Why walk when you can mosey? In this lesson, students will learn how to use synonyms to express shades of meaning in their writing. Introduce the topic with a book, then brainstorm descriptive options for overused words.

Learning Objectives
Students will be able to identify common synonyms that convey shades of meaning.

Materials and Preparation
- *Monsters Can Mosey: Understanding Shades of Meaning* by Gillia M. Olson and Ivica Stevanovic
- Paper tombstone prepared with the word "walk"
- Paper tombstones prepared with other overused words (1 per pair of students)
- Chart paper
- Student thesaurus (optional)

Key Terms:
- synonym
Lesson

Introduction (5 minutes)

1. Ask a student to demonstrate the direction, "Please walk across the room."
2. Ask another student to demonstrate the direction, "Please march across the room."
3. Repeat this demonstration with several other ways to walk such as: stomp, strut or sneak.
4. Explain that these words are all synonyms, or words that have almost the same meaning, for the word walk.
5. Introduce the book *Monsters Can Mosey*, explaining that monsters don't just want to walk. They want to be noticed for the way they move.

Explicit Instruction/Teacher Modeling (30 minutes)

- Read the book *Monsters Can Mosey* aloud to the class.
- While reading, stop and record the different synonyms used for "walk" in the story. Create a chart of words for the class to see, adding each word as it comes up.
- Each time you find a new synonym, ask a student volunteer to demonstrate the way to walk.
- After reading, review the different ways monsters can walk. Take a vote for the scariest way to walk and the funniest way to walk. Emphasize that these are all ways to walk.
- Show students the word tombstone for walk. Attach it to the top of the chart you made while reading.
- Tell students that now, in their writing, "walk" is a dead word. They can choose a more interesting and descriptive word from the list.

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Guided Practice/Interactive Modeling *(20 minutes)*

- Introduce some other overused words that you have observed in your students' writing. Common choices include: said/say, see, good, bad, big, little and like. You may choose to use all verbs or all adjectives if you are focusing on a certain part of speech.
- Have a word tombstone ready with each overused word written on it. Attach the tombstone to a piece of chart paper.
- With one pair of students, model how to create a list of synonyms for one of the overused words for the class. Start by asking some key questions that activate the students' prior knowledge. Great examples include things like, "What's another word for say?" or "Which word means very big?"
- Share the pen and take turns recording responses on the chart paper.
- After you have modeled thinking out and writing a few replacement words, pair off students in groups of two.
- Pass out a word tombstone chart to each pair of students. Direct them to ask key questions in order to come up with replacement words for the "dead" word.
- Students may be encouraged to use a thesaurus if one has been introduced previously.

Independent Working Time *(10 minutes)*

- Post the word tombstone charts in a visible spot.
- Give each student a blank sheet of paper.
- Ask them to choose one of the "dead" words, use it in a sentence, and then illustrate that sentence below.
- Next, have students write the same sentence, but replace the dead word with another word on the chart.
- Ask them to illustrate the new sentence, showing the change in meaning.
- Finally have students answer the question, "How does the new word change the meaning of your sentence?" Model an answer, such as "Mosey means walking more slowly."
Extend

Differentiation

- **Enrichment**: Ask students to write the replacement words on strips of paper. Then have them order the words by shades of meaning. For example, *little, small, tiny, miniscule, microscopic*.
- **Support**: Provide students with replacement words for two or more "dead" words already written on strips of paper. Have students sort the words by which "dead" word they could replace.

Related Books and/or Media

- *Mice Squeak, We Speak* by Arnold Shapiro and Tomie dePaola
- *Pitch and Throw, Grasp and Know: What Is a Synonym?* by Brian P. Cleary

Review

Assessment  *(5 minutes)*

- Observe student writing after the lesson. When you see one of the "dead" words used, ask the student to replace the word with another from the appropriate chart.
- Help them choose a new word by asking questions like, "How is this done?" or "Is it very ___?"
- Ask the student why he/she chose that particular replacement word. Assess whether the student chooses because of shades of meaning.

Review and Closing  *(5 minutes)*

- As the class prepares to transition to the next activity, ask the students to choose a way to walk to your next setting from the original word tombstone chart for *walk*.