

Writing Mini-Lesson: 4th Grade (Revision)

Intention (Skill): Using details to bring out the heart of the story

Teaching Point (Strategy): Writers make decisions about which details to include in their story by asking themselves "What is this story *really* about?", then looking at the details and asking, "Does this match what my story is really about?"

Connection: Boys and girls, I got a chance to read through your quick writes, and I was so excited about some of the smart things you were doing as writers! I noticed that you are the kinds of writers that know a thing or two about details! Details describe the setting, actions, or people in the story. For example, Mia wrote about the old schoolhouse in League City, and she gave really specific actions, like having to curtsy when she came in. Candace wrote about going down a huge slide at Schlitterbahn, and she included dialogue details to make me feel like I was right there with her. That's a really powerful gift we give to our readers - we give them details so that they feel like they are right there in the moment with us! Sometimes, though, too many details can make our story confusing. So we have to make decisions about which details belong in our story.

Today, I want to teach you that writers make decisions about which details to include in their story by first asking themselves "What is this story *really* about?", then looking at the details and asking, "Does this match what my story is really about?" If it matches, then leave it in. If not, cross it out!

Teach: Let me show you what I mean. I have this story called Hallway Race Disaster about a time I was racing with my sister in my house. In the story, I was running without shoes on, and I slid down the hall and right through a window! Here's how my first draft starts. (*Read from notebook.*) I have a ton of details, and I don't know if all of them belong there, so I'm going to try this new strategy. First, I'm going to ask myself, "What is this story really about?" I think this story is really about how my sister helped me when I got hurt. It was really nice of her. But here, I've written a whole page, and I haven't even gotten to the race yet! Right here, I have some details about how my house looks. (*Read from notebook.*) Now I'm going to ask myself, "Does this match what my story is really about?" I don't think it does! I like that part, but I'm going to be really brave and take it out. Did you see how I asked myself those two questions? (*Repeat questions.*) I'm going to add that to our chart.

Active Engagement: Now it's your turn to try it. Would you look over your draft from yesterday? First, ask yourself, "What is this story *really* about?" Turn and tell your partner when you know. Next, look at a place where you've included specific details and ask, "Does this match what my story is really about?" Turn and talk to your partner for help.

Link: So today, or any day when you go off to work on your draft, you can make decisions about what details to include by asking yourself, "What is this story *really* about?", then looking at the details and asking, "Does this match what my story is really about?" If it matches, then leave it in. If not, cross it out!

Share: (Look for: crossing details out, adding new details in that enhance the heart of the story.)

