Word Choice

6 + 1 Writing
Word Choice Defined

- It is the art of selecting the “just right” word that attaches meaning to the message.
- It is about using precise language, not vague or unwieldy words.
- Strong verbs are the heart of word choice.
- Strong word choice does not rely on fancy thesaurus language that few people can even pronounce, much less define. Instead, the writer uses everyday language in unique and interesting ways.
Word Choice: A Snapshot...

- Precise nouns
- Strong verbs
- Sparing use of modifiers (adjectives and adverbs)
- Language matches the purpose and audience
- Everyday words used in a unique way
What teachers look for

- Everyday language used in original ways
- You want to read it more than once – quotable
- Every word carries its own weight
- Words invoke sensory impressions, create vivid images
Word Choice: Where to begin?

1. Keep a journal
   On one page, write down favorite words – words like rhythm, serendipity, legendary, charisma, sleuth, cosmos, echo, hugger-mugger, kaleidoscope. And on another page, jot down words you are tired of: nice, fun, funner, far out, stuff, special, and so on.

2. Collect quotations
   Collect the good – and the not so good. Make a collage.

3. Think of another way to say it.
   Alice was angry. How else could you say that? Quick! Alice was vexed, provoked, furious, fuming, livid, hysterical, blue in the face, storming, frenzied, freaked out, beside herself, ranting, huffy, fiery, pugnacious, short-fused, cranky, bilious, bellicose, touchy, peppery, explosive – and agitated.
4. Think verbs.

No adjective on Earth can compete with a good verb. So, don’t move forward when you could lunge. Don’t simply walk down the street if you could trudge, shuffle, galumph, meander, promenade, or saunter.

5. Make a picture.

Remember when you were small and (if you were like lots of kids) you wrote mostly in pictures? Add those same details – only do it with words.

6. Cut the fat.

Words have power ONLY if they carry their own weight. So let them. Hack off words you don’t need.
Changing words changes not only meaning but also the pictures in your mind.

Consider how much difference ONE word makes.
Paul WENT down the road.