

Your Turn Lesson: Using Word Pairs to Create Rhythm

Hook: Some authors include word pairs in their descriptions of objects or actions. You can find examples in *Crab Moon* by Ruth Horowitz (slowly and grandly...stepping and pausing), and *Fireflies* by Julie Brinckloe (blinking on, blinking off...dipping low, soaring high). An excellent mentor text to use for word pairs is *Georgia's Bones* by Jen Bryant. There are over fifteen examples of word pairs in this book. As you reread the book, ask students to listen for the word pairs. Older students can jot them down in a notebook or thinking pad.

Purpose:

Writers, sometimes authors use words as pairs. Today we are going to look carefully at that technique and think about why authors might choose to use it. Then I'll give you a chance to try it out for yourself.

Brainstorm: Ask students to share the word pairs they heard or jotted down as you read *Georgia's Bones* (or a similar mentor text). These can be listed on the board or on chart paper. Return to portions of the text and read sections where the word pairs are used (you could also copy part of the text on an overhead or examine a page of text with a visualizer). For contrast, reread the sections as a list, without the word pairs. Ask students to brainstorm reasons the author might have chosen to use the words in pairs. Students might respond that it "sounds better" that way. Encourage them to think more deeply by asking why it sounds better. This thinking should lead to a discussion of rhythm and its importance as part of style. Then consider how the author did this (use of the word "and", matching numbers of syllables, etc.). Ask them to consider other words that might go together and add these to the list.

Model: Compose a short piece in front of the class using some word pair examples. Try listing, then combining, as you think aloud about which way adds to the rhythm of what you are writing. You can also return to a previous notebook entry and revise. Here's an example:

The other day I was driving along and I started to notice wildflowers growing by the side of the road. They were all different colors – blue, white, pink. They looked so cheery just blowing in the breeze. I knew the names of some of them and started to make a list in my head so I could write about it. I could write – The other day I noticed Strawflowers, Queen Anne's Lace, Red Clover, and Yarrow growing along the road. Or, I could use word pairs: The other day I noticed some wildflowers growing along the road – Strawflowers and Queen Anne's Lace, Red Clover and Yarrow, waving and nodding in the wind.

Shared/Guided Writing: You could try this technique with the class in at least two ways. One way might be to compose a shared writing. Once a topic is decided on, students could pair up to think of word pairs (nouns, adjectives, verbs, or adverbs) that might be included. This initial brainstorming is a way to make sure all students are involved. Then you could compose the piece together. Alternately, you could ask students to search their notebooks for pieces that could be revised by adding word pairs. You could then hold a guided conversation with a volunteer in front of the class.

Independent Writing: Ask students to try it out as they go about their work for the day. If some students are already working on a piece they can try adding some word pairs. Others might revisit a notebook entry for revision, or begin something new. If students have difficulty coming up with a topic, encourage them to revisit their heart maps or territories, or do a quick memory chain – any technique you have already demonstrated to help them discover topics for writing.

Reflection: Ask students to reflect on this technique in pairs, small groups, or whole group. The following questions can help guide their thinking:

*How did the use of word pairs help your piece?
How did it change your piece?
When is using word pairs effective?
Is this technique appropriate to use all the time?*