

Teaching ideas

Using sounds in writing can make it much more vivid and engaging for the reader.

1. Ask your students to think about what kind of 'sound words' you already use in your own writing and note a few down. For example: sob, cheer, giggled.
2. Now look at the Magnet activity that accompanies this resource, which contains thirty words with sound associations, and get students to compare it with their list.
3. You could use the Magnet resource to complete some of the following activities:
 - Rank order words from the quietest to the loudest sounds.
 - Group words according to their connotations, e.g. ominous, exciting. Notice how some words can be put into both categories depending on context.
 - Group words by association with human voice, nature or industry/technology; again some will fit into more than one group.
 - Identify onomatopoeic words.
 - Check meanings of words students are unsure of.
 - Find more words with sound qualities by using a thesaurus. Students could work in discussion groups, pairs or individually.
4. Think of other ways to categorise sounds, e.g. predictable and comforting versus sudden and shocking, sounds that can all be used to describe water, sounds of animals or musical instruments or sounds that can be used in a metaphorical way, e.g. when a river 'sings' or the wind 'roars'.
5. Just as there are lots of ways to categorise sounds, there are lots of ways to use them in writing. Students could write a paragraph about a scene first using very quiet words, then on another piece of paper a paragraph on the same scene using words to convey noise.

You could ask them to choose from:

- a shopping centre on Sunday morning / Saturday afternoon
- a park on New Year's Day / August Bank Holiday.

Students could exchange their writing with a partner. Can they tell which is the quiet scene and which the noisy? Underline the sound words, rather than the description, which tells them this. Now add a paragraph to continue each of the scenes developing the sound quality of the piece, using more sound words than the number underlined in the first paragraph. Discuss with their partner the effect of adding sound words.