

Instructional Lesson Plan EXCERPT
English Language Arts
Grade 7GT The Weight of Words

Lesson Overview
Students will closely examine the writing style of Mark Twain using excerpts from several expository essays and narrative fiction. After analyzing Twain’s style, students will use Don Killgallon’s sentence composing strategy to imitate sentences written by Twain. As a culminating activity, students will imitate Twain’s style in his essay “The Taming of the Bicycle” in order to compose a “fish tale” about a personal accomplishment or a time they learned to do something difficult.
Teacher Planning, Preparation, and Materials
For more information about sentence composing, teachers should consult this resource: Killgallon, D. (1997). <i>Sentence composing for middle school: A worktext on sentence variety and maturity</i> . Portsmouth, NH: Boynton Cook Publishers.
Essential Question
How does an author’s style affect perception and meaning of the text?
Lesson Procedure
Pre-Assessment: Have students define the terms <i>adverb</i> and <i>adjective</i> . If necessary, review definitions of the terms.
Day 1: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Provide students with two excerpts from Mark Twain and two excerpts from Edgar Allan Poe without identifying the authors. (See Resource Sheet 1. Consider placing each excerpt on a separate card to allow for sorting and manipulation.)2. Have students work in pairs to take turns reading the excerpts aloud in order to determine which two are written by author A and which two are written by author B.3. Instruct students to return to the texts to identify with highlighters which style features allowed students to distinguish between the two authors.4. Allow students to discuss their choices with each other so that they are prepared to present their findings and provide pertinent examples from the excerpts.5. Lead the class in a collaborative discussion of their findings encouraging them to debate any differences of opinion. Identify author A as Mark Twain (excerpts 1 and 4) and author B as Edgar Allan Poe (excerpts 2 and 3).6. As a formative assessment, ask students to complete the following sentence starters: “You know it’s Twain if…” AND “You know it’s not Twain if…”
Day 2: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Assign students to small groups. Students will read excerpts from several works by Mark Twain. (See Resource Sheet 2.)2. Provide students with a checklist of stylistic elements to analyze the different passages. Students should analyze tone, diction (word choice), punctuation, syntax (sentence structure), and use of figurative language. (See Resource sheet 2.)3. Assign each group a different element of Twain’s style to focus on and develop an argument to present to the class that justifies why their assigned element is the greatest distinguishing characteristic of Twain’s style.4. Expand on yesterday’s formative assessment to create a complete description of Twain’s style that addresses each of the stylistic elements that students analyzed.

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The following three lessons incorporate Don Killgallon’s sentence composing strategies.

Day 3:

1. Provide students with model sentences by Mark Twain chunked and scrambled into phrases and clauses. (See Resource Sheet 3)
2. Students will unscramble the sentences using yesterday’s lesson on Twain’s style as a guide.
3. Students will then classify phrases and clauses as adverbial (modifying a verb, adjective or other adverb) or adjectival (modifying a noun or pronoun.) Students can work in pairs to unscramble and identify the adverbial or adjectival phrases and clauses in the remaining sentences.
4. Students will next write imitations of the unscrambled sentences after the teacher models sentence unscrambling with an example sentence.
5. Students will exchange papers and determine if the imitation sentence contains a phrase or clause that is adverbial or adjectival.

Day 4:

1. Have the students think-pair-share to identify times in their lives when they learned how to do something difficult or accomplished a difficult task. Explain that students will be reading and imitating Twain’s account of a time when he accomplished something difficult.
2. Have students read the entire essay “Taming the Bicycle” (Resource Sheet 4) in order to select excerpts that they think are particularly representative of Twain’s style.
3. After defending the choices to a partner, each student will work independently to imitate one or more sentences using a personal experience as a topic.
4. As students are writing, the teacher should circulate and choose exemplary imitation sentences. When students are finished composing, the teacher should display or read aloud a student sentence, asking students to determine which sentence is closest to the original and why. In this way, the class can “crown” the student who is best able to imitate the master.

Day 5:

1. Explain to students that a “fish tale” or a “fish story” is an idiom describing a story that is exaggerated to the point of becoming a lie. Remind students that the stylistic term for exaggeration is *hyperbole*. A “fish story” does not use hyperbole only for effect, but exaggerates with the intention of deceiving, albeit in good-natured fun. Ask students in what ways “Taming the Bicycle” could be considered a “fish story.”
2. Explain that students will be imitating Twain’s “Taming the Bicycle” to draft a “fish tale” about an accomplishment or a time they learned to do something difficult. Tell students they can choose any of the passages from “Taming of the Bicycle” that were used in previous lessons to imitate. Encourage students to imitate the paragraph sentence by sentence.
3. Revision activity: After students complete a rough draft, have them work with a partner to edit their paragraph and have the partner attempt to identify which passage they imitated from “Taming of the Bicycle”.
4. Consider having students use voicethread.com or storybird.com to publish their paragraphs.

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Killgallon's Sentence Composing Strategy

- Goal: Improved style and structure
- Uses sentences from professional writers as "mentors."
- Students unscramble, imitate, combine, expand sentences.
- Integrates literature, language, and writing
- Useful for analysis of author's style

IMITATING TWAIN

DIRECTIONS: Unscramble each sentence from Mark Twain's "Taming the Bicycle." Label the underlined phrase(s) or clause(s) as adverbial (i.e., functioning as an adverb by modifying a verb, adjective, or another adverb) or adjectival (i.e., functioning as an adjective by modifying a noun or pronoun). Draw an arrow to the word being modified. Finally, write a sentence imitating Twain's model about a time when you mastered a difficult skill or accomplished a goal.

EXAMPLE:

a.)	<u>balancing a washboard on her head</u>
b.)	a little girl
c.)	and giggled
d.)	passed by