Topic: Descriptive Writing

Text: *Come On, Rain!* By Karen Hesse

**Elements of Descriptive Writing:**
- Vivid Verbs
- Sensory Words
- Astounding Adjectives
- Creating a picture with words
- Specific, Unique Word Choice
- Figurative language

Time Frame: At least 4 lessons

**Objectives:**
- TSW identify vivid verbs used in Hesse’s text and utilize one of her words in their own writing.
- TSW identify sensory words or phrases used in this story and how it makes the reader’s experience more real.
- TSW identify unique adjectives Hesse uses in this text.
- TSW choose a specific sentence or paragraph where Hesse particularly paints a picture with her words. Use her technique in their own writing.

**Lesson Ideas:**

1. **Vivid Verbs**—Go on a vivid verb hunt through the text. Students can write the vivid verbs on sticky notes. Share these with the class.

   Application to writing: “Word Stealing” Take one of Hesse’s vivid verbs and utilize it in one of their stories. Try to replace boring words with more vivid ones.

   Example:
   - *squinting* in the endless heat
   - *sagging* over her parched plants
   - sound of a heavy truck *rumbles* past
   - heat *wavers*
   - gray clouds *bunched* and *bulging*
   - her legs, like two string beans *sprout* from her shorts
   - *peeling* out of my clothes
   - *sweeps* off her hat
   - drops *plop* down big
   - dust *dance*
• clouds **burst**
• it **freckles** our feet, **glazes** our toes
• **squealing** and **whooping** in the streaming rain
• the music... **shimmies** and **sparkles** and **streaks** like night lightning
• **tromping** through puddles
• **romping** and **reeling** in the moisty green air

Use it in my writing: The airplane rumbles overhead, drowning out the quiet.

2. **Sensory Words**—Create a chart of sensory words/phrases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sight</th>
<th>Smell</th>
<th>Sound</th>
<th>Touch</th>
<th>Taste</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clouds rolling in, gray clouds, bunched and bulging under a purple sky</td>
<td>Smell of hot tar and garbage bullies the air</td>
<td>Sound of a heavy truck rumbles past</td>
<td>Endless heat</td>
<td>I aim a spoonful of sugar into my mouth, then a second into the drink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Her long legs, like two brown string beans sprout from her shorts</td>
<td>The needle sticks on her phonograph, playing the same notes over and over in the dim, stuffy cave of her room.</td>
<td>Slick with sweat</td>
<td>We gulp down rain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. **Astounding Adjectives**—Ms. Hesse does NOT use words like “nice”, “good,” “awesome” to describe the rain. She uses very specific WORD CHOICES to describe the scene.

Students can do a “Scavenger Hunt” like for vivid verbs, looking for these word choices in her text.

Examples: (Including the nouns they describe)
• listless vines
• parched plants
• crackling-dry path
• dim, stuffy cave
• swollen sky
• streaming rain
• moisty green air
• wet and wild-hair mammas
Students could also make a list of all of the words that she uses to describe the HEAT and compare it to the words that she uses to describe the RAIN.

Application to Writing: Students could brainstorm unique ways to describe something in their own writing. For example, they could come up with unusual ways to describe snow or beginning of summer, etc.

4. **Create a picture with words.** This is a good activity to do BEFORE showing the students the actual pictures from the book. Read a particularly good section of the story and have students DRAW what they see in their mind.

   Example:
   "I stare out over the rooftops, past chimneys, into the way off distance, And that’s when I see it coming, clouds rolling in, gray clouds, bunched and bulging under a purple sky."

   Give students a copy of the TEXT only (attached). Have them mark sections of the text where they can SEE the images in their mind because of the words.

   Application to Writing:
   Have students draw a small, detailed picture (index card size). Have them write a few sentences to a paragraph using WORDS that create a picture in the reader's mind.

5. **Unusual word choice**—much of this fits into other categories
   Examples:
   "kneeling over the hot rump of a melon"
   "insects have gone still"
   "a smile spreads from porch to porch"

6. **Figurative Language**
   Look for examples of figurative language.

   Examples:
   Metaphor:
   "in the dim stuffy cave of her room"

   Personification:
   "hot tar and garbage bullies the air"
   "her legs, like two string beans sprout from her shorts" (and simile)
   "Making dust dance all around us"

   Simile:
   • the music.....shimmies and sparkles and streaks like night lightning

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