

Thesaurus Forage

Purpose

Students will use a thesaurus to identify alternative word choices and meanings.

Materials

For the teacher: chalk, chalkboard, thesaurus, list of simple words for teams to look up

For the students: copies of a thesaurus

Activity

A. Pre-Activity Discussion

1. Tell students that you will be doing activities that require a thesaurus.
2. Remind students that a thesaurus is a book of words and their synonyms. Discuss using a thesaurus in order to choose a better word for a piece of writing.
3. Explain that students can also use a thesaurus to improve their vocabulary and communication skills.

B. Introducing the Game

1. Divide the class into four teams.
2. Give each team a thesaurus.
3. Have the teams look up the word “sad” and give you synonyms for the word. Write the words on the chalkboard.
4. Explain that, while none of these words mean exactly the same thing, a student can learn that they all have something to do with the word “sad” from seeing them together in a thesaurus.
5. Discuss how knowing the general meaning of many words might be helpful to someone who is reading a book or listening to a speaker.

C. Play the Game

1. Tell students that they will be playing a game called “thesaurus forage.” Explain that each team will choose one contestant for each turn to guess the key word of a word-meaning family.
2. Choose a contestant to help you demonstrate the game.

(continued)

EXTENDING
THE



ACTIVITY

Set up a word magnet board in the classroom, with a starter set of words including prepositions, articles, and pronouns. Have groups of students browse the thesaurus for a short time each week, select a word that they would like to put on the board, and write it on a blank magnet using a permanent marker. Allow student groups to make a new sentence each day.

MEETING
INDIVIDUAL



NEEDS

If students are having difficulty remembering the clues, erase the key word thoroughly and allow contestants to read the word clues from the board while thinking of an answer.

Standards Links
5.1.2, 5.5.5

Activity (continued)

3. Have the contestant come up and face the class. Tell the contestant that he/she may not look at the chalkboard (if a contestant peeks at the chalkboard he/she is disqualified and the team loses a turn).
4. Write a simple word on the board behind the contestant (e.g., big, *adj.*).
5. Guide the team to look up the word in the thesaurus and confer in writing as to which five words to give the contestant as clues. The clues can be synonyms or related words but cannot contain the key word (e.g., “biggish” is not a valid clue for “big”).
6. Allow the contestant to make one guess after each of the five clues until he/she arrives at the answer. As the clue words are spoken, write them on the board under the key word.
7. Repeat steps 3 through 6, alternating contestants from each team. Give each contestant five points for guessing after one clue, four points for guessing after two clues, etc. Tally the points to determine the winning team.

Questions for Review

Basic Concepts and Processes

During the activity, ask students the following questions:



What is a thesaurus?



How do you find a word in a thesaurus?



When would you use a thesaurus?



How could you use a thesaurus to expand your vocabulary?
