



EXPEDITIONARY  
LEARNING

# **Grade 6: Module 1: Unit 3: Lesson 5**

## **Writing to Show, Not Tell: Dialogue, Sensory Words, and Strong Action Verbs**



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**Long-Term Targets Addressed (Based on NYSP12 ELA CCLS)**

- Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences. (W.6.3)
- b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and descriptions to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
  - d. Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to convey experiences and events.

**Supporting Learning Targets**

- I can use precise words and phrases and sensory language to convey experiences and events in my hero's journey narrative.

**Ongoing Assessment**

- Draft narratives
- Exit ticket: How Do Writers Make Their Stories Show, Not Tell?



Agenda	Teaching Notes
<p><b>1. Opening</b></p> <p>A. Independent Reading Review (5 minutes)</p> <p><b>2. Work Time</b></p> <p>A. Mini Lesson: Analyzing the Use of Dialogue, Sensory Words, and Strong Action Verbs in the Model Narrative: “The Golden Key” (20 minutes)</p> <p>B. Applying the Mini Lesson to Draft Narratives (15 minutes)</p> <p><b>3. Closing and Assessment</b></p> <p>A. Exit Ticket: How Do Writers Make Their Stories Show, Not Tell? (5 minutes)</p> <p><b>4. Homework</b></p> <p>A. Complete the draft of your hero's journey story. Remember to use all that you have learned about using dialogue, sensory language, and strong verb choice to create writing that “shows.”</p> <p>B. Continue independent reading.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In Lesson 4, students began drafting their hero's journey narrative. In this lesson, they focus on narrative writing techniques that will help them “show, don't tell” in their stories. The focus is on using dialogue, sensory language, and strong action verbs.</li><li>• They first analyze the model narrative, “The Golden Key” and identify how the author used dialogue, sensory words, and strong action verbs to make the narrative more descriptive. They then apply this learning to their own drafts.</li><li>• As in Lesson 4, consider the setup of the classroom; if possible, students can work on computers.</li><li>• If students did not use computers to draft their essays in Lesson 4, consider giving them more time to revise the essays.</li><li>• Post: Learning target, directions for Work Time B.</li></ul>



Lesson Vocabulary	Materials
vividly, dialogue, sensory language, strong action verb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “Independent Reading: Review (one per student)</li><li>• “The Golden Key”: Writing to Show, Not Tell (one per student and one for display)</li><li>• Model narrative: “The Golden Key” (from Lesson 2)</li><li>• Highlighters in blue, yellow, and green (one of each color per student)</li><li>• Using Strong Action Verbs (one per student and one for display)</li><li>• Equity sticks</li><li>• Exit ticket: How Do Writers Make Their Stories Show, Not Tell? (one per student)</li></ul>



Opening	Meeting Students' Needs
<p><b>A. Independent Reading Review (5 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Remind students that they should be reading the book they chose in Lesson 1 independently every evening.</li><li>• Distribute <b>Independent Reading: Review</b>. Ask students to spend a few minutes thinking about the answer to this question:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* “What do you think of this book so far? How would you rate it on a scale from 0 (really dislike it) to 5 (really enjoying it)? Why?”</li></ul></li><li>• Invite students to score their opinion of the book so far and to justify why they give it that score.</li><li>• Collect the independent reviews. Have a discussion with students who scored their books 0–2 to determine whether they have given the book a fair chance. If appropriate, allow them to choose a new book and explain that sometimes books just don’t work for us and we have to move on to different ones.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Regular independent reading reviews make students accountable for their reading and give them more purpose for reading independently. Assess student responses to what they are reading and use this as an opportunity to explain that they should persevere with a book for a few chapters until they are sure they really don’t like it, but that they should change the book if they are really not enjoying it.</li></ul>



Work Time	Meeting Students' Needs
<p><b>A. Mini Lesson: Analyzing the Use of Dialogue, Sensory Words, and Strong Action Verbs in the Model Narrative: “The Golden Key” (20 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite students to read the learning target with you as you read it aloud: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* “I can use precise words and phrases and sensory language to vividly describe experiences and events in my hero’s journey narrative.”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ask students to Think-Pair-Share: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* “What does vividly mean?”</li> <li>* “Why do you think this is important? How will it help you to improve your hero’s journey narratives?”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Listen for: “It will help the reader understand what is going on, draw them into the story, and make it seem more real to them.”</li> <li>• Tell students that they are going to learn more about how writers use dialogue, sensory words, and strong action verbs to make their stories more descriptive and more real for the reader. Explain that it’s kind of like creating a movie that will play in the reader’s mind while he or she reads.</li> <li>• Display and distribute <b>“The Golden Key”: Writing to Show, Not Tell</b>. Focus on the title. Explain that writers show the reader things through vivid descriptions rather than telling them directly, which is why the handout is called “Writing to Show, Not Tell.”</li> <li>• Tell students that you are going to read two versions of a scene from the model narrative, “The Golden Key.” Invite them to read along silently in their heads as you read both Version 1 and Version 2 aloud.</li> <li>• Ask students to show a thumbs-up if they think Version 1 is best. Cold call students who have their thumbs up to explain their reasoning.</li> <li>• Ask students to show a thumbs-up if they think Version 2 is best. Cold call students who have their thumbs up to explain why.</li> <li>• Listen for responses that sound like: “I thought it was best because I could imagine the characters talking to each other,” or “I thought it was best because it was easier for me to imagine what the forest, the goat, the eagle, and the mountain looked like,” or “I liked this version best because I could feel how afraid Marney was at this moment in the story.”</li> <li>• Affirm comments that indicate Version 2 is much more descriptive. It has <i>dialogue</i>, <i>sensory language</i>, and <i>strong action verbs</i>.</li> <li>• Ask students to Think-Pair-Share: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* “What is dialogue? How can you identify dialogue in a text?”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Listen for: “Dialogue is people speaking. You can identify it because dialogue has quotation marks around it.”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Posting learning targets allows students to reference them throughout the lesson to check their understanding. They also provide a reminder to students and teachers about the intended learning behind a given lesson or activity.</li> <li>• Careful attention to learning targets throughout a lesson engages, supports, and holds students accountable for their learning. Consider revisiting learning targets throughout the lesson so that students can connect their learning with the activity they are working on.</li> <li>• Discussing and clarifying the language of learning targets helps build academic vocabulary.</li> </ul>



Work Time (continued)	Meeting Students' Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen for: “Dialogue is people speaking. You can identify it because dialogue has quotation marks around it.” Point out an example, like the opening paragraph of Version 2 on the handout.</li> <li>• Ask students to Think-Pair-Share:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* “So what is sensory language? What does <i>sensory</i> mean? So what do you think sensory language does for the reader?”</li> <li>* “What are some examples of sensory language in Version 2?”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Listen for: “Sensory language is words that describe how things look, sound, taste, smell, and touch, related to the five senses, to help the reader imagine the scene more vividly. Some examples in Version 2 are <i>dark</i>, <i>munched</i>, and <i>slick</i>.”</li> <li>• Ask students to Think-Pair-Share:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* “What are strong action verbs?”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ensure students understand that all verbs are action words, but only some are “strong” action verbs. Explain that strong verbs are those that express an action in a strong, precise way and add impact—for example, <i>sprinted</i> rather than <i>ran</i>, or <i>gobbled</i> rather than <i>ate</i>.</li> <li>• Pair students up and distribute <b>three highlighters</b> to each student. Ask them to work in pairs to reread <b>Model Narrative: “The Golden Key”</b> (from Lesson 2) and to highlight the narrative as follows:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Examples of dialogue in yellow</li> <li>* Examples of sensory words in blue</li> <li>* Examples of strong action verbs in green</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Model as needed, then invite students to begin.</li> <li>• After five minutes, ask students to pair up with someone else to share the words, phrases, and sentences that they highlighted and to justify why they chose to highlight those words and phrases.</li> <li>• Invite students to annotate their model narrative with additional explanations of how these words and phrases help the reader “see” the story.</li> <li>• Then select a few volunteers to come and highlight on the model narrative. Begin with dialogue. As students highlight dialogue examples on the displayed model, point out and discuss how punctuation is used. Point out the rules and record them on the board or chart paper for students to refer to in the next part of the lesson:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Quotation marks are placed at the beginning and end of what characters say.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing models of expected work supports all learners, especially those who are challenged.</li> </ul>



Work Time (continued)	Meeting Students' Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* Dialogue begins with a capital letter and is punctuated with an appropriate end mark.</li><li>* The punctuation mark is always placed inside the closing quotation mark.</li><li>* A new line of dialogue is started with each new speaker in the conversation.</li><li>• Repeat with sensory language and strong action verbs. Name strong action words as verbs and explain that interesting and vivid verb choices help the reader envision the action of the scene.</li><li>• Distribute <b>Using Strong Action Verbs</b> to each student. Explain that the chart contains examples of strong verbs that work to make writing vivid and action-packed.</li><li>• Ask students to get into their triads.</li><li>• Tell them that you would like them to work in their triads to use three of these verbs to replace verbs in their model narrative, "The Golden Key." Explain that their goal is to make the action in the story even more vivid.</li><li>• Use <b>equity sticks</b> to call on students to share their substitutions. Require them to explain how their substitution worked to make the action more vivid to the reader.</li></ul>	





Work Time (continued)	Meeting Students' Needs
<p><b>B. Applying the Mini Lesson to Draft Narratives (15 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Invite students to work independently to apply their learning from the mini lesson to their draft narrative. Post these directions for students to follow:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Look for opportunities to put dialogue in your narrative. Don't force it in; add it where it fits to make the story more descriptive. Try to have dialogue in at least one part of your narrative.</li><li>2. Check the punctuation you have used around dialogue.</li><li>3. Look for places to put more sensory words in your narrative.</li><li>4. Look for at least three verbs that could be changed out for some of the strong action verbs on your handout.</li></ol></li><li>• Circulate to assist students in revising their draft narratives. Ask probing questions, such as:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* "Look at the parts of your narrative where one character encounters another. Imagine those two characters talking to each other. What would they say at this point in the story that would give the reader more vivid details about their encounter?"</li><li>* "Have you used quotation marks at the beginning and end of the character's speech?"</li><li>* "Have you started speech by another character on a new line?"</li><li>* "Have you used punctuation inside the quotation marks?"</li><li>* "Where could you add sensory language? What sights, sounds, smells, tastes, or descriptions of the way things feel could you add here to make it more vivid for the reader?"</li><li>* "Which verbs could be stronger to be more precise and have more impact on the reader?"</li></ul></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• For students who struggle with following multiple-step directions, consider displaying these directions using a document camera or interactive white board. Another option is to type up the instructions for students to have in hand.</li></ul>



Closing and Assessment	Meeting Students' Needs
<p><b>A. Exit Ticket: How Do Writers Make Their Stories Show, Not Tell? (5 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Give students a minute to think about two possible answers to this question:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* “How do writers make their stories “show, not tell”?”</li></ul></li><li>• Distribute <b>Exit Ticket: How Do Writers Make Their Stories Show, Not Tell?</b> Invite students to record two suggestions to answer this question.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Using exit tickets allows you to quickly check for understanding of the learning target so that instruction can be adjusted or tailored to students' needs during the lesson or before the next lesson.</li></ul>
Homework	Meeting Students' Needs
<p>A. Complete the draft of your hero's journey story. Remember to use all that you have learned about using dialogue, sensory language, and strong verb choice to create writing that “shows.”</p>	



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## Supporting Materials



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**Name:**

.....  
**Date:**

What do you think of your independent reading book so far? How would you rate it on a scale from 0 (really disliking it) to 5 (really enjoying it)? (Circle your response.)

**0**

**1**

**2**

**3**

**4**

**5**

**Why?**

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### Version 1

On her way to the mountain, Marney ran into a white goat. The goat ate away a path for Marney to follow through the forest. Then, the goat said good-bye and left Marney on the mountainside. Marney cried. Then an eagle flew down and carried Marney to the top of the mountain.

### Version 2

“Hello, goat. I am trying to find my way through this murky forest, dark and dense, so that I can save my family’s farm, but I cannot find a path on which to walk. Do you think that you could help me, please?”

“Follow me,” said the white goat.

Marney followed the goat as he munched a path for her to follow through the forest. At the end of the forest he turned to Marney and said, “I can go no further. Good luck on your journey, my friend.” With that, the white goat vanished.

Marney began the steep climb up the incline of the dark mountain. Suddenly, it began to rain. The mountainside was slick, and Marney kept slipping and skidding into the mud. She began to weep, “Please, please can someone help me! I must make this trek to the dark castle to save my family’s farm.”

There, before her, appeared a giant white eagle. The bird spread its colossal wings, swooped down from the sky, picked Marney up, and flew her to the top of the mountain.

“Thank you for your help, eagle. Now I must find the golden key,” Marney said.

“Good luck on your journey,” the eagle replied. “The obstacles that you have faced are nothing like the one that lies ahead of you.” With that, the eagle flew away.



As writers, we often get stuck in particular patterns of writing, and one of these patterns is using the same verbs over and over again. One way to solve this problem is by replacing your general verbs with **strong action verbs**.

This table reveals several examples of general verbs and the vivid verbs that you can use to replace them. Keep in mind that each vivid verb has its own distinct meaning.

General Verb	Strong Action Verb
dislike	abhor, abominate, avoid, condemn, deplore, despise, detest, disapprove, hate, loathe, resent, scorn, shun
eat	consume, devour, dine, feast upon, gobble, ingest
like/love	admire, adore, appreciate, cherish, be fond of, worship
run	dart, dash, jog, lope, scamper, scurry, sprint
say/said	address, critique, define, establish, evaluate, examine, formulate, identify, propose, recommend, report, suggest, urge
walk	amble, hike, march, plod, saunter, stroll, stride, trek, trudge
work	employ, labor, toil, slave



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**Name:**  
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**Date:**  
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**1.**

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**2.**

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