



Dictionary or Doom

Learning objectives

The learning object of this game is to give students a more sophisticated notion of how dictionaries gain their authority over language. Sometimes "the dictionary" is seen as the arbiter over what is English and what is not, but language is changing all the time. Here the students are obliged to consider more deeply what is "proper" English by making reasoned decisions about marginal cases.

The activity could be introduced by polling students about where they think dictionaries come from, and who decides what goes in them.

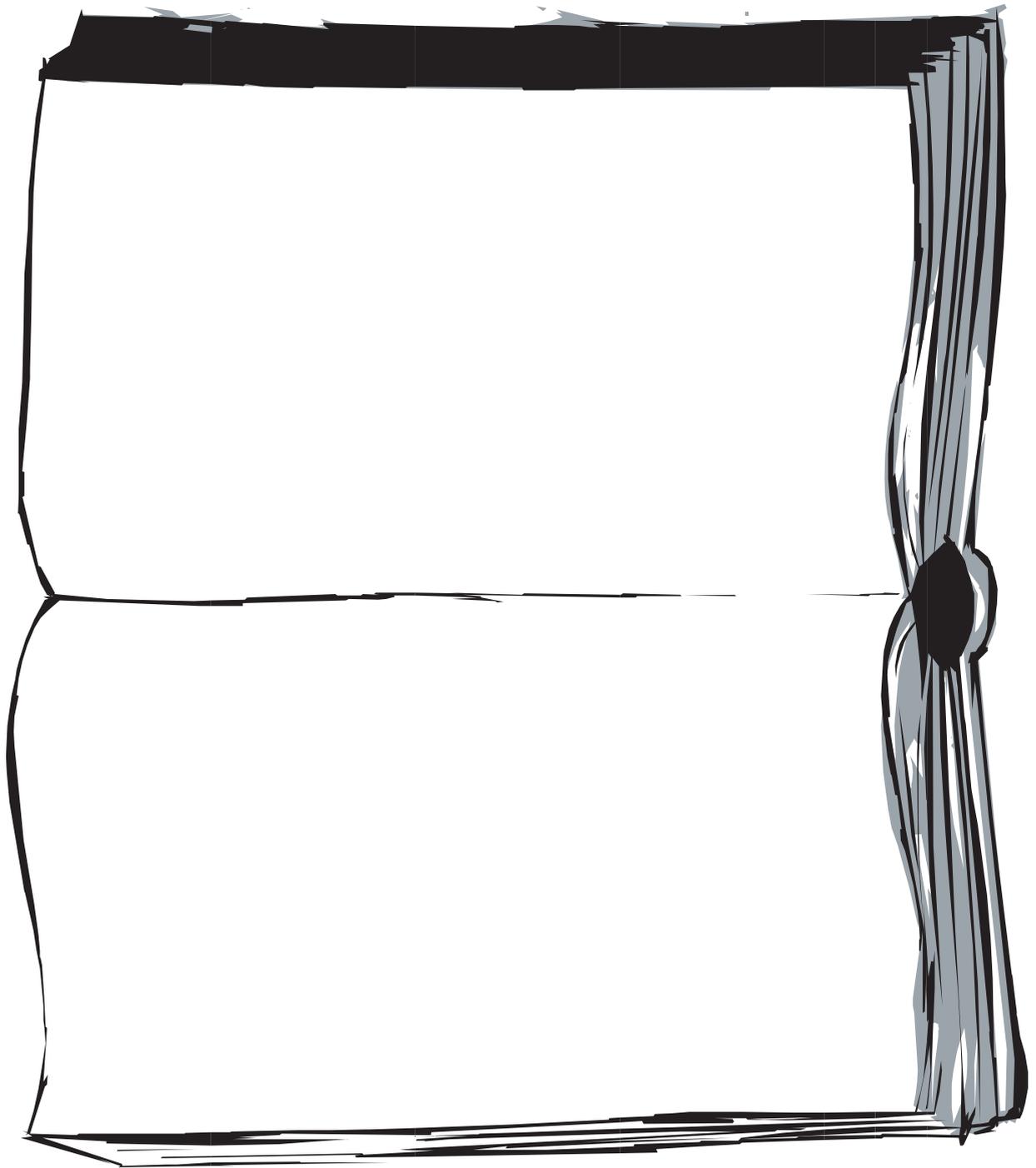
Extension activities might include considering whether particular words belong to particular registers or argots, and when some words, not formally considered "proper English", have a context in which they are appropriate. Students could add their own nominations for inclusion, and could also examine their own classroom dictionaries in a critical manner (for instance, looking at the -ise/-ize choice of the dictionary or the inclusion or non-inclusion of slang vocabulary that they use every day).

Instructions

1. Cut out all the words, fold them over and glue them together with a Pritt Stick.
2. Cut out the Dictionary, the Doom Chute, the Vault and the Favourite Word frame, and place them on a table or stick them to a wall.
3. Decide where you want each word to go. Does it belong in the dictionary? Should it be consigned to the doom chute?
4. If you are unsure what to do with a word, place it in the Vault.
5. You can add your own words using the blank cards.

The Dictionary

Place up to six words in the Dictionary



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The Doom Chute

Place words you want to discard here



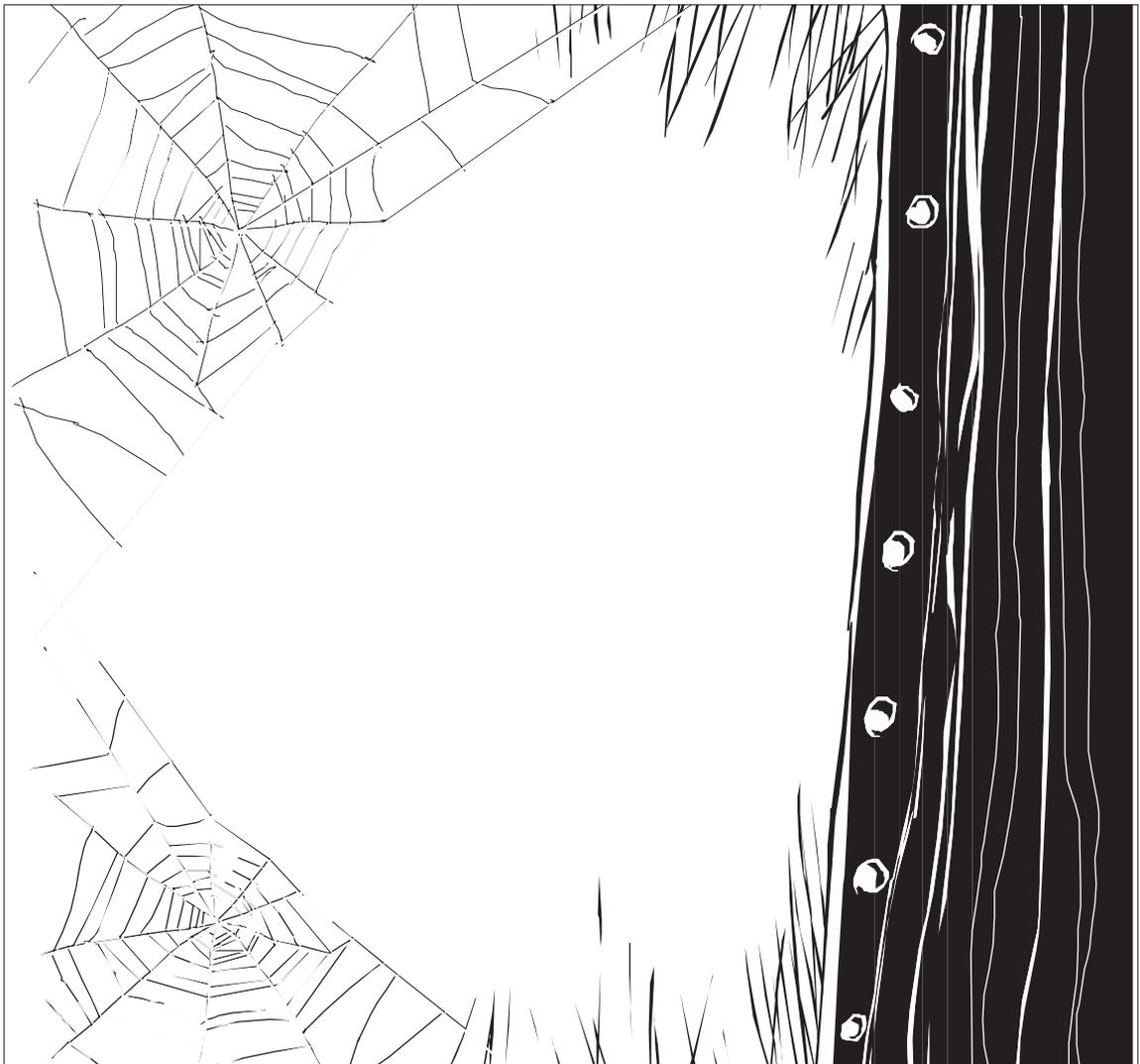
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The Vault

Place words you want to discard here



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Favourite word

Place your favourite word here



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Hocus pocus

Hocus pocus (noun)

People aren't sure where I came from. Probably from Latin. Some people think I'm not a proper word but just made-up. I think I'm magic.

Cacolac

Cacolac (noun)

OK, so the only person who says me is 3 and lives in South London. Just because he can't say 'chocolate'. Well everyone knows what he means so what's wrong with that? I'm a word, aren't I?

Intelligent

Intelligent (adjective)

I'm a very important word. I'm used a lot and you would be lost without me. You have to put me in the dictionary. Otherwise you could not be intelligent. My friend says you could use 'clever' instead, but don't listen to her.

Deratisation

Deratisation (noun)

I mean 'getting rid of rats'. There are so many rats living in our cities. This is a very important thing so I am a very important word. You can also tell I'm important because I'm long. Aagh! There's a rat just behind you!

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Combobulator

Combobulator (noun)

I'm new. I'm a new invention. Some people say it's too soon to put me in the dictionary as the invention might turn out to be no good, and then I'd have to be taken out again.

GR8

Gr8 (adjective)

I'm Gr8! People use me in emails and text messages and you can see me in magazines. Some people say I'm just an abbreviation*. But I should be in the dictionary because people use me a lot.

** A short word standing in for a longer one*

24/7

24/7 (abbrev.*)

People use me non-stop – mostly when they're talking. Some people say I'm not proper English, but I do a good job. I'm easier to say than 'every hour of the day and every day of the week'.

** abbreviation of twenty-four-seven, when written*

Gelid

Gelid (adjective)

I'm an old word for very very cold, but I'm still a good word, even if people don't use me nowadays. I can be found in old books and if you don't keep words like me then no-one will be able to read the old books.

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Mimeograph

Mimeograph (noun or verb)

I'm a good word made up of two parts. My first half means 'copy' and my second half means 'write'. People would rather say 'photocopy' nowadays instead, but my name is part of history.

Chunnel

Chunnel (noun)

I'm made out of two words mixed together: channel and tunnel. I'm quicker to say than 'channel tunnel'. My type of word is called a 'portmanteau' words.

Glabella

Glabella (noun)

I am the space between your eyebrows. Doctors have to have special words for parts of the body. You wouldn't like to go to hospital if there weren't enough words to write down your treatment accurately. You might get an operation on your knee by mistake.

Ciao

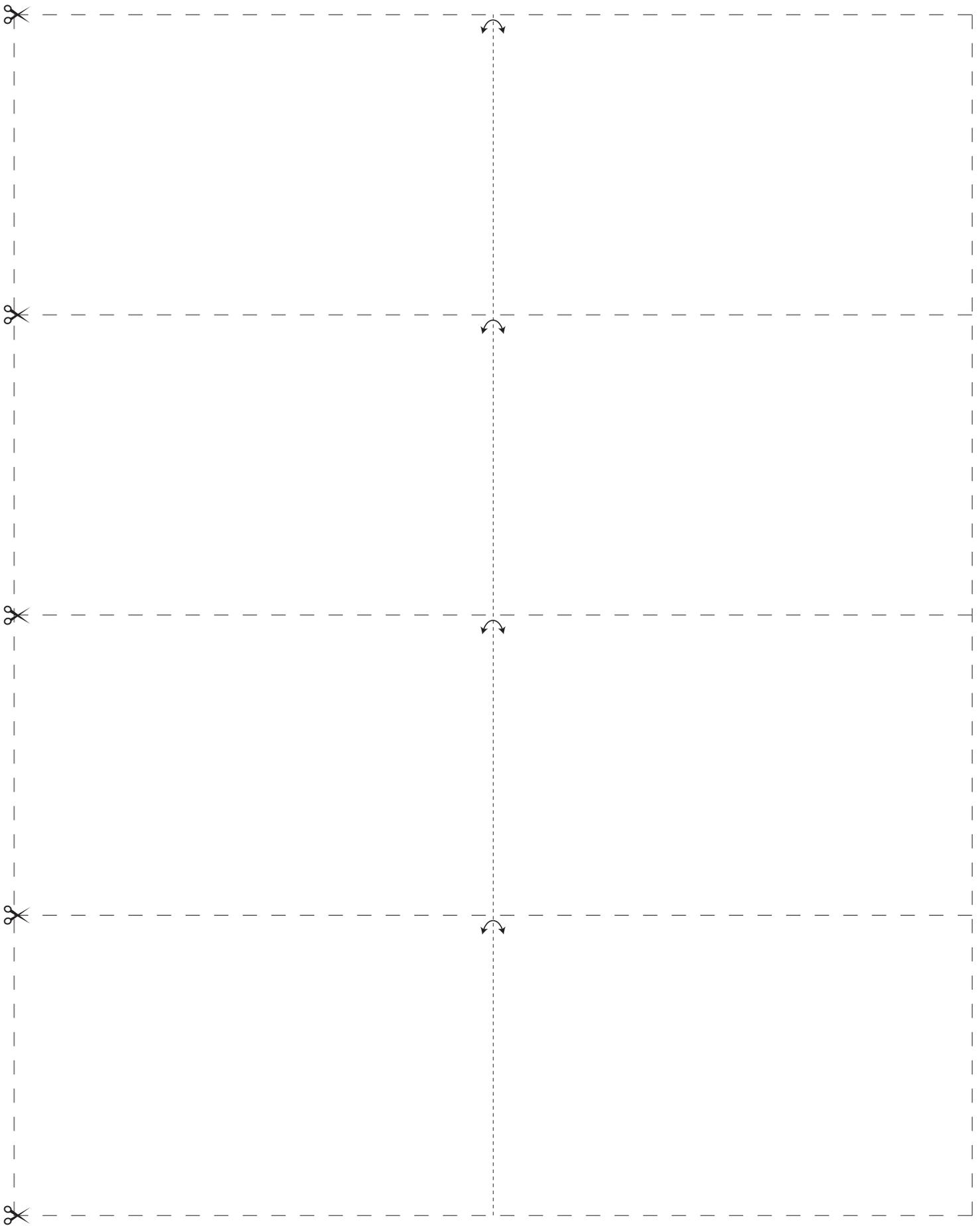
Ciao (interjection)

Ok so I'm an Italian word and not English at all. But people use me to say 'goodbye' – listen to them! You can't keep me out just because I'm not English. I'm very attractive and people can't resist me.

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