

Lesson 3: The Tornado

Getting Started

✿ Questions to Explore

- How does the environment affect living things?
- What makes an environment safe or unsafe?
- How does the weather affect people, plants, and animals?



Facts and Definitions

- **Word choice** is an element of writing that includes choosing interesting and descriptive words to make the writing more engaging and exciting.

⦿ Skills

- Draw and discuss visual images based on text description. (LA)
- Produce a summary of a text. (LA)
- Write to communicate with an audience. (LA)
- Examine author's decisions and word choice. (LA)

✂ Materials

- *Tornado* by Betsy Byars, Doron Ben-Ami
- journal
- crayons or colored pencils

Introduction

Tell your child that today in the book, Pete will describe a time a tornado hit his house. After the tornado, he will discover something very special.

Reading and Questions

Ask your child to listen as you read Chapter 2 aloud to him, and then ask him to verbally summarize the chapter. You can use the following questions for further discussion, as needed.

1. What does Pete's mom mean when she says, "I smell a storm."?

Explain to your child that often before a big storm the air can feel and even smell different.

2. How was the tornado at Pete's house different from the tornado in the first chapter?

There was no warning or funnel cloud.

3. Describe the yard after the tornado.

All of the trees were destroyed and the yard was littered with other people's things, like a doghouse, a clothesline, and a bicycle.

4. What is Pete most surprised to find in the yard after the tornado?

Pete finds a dog in the doghouse.

5. How do you think the dog felt after the tornado?

Answers will vary.

Activities

Activity 1: Journal Entry

Ask your child to write and illustrate his chapter summary in his journal. In his writing, remind him to use the transition words covered in Lesson 2 to help show the order in which the events in the chapter occurred.

Activity 2: The Doghouse: Choosing Words

For this writing lesson, ask your child to read the author's writing on the page called "The Doghouse: Choosing Words." Then ask him to read the simple description aloud.

Ask your child to tell you the difference between the author's description of the doghouse and the simple description. Explain to your child that the difference is the words that were used to describe the doghouse and the dog. This is what we call **word choice**. The two examples describe the same event but do so in a much different way.

The author of the book uses interesting descriptive words to tell the reader about the doghouse that Pete discovered after the tornado. Ask your child to underline the words that make the writing exciting and interesting. Explain that a good author creates a picture in your mind of what is happening in the story and uses words that appeal to your senses. Ask your child to name his five senses. Ask him to think of his own unique way to describe the situation as it is written in the "Simple Description."

Activity 3: My Pet

For this activity, your child will write a paragraph that describes his pet. He can write a paragraph on lined paper that describes his pet to someone who has never seen it. If your child does not have a pet, ask him to think about the pet of a relative or a friend.

Review the fact that a paragraph has a topic sentence and at least three supporting sentences that support the topic sentence. The paragraph should end with a sentence that ties the ideas together. Remind your child to choose rich and colorful language that describes details in an interesting and clear way. The words do not have to be big; even simple words can come together to make great descriptive writing.

Read the following example paragraph aloud to your child:

I have a beautiful, golden bird named Francis. Francis can sing louder and stronger than a trumpet. She spends her days eating voraciously and playing wildly in her cage. Sometimes I remove Francis from her cage and balance her carefully on my shoulder. She sits as still as stone. Francis is the best pet bird a girl could ever ask for.

Choose an option for your child to complete.

Assessment (for both options): To assess your child's writing, look to see that he attempted new words to make his writing more interesting. Correct spelling of new words is not essential. Look to see if he created an image for the reader. Look for words and phrases that engage the reader's senses. If you feel there are places in the writing that could be more interesting, point them out to your child and ask him to think about his word choice and how he could make the sentence more interesting. Then he can rewrite the sentence(s).

Option 1

For this option, your child will use the "Hamburger Paragraph Organizer" page to help him organize his ideas.

Option 2 (Advanced)

For this option, your child will use the "Paragraph Organizer" page to organize his ideas. This organizer is more advanced than the hamburger organizer in Option 1 because it gives your child freedom to add details and more than just five sentences for his paragraph. He may also have more than three supporting details. The important thing is that all his details stay focused on the main idea of the paragraph. The more sentences he uses, the easier it is for his writing to lose focus.

Wrapping Up

Ask your child to describe how the author's choice of words makes the book more interesting.

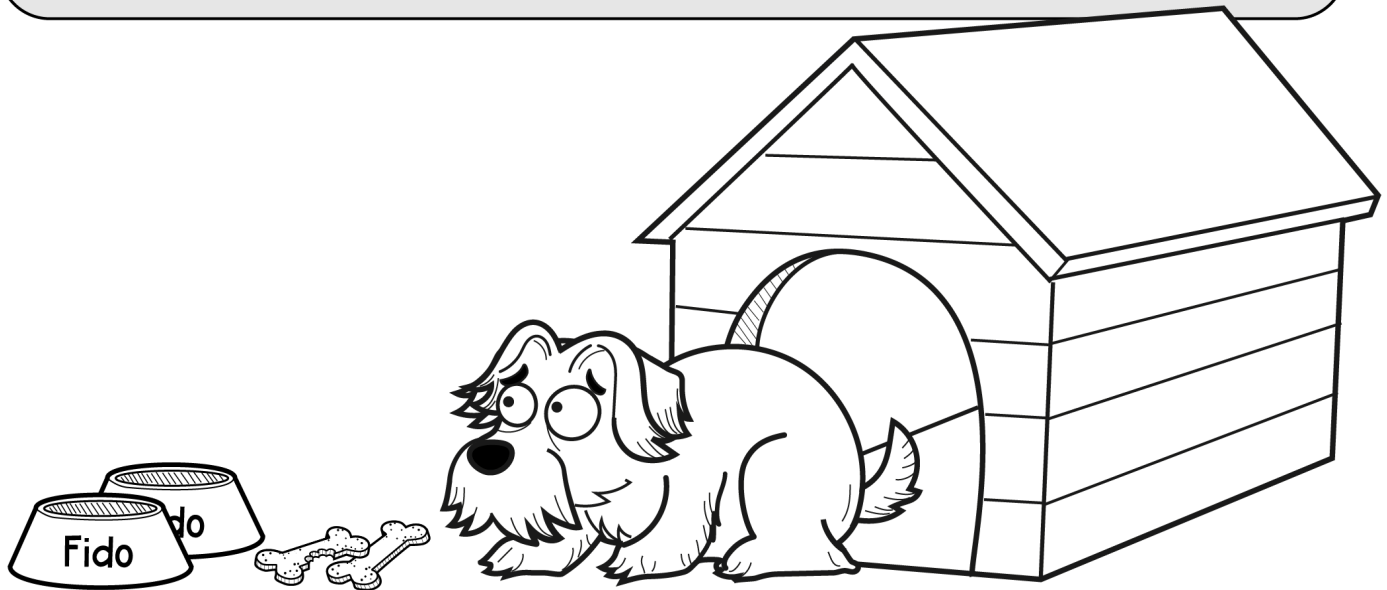
THE DOGHOUSE: CHOOSING WORDS

Author's Description:

The doghouse was trembling. You could see it. It was trembling. It was shaking. It was doing everything but having a fit. I looked inside, and there was a big black dog. He was panting so hard, I could feel his breath. He was shaking so hard, the doghouse was in danger of losing its boards.

Simple Description:

The doghouse was moving. I looked inside and saw a dog. He was panting and shaking.



Directions: Write your own description below.

Hamburger Paragraph Organizer

Topic Sentence



Detail #1

Detail #2

Detail #3

Conclusion

Paragraph Organizer

TOPIC SENTENCE	

[illegible]

CONCLUDING SENTENCE	