

## Lesson 7 – Defining Voice

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**Materials Needed:** a transparency of page 26, student copies of page 27, large sheet of white construction paper, and markers

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1. Select a paragraph from a science, social studies, or math textbook and have students follow along as you read. When you are finished, ask them these questions:

- ⇒ Who wrote this paragraph?
- ⇒ Is it a man or a woman?
- ⇒ How old is this person?
- ⇒ What country is this person from?
- ⇒ How does this person feel about the subject matter?

As you might predict, your students will not be able to answer these questions, but rather will just offer unsupported guesses. Explain to them that textbooks are written without “voice” so that readers don’t hear the author but rather focus on the subject matter only.

2. Now explain that as writers we should write with “voice” to let our readers know that a real person is willing to share a part of him- or herself. We are saying, *This writing is “of me” because I’m revealing my . . .*

- ⇒ **(O) opinions**—how I feel about certain issues
- ⇒ **(F) feelings**—how I react
- ⇒ **(M) memories**—stories from my past
- ⇒ **(E) expressions**—the words I use to share my ideas

3. On the overhead, show the “Which One Has Voice?” transparency (page 26). Ask students to guess which paragraph has voice. In paragraph 2 (the correct answer), locate examples of opinions, feelings, memories, and expressions that illustrate “voice.”

*Examples:*

- ⇒ **opinions:** “Personally, I think . . .”
- ⇒ **feelings:** “I could really get excited . . .”
- ⇒ **memories:** “. . . like they had to do last year . . .”
- ⇒ **expressions:** “. . . been bumped”

(Also emphasize that while both paragraphs give readers the same exact information, the second version makes it more interesting.)

4. Writing should sound like a real person wrote it, not a robot. The reader should sense the “heartbeat” of the writer. Let your students know that this is the type of writing that you expect from them. You expect to “hear” their heartbeat and their voice—not experience encyclopedia-type writing—when you read their writing.



## Lesson 7 – Defining Voice *(cont.)*

5. Divide your class into small groups. Tell them that each group is going to be generating a list of “Voice Similes.” Make sure that your students understand what a simile is by giving a few examples (e.g., “sharp like a tack,” “as sly as a fox”). Now provide this pattern on the board or on an overhead:

⇒ Writing without voice is like \_\_\_\_\_ without \_\_\_\_\_.

Now fill in the blanks to provide this example:

⇒ Writing without voice is like a nachos without cheese.

Explain that even though nachos taste great by themselves, cheese makes them even better. Ask your students for a few more examples. They might offer responses like:

- ⇒ Writing without voice is like *pretzels* without *salt*.
- ⇒ Writing without voice is like *Indiana Jones* without a *whip*.
- ⇒ Writing without voice is like a *computer* without the *Internet*.
- ⇒ Writing without voice is like *fingernails* without *pink polish*.
- ⇒ Writing without voice is like a *hamburger* without *French fries*.

Distribute a “Voice Simile” worksheet (page 27) to each group. Allow time for each group to come up with 10 more similes. Encourage originality. (These can get really humorous.) Then instruct each group to select their favorite simile and write it at the bottom of their paper. Share the group favorites. If time allows, provide each group with large sheet of construction paper and markers and have them design a VOICE poster using that simile. (See the example to the right.) Hang the posters around the classroom. Your students will soon realize the importance of voice to a piece of writing. It’s that little bit extra that makes their writing come alive. Share the following thought (and tell your students that the little “extra” is voice):

“The difference between *ordinary* and *extraordinary* is a little *extra*.”

— *author unknown*



6. For an additional activity, copy a short paragraph from your students’ science or social studies textbook. Put this paragraph on the top half of a page and make enough copies so that each student gets one. Then, instruct your students to rewrite the paragraph using their voice. Remind them that using their voice means that they should include their opinions, feelings, memories, and expressions. (Display and review the example on page 26.)
7. Explain to your students that in the following lessons you’ll be teaching them more about how to include their opinions, feelings, memories, and unique expressions (“of me”) in their writing and how to use their Writer’s Notebook as a special place to collect these ideas.

## *Lesson 7 – Defining Voice* (cont.)

### *Which One Has Voice?*

#### **paragraph 1**

According to a new definition recently adopted by the International Astronomical Union, Pluto can no longer be considered a true planet. To earn planet status, a celestial body must orbit the sun, have become a large spherical shape due to gravitational pull, and dominate its surroundings while clearing its orbital path of space debris. It is this last condition that has eliminated Pluto's status as a planet. It is now recognized as a dwarf planet. Obviously, this demotion in status will necessitate revision to many scientific journals and textbooks.

#### **paragraph 2**

What? Pluto is no longer a planet? What was the International Astronomical Union thinking? They recently came up with a new definition of what a true planet is. It has to be moving around the sun, be a humongous ball shape because of gravity, and dominate its neighborhood in space. Because it doesn't do the last thing, Pluto's now been bumped to being just a dwarf planet. I'm guessing that soon our school will have to buy us new, up-to-date science books (like they had to do last year with our social studies books). Personally, I think they should have left Pluto alone and spent their time doing something more important — like searching for space aliens!!! I could really get excited about that discovery.



## Lesson 7 – Defining Voice *(cont.)*

### *Voice Similes*

Writing without <b>VOICE</b> is like _____	without _____
Writing without <b>VOICE</b> is like _____	without _____
Writing without <b>VOICE</b> is like _____	without _____
Writing without <b>VOICE</b> is like _____	without _____
Writing without <b>VOICE</b> is like _____	without _____
Writing without <b>VOICE</b> is like _____	without _____
Writing without <b>VOICE</b> is like _____	without _____
Writing without <b>VOICE</b> is like _____	without _____
Writing without <b>VOICE</b> is like _____	without _____

*Here is our favorite one:*

Writing without <b>VOICE</b> is like _____	without _____
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## Lesson 9 – Getting in Touch with Feelings

Often when developing writers compose personal narratives, they will forget to tell how they felt during the event. They forget that merely relating a story is not very interesting unless they can explain to the reader how an event or series of events affected them personally.

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**Materials Needed:** transparencies of pages 31, 32, and 33

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1. Explain that good writers know that their writing becomes real when they put themselves into their work. Readers should be able to share the writer's emotions as they read along. Readers should be able to smile when a writer conveys his or her joy and get a little misty when they've been moved by the author's sorrow.
2. Display the "Basketball Tryouts" transparency (page 31). Have a student read the story aloud. Ask what's missing. Hopefully, students will notice that the writer never shares his feelings about this nerve-racking event. Ask them to look for places to add feeling statements. Readers should be able to note that the writer's feelings changed throughout the story. (If you wish, make a transparency of the corrected story on page 32 and use that as an example of where feeling statements could be added.)
3. Some fifth- and sixth-grade students still have difficulty adding feelings to their writing. They often have the bad habit of simply tacking on a feeling statement at the end of a paragraph, like "I felt sad" or "I was so excited." Challenge your students to "Add On or Move It" (page 33) by rewriting the short paragraphs together. Using the first paragraph as an example, the idea is to do one of the following:
  - ⇒ **Add on to the ending feeling sentence:**  
*Example:* We were so excited because we'd watched the Olympic skiers on TV and wanted to experience the same thrill.
  - ⇒ **Move it to somewhere inside the paragraph so it doesn't look tacked on:**  
*Example:* My brother and I were at the top of the hill anxiously waiting for our first ski lesson.
4. Tell students that it is very important that they are able to express their feelings when they write. The Writer's Notebook is a safe, private place where they can pour out their hearts without fear of others teasing them. They can practice using the words that truly express what is in their hearts. Encourage students to write down their feelings often as situations arise. Encourage them to make use of precise adjectives to describe these feelings. As a resource, post a list of feeling words for students to use in their writing.
5. Model often how you have stored feeling statements in your Writer's Notebook. Read an entry that expresses how you felt about a certain event.
6. Have students search through their Writer's Notebooks to find an entry that stirs up a strong emotion like happiness, anger, jealousy, pride, etc. (Select one ahead of time. A positive feeling is probably best.) Divide the class into small groups. Ask one person in each group to read his or her entry and have the others carefully listen before commenting with questions, connections, or empathy. If there is time, encourage other students to share their entries. Monitor groups to make sure that all feelings are being respected.

## ***Lesson 9 – Getting in Touch with Feelings*** (cont.)

### **Basketball Tryouts**

Last Saturday morning we had tryouts for the school basketball team. The coach told us to be there by 9:00 sharp or we wouldn't be considered. I got to the gym by 8:45, and almost everyone else was there by then, too.

First, we each had to run as fast as we could to one end of the court and back. Then, we had to run again, only this time we had to dribble the basketball all the way down and back. I saw the coach taking notes on his clipboard as he timed us with his stopwatch.

The last thing we had to do was show that we could make a basket from the free-throw line. I sank two out of five shots. Several guys made all five.

On Monday morning, the team roster was posted in the gym. My name was on the list. Now I'm one of the Fighting Eagles.

## *Lesson 9 – Getting in Touch with Feelings* (cont.)

### **Basketball Tryouts**

Last Saturday morning we had tryouts for the school basketball team. The coach told us to be there by 9:00 sharp or we wouldn't be considered. I got to the gym by 8:45, and almost everyone else was there by then, too. *We all felt so sleepy but anxious to get started.*

First, we each had to run as fast as we could to one end of the court *was I ever tired!* and back. Then, we had to run again, only this time we had to dribble the basketball all the way down and back. I saw the coach taking notes on his clipboard as he timed us with his stopwatch. *That made us real nervous because he looked so serious.*

The last thing we had to do was show that we could make a basket from the free-throw line. *proudly* I sank two out of five shots. Several guys made all five.

On Monday morning, the team roster was posted in the gym. My name was on the list. Now I'm one of the Fighting Eagles! *and I was almost too afraid to look.*

## *Lesson 9 – Getting in Touch with Feelings (cont.)*

### *Add On or Move It*

*Time to eliminate those dangling feeling statements . . .*

1. My brother and I were at the top of the hill waiting for our first ski lesson. We were excited.

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2. Tickets for the concert were selling out fast, and there was a good chance that they would be sold out before I could get to the ticket office. I felt worried.

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3. This morning the principal told us that our teacher had broken his leg and wouldn't be at school for the rest of the week. We felt upset.

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4. I need to tell Dad that I accidentally scraped the side of his car when I was getting the lawnmower out of the garage. I feel nervous.

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