

Minnesota Writing Project

--- Demonstration Lesson Template ---

Title of lesson: Staggering Sentences

Suggested grade/age: 5th Grade, but applicable to all grade levels

Approximate time needed to complete lesson:

Can be done in as little as two 45 minute lessons, but I'm hoping to expand it into a longer unit that can look at the specific craft of sentence construction.

Learning objective(s) and significance of lesson:

(Why is this lesson important in the development of your students' skills or knowledge? What do you want students to learn or be able to do? What "best practice" does this lesson incorporate?)

This lesson is designed to help students push themselves beyond basic sentence construction, and helps students be aware of repetition in their writing. It provides an opportunity for students to examine and dissect a Mentor Text. The lesson goals tie into Common Core Standards in 5th grade - but can be applicable to any level of writing. Incorporating sentence variety helps engage the reader, and can raise the level of the quality of writing.

Brief summary/outline of lesson:

(What steps do you take to implement this lesson in your classroom? Where is this lesson located in the school year or unit—beginning, middle, end? Does this lesson scaffold or build to a culminating assessment or demonstration of learning?)

In fifth grade we typically have done this lesson in the winter, though it really could be done at any time. Going forward, I would like to use this lesson as an introduction to a more in-depth study of grammar and sentence construction.

Lesson Outline:

Make sure students have a sample of writing available. Give a writing prompt if needed. (i.e. "The car swerved.")

Read *Owl Moon* by Jane Yolan out loud. Engage students in a discussion of the writing.

Closely examine the sentence construction in Yolan's text. Project a page and invite students to count the words in each of the sentences on that page - and to make a note about the first three words of each sentence. Chart their findings on a graph that looks like this:

Number of Words	First three words of sentence
5	There was no
14	When you go

After some guided practice with this task (Whole Group, Small Group) allow students to apply this practice to their own writing sample.

Engage students in a discussion about what they discovered. Did anyone see ways that they could improve their writing?

Give students another writing prompt (this time with a more sophisticated sentence construction i.e. "With eyes closed, I jumped."). Ask them to keep sentence variety in mind as they compose this piece.

Ask students to reflect on the second piece in the same way (counting words per sentence, and making note of sentence beginnings).

Related Resources:

(What technology, articles, books, or supplies do you recommend?)

🔗 *Using Picture Books to Teach Writing With the Traits* - Culham

🔗 *Bullying Hurts* - Laminack

🔗 *Mechanically Inclined* - Jeff Anderson

🔗 *Everyday Editing* - Jeff Anderson

🔗 *The Daily Five* - The Sisters

🔗 *Literacy C.A.F.E.* - The Sisters

🔗 Lucy Calkins

Possible extensions or adaptations for different purposes/student needs:

- Make a graphic organizer that shows sentence variety in a visual way
- After this lesson, incorporate this step into a peer review guide
- Use it to compare different genres of writing (non-fiction/fiction)

For additional information, contact:

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