

Wonderful Words

Student Lesson 4

Consider the text:

Dodos made nests on the ground. Females laid a single egg.

Dodos were **watchful** mothers.

Melissa Higgins, *Dodos*

Take a deeper look:

1. If you **watch** TV, you pay attention. If a soldier keeps **watch**, he is looking out for enemies. What do you think a “watchful” mother does? Draw a picture of a watchful mother bird.

2. Which sentence helps you have a better idea of what the dodo mother is like?

“Dodos were watchful mothers.”

or

“Dodos were good mothers.”

Now you try it:

Think about this sentence:

“Gabriella is a good dancer.”

With your class, brainstorm all of the things that “good” could mean. Think carefully about what specific words you could use instead of “good” to describe how well Gabriella dances. Now choose which words or phrases are the most exact when it comes to Gabriella’s dancing. Add some of your words to the Wonderful Words Chart.

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Commentary and Suggestions for Teachers

Lesson Objective: to find the perfect word that says exactly what the author wants to say

Consider the text:

This passage is from a book that describes what we know about dodos, which are extinct, flightless birds. Read the passage to students several times. Be certain they know what a nest is and understand that birds lay eggs instead of giving birth to live young.

Take a deeper look:

1. Answers will vary, but students should get the idea that the mother dodo carefully protected the eggs (and later her young) in her nest, keeping dangers away. The pictures should reflect the watchfulness of the mother dodo. It is not important that students know what a dodo looked like, but if you wish to share pictures of dodos, you can easily find images on the Internet.
2. The first sentence gives the reader (or listener) a much clearer picture of the mother dodo's behavior. A "good" mother could mean many things: kind, sympathetic, helpful, and so on. "Watchful" gives us a precise idea of what the dodo mother was like: on guard and protective. Authors try to find the exact word to focus the reader's attention on important ideas.

Now you try it:

Have students brainstorm words that could replace "good" in the sentence to give a more precise idea of what Gabriella is like as a dancer. Then have students select the word or phrase that they think most precisely describes the way Gabriella dances. Suggestions may include such words as "graceful," "skilled," "lively," "expert," and "experienced." Add some of their words to the Wonderful Words Chart.