

Vocabulary Builder

Using Inspiration to Generate Lists of Descriptive Words

OBJECTIVES

- Create a vocabulary web
- Practice using descriptive language to clarify and enhance ideas
- Use a thesaurus to choose effective wording

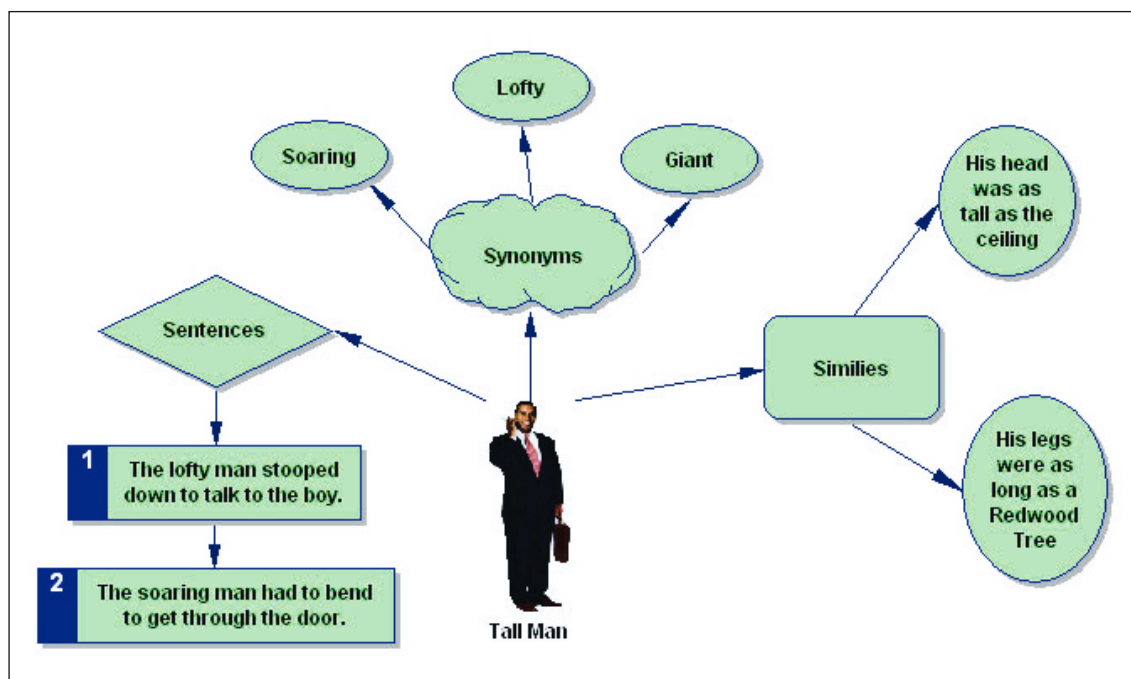
MATERIALS

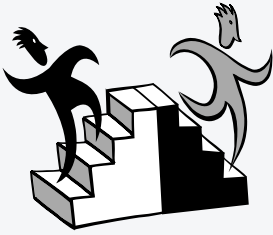
- Inspiration software
- Vocabulary Builder Planning Sheet
- Vocabulary Builder Template
- Vocabulary Builder Sample Activity
- Thesaurus

Note: Before the lesson, spend some time reviewing the Vocabulary Builder Sample Activity and Template. Make changes to meet your needs or have students create their own templates. Explore the Internet Connection section for more ideas on teaching descriptive writing techniques.

It's easy to say that Abe Lincoln was tall, but how tall was he? You could describe a girl by saying that she felt embarrassed, but how do you know? In both instances, the writer can use descriptive words to show their readers exactly how tall Abe Lincoln was and how embarrassed the girl felt.

In this lesson, students learn how to engage all their senses and powers of observation to effectively communicate an idea or emotion.





Customizing to Meet Your Needs

- Younger students may want to use their faces or bodies to get an idea across. Encourage them to act out their thoughts (like actors do), and then help them to find the words to describe what they are showing.
- You can have younger students look through the faces in the Inspiration clip art or other picture collections to find a happy face, a surprised face, an angry or sad one, and so on. Have them describe what they see.
- Older students might want to create a descriptive word library by designing vocabulary webs that can be printed on index cards.

Before the Computer

1. In a whole group setting, brainstorm a list of words that describe physical characteristics, attributes, or emotions, such as *tall*, *short*, *brave*, *embarrassed*, and *nervous*. Ask students to add to this list of descriptive words.
2. Ask students to use the words in a sentence. They will most likely respond by telling you that “the girl is pretty” or “the frog was slimy.” Ask them to use their imagination to show you what they mean, instead of telling you the facts.
3. Have students consider one of the words, such as *embarrassed*. Ask what they see, hear, and sense what tells them that a person is *embarrassed*. They might say “he was red in the face or blushing” or “his head was lowered.”
4. Introduce similes. Invite students to create a simile to better express the word “embarrassed” (or tall, etc.). For example, *Her face was as red as a beet*.
5. Remind students how to use a thesaurus in order to generate synonyms and to choose effective wording for writing.
6. Distribute the Vocabulary Builder Planning Sheet and instruct students to select a physical characteristic or emotion as the main idea and then tell them to generate a list of synonyms, similes, and sentences to describe their main idea.

At the Computer

1. Direct students to the Vocabulary Builder Template and Sample Activity; tell them to rename and save their file in the appropriate location.
2. Next have them type their key word from the Planning Sheet in the center symbol labeled “Key Word.”
3. Ask students to complete the synonyms and similes symbols with appropriate words or phrases.
4. Finally, tell students to use the Vocabulary Builder Planning Sheet as a guide in completing the sentence symbols.
5. Invite students to add symbols and clip art as needed.

Other Great Activities

- Instruct students to use the vocabulary webs they produced to compose a creative writing story or poem.
- Select a piece of writing that clearly describes a person, place, or event and share it with students. Have them analyze the writing for words and details that establishes tone and mood, uses figurative language, and illustrates effective comparisons.
- Select a “Weekly Word” and post a different vocabulary web on the class bulletin board each week.

Internet Connection

<http://cctc.commnet.edu/grammar/composition/narrative.htm>

Read the section on Descriptive Elements for more ideas as well as information on good writing techniques. Several examples of descriptive writing are included.

<http://www.connected.org/learn/ei-internet.html>

An interesting article for teachers that includes a discussion of the importance of “picking up emotional clues” from writing, and the importance of paying attention to the words we use, and read.



Tips & Timesavers

- Students can use the **Record** function to demonstrate pronunciation.
- You can change the color of the background that appears on your screen by selecting **Background Color** from the **Effect** menu and choosing the color you want.