

Toy Designer: Using Details in Writing

Adventure Description:

In this adventure, you will think like a toy designer and create a toy monster for kids to play with!

Activity

Teacher note: This activity can be completed across multiple days.

Step One: Background Information on Toy Designers (5 minutes)

- Show [Video: Using Details in Writing](#).
- Explain to the class that toy designers design toys and choose what materials the toys are made of. Show [Handout: Toy Examples](#).
- Ask students what skills toy designers would need to have to be good at their jobs. Examples include:
 - Coming up with a creative idea for a toy that kids will be excited to play with.
 - Working with others to talk about their ideas
 - Designing and building toys that are safe for children
 - Collecting data on whether people like a toy
- Explain to students that toy designers also have to be great writers. Ask students why toy designers need to be great writers. Examples include:
 - Writing a label for toys so that adults and kids will know what is included in a box at a toy store
 - Checking over other toy designers' toys and writing out their feedback
 - Sending emails about a new toy idea to another toy designer
- Discuss how toy designers must use descriptive language while they write!
- Display [Handout: Descriptive Writing](#). As a class, discuss how descriptive writing is used to describe a person, place, object, or event in detail.
- Discuss some reasons that good writers use descriptive writing. Some reasons are to:
 - Clearly explain what they are writing about to the reader. The more information the reader has, the more they will understand the topic.
 - Tell students to think about if a toy designer reads an email from another toy designer that says, "Will you help me make a toy?". The toy designer won't know any information about what kind of toy they are helping to make, what it looks like, or when it needs to be done.

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- What if the email said, "Will you help me make a plastic dolphin toy by tomorrow? I want it to be 6 inches tall, a grayish blue color, and smooth." The email with the details added helps the designer know exactly what he needs to do.
- Help readers to create a mental image of what they are reading about. When readers read what you write they should be able to create a picture of what you are describing in their head.
- Keep readers interested in their writing. Writing that does not include details is not as exciting as writing with details and readers will become bored.
- Display [Handout: Using Your Senses](#).
- Discuss with students that they should use their senses of hearing, sight, smell, touch, and taste to help them think of what details to add to their writing.
 - As a class discuss how they could use their senses to write about popcorn.
 - Go through each sense and ask students to give words they could use to describe popcorn. For example:
 - Hearing: Crunchy, Popping
 - Sight: Bumpy, Yellow, White
 - Smell: Buttery, Yummy
 - Touch: Warm, Greasy
 - Taste: Good, Buttery, Salty
- Display [Handout: Using Adjectives](#).
- Discuss that another way writers can add to their writing is by using adjectives in their writing to describe what they are writing about in detail.
 - Go through the handout and give examples such as:
 - To describe something's size you can use adjectives like: big, tall, short, heavy, etc.
 - To explain something's smell you can use adjectives like: stinky, clean, rotten, etc.

Step Two: Activity Set Up (5 minutes)

- Explain to students that they will design a new toy for kids to play with. The toy will be sold in stores for Cookie Monster Day! Cookie Monster Day is a holiday that is November 2nd each year.
- Teacher note: if students are not familiar with the cookie monster, show [Handout: Cookie Monster Toys](#).
- Discuss how the Cookie Monster is a cartoon character that is now incorporated into a variety of toys. Explain that students will first draw a detailed picture of what their new toy will look like. Then they will write a descriptive paragraph about the toy!

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- When each student is finished with their descriptive paragraph they will trade it with another student. However, they will NOT give the other student the picture. The other student will have to read the descriptive paragraph and build the toy based only on what they read in the description.
- Show students an example of how the activity is completed. Display [Handout: Monster Example](#) for the class to see.
 - Instruct students to view the original drawing of the monster that the toy designer created and explain that the picture shows exactly how the toy designer wanted it to look, and they should do the same when they design their monster.
 - Next, explain to the students that they have to use description language when they create their monster description because that is all their partner will be able to use when building it.
 - Have students view Built Monster 1 while you read them the description. Explain that because the monster description wasn't detailed the built monster looks a lot different than it should.
 - Now have students view Built Monster 2 while you read them the description. Explain the because the description is very detailed, the built monster looks almost exactly like the original design.

Step Three: Brainstorming and Sketching (15 minutes)

- Explain to students that they will first draw a detailed picture of a new toy. Provide students with [Handout: Steps to Build a Monster Toy](#). Have students complete Steps 1 and 2 on the handout.
- Encourage students to come up with a unique toy design. This means that they will design a toy that looks different from other Cookie Monster toys. Ask students why it would be important to design a new toy that hasn't been designed before (e.g., if you make a toy that has already been made that no one will buy yours because it is always available on the market, it is illegal to copy someone else's toy design).
- Teacher note: if students need help coming up with an initial idea, discuss the following:
 - How can you create a monster that is inspired by a cookie monster but a bit different? (e.g., Oreo monster, ice cream sundae monster, cookie dough monster).
 - How can you create a monster that has different coloring and features (e.g., tie dye monster, rainbow monster, polka dot monster).
 - How can you create a monster that has specific interests or hobbies (e.g., sports monster, musical monster, nature monster).

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Step Four: Write Monster Description (20 minutes)

- Explain to students that they will now write a detailed description of their monster toy. Have students complete Step 3 on the handout.
- Tip: Display [Handout: Descriptive Writing](#) while students write.
- As students are working, remind them to include a lot of details to describe their monster. Examples include:
 - Shape (e.g., round, oval, square)
 - How many of each feature (e.g., one eye, four arms, six mouths)
 - Texture (e.g., soft, hard, furry, hairy)
 - Size (e.g., tall, short, big, small, heavy, light)
 - Color (e.g., multicolored, polka dots, blue)
- Ask students: will someone who has never seen your drawing be able to build your toy exactly how you want only using your writing?

Step Five: Building a Classmate's Monster (20+minutes)

- Explain to students that they will now switch their monster description with another student. Then, they will read through that student's monster description and build a prototype of the monster.
- Divide students in pairs to complete Step 4.
- Teacher note: remind students that partners should NOT see the others' drawing, only their descriptions!
- Provide students with art supplies to build the monster. Examples of supplies include:
 - Recycled materials: cardboard pieces, egg cartons, etc.
 - Art supplies: tape, scissors, glue, construction paper, etc.
 - Any additional art supplies you would like to supply.
- As students are working, ask the following:
 - Are there any details missing that you need to build the toy?
 - What could your partner add to their description to help you build a better prototype?
 - Why is it important to include a lot of details in your writing?

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Step Six: Concluding Class Discussion (10 minutes)

- Ask pairs to share their experience.
- Have the entire class come together and discuss why descriptive writing is important. Examples include:
 - Keeps readers interested (e.g., monsters with more detail are more interesting to look at).
 - Readers are able to form a mental image (e.g., descriptions with more details were easier to draw than those that had only a few details).
 - Helps explain a topic (e.g., students who used descriptions with more details made products that looked very similar to the original drawing).

Materials List

Provided online:

- Video: Using Details in Writing
- Handout: Toy Examples
- Handout: Descriptive Writing
- Handout: Using Your Senses
- Handout: Using Adjectives
- Handout: Cookie Monster Toys
- Handout: Monster Example
- Handout: Steps to Build a Monster Toy

Not provided:

- Recycled materials: cardboard pieces, egg cartons, etc.
- Art supplies: tape, scissors, glue, construction paper, etc
- Any additional art supplies you would like to provide

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