

The Big Dig

Learning objectives

This is a game to get students thinking about the history of morphemes and about how etymology works. By rolling a die, they choose morphemes from Latin, Greek, Middle English, Old English or other languages. Putting them together creates new meanings. All the morphemes are taken from the names of animals, so students can have fun imagining how their new creations would look and behave, based on the morphology.

Extension activities could include looking at the morphemes and working out which animals they currently describe (eg. "Kroko" + "drilos" = "Crocodile"). Students could also consider whether the new words they create are "morphologically plausible" by themselves or whether they would need to be Anglicised or reconfigured to look and sound more like "proper words". Some work could be done here on why students think the spelling has changed from the originals in Modern English. Students could also speculate about how spellings might change in the future and give reasons why.

Instructions

1. Acquire two dice
2. Cut out all the animal words and spread them out on a table. The origin of the word is shown in the bottom left hand corner, and the modern meaning in the bottom right hand corner of the card.
3. Throw the dice, and pick two words corresponding to the numbers on the dice.
4. Put the two words together. What kind of creature have you made? What might it look like?
5. Why not try and make a drawing of one of the animals you have made?



Latin

Octo



'Eight'

Pardus



Latin

Porcus



Latin

'Hog or Pig'

Latin

Spino

'Thorn'



Drillos



Greek

'Worm'

Greek

Hippos

'Horse'



Podes



Greek

'Feet'

Greek

Kroke

'Pebble'

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Zabra



Kulla

Other

'Zebra'



Olifaunt

Other

'Koala'



Catyr

Middle English

'Elephant'



Pillar

Middle English

'Hairy like a cat'



Hegge

Middle English

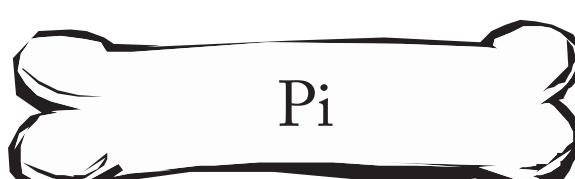
'Pillager or thief'



Hogge

Middle English

'Hedge'



Pi

Middle English

'Pig'



Middle English

'Striped bird'

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Picga



Wyrm



Fléoge

'Pig'

Old English

'Serpent/dragon'



Hwæl

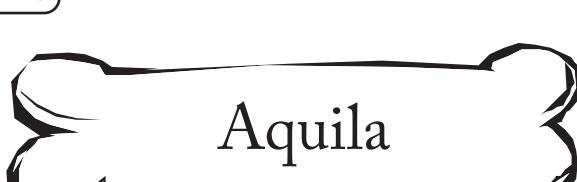
'Fly'

Old English

'Wasp'



Bera



Aquila

'Whale'

Old English

'Bear'



Butyrum

'Eagle'

Old English

'Bear'



Latin

'Eagle'

Latin

'Butter'

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Spanish

'Fly'



Middle English

'Sheep'

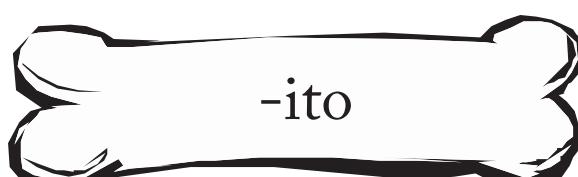
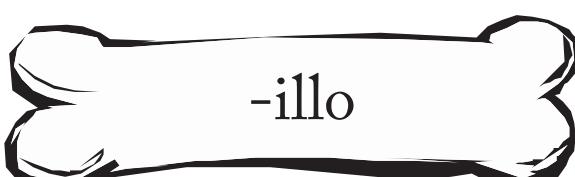


Middle English

'Margaret'

Latin

'Lion'



Spanish

'Little'

Spanish

'Little'



Spanish

'Armed'

Other

'Giraffe'

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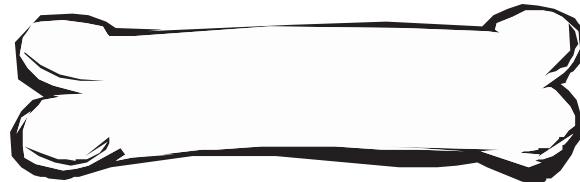
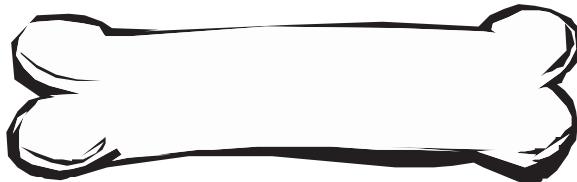
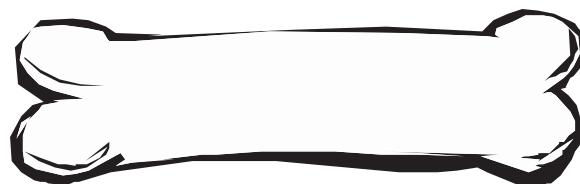
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Greek

'River'



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