**TEN BOOKS THAT ILLUSTRATE STRONG VERBS**

Select passages with strong verbs from books to share and discuss with students. Also invite students to search for image-making verbs by asking pairs to read picture books, magazine articles, or their own books and share these in groups or with the entire class. Here are ten titles I often use:

- *Alvin Ailey* by Andrea Davis Pinkney, illustrated by Brian Pinkney (Hyperion, 1995).
- *Chrysanthemum* by Kevin Henkes (Greenwillow, 1991).
- *How Turtle’s Back Was Cracked: A Traditional Cherokee Tale* retold by Gayle Ross, paintings by Murv Jacob (Dial, 1995).
- *Night Sounds, Morning Colors* by Rosemary Wells, illustrated by David McPhail (Dial, 1994).
- *Rattlesnake Dance* by Jim Arnosky (Putnam, 2000).

**STRATEGY LESSON**

**Spotlight Strong Verbs on Word Walls**

**Introduction**

Verb word walls can tune students in to the rich amount of words in our language that have similar meanings. Instead of using the verb *walk* to describe how a character moved, I want students to refine the image and search for a verb that accurately shows the walk. *Trudge, stroll, and limp* are stronger and can better portray the action.

Build verb walls throughout the year by including strong verbs that can be used when writing about:

- holidays and birthdays
- themes the class is studying, such as space, friendship, conflict, peer pressure, weather
- the seasons
- similar words for *walk, said, cried, talked*
- sports
- dance, singing, acting, music

If you have limited wall space on which to hang large pieces of construction paper, use a wide roll of adding-machine tape. Attach strips of...
adding-machine paper to a wall or bulletin board and record verbs. It’s easy to change these. Just roll up and store ones you’ve completed, making room for new lists.

**Purpose**

To help students explore verb possibilities and choose the one that creates the strongest image; to generate lists of strong verbs students can refer to as they draft and revise.

**Materials**

books, magazines, poems, chart paper and/or adding-machine tape, marker pens

**Suggestions**

1. Help students understand that in a sentence, verbs show what happens and how it happens. Stronger, more colorful verbs, such as *sizzle*, appeal to our senses, enabling readers to picture, taste, feel, hear, and smell.

2. Write, on an overhead transparency or chart paper, sentences with weak and strong verbs. Here are two pairs of sentences I share with fifth graders:

   - Molly went to the store.
   - Molly skipped and jogged to the store.

   - The third graders go into the gym.
   - Third graders charged into the gym.

3. Involve students by asking: “How did your sensory images change when you read the second example? What other verbs might work? Why?”

4. Invite students to collect strong verbs from their reading and write these on the verb wall. Spend six to ten minutes three to four times a week gathering students’ examples. Continue collecting over several weeks or collect intensively for two weeks. As you review verbs, have students add to the lists.

5. Focus verb lists on writing topics, units of study, or synonyms.

6. Encourage students to use these lists as they draft and revise pieces.

7. Create a list of verbs and other words to avoid in writing—words that don’t create images. I call these “banished words” (see next page).
### SIXTH GRADE’S LISTS OF STRONG VERBS

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<th>Instead of “go,” try:</th>
<th>Instead of “fall,” try:</th>
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<td>walk</td>
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### List of Banished Words

During the year, students and I create a list of words—various parts of speech—to avoid in their writing. I start the list, and in a think aloud, I explain the rationale behind it. Students enjoy bringing candidates before the class, and everyone votes to see which words make the list. I tell them, “This year we’ll work together to cull words to avoid in writing. Words on the list are ordinary and don’t appeal to the senses. The list will help you eliminate these words when revising.”

Here are some of the words that made it onto my eighth graders’ list:

- a lot
- get
- make
- went
- pretty
- good
- bad
- beautiful
- go
- come
- nice
- fun
- cute
- okay
- say
- do
- stuff
- things