

G3 Mini-Module: Word Choice

Aligns with CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.3.3.A:

- Choose words and phrases for effect.

Welcome

Kim is writing an article about a new pizza shop called Pizza Town. She wants to convince readers to go to Pizza Town by making them hungry for the shop's pizza. Which sentence creates this effect?

- Pizza Town has good pizza.
- Pizza Town has hot, cheesy pizza.

In the second sentence, *hot* and *cheesy* add important details. People usually enjoy pizza that is hot and cheesy, so Kim uses these details to persuade people to go to Pizza Town. Authors choose certain words and phrases to have different effects on their readers. Their word choice can make readers feel different emotions toward the topic they are writing about. Making wise word choices can create the right mood or tone in a text.

Objectives

In this module, students will learn how to:

- analyze an author's word choices.
- understand how word choice shapes meaning, mood, or tone in a text.
- choose words that express ideas clearly.

Review

Key Terms

- **Effect** is what the reader feels or understands after reading a text.
- **Word choice** is the decision a writer makes on what words to use.

Exploring the Standard

Writers need to think carefully about the words they use. For example, in the sentences about the pizza shop, describing the pizza as *good* doesn't create that much of an effect. Several things can be described as *good*: movies, food, people, and pets, for example. The words *hot* and *cheesy* are more specific, and they better explain why the pizza was good. They have the effect of making readers hungry for that pizza. When writing, think about the best possible way to create the desired effect or meaning.

Watch!

This video discusses the importance of word choice:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NlaeV-TH8WE>

A Closer Look: Strong Word Choice

An author wants to explain ideas so that readers will understand them. What's the best way to do that? Authors choose strong, clear nouns, verbs, adverbs, and adjectives. When a word is **strong** and **clear**, it

shows a specific meaning and creates a specific effect. Looking in a dictionary or a thesaurus can help writers find the perfect word to use.

Writers can create certain effects by:

- using strong verbs.
- using descriptive adjectives.
- replacing overused words such as *stuff, have, good, sad, very, said, go, fun, walk, pretty, get, bad, happy, so, come, nice, run, like, feel, can, make, tell, do, help, and put.*

Look at these two sentences:

1. Izzy *put* her books on the table.
2. Izzy *slammed* her books on the table.

Sentence 1 doesn't create a strong effect or mood. It simply describes Izzy putting her books down. Sentence 2 uses the strong verb *slammed* to suggest that Izzy is upset about something. Words can carry different emotions, and some words can create stronger effects than others. Writers should know the effects that certain words will have on their readers. When reading, think about what mood individual words create. Ask, "How does this word make me feel?"

For example:

1. Ryan thought the movie about the evil clown was *scary*.
2. Ryan thought the movie about the giant wasps was *terrifying*.

Which movie scared Ryan more? The movie about the giant wasps. The writer didn't have to say this for readers to understand because the adjective *terrifying* creates a stronger effect than *scary*.

When choosing words to use, writers should think about what they want the reader to feel and understand. What information does the reader need to know in order to fully understand the writing? How should the reader feel after reading?

Watch!

Watch this video to learn how to use strong verbs:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=AzhChOZDGDU

This video gives some advice on how to make better word choices:

<http://www.schooltube.com/video/66cd9b30244607619b5d/61-Writing-Traits-Word-Choice>

Practice!

Practice word choice by replacing the underlined words in these sentences with stronger adverbs or adjectives. Use a thesaurus or dictionary to find the right word or phrase:

1. The hot wings tasted good.
2. The student walked to class.

3. Mr. Oliver is nice.
4. Erika said that she was upset.
5. The cat is happy.

A Closer Look: Word Choice and Effect

Example 1

Read the sentences below:

Sentence 1

The abandoned house was dusty and covered in spiderwebs.

Sentence 2

The room was full of sunlight and smelled like the fresh outdoor air.

What are the different effects of these two sentences? How do these sentences make readers feel? The first sentence creates a gloomy effect, and it might be used in a scary story. The second sentence creates a cheerful effect, and it might be in a story about a happy event. Notice that the writer of these sentences doesn't ever tell the reader what the effect should be. It is up to the reader to understand the effect.

Example 2

This selection is from *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* by Beatrix Potter. The author uses descriptive writing to create different effects and to help the readers understand what is going on in the story.

¹Once upon a time there were four little Rabbits, and their names were—
 Flopsy,
 Mopsy,
 Cotton-tail,
and Peter.

²They lived with their mother in a sand-bank, underneath the root of a very big fir-tree.

³"Now my dears," said old Mrs. Rabbit one morning, "you may go into the fields or down the lane, but don't go into Mr. McGregor's garden: your father had an accident there; he was put in a pie by Mrs. McGregor."

⁴"Now run along, and don't get into mischief. I am going out."

⁵Then old Mrs. Rabbit took a basket and her umbrella, and went through the wood to the baker's. She bought a loaf of brown bread and five currant buns.

⁶Flopsy, Mopsy, and Cotton-tail, who were good little bunnies, went down the lane to gather blackberries:

⁷But Peter, who was very naughty, ran straight into Mr. McGregor's garden, and squeezed under the gate!

⁸First he ate some lettuces and some French beans; and then he ate some radishes;

⁹And then, feeling rather sick, he went to look for some parsley.

¹⁰But round the end of a cucumber frame, whom should he meet but Mr. McGregor!

¹¹Mr. McGregor was on his hands and knees planting out young cabbages, but he jumped up and ran after Peter, waving a rake and calling out, "Stop thief!"

¹²Peter was most **dreadfully frightened**; he **rushed** all over the garden, for he had forgotten the way back to the gate.

¹³He lost one of his shoes among the cabbages, and the other shoe amongst the potatoes.

¹⁴After losing them, he ran on four legs and went faster, so that I think he might have got away altogether if he had not unfortunately run into a gooseberry net, and got caught by the large buttons on his jacket. It was a blue jacket with brass buttons, quite new.

¹⁵Peter gave himself up for lost, and **shed big tears**; but his **sobs** were overheard by some friendly sparrows, who flew to him in great **excitement**, and implored him to **exert himself**.

¹⁶Mr. McGregor came up with a sieve, which he intended to pop upon the top of Peter; but Peter wriggled out **just in time**, leaving his jacket behind him.

This scene from the story creates a sense of excitement for the reader. The highlighted words and phrases are used by the author to create this effect. The reader understands that Peter is very scared and that he has to do whatever it takes to escape Mr. McGregor.

Watch!

Watch *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*. Pay attention to the words the narrator uses to create effect:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EuTIQCGxE5Y>

Applying the Standard

Read a passage in a textbook or a favorite story. Answer the following questions about that passage:

- Which words are strong verbs?
- Which words are descriptive adjectives?
- Why do you think the author used these words?
- How do these words make the reader feel?