

N+7 DICTIONARY MASTER

HERE IS A TASK THAT WILL HELP STUDENTS USE A DICTIONARY, IDENTIFY PARTS OF SPEECH, AND READ ALOUD IN A PLAYFUL, STRESS-REDUCING WAY!

Depending on how you do it, they can also practice **penmanship** and write in **code**. The result is a lot (okay, a little) like Mad Libs and I think students of all ages will enjoy it. Since it can lend itself to a variety of texts, fiction or non-fiction, this activity could become a **classroom routine** you return to regularly. In addition, once your students have mastered it, it would be a useful activity to include in **sub plans**.

History of the game : N+7 is one of the most popular activities imagined by [OULIPO](#). OULIPO was created in 1960 by the poet Raymond Queneau and the mathematician François Le Lionnais. The two wanted to find ways to generate and practice creativity instead of waiting for the lightning bolt. OULIPO is an abbreviation of the words *ouvroir de littérature potentielle*, which means 'workshop of potential literature'. Potential literature means the stories that we all have waiting inside us, while the idea of the workshop underscores the labor involved in unearthing that treasure. OULIPO exercises make us apply rigid rules to writing in order to activate inspiration. The most famous example is probably Georges Perec's 300 page novel, [La disparition](#), which was written entirely without the letter 'e'! You can see an application of N+7 to a poem by Wallace Stevens [here](#).

Objective : Student can identify nouns in a text and in the dictionary. Student produces a literary passage. Student performs the text s/he has helped to create.

When : You can do this after you've read two or three chapters in the book, depending on how many students you have.

Advance Knowledge : What do students need to know before being able to do this activity? Students need to know how to tell if the word they are looking at in the dictionary is a noun or another part of speech.

What do you need? One dictionary per pair. It's ideal to have different editions, so that's good because I'm sure your classroom dictionary shelf looks like mine—with editions from 1955 disintegrating alongside the shiny new one you managed to buy last year!

Set the activity up depending on how much time you have.

Lots of time? Make this your Do Now: Students independently look for their favorite passage in the chapter/s assigned. After 5 to 10 minutes (set a timer!) have volunteers read the first line of their paragraph. If another student has chosen the same paragraph, have them work together. Proceed until all students have a partner. It doesn't matter if you have several pairs working the same paragraph.

A little time? Students work in pairs to choose a paragraph they like.

Very little time? Assign paragraphs to pairs.

*the passage should be only about 3 sentences long.

Instructions for the teacher :

Show the kids this example. Then choose one of your leaders/big personalities and have them replace the underlined words in column A with the 7th noun words from column B.

Example :

I've seen some things in the woods near here that nobody would believe. In fact, I am something that nobody would believe. But I like you, so I'll tell you. Hidden deep among the trees, there's a lighthouse. As soon as the other kids go home for the weekend, I rush there and wait for sunset—and the amazing thing that happens then. Because when the sun goes down, I'm no longer the only one of my kind.

Column A : Noun from story	Column B : N + 7
things	threads
woods	worlds
trees	trials
Lighthouse (no lighthouse in our dictionary so we counted from 'light')	line
kids	kin
home	homophone
weekend (we had to count from 'week')	whale
sunset (we had to count from 'sun')	superintendent
thing	thread
sun	superintendent
one	operation
Kind	kit

Now hand out the student directions below.

Once students have selected their paragraph, have them list all the nouns in the order they appear. Remind them of the difference between a noun and a pronoun. Only list nouns.

Now, have them look up each noun in the dictionary. Then they count seven noun entries down (count *only* nouns!) and replace the noun in the passage with *that* noun. They work their way through the passage until they've replaced all the nouns.

Have each pair practice reading their new passage aloud together. Do it as a relay between pairs, with Student 1 reading from the book until s/he comes to the first noun and then Student 2, who is looking at the list, will jump in with the replacement and read until the second noun when Student 1 will jump in.

After they've practiced, you could have them perform their reading for a larger group or the whole class. Time them if they're a class that enjoys competition and if they aren't stressed about reading aloud. You could even have a run-off between the pairs that read the fastest.

What's great about this activity is that students who struggle with reading aloud will have had a chance to familiarize themselves with the text, and hopefully the passage that they end up creating will be silly enough that they will feel less self-conscious. Pairs that share the same passage will undoubtedly end up with different versions, and that might be an interesting point to develop if they've used different dictionaries.

OTHER IDEAS

*If you're working on penmanship or cursive, have students write the paragraph out in pencil, underlining nouns and then replacing them by erasing and writing in the N+7 word.

*Connect 'N+7' to the idea of a formula or a code. Have students in pairs write out a sentence in code using N+7, and then exchange codes with other pairs to try and crack their code. Both pairs need the same dictionary!

*Photocopy just one or two paragraphs so that everyone is looking at the same passage. Have different pairs look to find and replace different parts of speech in that passage. Since you've photocopied it, they can write on the copy and the exercise will go more quickly. Maybe one group is looking for verbs, so they can do V+7, or another is looking for pronouns (P+7).

*Use the same passage but give each pair a different dictionary. Have a few pairs use online dictionaries. The results could allow students to reflect on the advantages of print vs. online dictionaries, and also on the level of detail in reference works.

And don't forget to send me your students' work at sandy@sandra-evans.com. I'd love to feature it on my website.