Lesson #2

Describing People

Practicing adjectives

Lesson Plan by Catherine Schell
WARM-UP:

Look at the following poem, a traditional love poem linked to Valentine’s day (February 14th). The colored words are adjectives.

Roses are red,
Violets are blue,
Sugar is sweet,
And so are you.

Read the lyrics to the first stanza of the American anthem. All the colored words are adjectives.

Oh, say can you see by the dawn’s early light
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight’s last gleaming?
Whose broad stripes and bright stars thru the perilous fight,
O’er the ramparts we watched were so gallantly streaming?
And the rocket’s red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there.
Oh, say does that Star-Spangled Banner yet wave
O’er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

Watch the following video, called ‘Grammar Rock Adjectives’:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mYzGLzFuwxI
Describing People

adjectives

Text:
Remember our friends from the previous lesson? They are back to tell us more about themselves!

Steve, college student: Well, I am tall and athletic. I play different sports: basketball, football, and soccer. I have brown hair and hazel eyes. My friends say I am friendly and nice. I am very open. I love discussing interesting ideas and meeting new friends.

Julie, journalist: I am small, but I am strong! Sometimes I am shy around people I do not know. With my friends and family, I am very outgoing. My mom says I have a pretty smile. Do you agree? She also likes my long, curly brown hair. My favorite color is blue, and I am always optimistic. I am youthful, but I am an old soul.

Claudia, artist (Claudia was unavailable, so her friend Vivian talks about her): Claudia? Oh, she is special! I like her spontaneous nature. She is young, exuberant, and lively; she is slim and active. She often wears colorful clothes. Do you see her picture? She wears a green shirt and her favorite jeans! She has a creative mind: students love her passionate outlook on life.

Walter, doctor: I am nearsighted, so I wear glasses. I am well built; I have a dark complexion and black, wavy hair. I am focused and driven. I am not lazy! I am very patient. I work long hours, but I am never bored at my job. It is so interesting! I do not want a boring life. I am energetic and I want to be successful.
2. Looking at the descriptions, can you find how adjectives are placed in relation to the noun they modify?
What are adjectives?
Adjectives are words that describe or modify a person/thing/place/concept (i.e. a noun or a noun phrase) in a sentence. Adjectives are placed before the noun or noun phrase that they modify. If two adjectives describe a noun, use and to link the adjectives. If there are more than two adjectives, use commas at first, then use and before the last adjective (it is rare to have more than three adjectives in a row):

Examples: He owns a yellow car.
          Black and white televisions are very rare.
          The company seeks intelligent, motivated, and energetic people.

Adjectives are also used on their own, or with fixed expressions such as how _______ or it/this/that is ________:

Examples: Excellent! This is great!
          You work in advertising? How interesting!

When indefinite pronouns (i.e. something, someone, anybody) are modified by an adjective, the adjective comes after the pronoun:

Examples: We watched something fascinating on the news tonight.
          In Washington DC you always see something new.

When an adjective owes its origins to a proper noun, it is capitalized:

Examples: French fries, the English Parliament, the Smithsonian institute, a Victorian house, etc.

How do I find or make adjectives?
Adjectives are very often associated with nouns, and describe various attributes of the noun:
- size: a small company, a big house
- shape: a round table, the Oval Office
- age: a young man, an old establishment
- color: blue skies, a red carpet
- origin: an American car, the Spanish football team
- material: a wooden house, a marble building
- etc.

You can easily create adjectives with many verbs (not all!) if you add the –ed or –ing endings to the verb. However, be careful to make a distinction between the two! Generally, the -ed ending means that the noun described is the receiver of the action implied by the original verb. The -ing ending means that the noun described is the actor:

Examples: The news is dramatic. I am shocked. (the news shocks you)
BUT I hate shocking documentaries. (the documentaries shock you)
LESSON (cont.)

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**Common adjectives and their opposites:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good / bad</th>
<th>Rich / poor</th>
<th>Polite / rude</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clever - intelligent / stupid</td>
<td>Hot / cold</td>
<td>Lively / calm – reserved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wise / foolish</td>
<td>Clean / dirty</td>
<td>Easy / hard – tough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart / stupid</td>
<td>Funny / sad</td>
<td>Alone / together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beautiful / ugly</td>
<td>Happy / unhappy</td>
<td>Far / close</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big / small - little</td>
<td>Patient / impatient</td>
<td>Hopeful / desperate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long / short</td>
<td>Exciting / boring</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thick - fat / thin</td>
<td>Perfect / imperfect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young / old</td>
<td>Interesting / dull</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exercises

Find the intruder:
1. Small / tall / patient / thick
2. Funny / boring / lively / clever
3. Lazy / active / exuberant / lively
4. Clever / beautiful / intelligent / stupid

Describe a person or element in the following pictures.

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Exercises (cont.)

React to the sentences using this is ____ or how ____ and an adjective of your choice:

Example: I have a new job! How great! / This is great!

1. It is raining!
2. You are late for a meeting.
3. Your friend lost his wallet.
4. President Obama is visiting your school.

Role-play:
Act out the following scenarios, using adjectives to describe the situation.

1. You left your bag at the gym. Describe what it looks like to the gym manager…
   I have a green bag. It is small and __________. It is as big as a _____________. It is a leather/canvas/plastic/nylon bag.

2. You just returned from visiting Washington D.C. Tell your family/friends about your discoveries.
   The Washington Monument is tall! The stones are different colors, and the Mall is immense!

3. Pick a celebrity and describe him/her to a classmate. When your classmate correctly guesses the name of your celebrity, reverse the roles.
   He is a political figure. He is very well-known, he is old, he lives in South Africa… Nelson Mandela!

Family portrait:
Describe what someone in your family looks like to an artist.
Wind-down

Listen to the song and find the adjectives!
Tom Petty, American girl  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uNgt7U9rFQ

Well, she was an _______________ girl,
Raised on promises
She couldn’t help thinking that there was a little more to life
Somewhere else
After all it was a great _______ world
With lots of places to run to
And if she had to die
Tryin’, she
Had one ____________ promise she was gonna keep

Oh yeah, alright,
Take it ____________, baby
Make it last all night
She was an American girl.

Well, it was kind of ___________ that night,
She stood ___________ on the balcony
Yeah, she could hear the cars roll by,
Out on four forty one like
Waves crashing on the beach,
And for one desperate moment there
He crept back in her memory
God, it’s so painful when something that’s so close
Is still so __________ out of reach

Listen to this broadcast and find the adjectives!
VOA Learning English – Education report #397
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BM6S7GmKI7o&feature=PlayList&p=CF433A0716D62837&index=0&playnext=1

Pictures: courtesy of http://www.stockvault.net
Videos: courtesy of http://youtube.com