Style and Voice Workshop
Foundation Lesson

About this Lesson
Style and voice result directly from the choices an author makes when he or she is writing. Some elements of voice and style are diction, imagery, figurative language (figures of speech), sound devices, sentence structure, and even punctuation. Students who become aware of the choices they are making and learn to use the tools available to them will be much more effective writers than those who do not. By layering unimpressive, general prose with images, comparisons, and sound devices, students can develop their own style and voice. Finding active, vivid, specific verbs to replace “be” verbs and lackluster, vague verbs and making choices about sentence length, sentence beginnings, and other syntax elements can add color, life, and movement to a student’s writing.

Part of an author’s voice is reflected in his/her attitude about the topic or the mood created for the reader through stylistic choices. Students need to be aware that the choices they make also reveal their attitudes toward what they are writing about.

This lesson is included in Module 1: Introduction to Laying the Foundation.

Objectives
Students will
- write and revise descriptive sentences.
- revise writing to manipulate tone.
- evaluate an author’s choices in creating tone.
- create a descriptive paragraph.
- evaluate their own choices and how those choices create style and voice.

Level
Grades Six through Ten

Connection to Common Core Standards for English Language Arts
LTF® Foundation Lessons are designed to be used across grade levels and therefore are aligned to the CCSS Anchor Standards. Teachers should consult their own grade-level-specific descriptions for these Anchor Standards. The activities in this lesson allow teachers to address the following Common Core Standards:

Explicitly addressed in this lesson

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Level of Thinking</th>
<th>Depth of Knowledge</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L.3</td>
<td>Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.</td>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>II</td>
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<td>Code</td>
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<tr>
<td>W.3</td>
<td>Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.</td>
<td>Create</td>
<td>IV</td>
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<tr>
<td>W.4</td>
<td>Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.</td>
<td>Create</td>
<td>III</td>
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<td>W.5</td>
<td>Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.</td>
<td>Evaluate</td>
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<td>W.10</td>
<td>Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.</td>
<td>Apply</td>
<td>III</td>
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<tr>
<td>L.1</td>
<td>Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.</td>
<td>Understand</td>
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<td>L.2</td>
<td>Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.</td>
<td>Understand</td>
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<td>SL.1</td>
<td>Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.</td>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>II</td>
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<td>R.10</td>
<td>Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.</td>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>II</td>
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LTF Skill Focus
The foundation for LTF English lessons is the Skill Progression Chart that identifies key skills for each domain, beginning with grade six and adding more complex skills at each subsequent grade level while reinforcing skills introduced at previous grade levels. The Skill Focus for each individual lesson identifies the skills actually addressed in that lesson.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels of Thinking</th>
<th>Remember</th>
<th>Understand</th>
<th>Apply</th>
<th>Analyze</th>
<th>Evaluate</th>
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<td>written, spoken, and visual products</td>
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Literary Elements
Mood
Tone
tone determined through diction, imagery, detail, and point of view

Figures of Speech
(Figurative Language)
Simile

Types (modes)
Descriptive
The Process of Composition
Drafting
Structural Elements
Body
Style/Voice
Experimentation with Original Forms and Structures
Imitation of Stylistic Models (beyond sentences)
Less/No Formulaic Writing
Selection of Detail
Selection of Vocabulary
Use of Figures of Speech (Figurative Language)
Use of Literary Techniques

Connections to AP*
Style and voice are desired elements listed in most AP scoring guides at the upper levels. One feature that elevates the quality of student writing is unique and original voice, developed through word choice and syntax.

*Advanced Placement and AP are registered trademarks of the College Entrance Examination Board. The College Board was not involved in the production of this material.

Materials and Resources
- copies of Student Activity
- “Bare Bones” paragraphs from the activity or teacher-generated paragraphs
- Additional LTF lessons for improving style/voice:
  o Composition Foundation Lesson: “Filling in the Blanks—Using Modifiers to Provide Detail”
  o Grammar Foundation Lesson: “Sentence Strategies”
  o Close Reading Foundation Lesson: “Sound Devices”
  o Grammar Foundation Lesson: “Sentence Variations”
Assessments
The following kinds of formative assessments are embedded in this lesson:
- guided revision activities
- writing assignments

Teaching Suggestions
Teachers can write several vague, general paragraphs like those in the activity, or use student examples from past years. Students can work in pairs or groups, adding imagery, specific diction, figurative language, and sound devices to the sample paragraphs and changing verbs to make them more dynamic and active. Students can also consider revising sentence structures by referring to handouts on “Sentence Variations” and “Sentence Strategies.”

Teaching students to revise their essays is an ongoing process. Teachers may consider having students change only one or two elements listed on the “Sentence Variations” and “Sentence Strategies” handouts before requiring them to revise all of the elements in their own writing.

Teachers should review the elements that contribute to style and voice with their students, emphasizing the importance of connotative diction.

Answers
Answers for this lesson are subjective and will vary. To obtain the maximum benefit of the lesson, ask students to go beyond the expected responses.
Activity One
A. Descriptive Sentences
   1. Write a descriptive sentence consisting of just an article, a noun, a linking verb, a predicate adjective, and a prepositional phrase.
      *Example:* The moon was bright over the land.

   2. Replace the linking verb with an action verb while retaining the meaning of the sentence.
      *Example:* The bright moon shone over the land.

   3. Add a detail about sound, taste, touch, smell, or sight (imagery).
      *Example:* The bright moon shone over the land with yellow light.

   4. Add a detail or image using a simile (like or as).
      *Example:* The bright moon shone over the land with light as yellow as butter.

B. Manipulating Tone
The tone conveyed in writing is determined by the author’s choice of diction, details, figurative language, and other devices. The examples above use positive images and details such as bright, shone, and yellow light to convey a sense of calm or serenity. By changing the details and images, another tone can be conveyed.

For example: The dark moon brooded over the land like a sullen night watchman.

The tone of the sentence now is noticeably different from the original. Take your sentence from number 4 above and change the details and images to create a tone different from your original sentence.

Highlight the stylistic choices you made in both the original and revised sentences. Determine the tone of each.
Activity Two
The paragraph below is taken from a novel. The details have been removed to give it a neutral tone.

It was April, and the clocks were ringing. Winston Smith slipped through the glass doors of Victory Mansion. The hallway smelled. At one end of it, a poster had been tacked to the wall. It depicted the face of a man.

Now read the paragraph with diction, details, and images that have been added to create a pleasurable tone:

It was a blustery day in April, and the clocks were chiming thirteen. Winston Smith, his chin tucked on his breast in an effort to escape the playful wind, skipped through the glass doors of Victory Mansions, though not quickly enough to prevent a dancing column of dust bunnies from entering along with him. The hallway smelt of baking cookies and laundry detergent. At one end of it, an extra large poster had been tacked to the wall. It depicted simply a face, more than a metre wide: the benevolent face of a man of about forty-five, with a thick, dark moustache and strong, attractive features.

Now read the paragraph with the original diction/details/images.

It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen. Winston Smith, his chin nuzzled into his breast in an effort to escape the vile wind, slipped quickly through the glass doors of Victory Mansions, though not quickly enough to prevent a swirl of gritty dust from entering along with him. The hallway smelt of boiled cabbage and old rag mats. At one end of it a coloured poster, too large for indoor display, had been tacked to the wall. It depicted simply an enormous face, more than a metre wide: the face of a man of about forty-five, with a heavy black moustache and ruggedly handsome features.

The tone of the original is much more negative and a bit ominous because of the author’s choice of diction, imagery, and details.

Activity Three
A. Imagine you are at a place you know very well. On the lines provided, write a description of this place. Where is it? What is there? What does it look like, smell like, sound like? Be aware of the choices you make in creating your style/voice. Use vivid verbs, at least five adjectives, and one figure of speech in your description.
B. Consciously changing your tone

Fill in the blanks below with the choices you made in your paragraph about verbs, adjectives, and figurative language. Then in the blanks to the right choose an alternative for the choices you made. In the second column, write a word/phrase with a positive connotation and, in the third, a word or phrase with a negative connotation.

For example:

shone: \textit{positive connotation}: gleamed \hspace{1cm} \textit{negative connotation}: glared

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C. Now rewrite your paragraph from Exercise A, using alternative choices to change the tone of your paragraph.

D. Review your paragraphs from Exercises A and C. Describe your writing style. How might it be different from other writers in your class?
Bare Bones Paragraphs

Select one of the “bare bones” paragraphs to expand by using the techniques from the “Style and Voice Workshop.” Make thoughtful choices about changing diction and adding details, imagery, and figures of speech. Be aware of the tone your choices create.

The boy found blood on the floor. He called the police. CSI agents came to collect evidence. They wanted to solve the mystery. They found hairs on the carpet and a piece of glass on the victim’s shirt. They asked many questions. They ran many tests. They found the answer.

Two friends sat at a table in the coffee shop. They talked and drank their coffees. The waiter checked to see if they needed anything. A man and woman walked through the door. The woman glanced around and shook her head. She turned and left the shop. The man followed her. The two friends looked up and laughed. The waiter brought their bill.

Rebecca and Michael are the best athletes on the Graham Middle School Hover Derby Squad. Their skills enable them to outrace their opponents on the steeply banked hoverboard track. Some of the Hover Derby maneuvers are dangerous, but the team members practice every day. They hope for a winning season this year.

The child held his mother’s hand. They got on the bus. The bus driver looked at them. They went to the back of the bus and sat down. Fifteen minutes later, the mother pulled the string, signaling for the driver to stop. He did, and they got off the bus and walked to the entrance of the zoo.

I went duck hunting with my dad. We left very early in the morning before the sun came up. It was very cold. I had a new shotgun. When we got to the pond, we walked to the blind, settled in, and waited. We were surprised by what happened. We came home with a tale to tell.