

Jazz Up That Title!

FROM *NONFICTION CRAFT LESSONS*
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DISCUSSION

As students learn about their particular topics, they will revise their thinking many times along the way. Revising the title is one of the simplest examples of this. On one hand, changing a title is easy since the title is so short. We want to teach kids that a snappy title will entice their readers. But the title is more than window dressing. We have often seen that when students sharpen their titles, it has a positive effect on the entire piece of writing.

How To Teach It

Today I want you to think about your title. Often we don't really think much about it. We come up with a title that is nothing more than a label, like a tag that gets stuck on a holiday present. A title like "Bees" or "Slavery" is okay for a start, but at some point you probably want to come up with a title that's going to intrigue your readers.

Consider these ideas for jazzing up your title. (You might want to list these on a large easel.)

1. Surprise your reader: "Rabbits That Kill," "They Bloom Only at Night."
2. Use humor: *It's Disgusting and We Ate It!** or "Don't Marry a Black Widow Spider."
3. Try using an adjective that starts with the same letter as your subject: "The Terrifying Tarantula" or "Mischievous Monkeys." This technique is called *alliteration* in poetry, and it can create a title that is fun to say out loud.

Take a good hard look at your title. Is it just a label, or will it really grab your readers' attention and make them want to read more? If you want to jazz up your title, consider using one of these ideas.

Remember: your title should be as specific as possible. If your title is too general ("Dinosaurs" or "Pollution") it's probably a sign that you need to focus your topic by taking a slice instead of the whole thing. Instead of "Predators," for example, you might want to narrow your title to "Predators of the Night."

* *It's disgusting and We Ate It!* True Food Facts from Around the World and Throughout History by James Solheim