

Reading/Language Arts

Activity #9: *Keeping It Consistent*

Objective 09: Editing Skills

In this activity, students practice identifying and changing verb tense.

Description: Students read a short, narrative passage, identify the verbs, and rewrite the passage from past tense to present tense.

► **Directions**

1. Introduce the activity by reviewing verb tenses. Ask students why an author would choose to use past tense rather than present tense. Encourage students to refer to specific works they have read, citing examples of past and present tense.
2. Divide the class into pairs and distribute the passage found on the following page.
3. Instruct the student pairs to read the passage and circle all the verbs.
4. When students have finished identifying the verbs in the passage, create, on the board, a class list of all the verbs.
5. Ask the class to identify the tense of the verbs used in the passage. Then instruct the students to change each verb from past tense to present tense.
6. Finish the activity by discussing with the class how a change in verb tense affects the reader. Ask students if the story was more effectively told in one tense or the other.

Variation: Have students write paragraphs in both the present and past tense.

Directions: Read the passage below and circle all the verbs. When instructed, change the tense of the verbs from past tense to present tense.

When they reached the river, Sammy splashed cold water on his face; he was hot and scratched from the journey through the thick brush. Sammy noticed that Betsy and Robert had already forgotten the tedious climb and were busy skipping flat stones across the river. Since his cousins had lived in the rugged Jackson Mountains all their lives, they were used to hiking. After resting for a few minutes, Sammy started upstream to search for the rapids that Betsy said they would swim across. By the time Sammy found the white, splashing water, Betsy and Robert had joined him.

The river was considerably narrower and deeper here, and the swift water gushed around giant boulders. Sammy was an excellent swimmer, but he had never before attempted to swim across a current. As he waded in and then swam quickly into the current, he wondered if he would make it. He approached the first boulders and pulled past them with strong, decisive strokes. It was thrilling because he felt he was testing his strength against the current.

Sammy could see that the river formed a pool just ahead of him. It looked a bit calmer; he could probably catch his breath there. Suddenly, the current grabbed him and pulled him under. The river was far deeper here than he had realized. As he hit bottom, he felt his pant leg snag on a branch. Sammy struggled desperately because he knew he soon would be out of air. Finally, he was able to kick himself clear, and with a few vigorous strokes, he emerged near the opposite shore.

He climbed out and flopped on the bank, exhausted but safe. His cousins, beaming, waved to him, obviously unaware of his narrow escape in the pool. Sammy just took in a deep breath and smiled back.