

Using a thesaurus

from the *Oxford Illustrated Junior Thesaurus*

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Background

In every term, throughout Years 3 and 4, reference is made to using wordbanks, dictionaries and so on to assist with spelling and vocabulary development, emphasising the importance of this objective. This text extract has been taken from introduction to *The Oxford Illustrated Junior Thesaurus* by Alan Spooner (OUP) and provides an excellent overview of how a thesaurus should be used.

What's on the CD-ROM?

A section of the text appears on the CD-ROM in which simplified definitions of the features are added as boxed captions. This can be used as a basis for discussion with the help of an LSA. The sheet can be laminated and retained as a quick reference reminder of how to use a thesaurus.

Discussing the text

- Read the opening paragraph as a class. Act as a scribe and create six bullet points to summarise the function and contents of a thesaurus.
- Establish how a thesaurus differs from a dictionary and what a synonym is. Discuss when you might use a thesaurus and what sort of writing it would help with.
- Direct attention to the heading beneath the introductory paragraph. Ask which part of the text they think is an extract from the thesaurus. Explain that the six boxes are explanations of what is included and provide help with using the information.
- Read 'Headwords'. Ask the children to tell you the three headwords included in the text (*bolt*, *book* and *bottom*). Discuss how words are organised alphabetically, using the first, then second letter and so on. All three words begin *bo-* and are subsequently arranged by their third letters. Can the class think which word may come before *bolt* and after *bottom*?
- Explain that the italicised print after each headword is the part of speech (a verb and two nouns are given). Invite the class to suggest other parts of speech and give examples.
- Find the five examples of sentences that are given to show how the words might be used in speech or writing. Explain that an example is given for each different meaning of the word.

Words having more than one meaning have the different uses numbered.

- Explain that some words such as *book* (a noun) provide a list of words related to that topic. Give another example of a word which might be presented in a box like this and create a list of suggestions for words liked to it.
- Locate the synonyms for each of the headwords. Find the antonyms.
- Finally, discuss whether the layout of the text was helpful in explaining how to use a thesaurus. Confirm the children's understanding of the purpose and organisation of a thesaurus.

Talk, read and write

- Ask each child to select one of the synonyms for the different uses of the headwords. Invite them to give their own sentence to show how to use the word. Record the suggestions on the board. Draw attention to verb entries – synonyms are given in the form of the root, such as: *to fasten*.
- Provide everyone with a skeleton version of the text. Let more able writers work without using the wordbank. Ask the children to complete the boxes individually to demonstrate understanding of what has been read and provide a reference page for future use.
- Provide thesauruses and practise locating each of the features mentioned. Find headwords; ask how many definitions a certain word has; ask what part of speech a specific word is; find examples of lists of words; and locate synonyms and antonyms.
- Draw a table on the board with three columns: headword; synonym; example sentence. Enter a list of headwords. Using the thesauruses, ask the children to find a synonym for the word and make up a sentence to demonstrate its meaning.

Extension

When individuals need a short activity, write a word in their thesaurus book (use 26 pages, heading each with a letter of the alphabet). They may then use a thesaurus to locate synonyms and antonyms for the word you have provided. Use the booklets for literacy work, to widen vocabulary use.