different sentences best fit different genres or can be as simple as a warm-up. A variation of this activity could be to start students off with “good” sentences and have them write “better” and “best” sentences (in a particular genre or not)

Example Sentence Sets:

[Set 1] The dog ate my homework.

The dog, species type *canus homeworkticus*, is known for unexpected cravings of assignments written on lined paper.

I was sitting at my kitchen table doing my Language Arts grammar sheet, when all of the sudden, my pitbull puppy, Rex, jumped up and started gnashing at the paper and ripping it to shreds.

[Set 2] The man left the building at 2pm.

Usher has left the building!

Reportedly, Usher, R&B star, was seen leaving the west entrance of the building at 2pm and heading into a black limousine with an unknown woman.

[Set 3] The show was funny.

Kenan and Kel is the funniest show I have ever seen; the main characters are always in the craziest situations and it takes my mind off my own drama.

Kenan and Kel is my favorite show because it is funny and the characters are realistic.