

Teaching News Is Elementary

April 22, 2016

Each week, this lesson will share some classroom activity ideas that use the newspaper or other NIE resources. You are encouraged to modify this lesson to fit the needs of your students. For example, some classrooms may be able to use this as a worksheet and others might need to ask and answer the questions in a class discussion.

Materials you will need for this lesson: The Seattle Times e-Edition, pencil, and paper.

Article: “Inky the octopus legs it from New Zealand aquarium”

Page: Main, A8

Date: Thursday, April 14, 2016

Pre- Reading Discussion Questions:

What is a verb? What does a verb do in a sentence? Examine the following two sentences:

1. Caroline laughed at the joke as milk came out of her nose.
2. Caroline snickered at the joke as milk blasted out of her nose.

What is the difference between these two sentences? Which sentence uses weak verbs? Which sentence uses strong verbs? What do you think makes a verb strong or weak?

Vocabulary:

Read the following quotes and determine the meaning of the word based on how it’s used in the sentence:

“It was an **audacious** nighttime escape.”

Audacious: extremely bold or daring

“After busting through an enclosure, the **nimble contortionist** appears to have quietly crossed the floor, slithered through a narrow drain hole about 6 inches in diameter and jumped into the sea. Then he disappeared.”

Nimble: quick and light in movement or action; agile.

Contortionist: an acrobat able to twist the body into unusual postures.

“Octopus tracks suggest he then **scampered** 8 feet across the floor and slid down a 164-foot-long drainpipe into Hawke’s Bay, on the east coast of North Island, according New Zealand’s news media. When the aquarium’s keepers came to work and discovered that Inky was not in his tank, they searched the aquarium’s pipes after discovering Inky’s trail, to no **avail**..”

Scampered: to run or go quickly and lightly.

Avail: to be of use or advantage to; benefit

“Inky’s escape surprised few in the world of marine biology, where octopuses are known for their strength, **dexterity** and intelligence.”

Dexterity: skill in using the hands or body; agility

“Alix Harvey, an aquarist at the Marine Biological Association in England, noted that octopuses, members of a class of marine animals including squid and cuttlefish called Cephalopoda, can get through spaces as small as a coin, **constrained** only by their beaks, the only inflexible part of their bodies.”

Constrained: To keep within certain limits; confine or limit

Journal Writing Prompts:

Highlight or make a list of the all the verbs that are used in the news story. Rank the verbs from strongest to weakest and justify your ranking.

Discussion Questions:

What did you think of the verbs used in this article? How did they make the story of the escape more exciting? What kind of images did the verbs help you see give? Were there any weak verbs in this article? If so, what other verbs could have been used instead? What are some other examples of strong verbs that you can think of? Are there any cases that you can think of when it might be better to use a weak verb? Is there anything else you noticed about the word choice in the article?

Small Group Discussion and Activity:

In a group or with a partner, brainstorm a list of at least three other verbs that mean the same thing as the following verbs:

1. Walk
2. Run
3. Talk
4. Take
5. Look
6. Laugh
7. Eat

Extension

Read excerpts from famous writers and identify the strong and weak verbs! Or better yet, identify the weak verbs in a piece of your own writing, and replace them with strong verbs.