Lesson Skill: Working with a good sentence

Strand Reading—fiction/nonfiction

SOL 9.4, 9.5
10.4, 10.5
11.4, 11.5
12.4, 12.5

Materials
- Independent reading text
- Copies of the attached worksheets

Lesson

1. Have each student locate in an independent reading text a passage that is particularly interesting and meaningful to him/her. From this passage, have each student extract one sentence that is clear and engaging. Questions to consider in choosing this sentence include the following:
   - What important information does this sentence tell me about a particular person, place, thing, or idea?
   - What kind of verb(s) is used to convey action, make comparisons, and/or indicate consequences?
   - Why is this sentence so interesting? Is it because of the use of descriptive adjectives and/or adverbs? Is it because the sentence contains special phrases and/or clauses? Because it has a unique structure? Because it has similes, metaphors, allusion, or personification? Because it states an important truth or an interesting idea about a character?

2. Model a good sentence, for example, the opening sentence from *What Came before He Shot Her* by Elizabeth George: "Joel Campbell, eleven years old at the time, began his descent towards murder with a bus ride." Ask students what your reason was for choosing this as an example of a good sentence. Discuss the fact that as a first sentence in a novel, this example does several things for the reader: first, it immediately introduces the reader to a character who has a situation that attracts the reader's attention; secondly, it makes the reader initially wonder and ask questions, such as "What happens on this bus ride? Where is Joel headed? What other characters might be involved?"; finally, it causes the reader to make connections to other stories and begin to wonder how a young, innocent boy could become a murderer. Or is he all that innocent? What life experiences might have changed him? Why does this make me think of the play *Macbeth*, where a good man becomes a murderer?

3. Hand out copies of the Working with a Good Sentence, 1 worksheet, and have each student write the sentence from their passage chosen in step 1. Then, have them explain the reason for their choice.

4. Post these sheets around the room, and allow the students to review their peers' sentences. Hand out copies of the Working with a Good Sentence, 2 worksheet, and have each student choose three other sentences from the posted sheets that seem particularly interesting and meaningful, write them on this worksheet, and explain the reason for each choice.

5. Have students present and discuss the sentences they wrote on the Working with a Good Sentence, 1 worksheets. As each sentence is presented, have the students who have commented on it share their observations with the class.

Strategies for Differentiation
- Switch steps of modeling and selecting text to reinforce skill set being taught
- Review literary terminology
- Provide selection options for the reluctant reader/writer
- Use highlight tape to enable students to easily retrieve important information

Working with a Good Sentence, 1

Name: _____

Sentence from text:

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Reason for choosing this sentence:

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Working with a Good Sentence, 2

Name: _____

Sentence 1 from text:

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Reason for choosing this sentence:

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Sentence 2 from text:

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Reason for choosing this sentence:

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Sentence 3 from text:

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Reason for choosing this sentence:

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