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Instructional Recipe

Which Type of Thesaurus Do You Prefer and Why?

Fifth Grade, Language Arts

Step 1 – Ask

Objectives: Students will use online and print thesauri to edit an existing piece of their writing. Students will: explain how each type of thesaurus can be utilized and evaluate which type of thesaurus they prefer to use and why.

Introduction: Students will select a piece of their writing to revise/refine. In pairs, students will read one another's drafts and circle ten words for which more precise or vivid words might be substituted (e.g., instead of "small" the writer could use "tiny"). The teacher will review the purpose of thesauri and the ways in which print and online thesauri are used.



"computer." Online Photograph. Encyclopædia Britannica Online School Edition. 13 July 2008 <<http://school.eb.com/elementary/art-88096>>.

Ask:

- ★ What is a thesaurus?
- ★ How can using a thesaurus help improve our writing?
- ★ What types of thesauri are available?
- ★ Which type of thesaurus, print or online, do you prefer to use? Why?

Vocabulary:

- ★ thesaurus- a tool that provides lists of words that have similar meanings (synonyms)
- ★ synonym- one of two or more words or expressions of the same language that have the same or nearly the same meaning in some or all senses

English/Language Arts TEKS:

- (2) **Reading/Vocabulary Development.** (E) use a dictionary, a glossary, or a thesaurus (printed or electronic) to determine the meanings, syllabication, pronunciations, alternate word choices, and parts of speech of words.
- (15) **Writing/Writing Process.** (C) revise drafts to clarify meaning, enhance style, include simple and compound sentences, and improve transitions by adding, deleting, combining, and rearranging sentences or larger units of text after rethinking how well questions of purpose, audience, and genre have been addressed;
- (19) **Writing/Persuasive Texts.** Students write persuasive texts to influence the attitudes or actions of a specific audience on specific issues. Students are expected to write persuasive essays for appropriate audiences that establish a position and use supporting details.

Technology Application TEKS:

- (7) **Solving problems.** (B) use appropriate software to express ideas and solve problems including the use of word processing, graphics, databases, spreadsheets, simulations, and multimedia.

Step 2 – Investigate

Students will select a minimum of four of the words circled on their papers to look up in a thesaurus. For each word chosen, students will select an alternate word that is more precise or vivid and will edit their writing to reflect the newly chosen words.

Students will use a print thesaurus for two of the circled words and an online thesaurus for the remaining two words.

K-12 Databases Resources:

- ★ [Encyclopedia Britannica Online School Edition](#) (Merriam-Webster's Student Thesaurus; Note: Click on "Dictionary" tab at the top of the page)

Books:

Print copies of thesauri



Step 3 – Create

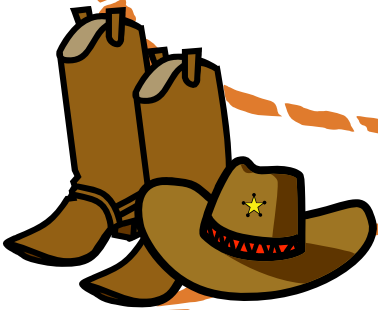
Students will record in their notes:

- (1) original words from their writing that could be made more precise or vivid (at least four of the ten words circled by peer reviewer)
- (2) replacement words found in thesaurus; type of thesaurus used
- (3) several sentences explaining how to use a print thesaurus
- (4) several sentences explaining how to use an online thesaurus
- (5) a conclusion regarding the type of thesaurus they prefer to use and why

Step 4 – Discuss

- ★ The school has money to purchase either print or online thesauri. Have students write a persuasive letter to the school librarian (or appropriate funding authority) explaining which type of thesaurus should be purchased and why.
- ★ Individual students or small groups of students will create a poster explaining why a particular type of thesaurus (print or online) is the most helpful and easy to use. (Finished posters may be displayed in the classroom or library.)

🔗 Technology Link - Students may use a word processing program to type the letter.



Step 5 – Reflect

Allow students to present their projects to the rest of the class. Use the following suggested rubric to assess the students' work. Make sure that the students are familiar with the rubric *before* they begin creating their project. They should refer to the rubric repeatedly to monitor their progress in creating their project.

🔗 Technology Link: You can also create your own rubric with your students at <http://rubistar.4teachers.org/index.php>.

Persuasive Letter

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Content Accuracy	The letter explains, in detail, which type of thesaurus should be purchased and gives at least two reasons that support the recommendation.	Letter explains, in some detail, which type of thesaurus should be purchased and gives one reason that supports the recommendation.	Letter explains, although weakly, which type of thesaurus should be purchased; provides limited support for recommendation.	Letter does not tell which type of thesaurus should be purchased or does not support the recommendation.
Sentences & Paragraphs	Sentences and paragraphs are complete, well-constructed and of varied structure.	All sentences are complete and well-constructed (no fragments, no run-ons). Paragraphing is generally done well.	Most sentences are complete and well-constructed. Paragraphing needs some work.	Many sentence fragments or run-on sentences OR paragraphing needs lots of work.
Salutation and Closing	Salutation and closing have no errors in capitalization and punctuation.	Salutation and closing have 1-2 errors in capitalization and punctuation.	Salutation and closing have 3 or more errors in capitalization and punctuation.	Salutation and/or closing are missing.
Ideas	Ideas were expressed in a clear and organized fashion. It was easy to figure out what the letter was about.	Ideas were expressed in a pretty clear manner, but the organization could have been better.	Ideas were somewhat organized, but were not very clear. It took more than one reading to figure out what the letter was about.	The letter seemed to be a collection of unrelated sentences. It was very difficult to figure out what the letter was about.
Format	Complies with all the requirements for a friendly letter.	Complies with almost all the requirements for a friendly letter.	Complies with several of the requirements for a friendly letter.	Complies with less than 75% of the requirements for a friendly letter.
Capitalization and Punctuation	Writer makes no errors in capitalization and punctuation.	Writer makes 1-2 errors in capitalization and punctuation.	Writer makes 3-4 errors in capitalization and punctuation.	Writer makes more than 4 errors in capitalization and punctuation.

Poster

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Title	Title can be read from 6 ft. away and is quite creative.	Title can be read from 6 ft. away and describes content well.	Title can be read from 4 ft. away and describes the content well.	The title is too small and/or does not describe the content of the poster well.
Graphics - Relevance	All graphics are related to the topic and make it easier to understand. All borrowed graphics have a source citation.	All graphics are related to the topic and most make it easier to understand. All borrowed graphics have a source citation.	All graphics relate to the topic. Most borrowed graphics have a source citation.	Graphics do not relate to the topic OR several borrowed graphics do not have a source citation.
Required Elements	The poster includes all required elements as well as additional information.	All required elements are included on the poster.	All but 1 of the required elements are included on the poster.	Several required elements were missing.
Mechanics	Capitalization and punctuation are correct throughout the poster.	There is 1 error in capitalization or punctuation.	There are 2 errors in capitalization or punctuation.	There are more than 2 errors in capitalization or punctuation.
Grammar	There are no grammatical mistakes on the poster.	There is 1 grammatical mistake on the poster.	There are 2 grammatical mistakes on the poster.	There are more than 2 grammatical mistakes on the poster.