

TITLE: Horrific Homonyms

GRADE LEVEL: This activity is appropriate for any sixth to eighth grade language arts class.

OVERVIEW: When writing, students at the junior high level often confuse and misuse words that sound alike but have different meanings. Words pairs such as your-you're, whose-who's, there-their, and past-passed are examples of these "horrid homonyms" where mistakes are not evident in speech but are only too evident in writing! This activity is designed to remind students of the specific meanings and correct usage of some of these often-confused words.

PURPOSE: This activity gives students the opportunity to think about the specific definitions of commonly misused words and to use them correctly in sentences.

OBJECTIVE(s): Students will do the following:

1. Learn the correct definitions for a predetermined list of commonly misused homonyms.
2. Use each of the words on the list correctly in a sentence.
3. Recognize that writing words that sound alike requires the writer to be careful and more specific than when speaking.

RESOURCES: The teacher will need a list of words that have homonyms and are often misused by students in their writing. The following is a list of homonyms that might be used.

1. to, too, two
2. who's, whose
3. your, you're
4. there, their, they're
5. past, passed
6. close, clothes
7. blue, blew
8. aloud, allowed
9. acts, ax
10. guessed, guest
11. so, sew, sow
12. sight, cite, site
13. stationary, stationery
14. principal, principle
15. capital, capitol
16. its, it's
17. patience, patients
18. pair, pear, pare
19. sail, sale
20. sent, scent, cent

MATERIALS:

List of Homonyms

KleenSlate Dry Erase Paddles with markers and erasers.

Dictionaries

ACTIVITIES: The teacher will divide the class into groups of about 7 students per group. Each group will have a chance to come to the front of the room and create sentences using the homonym pair the teacher gives them.

INSTRUCTIONS:

The teacher will give a homonym pair to each group.

Groups will have 5 minutes to come up with a sentence using the pair of homonyms.

Each group will then write a sentence that contains both forms of the word- one word per paddle- used correctly in the same sentence. For example, if the teacher pronounced the word "threw" or "through," the students might write a sentence such as the following: "I threw the rock through the window." Each group takes a turn to come up in front of the class to show their sentence.

After reviewing the sentence together, the teacher brings another group to the front of the class with a new homonym pair until every student has had a chance to be a part of the sentence. The teacher can give another pair of homonyms to each group and repeat.

CULMINATING ACTIVITIES: The teacher should end the game by discussing with the students the ways that the writer has to be more specific than the speaker. This discussion can include the reasons for good spelling, punctuation, and grammar.

The teacher might ask the students if they have recently seen any examples of homonyms used incorrectly.

There are several things that the teacher can use as a concluding assignment. The teacher might ask each group to list as many homonyms as they can in a short period of time.

Also, each group might be given a list of words that have homonyms and be asked to find the homonym for each.