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6-8

Lesson Plan Selector

Grade Band

Literacy Strand

Literacy Engagement

[Display](#)**Estimated Lesson Time**

Four 50-minute sessions

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1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, 12

Resources

- [Restaurant Menu Planning Sheet](#)
- [Flip Book Student Interactive](#)
- Assorted restaurant menus
- Completed flip book or blank flip book
- General classroom supplies

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Cooking Up Descriptive Language: Designing Restaurant Menus

printer-friendly
version**Overview**

Students explore the genre of menus by analyzing existing menus from local restaurants, including a review of adjectives and descriptive writing based on the language included in the menu examples. After establishing the characteristics of the genre, students work in groups to choose a restaurant and then create their own custom menus. The final menus can be customized to fit the needs of your class. In advanced classes or situations where you can allow extra time for writing and publishing the menus, have students create fully detailed menus that include foods for all meals as well as details about the restaurant itself, such history of the restaurant or background on the foods. If time is limited, arrange students in groups and have each group design one page of the menu (e.g., one group does breakfasts, another does lunches).

**From Theory to Practice**

Students are likely to be familiar with restaurant menus—even if they have never thought carefully about the information included on a menu, they have probably seen many kinds of menus in their environment. Depending upon their experience, students may have seen school breakfast and lunch menus, fast food restaurant menus, or local family restaurant menus. Further, they have probably heard descriptive language associated with restaurant food on television and radio commercials. By tapping this prior knowledge, this lesson encourages students to connect their understanding of the ways that language works to specific grammatical concepts as well as to draw upon their implicit knowledge of the genre to compose their own texts.

This lesson plan was adapted from "Menu Magic!" by Susan H. Smith with Bethany Hickey, from *Voices from the Middle* 10.4 (May 2003), pp. 13–15.

Student Objectives

Students will

- review the characteristics of adjectives.
- analyze the structure, content, and purpose of a variety of restaurant menus.
- explore how audience and purpose shape their writing.
- compose restaurant menus with attention to accurate and descriptive word choice.
- identify appropriate layouts and images that relate to their menus.
- interact with classmates to give and receive feedback.

Instructional Plan

- A Directed Listening-Thinking Activity for *The Tell-Tale Heart*
- Book Report Alternative: Character and Author Business Cards
- Book Report Alternative: Comic Strips and Cartoon Squares
- A Picture's Worth a Thousand Words: From Image to Detailed Narrative
- Scaffolding Comprehension Strategies Using Graphic Organizers

Resources

- Assorted restaurant menus
- [Restaurant Menu Planning Sheet](#)
- [Flip Book Student Interactive](#)
- Completed flip book or [blank flip book](#) as an example
- General classroom supplies

Preparation

- Gather an assortment of restaurant menus from a variety of kinds of restaurants, including a variety of specialty restaurants, ethnic restaurants, chain restaurants, and so forth. You might collect menus by visiting restaurants, or asking students to bring examples. Additionally, check the yellow pages of your telephone book, as many restaurants include their menus as an advertisement. Many restaurants also have menu information [available online](#). Some examples for major chain restaurants are included in the [Web Resources](#).
- Make copies of the [Restaurant Menu Planning Sheet](#).
- Review the "Menu Magic!" article for additional ideas on how to structure the lesson.
- Create an overhead transparency of a sample menu that features descriptive adjectives for Session Three.
- Test the [Flip Book Student Interactive](#) on your computers to familiarize yourself with the tool and ensure that you have the Flash plug-in installed. You can download the plug-in from the [technical support page](#).
- Create a flip book as an example, or provide a [blank one](#), so the students can see the layout and format. For this activity, it's unlikely that students will need to use all 10 pages of the flip book, so you may only want to share a 4 or 5 page book.

Instruction and Activities

Session One

1. Ask students to brainstorm the characteristics that they associate with restaurant menus. Record their responses on the board or on chart paper.
2. When students begin to run out of responses, review the list as a group. Make any additions or revisions.
3. If desired, group related items on the brainstormed list (e.g., information about the restaurant itself, kinds of foods, menu sections).
4. Arrange students in small groups, and pass out examples of restaurant menus that you have gathered.
5. Ask groups to review the example menus and gather additional details of the characteristics of restaurant menus. If the items they notice are already included on their brainstormed list, ask students to add details that describe and explain the characteristics. If they items they notice are new, students should identify the characteristic as well as provide additional details that describe it. Explain that the class is working toward a class list that will guide their own composition of restaurant menus.
6. Give each group chart paper and a section of the board to post the results of their analysis.
7. When students have completed their research, gather the class and ask students to identify common characteristics that are included on the class lists.
8. As the discussion continues, lead students through discussion of the key elements for restaurant menus and how the elements differ depending upon the kind of restaurant and the particular customers. Work toward creating a rubric for your class menus, using the characteristics that students have gathered from their analysis of the menus.
9. If time allows, demonstrate the [Flip Book Student Interactive](#) and/or share the completed flip book or [blank flip book](#), so that students understand the format they will use for their final drafts.
10. For homework, ask students to consider kinds of restaurants that they might write their own menus for. Students can begin gathering resources to help them as they begin writing. Possible resources include additional sample menus,

cookbooks, and other resources on the particular kind of food or restaurant they have chosen (e.g., a book on Italian food if the student has chosen to create a menu for an Italian restaurant). This activity gives students an opportunity to tap their own family recipes and food traditions as well, so students might ask family members for suggestions as part of their preparation for writing.

Session Two

1. Remind students of the characteristics of restaurant menus, established during the previous session.
2. If desired, students can work in small groups to create one group menu, or students can work individually to create their own menus. If students will work in small groups, arrange groups so that students working on similar menus (e.g., Italian restaurants, Mexican restaurants, Coffeehouse) are together.
3. If you have not done so previously, demonstrate the [Flip Book Student Interactive](#) and/or share the completed flip book or [blank flip book](#), so that students understand the format they will use for their final drafts.
4. Begin the process of composing the menus by asking students to take a few minutes to freewrite on things that they would like to include on their menus (e.g., specific food items, restaurant details).
5. After students have had time to gather their preliminary ideas, ask students to discuss the audience for their restaurant and its menu. Ask students to consider how old customers will be, what they will be looking for on a restaurant menu, and the kind of details that will be convincing for these group of customers. Students may have a particular segment of an audience—for instance, they may be creating children's menus for an Italian restaurant. The kind of details that belong on the children's menu will be different from those on the more general menu.
6. After the class has discussed the role of the audience, have them reread their freewriting and then spend a few more minutes freewriting on things that they will include for their particular audience.
7. After students have finished writing, pass out copies of the [Restaurant Menu Planning Sheet](#) and ask students to work through the sheet to begin the process of creating their menus.
8. Ask students to take 10 to 15 minutes to work through the planning sheet for their restaurant.
9. If students are working individually, once they have gathered their preliminary ideas, arrange them in small groups to share their ideas. Encourage students to interact with one another, to share and receive feedback on their plans.
10. For homework, ask students to begin drafting their menus. Ask that they come to the next session with at least a partial draft of their menu. If students are composing their menus in groups, consider adding a work session for them to gather and draft their ideas.

Session Three

1. Remind students of the goals and elements included in this project. Answer any questions students have.
2. Review the adjective part of speech, using the [Capital Community College "Guide to Grammar and Writing" Web site](#) or your grammar textbook as a reference.
3. Display a sample menu using an overhead projector. As a class, read through the example.
4. Underline the adjectives that are included in the sample menu.
5. Once the adjectives are identified, ask students to consider how effective the adjectives are. Encourage students to consider whether the adjectives are appropriate and whether they are used in moderation.
6. Talk about the importance of balance in the use of adjectives, reminding students that using too many adjectives will detract from their usefulness for readers.
7. After you've considered adjectives on the example menu, look at the overall descriptions for food items on the menu. Ask students to consider the length and depth of detail included in the descriptive phrasing on the menu.
8. Take a few minutes to compare the sample menu to the rubric that the class created during the first session, to underscore the requirement for students'

- work.
9. Answer any questions that students have about the process of analyzing the descriptive language used on the menu.
 10. Ask students to analyze their own menus, underlining all the adjective that they have used to describe the food items on their menus.
 11. Once they've finished, have students work in small groups to discuss the adjectives that they have found. Ask students to consider the kinds of adjectives included on the sample menus and what they have learned about adjectives in general.
 12. Demonstrate how to use online resources such as an [Internet dictionary and thesaurus](#) (or show students the thesaurus command in Microsoft Word) to arrive at additional descriptive adjectives for their menus.
 13. After reviewing the adjectives included on the menus, ask students to revise their menus with particular attention to their descriptive phrasing.
 14. While students work, again encourage them to interact with one another.
 15. For homework, students can continue work on their menus. Ask students to come to the next session with a complete, polished draft of their menus.

Session Four

5. Remind students of the requirements for the project, using the rubric that the class created during the first session.
6. Demonstrate the [Flip Book Student Interactive](#), so that students understand the tool and how it works before they begin publishing their own menus.
7. Explain the basic organization of the flip book:
 - o The first page of the flip book could act as a title page, providing basic information on the restaurant and the foods it serves.
 - o For the rest of the flip book, the menu sections are used for the labels (e.g., appetizers, lunch, dinner, beverages, desserts).
 - o Type the menu items and their descriptions on the pages, above each label, using the templates of the students' choice.
8. Allow students time to make last minute additions or revisions then ask them to move to the computer to publish their work.
9. When the flip book is complete, ask students to print it out, cut away the lower areas as appropriate, and assemble the finished menus.
10. If desired, students can use markers, colored pencils, and other general supplies to decorate their final drafts before submitting them for evaluation.
11. Allow time for groups to share their menus with the class.
12. When the sharing and discussions are complete, assess students' work using the rubric created during the first session.

Alternatives

- As an alternative, students can take the school's lunch menus and create new restaurant-quality versions that can be posted in the cafeteria.
- Use the assignment sheet and rubric included in "Menu Magic," by Susan H. Smith with Bethany Hickey, to structure the assignment and students' work.
- Complete this activity as a book report alternative, asking students to create menus for restaurants or meals that characters in the books that they have read would eat. Alternately, students can create historical menus that fit a particular time period that they have been exploring in their readings or in other subject areas.

Web Resources

United States Chain Restaurant Menus

The following menus can be used as examples for your students. Some of the sites require that students enter a local zip code, but no additional personal information is required. You can supplement this list with local restaurant menus you find online.

Chili's

<http://www.chilis.com/>

Red Lobster

<http://www.redlobster.com/homeflash.asp>

Ruby Tuesday

<http://www.rubytuesday.com/>

Famous Dave's

<http://www.famousdaves.com/>

Panda Express

<http://www.pandaexpress.com/default.asp>

Olive Garden

<http://www.olivegarden.com/>

Chevys Fresh Mex

<http://www.chevys.com/>

Starbucks

<http://www.starbucks.com/>

Merriam-Webster Online: The Language Center

<http://www.m-w.com/>

On this Web site, you can access the full text of Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Eleventh Edition, and Collegiate Thesaurus. Site links take you to word games, the featured word of the day, and to Word Central, a language site for kids.

Adjectives

<http://cctc.commnet.edu/grammar/adjectives.htm>

This section of the Capital Community College "Guide to Grammar and Writing" Web site provides extensive information on adjectives—more than enough information to help any students who are unsure about the part of speech.

Using the Thesaurus

<http://atto.buffalo.edu/registered/Tutorials/msword/Thesaurus.doc>

This reproducible provides step-by-step instructions for using the thesaurus in Microsoft Word.

Student Assessment/Reflections

Observe students for their participation during the exploration and discussion of restaurant menus. In class discussions and conferences, watch for evidence that students are able to describe the layout and format of menus. Monitor students' progress and process as they conduct their research and complete drafts of their own menus. As students present their menus to the class, take notes and assess their work using the rubric that the class creates during the first session.

NCTE/IRA Standards

1 - Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

3 - Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts,

Write a menu description for two of the following menu items:

- a. appetizers
- b. soup(s) of the day
- c. salads and/or salad bar
- d. entrees/main dishes
- e. side orders (which may include breads)
- f. beverages
- g. desserts

You may choose one of the following types of restaurants or use one of your own:

- a. Sandwich Shoppe
- b. Waffle House
- c. Ice Cream Saloon
- d. Crepe Shop
- e. Sausage Hut
- f. Avocado Pit
- g. Pizza Palace
- h. Hamburger Haven
- i. Seafood Shanty
- j. Yogurt Bar
- k. Onion House
- l. Steak Stop