

Informational Writing Minilesson:

Adding Comparisons

Shannon, First Grade

Teacher speaking to whole class:

“Alright, Ok writers, yesterday we had been working on thinking of another topic that we feel like we know all about - something, an animal, or a thing, a person. And a lot of you, we chose an animal yesterday because it’s going to go well with our lesson with something new that I’m going to teach you today. Ok? And last night you took some books home with you to read and do some additional research on so I can’t wait to see what you can tell me all about with your piece today. Today I want to teach you this, you know how in small moment we know how to use details, well in my nonfiction writing I don’t just want to tell the reader a fact, we do have facts, but when I tell them a fact I also want to make sure that I give them a detail. Ok?”

Student speaking:

“Or a question”

Teacher speaking to whole class:

“I grab my reader with a question, you’re right. But when I tell them facts, I’m going to add details to it. The reason we do this is we really want the reader to understand why that fact matters. Why it’s important. And one way we can do that is to use comparisons and I know you remember some of the examples that we have read in some of our whale books. Do you remember in some of our whale books when they would give an example, the author would let you know the size of the whale by comparing it, do you remember, to...”

Whole class speaking:

“Another thing”

Teacher speaking to whole class:

“Another thing. You’re exactly right. And when they did that then we as the reader were like ‘Oh now I can really visualize that now because they gave me an example I can really understand’. Like in Johnny’s book, you took the spider book home last night. Look how the author, this all about ‘Mighty Spiders’ and the author, they said, ‘Six eyes, eight eyes, large and small now.’ Now when I say large or small does that give me a specific detail of how large or how small?”

Whole class shakes heads no

Teacher speaking to whole class:

“Not really does it. But look what the author did by giving this detail. ‘Spiders small as grains of sand’. That gives me an idea of how small that spider is. Then ‘Spider’s bigger than your hand’. What a good example, what a good detail.

They told me some were as small as a grain of sand that you'd even have to use a magnifying glass to see it and some the size of my hand. Does that give me a better idea?"

Whole-class speaking:

"Yes"

Teacher speaking to whole class:

"Look at this one that one of you took home last night. I can't remember who had this one."

Whole-class speaking:

"Christian"

Teacher speaking to whole class:

"Ok. Christian. Listen to this. 'The pigmy sperm whale is one of the smallest wales. It is about the size of a canoe. That is still pretty big'. So if you were able to understand how big a canoe is, that is actually the size of a pigmy whale. Do you see what the author did? They compared it to something to give you an idea of what the size is really like. Got that? Alright, I need your help though. You know how you started your piece yesterday, I started mine too, and I decided that I was going to write all about jellyfish. Because I've seen a lot of jellyfish and I've actually read several books about jelly fish so I know a good bit about it, all about jelly fish. I'm going to turn to my general information page about jellyfish and I'm going to read to you what I have so far and I'm going to think maybe there's a spot in here where I could add a comparison there to really help you as the reader understand and me be able teach you with that detail. 'Have you ever seen a jelly fish in real life? Jelly fish are very cool. They can be clear or colorful. They are shaped like a bubble at the top and can be very big or very small'. I was sure that I gave you a detail to give you like a shape description here, Aiden. But I'm thinking, I bet I could use a comparison on this page to give you as the reader, a better detail to understand what I mean when I say very big or very small. Yes Christian?"

Student speaking:

"Picture"

Teacher speaking to whole class:

"Are you reading my mind? I think you are. That is exactly what I was going to do. Because what do the author do in our text? They gave us a picture to show an example of what they meant about that detail about size, so I'm going to do that. 'Did you know that there are jellyfish as small as a penny and some that are as tall as a man?' Let me write that. 'Some are as small as a penny and large as a man so now this would be the perfect spot for me to draw that picture, to show that detail, to show that fact. So I'm going to start with something about the size of the penny. Ok? And then I'm going to draw the jelly fish that is about that size. So there is my penny. Do you see the example? Then I'm going to draw [inaudible] but did you see how I did that? I got a great idea from a book that I had read on another topic and it made me think, 'Wait a minute, I could do the same thing in my writing, too'. I can give a detail to let you as the reader know, exactly not just saying big or small, but I can give you an actual example so that you understand how small they can be or how big they can be. Ok, so now I want you to try. I want you to get out your piece and I

want you to turn to your first - your general information page and I want you to think and turn and talk with your partner.”

Teacher speaking to individual student:

“I’ll be you’re partner Caleb since Alina isn’t here”

Teacher speaking to whole class:

“Turn and talk to your partner if you know or if you can think of an example that you might try on your page today as far as a comparison. Ok?”

Teacher speaking to pair of students:

“Get Selena to start. You can be with us. Ok, so you’re topic, whales, Ok. Do you think you could compare a whale to something to give me an idea of how large or its size? What?”

[Student speaking inaudible, discussing the size of whales]

Teacher speaking to pair of students:

“Blue whale. He was talking about the same thing, about the size of what?”

[Student speaking inaudible, discussing the size of whales]

Teacher speaking to pair of students:

“Oh, but is that still comparing? It sure is.”

[Student speaking inaudible]

Teacher speaking to pair of students:

“Ok, alright. You remembered that right? Would that be a good piece of information?”

[Student speaking inaudible]

Teacher speaking to pair of students:

“Ok, what would be something to compare it to?”

[Student speaking inaudible]

Teacher speaking to pair of students:

“Really? I didn’t know they were that big. Did any of your books when you were reading have something that they compared it to? What? Don’t worry about that yet.”

[Student speaking inaudible, discussing capabilities of an animal]

Teacher speaking to pair of students:

“Ok, could you compare that to a tool of some sort? Like what?”

Teacher speaking to pair of students:

“What else could I use to dig with?”

[Student speaking inaudible, discussing capabilities of an animal]

Teacher speaking to pair of students:

“So they dig with their snout like a.....”

Student speaking:

“Shovel”

Teacher speaking to pair of students:

“A shovel. We’ll share the example ok?”

Teacher speaking to individual student and whole class:

“Ok writers, my turn. I like how I see your folders in your lap, your piece on top, and your ears and eyes on me and each other, so we can share some good examples of what I overheard. Ok? When I gave my examples I was giving you comparing it to the size of something wasn’t I? But Christian tell us, his topic is on whales, share with us an example.”

Student speaking:

“A blue whale weighs more than 25 elephants.”

Teacher speaking to whole class:

“Now that gives me a better idea of how much that whales weighs, because I know that an elephant is a really large animal so that helps me as the reader understand that better by giving that detail. Good example. Ok writers, I’m so excited to see what you come up with today, so off you go.”