

The Building Blocks of Language: Lesson Plan 4

After PE and Cooldown

Use the class song.

Today We Are Learning

This week we have learned a lot about what we can do with a word. We can: see it, say it, clap its syllables, break it apart, find things we know, put it back together.

We have worked with compound words. We have learned that syllables and meaning pieces are not always the same. We have even discovered that some words have older pieces from other languages.

Today we are going to add one more idea:

WORDS HAVE MEANING.

And sometimes we have to investigate to find it.

We Are Word Detectives

Tell the class: "This week you have been learning how to investigate words."

A word can give us clues. Sometimes the clues are easy to see. Sometimes they are harder to find. Sometimes the meaning has been carried for a very long time. Sometimes people begin using a word or expression in a new way. Our job is to look for clues.

Quick Week Review

Bring familiar words back to the whiteboard one at a time. Do not reteach every lesson. Let the children show what they remember.

DOGHOUSE

Write: DOGHOUSE. Ask: "What can we do with this word?" Let the class lead as much as possible.

Clap: DOG | HOUSE. Break: DOG + HOUSE. Ask: "What do the two pieces tell us about the meaning?" A doghouse is a house for a dog. The meaning is easy to see from the pieces.

TOOTHBRUSH

Write: TOOTHBRUSH. Let students say it, clap it, and break it.

 **TOOTH | BRUSH**

 **TOOTH + BRUSH**

Ask: "Does knowing tooth and brush help us understand toothbrush?" Yes. Again, the pieces give us a strong clue to the meaning.

SUNFLOWER

Write: SUNFLOWER. Ask students to show both kinds of breaks.

 **CLAP IT: SUN | FLOW | ER**

 **BREAK IT: SUN + FLOWER**

Ask: “What did sunflower teach us?” Bring the class back to: Three syllables. Two compound-word pieces. They are not the same kind of break.

Then ask: “Do the words sun and flower give us some clues about the meaning?” Yes. But the finished thing is still its own thing.

BUTTERFLY

Write: BUTTERFLY. Let the class carry as much of the routine as possible.

 **CLAP IT: BUT | TER | FLY**

 **BREAK IT: BUTTER + FLY**

Now ask: “Does butter + fly tell us exactly what a butterfly is?” No. That is important. Sometimes we recognize pieces inside a word, but those pieces do not immediately give us the whole meaning.

THE CLUES DO NOT ALWAYS SOLVE THE MYSTERY.

Remember HIPPOPOTAMUS

Return briefly to: HIPPOPOTAMUS. Ask: “What did this giant word teach us?” Let students remember: It had syllables. We could find familiar things inside it. It had a history.

Then remind them of the older pieces the teacher introduced: HIPPOS — HORSE POTAMOS — RIVER

RIVER HORSE

Ask: “Could we have figured that out just by looking for little English words inside HIPPOPOTAMUS?” Probably not. Sometimes the meaning is hiding farther back in the history of the word.

Optional Mystery Word

If the class has time, write: ROBOT. Say it. Clap it: RO | BOT. Ask: “Can we find two ordinary English words that explain what robot means?” Do not force an answer.

The purpose is simply to notice:

NOT EVERY WORD WORKS LIKE DOGHOUSE.

Some words require a different kind of investigation.

Meaning Can Hide in Different Ways

Tell the class: “Words do not all give us their meaning the same way.”

Sometimes meaning is easy to see: DOG + HOUSE

Sometimes the sound pieces and meaning pieces are different: SUN | FLOW | ER but SUN + FLOWER

Sometimes the pieces we recognize do not explain the whole word: BUTTER + FLY

Sometimes we have to look into the history: HIPPOPOTAMUS → RIVER HORSE

And sometimes people begin using words or expressions in new ways. A word or expression can mean something to a group of people even when the meaning is not obvious from the individual words. Language keeps moving.

Classroom Detective Questions

When students meet a word, the teacher can ask: “What do we hear?” “What do we see?” “What pieces do we recognize?” “Do those pieces help with the meaning?” “Do we need another clue?” “Could this word have a history?”

The children do not need to answer every question every time. These are tools for investigating.

Student Participation

Let students increasingly carry the recap.

- read a familiar word
- clap its syllables
- mark syllable lines
- mark compound-word pieces
- explain something they remember
- draw a quick meaning picture
- come to the board
- work with a partner
- ask their own question about a word

The teacher should not feel required to complete every activity with every word. Follow the class. Keep the drill moving.

Today’s Discovery

This week we learned that words can be taken apart. Today we learned something more:

THE PIECES CAN GIVE US CLUES ABOUT MEANING.

Sometimes those clues are easy. Sometimes they are hidden. Sometimes they come from long ago. Sometimes language changes and people give words new uses. That is why we investigate.

Today’s Big Idea

WORDS HAVE MEANING.

MEANING CAN HIDE INSIDE WORDS.

WE CAN LOOK FOR CLUES.

We are learning to be: WORD DETECTIVES.