**Describe the Character**

**Suggested Grade Level:**  1-6

**Purpose:** In this cooperative group activity, the children use oral language to discuss the outside features (appearance) and the inside features (feelings, personality character) of major characters from stories they have just read.

**Materials:** 3” x 5” cards with the name of a literacy character on each

Book from which each character came

Chart paper for each group

Colored markers

**Procedure:**

1. Hold up the character cards, one at a time, for the entire class. Revisit their parts in stories that recently have been read.
2. Select one character from a grade-appropriate book, such as Amelia Bedelia, to use as a demonstration.
3. Make two columns on the chalkboard, one labeled “outside” and the other labeled “inside.”
4. Ask the children to brainstorm the best words they can think of to first describe Amelia’s outside, or her appearance. Write their suggestions under the “outside” column (e.g., thin, old-fashioned, dark-haired, grown-up). Do the same for their suggestions for Amelia’s inside or feelings and personality (e.g., confused, hard-working, funny, kind).
5. Place the children in small cooperative groups of three children each. Given one character card to each group.
6. Invite the children to revisit their character in the story from which he or she came. Have them pay careful attention to the character’s physical appearance and then, using colored markers, draw a picture of their character on the top of the chart paper.
7. Ask the groups to brainstorm as many words as they can think of for their literary character for both categories, inside features and outside features.

**Assessment:** On an individual basis, ask each child to select one character from a book he or she is reading or has recently read. Using the inside/outside format, ask the child to list as many descriptors as possible for the character. Place the list in the child’s file. Provide a mini-lesson on descriptive words (adjectives) for children who offer mostly “tired” words, or who are unable to list five words for both the inside and outside of their chosen character.

**Strange Expressions**

**Suggested Grade Level:** 2-4

**Purpose:** Figures of speech, homophones, and other unusual expressions in the English language are often confusing for English language learners, as well as native English speakers. This activity focuses on some commonly used figures of speech through a whimsical text and invites children to collect others for group discussion.

**Materials:** A *Chocolate Moose for Dinner,* by Fred Gwynne (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1976) or *The King Who Rained,* by Fred Gwynne (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974)

Word Wall

White Drawing Paper

Marking Pens

**Procedure**

1. Read any of Fred Gwynne’s books to children. Each of these concerns a little girl trying to visualize the strange expressions her parents use, such as a “car pool,” or a “king raining or a “gorilla war.”
2. Discuss the actual meaning of these expressions and their literal connotations.
3. Revisit the book, directing the children’s attention to the illustrations, in which the little girl’s literal interpretations of the terms leads to some hilarious visualizations.
4. With the children, brainstorm some other confusing expressions, idioms, or figures of speech that Gwynne’s book did not cover. List these on chart paper, to which new expressions will be added over the next several weeks as they are encountered.
5. Encourage each student to select one of these expressions the class has collected and have each child illustrate the literal interpretation of them and write the expression underneath.
6. Have each child share his or her illustration with the rest of the class, explaining what the expression actually means, yet what it sounds like it means to them.
7. Collate the pictures and bind them together into a class book entitled “Strange Expressions” or another title of the children’s choice.

**Assessment:** Understanding of these expressions can be determined by using the class book. Ask each child to read the expression and explain what each statement means and how each can be misinterpreted. Calculate the percentage of expressions each child was able to explain and place this information in each child’s file. Repeat this exercise with an alternate Gwynne book for those children scoring less than 80%.

**Beef It Up**

**Suggested Grade Level:** 3-6

**Purpose:** With this activity, children can see how adding descriptive language and replacing “tired” word and phrases with more interesting vocabulary make writing come to life. The activity is one of the few that also provides opportunities for group writing for young children, as well as an important experience in the evaluation of writing.

**Material:** Simply written, short paragraph on an overhead

Overhead projector, blank transparency, and overhead writing instrument.

**Procedures:**

1. Make a transparency of a simply written paragraph and put it on the overhead projector for the children to see.
2. Read the paragraph aloud to the children as they follow along (for younger children, provide a hard copy and allow them to “track” as you read).
3. Ask the children if they think the first sentence could be improved by adding words, feeling, details, or by changing some “tired” words (such as good, happy, or nice) without changing what the author was trying to say. Solicit some ideas from the children. Write the “improved” version of the sentence on a blank transparency.
4. Divide the class into groups of three. Assign one or two sentences fro m the paragraph to each group. Ask each group to “improve” their sentences by adding words, feeling, details, or by changing “tired” words.
5. When all the groups have finished editing, ask a child from each group to read his or her revised sentence. Write the revisions on the blank overhead transparency under the first sentence. Continue in this manner until the entire rewritten paragraph has been read.
6. Place the written paragraph(s) alongside the original paragraph. Read the revised one first, and then reread the original paragraph.
7. Ask the children to tell, in their own words, the difference between the two paragraphs.
8. Revisit this activity several times to ready the children to take part in a Writer’s Workshop as helpful peer editors and self-evaluators.

**Assessment:** After implementing this activity several times, use the sample original paragraph in the illustration to see how well the children are able to revise the writing individually. Ask them to rewrite the paragraph, as they did in the activity, adding fresh words and phrases, dialogue, feelings, and other colorful details. Place these paragraphs in the children’s files. Provide direct instruction in the use of descriptive language for those children experiencing difficulty.

(1)Danny was a boy. (2)He lived with his family in a small town. (3)He always wanted to be in the circus. (4)He though it would be fun. (5)One day he met a clown. (6)The clown told him that living in a circus was hard work. (7)You also have to travel from place to place. (8)Danny changed his mind. (9)Now he wants to be a firefighter.

**Original Paragraph**

Danny was a boy. He lived with his family in a small town. He always wanted to be in the circus. He though it would be fun. One day he met a clown. The clown told him that living in a circus was hard work. You also have to travel from place to place. Danny changed his mind. Now he wants to be a firefighter.

**Revised Paragraph:**

Danny was a friendly eight-year-old boy with sandy brown hair and freckles. He lived with his mother and father and seven brothers and sisters on a small, tree-lined street in a little Midwestern town. He dreamed of joining a circus in a far away city. “Becoming a circus performer seems like an exciting way to live,” Danny blurted to his little sister.

One sunny afternoon Danny met a clown who was performing in a circus nearby. The clown, whose name was Bubbles, told Danny that becoming a circus performer took lots of difficult work. “A circus performer also has to travel from one location to another, all around the country,” Bubbles whispered to Danny.

Danny thought about that for a while and finally decided not to join the circus after all. “I guess I will become a firefighter just like my dad!” he exclaimed.

**Other Activities**

**Torture the Teacher-** Have the children take turns daily, finding a new word they think you will not know. Have them write their word on the top right-hand corner of the chalkboard while you decide whether you know it or not.

**Describe the object-** Place a common object in a bag and give it to a volunteer, who peeks in the bag. Have that child use words to describe the object without naming it.

**Favorite Words-** Share your favorite words with the children and encourage them to collect their own favorites.

**Words from other languages-** As words encountered through reading and discussions collect them from other languages and cultures.

**Word of the Day-** Choose a “stretch” word that is just above the children’s meaning vocabulary.

**Vocabulary Websites**

* Vocabulary Pinball - [http://www.playkidsgames.com/games/pinball/default.htm#](http://www.playkidsgames.com/games/pinball/default.htm)
* Vocabulary Games - <http://eslbears.homestead.com/contact_info.html>
* Hangman - <http://www.manythings.org/hmf/>
* Vocabulary Activities - <http://www.cobbk12.org/~cheathamhill/LFS%20Update/Vocabulary%20and%20Word%20Walls.htm>

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**Meeting New Vocabulary**

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| **Word** | **Drawing Or Symbol For Word** |

Predicted meaning of word: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Based on that meaning, use this word in a sentence:

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Definition from dictionary: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Based on the dictionary's meaning, use this word in a sentence:

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**4-Fold Vocabulary**

In this activity, students fold their papers into rows of 4 sections each. The number of row can relate to the number of words to be studied. In the first section, the student writes the word. In the 2nd section, the student writes a definition of the word in their own words. In the 3rd section, the student draws a picture or symbol to represent the word. In the 4th section, the student writes a sentence with the word based on their definition.

After completing the page, the students cut apart the sections and put them in an envelope. The words are review by having student reassemble the word rows. Students can trade rows/envelopes with others.

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| **Word** | **Definition** | **Picture** | **Sentence** |

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| Oven | kitchen appliance used for baking or roasting | MCHH01068_0000[1] | We baked cookies in the oven. |

**Word Analysis**

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| **Word Analysis for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Definition (Like)** | **Contrast (Unlike)** | | **Examples** | | |

**Linear Arrays**

Linear arrays are a strategy to extend vocabulary by asking students to extend their understanding of words. Using opposites on each end, students add words that are in between.

Beautiful

Ugly