



SAMPLE MATERIAL

Appositive Worksheet: How Do Experts Do It?

Newport Elementary School, California

Topic: Teaching Elementary School Students to Be Effective Writers

Practice: Foundational Skills

Teachers at Newport Elementary School use sentences from exemplar (“mentor”) texts to provide strong examples of well-crafted sentences.

This worksheet, used in a sixth-grade unit on nonfiction writing, uses mentor text sentences from science and social studies texts to introduce or review how authors use appositives to clarify potentially unfamiliar words. After reading the examples, students work in pairs to answer a series of questions regarding what they noticed about the sentences’ construction. In this way, students learn to recognize how key subject-area vocabulary can be explained within the sentence.

Once students feel comfortable in their understanding of the strategy, it’s time for them to try it themselves. In a dedicated “Try It” section of their writer’s notebook (or at the bottom of the worksheet), students work on crafting their own sentences using appositives to explain science or social studies vocabulary. This practice helps reinforce students’ understanding of both the writing strategy and the subject-area vocabulary. As students

become comfortable with writing basic sentences using appositives, teachers introduce their inclusion in compound and complex sentences.

For further information on using mentor texts to teach sentence construction, listen to the audio interview *Learning to Construct Effective Sentences*. The sample material *Check This Out* provides a blank template teachers can use to design their own mentor text activities.

How Do the Experts Do It?

You are in the middle of writing your nonfiction piece when you realize you are using a word or phrase that your readers might not know. The word is important to your subject and main idea and you decide you need to use that word. What can you do to help your reader understand? Let's look at how some experts handled this situation.

1. Toxins, or chemicals in these poisons, work in many different ways.
2. The Egyptian kings, or pharaohs as they were called, lived with their families in grand palaces.
3. The first colonial assembly, the House of Burgesses, met in Jamestown, Virginia, in 1619.
4. This mandate, or formal order, was called the Mandate of Heaven.
5. Many animals hibernate, or sleep, through the winter.

Ponder the sentences above. Be ready to discuss with your partner.

- What do you notice?
- Does there seem to be any particular rule (or rules) the author must follow?
- What is the punctuation doing in this section?
- What would happen if we took a punctuation mark out or moved the punctuation mark?

Discussion Notes:

Try It: