

TRAIT FOCUS: IDEAS

Lesson Objective

Students demonstrate an understanding that details tell more about something.

Understanding That Details Describe

Early learners begin their exploration of writing and storytelling through pictures and oral discussion, especially during read alouds. Beginning reading comprehension often passes through a series of developmental stages that includes “reading” pictures for meaning. Early learners read pictures through recognizable details—who or what is in the picture, and what is happening?

Most early learners are able to describe pictures in their own words, providing a significant amount of descriptive information. However, they might not always have the vocabulary necessary to understand that they are, in fact, using details to describe what they see. Providing this vocabulary helps them to understand what details are and how they are used. This is one of the first steps in crafting a new writer.

The book *Lunchtime for a Purple Snake* by Harriet Ziefert is an excellent mentor text for giving early learners an understanding of details. Integrate the following Literature/Writing Connection lesson into your instruction on the trait of ideas.

Story Overview

Jessica spends a lot of time with her artist grandfather. She wants to be an artist, too, but she still has a lot to learn. Her grandfather teaches her how to blend colors. Five is all you need to make all the colors of the rainbow. He also assures her that all artists make mistakes. You just have to turn the mistake into something new.

Jessica paints and paints and learns all that she can. In the end, she develops a whole new appreciation for both her grandfather and his art.

Painting a Picture in the Mind

1. As part of your instruction on what the writing process is and what writers do, share with your students that part of a writer’s job is to gather details. Details are words that tell more about something.
2. Show the class the cover of the book. Ask a few probing questions about what they see. What color is the snake? Is the snake big or small? Is it long or short? Write their answers on the board. Explain that these words are details because they tell more about the snake.
3. Read the book to your class. As you walk them through the pictures and the text, continue to ask probing questions about what they see. What details does Jessica add to her blob to make a plate of spaghetti? What details does she add to her picture of the snake?
4. After you have finished discussing the book, have your students each use a black marker or crayon to draw an outline of a dog.
5. Now discuss what features or characteristics they would like to add to bring their dogs to life. Write this list on the board. These are detail words that tell more about the dog.
6. Tell your students to color their dog drawings however they wish. Once they are finished, ask for volunteers to discuss what details they used to make their dog pictures unique.