

The Building Blocks of Language: Lesson Plan 3

After PE and Cooldown

Use the class song.

Today We Are Learning

For the last two lessons, we have been learning that words can be taken apart in different ways. Today we are going to use those same tools on one giant word.

Today's Word

The teacher should take time to write the word slowly and clearly on the whiteboard while students watch. Write: HIPPOPOTAMUS. Let the word sit there.

Ask: "Does anybody know this word?" "Does anybody want to try to read it?" If someone knows it, great. If nobody does, that is fine too. Ask: "What do we do when we meet a word?"

● SEE IT

Look at the whole word: HIPPOPOTAMUS. Give students time to look across the letters.

SAY IT

Say the whole word naturally: hippopotamus. Let the class repeat it. Let individual students try it. Then say it together.

CLAP IT

Tell the class: "Let's slow it down and listen for the syllables." Clap together: 🖐 HIP 🖐 PO 🖐 POT 🖐 A 🖐 MUS

Ask: "How many syllables?" Five. Write: 🖐 CLAP IT: HIP | PO | POT | A | MUS

Let students come to the board, point, clap, mark the syllable lines, or work with the word on their own paper. Then return to HIPPOPOTAMUS and say the whole word naturally again.

♀ FIND WHAT WE KNOW

Now ask: "HOW MANY WORDS CAN WE FIND HIDING INSIDE HIPPOPOTAMUS?" Do not immediately give students the answers. Let them search.

- point to something they recognize
- circle it
- underline it
- come to the board
- copy the giant word onto paper

- work with a partner
- call out a word they find

Let the search be playful. This is a big word. There is a lot hiding inside it.

Teacher Board Guide

Give students time to search first. Then make sure the class has seen the useful words below. For one they missed, the teacher can say: “I found another one. Can you find it?”

Words to Find

I, A, HI, HIP, HIPPO, POP, POT, AM, US

Students may find other letter groups or words. Talk about useful discoveries as they appear. The purpose is not to turn this into a spelling contest. The purpose is to show the class: THIS GIANT WORD IS NOT SOMETHING WE HAVE TO BE AFRAID TO LOOK INSIDE.

Look at What We Found

Keep HIPPOPOTAMUS on the board. Around it, collect the words the class found: I, A, HI, HIP, HIPPO, POP, POT, AM, US.

Ask: “Did you expect one big word to have this many familiar words hiding inside it?” Let the class play with what they found. They do not need to determine that these little English words are what originally built hippopotamus. They are simply things we recognize. Then tell them: “But there is another way to look inside this word.”

Something Older Is Hiding Here

Tell the children: “HIPPOPOTAMUS is an old word. English got this word from another language.” The word came to English through Greek.

Now give them two older pieces: HIPPOS means HORSE, and POTAMOS means RIVER. Put them together: HIPPOS + POTAMOS. Then give them the surprise: RIVER HORSE.

Tell the class: “The old word gave us the idea of a river horse.” This is our first introduction to roots and word history. The children do not need to memorize the Greek words or investigate Greek today. They only need to discover: SOME WORDS HAVE OLDER PIECES INSIDE THEM. Those pieces can carry meaning.

Drawing Game: Draw a River Horse

Do not begin by showing students a picture of a hippopotamus. Tell them: “Imagine you had never seen a hippopotamus.” “Someone tells you its name means RIVER HORSE.” Ask: “WHAT WOULD YOU DRAW?”

- horse legs
- fins
- a giant mouth
- a horse head
- a fish tail
- webbed feet
- anything else they imagine

Let the drawings be funny. Let students explain them if they want. Then compare their imagined river horses with a real hippopotamus.

Student Participation and Writing

By Lesson 3, continue giving students opportunities to carry more of the work.

- write HIPPOPOTAMUS
- mark HIP | PO | POT | A | MUS
- circle familiar words
- write words they discover
- come to the board
- point to discoveries
- write HIPPOS
- write POTAMOS
- write RIVER HORSE
- label their drawing

Other students can: clap, point, say, repeat, draw, listen, or work with the group. As always: THE PAPER SHOULD NOT OVERTAKE THE DRILL.

Today's Discovery

We started with HIPPOPOTAMUS. It looked like one enormous word. We clapped it: HIP | PO | POT | A | MUS. We searched through it and found familiar English words. Then we discovered something new: this word has a history. Its older Greek pieces gave us HORSE and RIVER: RIVER HORSE.

Today's Big Idea

BIG WORDS CAN HAVE A LOT INSIDE THEM.

We can hear pieces. We can find things we recognize. And some words contain older pieces that have traveled into English from other languages. Today we met those older pieces for the first time: ROOTS. We do not have to know all of them yet. We only have to know that they are there.