

## A Note to the Teacher

Speakers and writers create images of people and things through their choice of **adjectives**.

Adjectives give meaning and life to nouns. They are often chosen specifically to give a positive or a negative view of people, places, events and objects.

Advertisers know this very well, and choose adjectives that will display their products in the most desirable way. They use words like *reliable, charming, immaculate, heavy-duty* etc. Value can be *outstanding, great* or *unbeatable*.

The media too, selects adjectives designed to sway the audience to a particular view. Of a dictator it may use words like *evil, vicious, ruthless*, and the acts of such a person may be described as *despicable, brutal, inhuman*. Whereas a princess may be described as *beautiful, stylish, graceful*, performing acts that are *generous, compassionate* and *admirable*.

Adjectives give life and personality to all the people and things we speak and write about.

# ADJECTIVES

## The Bare Bones

Adjectives are words that give color, shape, size, sound and feeling to nouns. Their job is to paint clearer pictures of nouns.

*Carl, a tall man, went to the local shop to buy big bones for his shaggy, brown dog.*

Adjectives can be placed before the noun they describe.

e.g. I stroked the *soft* fur of the *tiny, white* kitten.

Adjectives can be placed after the noun they describe.

e.g. The door was *wooden* and *heavy*.  
This orange is *sweet* and *juicy*.

Different adjectives have different jobs to do.

**Descriptive adjectives** give color, shape, size and feeling to nouns.

e.g. sharp pencil; choppy seas; haunting melody; scruffy dog; long, dusty road; quaint, white-washed cottages

**Verbal adjectives** are participles used as adjectives. Participles end in *-ing* or *-ed*.

e.g. a walking stick; falling rocks; a deafening roar; scented roses; a puzzled look; a dazed expression

**Number adjectives** give quantity to the noun.

e.g. ten geese, five marbles, sixth person, first place

**Indefinite adjectives** give uncertain quantity to the noun.

e.g. some children; few coins; many soldiers; most people

Adjectives may show degree.

**Adjectives of degree** may describe nouns as they are (positive degree)

e.g. *I have a long rope,*

or compared to another (comparative degree)

e.g. *My rope is longer than yours,*

or compared to all others (superlative degree)

e.g. *Todd has the longest rope of all.*

Suffixes *-er* and *-est* are usually used to make adjectives of degree.

e.g. old, older, oldest;  
sweet, sweeter, sweetest

Other adjectives of degree are formed by placing *more* or *most* before the adjective.

*More* and *most* are used before adjectives that already end in a suffix.

e.g. beautiful, more beautiful, most beautiful;  
helpful, more helpful, most helpful;  
famous, more famous, most famous

### Similes

Adjectives are used in similes – a figure of speech which likens one thing to another, to provide a clearer word picture of something or someone.

e.g. as light as a feather; as cold as ice;  
as white as snow

Adjectives show opposite ways of describing nouns. Because the work of adjectives is to describe nouns, it is possible to use them in ways that will give opposing views of people and things. These adjectives are called **antonyms**.

e.g. a short/tall person; fresh/stale cake;  
sweet/sour oranges; dull/bright day;  
rough/smooth road

## Reviewing adjectives

- Remind the students that **adjectives** are very powerful tools that writers use to give life and meaning to people and things. Like artists, they paint pictures, using words as their colors. They have a large palette of words, from which they constantly draw, to give their nouns shape and color, size and feeling. Writers, especially, create pictures of story settings and characters using word pictures.
- Tell the students that together you are going to paint a picture of a man. Write the word 'man' on the board. Say that today they are going to create that picture using adjectives.
- Write the key headings (below) across the board. Brainstorm a list of adjectives and write them under each heading.

### Adjective-forming suffixes

A suffix (word ending) changes the way a word is used in a sentence. Some suffixes added to words form adjectives. e.g. *funny, helpful, careless, comfortable, famous, tiresome, attractive, foolish, dependent*

- Discuss how we order adjectives in a logical way – a *big, fat* man rather than a *fat, big* man.
- Discuss the use of commas when using more than one adjective – a *tall, skinny, long-legged* man.
- Tell the students that the adjective/s can be placed before or after the nouns they describe, e.g. an *angry* man, *bald and overweight*; a *large* man, *kind and friendly*.
- Show the students how to build sentences around these words e.g. *An angry man, bald and overweight, stomped into the room; He was a large man, kind and friendly.*

<i>The Look</i>	<i>The Shape</i>	<i>The Size</i>	<i>The Color</i>	<i>The Feeling</i>
<i>bald</i>	<i>plump</i>	<i>tall</i>	<i>pale</i>	<i>sad</i>
<i>bearded</i>	<i>thin</i>	<i>short</i>	<i>ginger-haired</i>	<i>angry</i>
<i>stooped</i>	<i>fat</i>	<i>towering</i>	<i>freckled</i>	<i>old</i>
<i>flamboyant</i>	<i>skinny</i>	<i>large</i>	<i>pimpley</i>	<i>friendly</i>
<i>handsome</i>	<i>long-legged</i>	<i>overweight</i>	<i>dark-skinned</i>	<i>lonely</i>
<i>regal</i>	<i>stocky</i>	<i>small</i>	<i>blonde-haired</i>	<i>excited</i>
...	...	...	...	...

- Ask the students to choose three adjectives to describe the man. Write several responses on the board. Explain that writers, generally, only use between 1 and 3 adjectives at any one time – more would be cumbersome, e.g. a *short, plump, bearded* man; a *handsome, dark-skinned* man; a *stocky, ginger-haired* man.

- Ask the students to build a picture of a man using adjectives, then to build a sentence around them. Share their responses.
- Ask them to reflect on how their choice of words changed the picture of the man.

# Exploring ADJECTIVES

## Setting the Scene

Prepare some sheets of paper headed with a range of story settings, e.g. beach, city, sporting venue, countryside, train station, street carnival, the mountains etc.

Give each pair of students a prepared sheet of paper. Ask them to list some 'things' they would expect to see, hear, feel and touch in that setting. They could then add one or two adjectives to describe their 'things', e.g. *golden sand; broken shells; loud, crashing waves; colorful beach umbrellas; laughing children; rocks, wet and jagged...*

After 15 minutes or so, pairs present and display their lists.

In a second session, you could return the lists to their authors and ask them to write a short paragraph to describe their particular setting.

## Goodies and Baddies

Explain that storytellers use adjectives very effectively to build images of their characters, either in a positive way or a negative way. Give examples of Cinderella and the ugly step-sisters, Red Riding Hood and the wolf. Provide the students with a range of fairytales, folktales, myths and legends. Ask them to work in pairs to list the adjectives that describe the 'goodies' and the 'baddies'. Share their findings.

## Collectors' Corner

Divide the class into small groups.

Supply each group with magazines, papers and junk mail. Nominate a topic for each group, e.g. sport, fashion, cars, animals, movie/rock stars, food, travel etc.

Ask each group to find and paste pictures about their topic, collage-style, onto an A3-sized sheet of paper. Ask them to write any number of describing adjectives on a label to paste on/below each picture. On completion, the groups could pin up their sheets, side by side, to create a large mural of adjectives.

## Point of View

Explain that most material we read in newspapers is biased in some way – the reporter or advertiser is writing from a particular point of view. Provide the students with newspapers. Ask them to work in pairs to scan some articles and advertisements and list adjectives under two headings: **Positive** and **Negative**. Direct the students to the real estate section, letters to the editor, articles about political, environmental or economic issues, and to general advertising. Share their findings.