Cedric Synnestvedt  
Best Lesson Plan  
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I used the “Exploding a Moment” lesson on TRACs, and my students in both classes had a lot of fun with it. It’s a creative way to teach them a few levels of revision: sentence variation, paragraph development (point illustration, removal of irrelevant sentences/ideas), and revision. You could even work in a mini grammar lesson.

Materials needed:  
“Exploding a Moment” handout from TRACs (it’s a PDF and you may need to adapt it to your liking), sample paragraph handouts (adapted from original)

Objectives: teaching a revision tool, applying that tool to an in class writing assignment, discussing readings.

Opening writing exercise—10 minutes:  
A guided prompt is useful for this. Having students try to compose a complete paragraph in response an essay prompt is a good way to go. In my case, I had students respond to a prompt relevant to the current unit, which was Human Nature.

Main lesson:  
This exercise took about 45 minutes.  
-Project boring sample paragraph, read it, have students react to it  
-Project sample revision of one moment in the boring paragraph, have students react to that  
- Have students find a partner (or put them into small groups)  
-Distribute handouts of the original boring paragraph, have them find a moment to expand on (15-20 minutes)  
-Then have students share their work with the class  
-Finally, have them use the same tool on the piece of writing they have from the beginning of class. My students really seemed to like this.

This took up most of the class period, but there was still time to discuss one reading. You may not want to use this lesson on a reading-heavy day.
EXPLODING A MOMENT

Angel Barbee
Time Required: 45 minutes
Goals/Purpose: Revision Activity
Description: Exploding A Moment. This revision technique is especially helpful in eliciting rich details (and the students will love the length it adds to a draft) It’s almost like writing in slow motion—slowing down the moment—to capitalize on sights, thoughts, feelings, and more.
Origin: Inspired by Barry Lane’s After The End: Teaching and Learning Creative Revision and fellow Teaching Assistant Chris Davis.

Procedure:
1. Read orally the following paragraph:

I woke up late this morning—as usual. I had no clean clothes and the fridge was next to bare. Traffic was heavy as I sped to work. Some jerk cut me off and I almost had a wreck. At work I went to my desk and there was a note to go and see the boss. I waited outside her office for a while before she called me in. I couldn’t figure out why she wanted to see me. I went inside and sat down. My boss handed me an envelope. She told me that my services were no longer needed and that I was free to go. I got my belongings from my desk and left. The drive home was quick. I am now unemployed.

2. Point out the lack of details in this paragraph. Explain that any one of these sentences could be "exploded" to create an interesting story. Then read them the following explosion I wrote as an example:

Some jerk cut me off and I almost had a wreck. I hate people who can’t drive. I decided to teach him a little lesson by playing near bumper cars with his bright red 300 ZX. He kept hitting his brakes, and eventually even shook a fist of rage at me. I giggled gleefully—kind of like that lady in Fried Green Tomatoes who got immense pleasure from repeatedly rearranging the car of the person who had stolen her parking space. Space is crucial, and that jerk will probably think twice before he cuts into mine again.

3. Now pass out copies of the first (bland) paragraph to students while they are getting into pairs. Tell them to choose one sentence to explode, making up the most interesting details they can—as long as their additions will still fit in the facts of the original paragraph.
4. After giving them 15-20 minutes, read the original paragraph again orally one sentence at a time, asking for volunteers to share their explosions. Students usually enjoy this time and are eager both to share and to listen to each other’s explosions.
5. Finally, after discussing the differences between the bare bones of the first paragraph and the rich details of their explosions, have students take out their most recent drafts and choose a sentence they feel is ripe for explosion (with actual details this time). Have students explode the moment(s) they’ve chosen as a means of adding interesting details to future drafts.

Believe me, as far as revision techniques go, this one has been phenomenal. “Exploding a moment” is a tool that can really add depth to student writing. It even gives a new vocabulary for revision; I can’t tell you how many of my students have said, “I think I’ll do an explosion here!”
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