

# How Do You Mean?

## Scheme of work

### Introduction

How Do You Mean? attempts to bring together a series of insights and ideas about language that give students the 'inside track' on how the English language works. It helps students to discover that the 'rules' of spelling and meaning are not fixed and eternal, coming down from a higher authority, but change over time. It shows that words are formed of morphemes and that morphemes allow for the plausible coinage of new words. It encourages a creative approach to language.

There are three elements to this resource:

- ◆ seven online interactive activities
- ◆ six classroom activities
- ◆ how to use the online interactive activities in a classroom as a game.

### Objectives of Activities

The activities enrich students' understanding of spelling and the functional use of language in terms of morphology and semantics. This is achieved through online interactive games and classroom activities, each based on a different element of morphology and/or semantics and classroom activities.

### Prior Learning Expectations

Good knowledge of English language, Knowledge of phonics; good word recognition; graphic knowledge of words; grammatical awareness.

# How do you mean? Scheme of work

## NC Links and key areas of learning for the Primary Strategy

### Builds on the Primary Strategy – Key Aspects of Learning

Reasoning; evaluating; creativity; enquiry; information processing; self awareness; motivation;

### National Curriculum

Literacy, IT and History

In the English Language curriculum for Year 5 and 6, this resource supports the following:

#### Year 5

Objectives	Supported by
to identify everyday words such as <i>spaghetti, bungalow, boutique</i> which have been borrowed from other languages, and to understand how this might give clues to spelling	The Big Dig and Loan Words classroom activity
to use a range of dictionaries and understand their purposes, e.g. dictionaries of slang, phrases, idioms, contemporary usage	“Explore Dictionaries” research resource on the How Do You Mean site
to use dictionaries efficiently to explore spellings, meanings, derivations, e.g. by using alphabetical order, abbreviations, definitions with understanding	“Explore Dictionaries” resource

#### Year 6

Objectives	Supported by
To use word roots, prefixes and suffixes as a support for spelling, e.g. <i>aero, aqua, audi, bi, cede, clude, con, cred, duo, log(o)(y), hyd(ro)(ra), in, micro, oct, photo, port, prim, scribe, scope, sub, tele, tri, ex;</i>	Wordstone Tower, Computaword and Morphology classroom activities
to understand how words and expressions have changed over time, e.g. old verb endings -st and -th and how some words have fallen out of use, e.g. <i>yonder, thither;</i>	Mean Time and Rewriting the Dictionary classroom activity
to understand how new words have been added to the language, e.g. <i>trainers, wheelie;</i>	Loan words classroom activity
to understand the function of the etymological dictionary, and use it to study words of interest and significance.	Follow-up activities.
to invent words using known roots, prefixes and suffixes, e.g. <i>vacca + phobe = someone who has a fear of cows;</i>	Wordstone Tower and the spells classroom activity.
to experiment with language, e.g. creating new words	Wordstone Tower interactive and by the rewriting the dictionary classroom activity.

# How do you mean? Scheme of work

## Skills and knowledge to be taught

### Literacy Strategy details

#### Spelling strategies

- ◆ Work out the spelling of unfamiliar words by using knowledge of familiar words with similar spelling patterns and/or related meanings.
- ◆ Build up spellings using known prefixes, suffixes and roots.
- ◆ Build words from knowledge of meaning or derivation of familiar words.
- ◆ Use dictionaries.

#### Spelling conventions

- ◆ Explore the use of word roots, prefixes and suffixes.
- ◆ Extend word origins/derivations. Investigate words with common prefixes.

#### Vocabulary extension

- ◆ Study how words/expressions have changed through history.
- ◆ Study new words that have recently come into common usage.
- ◆ Use and understand an etymological dictionary.
- ◆ Understand that word meanings change with time.
- ◆ Create new words by using familiar roots/prefixes/suffixes.
- ◆ Revise, practice, extend vocabulary.
- ◆ Become experimental with language, for example create new words.

#### Cross Curricular Skills

- Communication
- Using ICT
- Collaborative work
- Creative thinking skills
- Enquiry
- Evaluation
- Information processing
- Reasoning

# How do you mean? Scheme of work

The following information gives you a suggested guide on how to use the activities but you may wish to use them differently. Four of the online interactives can also be played as class activities and there is guidance on how to do this at the end.

## Getting started....

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### 1. Selection of students' personal words

In preparation for the class activities, students use a dictionary, thesaurus or just their memories to select a word they like because of its sound, its meaning, its shape or its connotations. The word can be any English word (which means it might appear in the full Oxford English Dictionary or foreign dictionaries or dictionaries of slang, but may not do so in smaller school dictionaries).

The students will use this personal word through the live activities. As they gain insights about language or word origins, they can apply the knowledge to this word. Students can be motivated when they discover their 'personal' word turns out to be interesting for reasons they didn't at first think of. It encourages them to find out more, because of their 'personal stake' in the word.

### 2. Online interactives and class activities

There are seven online interactives. Each game could be played as a group with the teacher facilitating using an interactive white board, to model some methods of getting the best out of the interactives. Then they could be played by individual students at first as an introduction to the general sort of concepts they will be dealing with later.

The online interactives and class activities are organised in three elements and focus on key aspects of language:

- ◆ Morphology
- ◆ Sound-meaning relationships
- ◆ Contextual meaning

# How do you mean? Scheme of work

## Morphology activities

### Online interactives for use on Whiteboard or own personal computers



**Wordstone Tower** gives a selection of (mainly Greek and Latin) morphemes, many of which are affixes. Students are encouraged to put these together in combinations and to try and extrapolate the likely meaning of the words they have created. They can put the words together completely at random, or they can be encouraged to reflect on which words have a plausible morphology (i.e. look like they could be English words because they use the roots and affixes in a plausible order). More advanced students might make use of the question mark stone, which allows students to make their own morphemes, and fit them together in any combination.



**The Big Dig** offers a series of morphemes that come from words for animals in Latin, Greek, Old and Middle English as well as other languages. Students put the morphemes together in combinations of two to create new words for new animals, which they can then describe. The idea here is that students get a sense of how etymology works; that individual pieces of words have a history and a provenance.



**Computaword** is also about how words can gain meaning from context. Students have to select some words out of a random selection made up by a “morpheme machine”, which the interactive then places into the context of a poem or story. Students might consider at each stage what the word means when they select it and what it means once it has been placed in a context.

### Classroom Activity

#### 1. Introducing morphology

Objective: needs rephrasing

Take any of the students' favourite words and ask the students to work out how many 'bits' it is made of. You may get answers that divide it into syllables, or phonemes, but students may also have an instinctive understanding that it divides into 'bits' of meaning. See how many ways you can divide a word. Try to avoid being prescriptive. Ask students if they know words for 'pieces of words' – e.g. syllable, prefix, etc.

Take some words (including the students' words) and tear them up into their component pieces, then analyse the tearing.

# How do you mean? Scheme of work

## **Scaffolding students' learning**

You can increase the challenge as the activities progress by encouraging to evaluate the morphological complexity of their chosen word, and seeing if they can identify a more complex word with which to repeat their investigations.

## **2. Spells**

**Objective:** To encourage students to acquire insights into plausible morphology through practical wordsmithing.

In fiction (e.g. Harry Potter), you often find new words coined, and magic words are especially interesting. You could find a list of spells from Harry Potter (there are quite a few on the web) and ask the students to analyse them in terms of their morphology. Students could then make up new spells from existing morphemes (work out what you want your spell to do then look up some roots in an etymological dictionary). As an extension, students could attempt coinages that aren't just made of existing morphemes, or are drawn from other languages they speak as well as English.

## **Scaffolding students' learning**

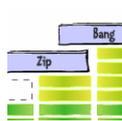
You can increase the challenge of this activity by encouraging students to discover the etymological source languages of different spells in Harry Potter or elsewhere. There are a range of languages from which the spells are drawn. Where students have used a Latin root for a spell, you might encourage them to find its equivalent using Greek roots (or roots from another language they know). For example, "television" is made up of a Greek and a Latin word. Reverse them and you get something like "Proculoscope".

This can then be linked into the contextual meaning activity, where students can consider which morphemes are most familiar in English and which are obscure.

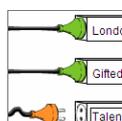
# How do you mean? Scheme of work

## Sound meaning relationships

### Online interactives for use on whiteboard or own personal computers



**Sound FX** invites students to consider the connotations of words. They must place a series of onomatopoeic words on a scale from 'big' to 'small', 'wet' to 'dry' and 'sweet' to 'sour'. This is an open exercise in which comparing students' choices and their reasons can give rise to understandings about how association and assonance are ways of deciding the meaning of a word.



**On-a-mat-o'-meaning** is a game in which students can think about how the sound of a word (rather than its morphology) influences its meaning. Students create new words that attempt to sound like the thing they must describe. They then have an opportunity to change the words themselves, to make them fit the definitions better. This could give rise to interesting discussion about how much a word draws its meaning from its sound (and spelling) and how much of the meaning is drawn from context.

### Classroom Activity

#### 3. Onomatopoeia and context activity

**Object/insight:** to collapse the notion that words are an analogous system of codification; that words do not carry intrinsic meaning in their sounds or shapes

Begin this by thinking about how different letters feel...and how they feel in different combinations – possibly students choose favourite letters and you would see if they can make different feeling words out of the combination they select. Ask the students to think of words that carry their meaning in their sound or appearance on the page.

If you have a student who is bilingual, ask that student to pick a word from their other language. The tutor and other students have to guess at the meaning just from the sound. You might ask questions like 'How do you know it means that?' Then ask the student to put the non-English word into the context of an English sentence. See how many tries it takes to deduce the meaning.

Collaboratively compose a poem that invents a new word but gives it a context that gives it meaning. Pose the question to the students: how do words mean? How can you learn a meaning?

# How do you mean? Scheme of work

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## **Scaffolding students' learning**

You can increase the challenge by inviting students to examine a poem like “Jabberwocky” and to create a poem with a larger number of invented words. You can ask them to analyse how many made-up words you can put into a poem before it crosses the line into incomprehensibility.

## **4. Personal meanings activity**

**Objective: Object/insight:** meaning shifts from person to person because of association and personal grammar.

Suggest a word to the group and ask each student to describe its meaning to you in writing. Choose some easy words (such as dog), then move on to the harder ones (such as life, love, meaning, self, soul, time, art, idea, feeling, remember). Do this on a page like a game of consequences (write what you see/understand of the word, then reveal and compare students' versions of the meaning).

# How do you mean? Scheme of work

## Contextual meaning

### Online interactives for use on whiteboard or own personal computers

**Dictionary or Doom** illustrates that the dictionary is a changing resource which is updated to accommodate changes in the English language. Students have to select just six words out of twelve to include in an edition of the dictionary. This seeks to generate controversy over which words in the language are 'official' and which are not part of the language.

**Mean Time** is about language change over time. Many words have had multiple meanings in history. Students are given a choice of meanings to compare for each of a series of words, and are asked to decide how much the meaning has differed over time. Once each word has a score ('has changed a lot', 'hasn't changed much'), the students are asked to project a possible meaning for the three most volatile words in the future. This interactive is designed to provoke discussion about language change and the reasons for it.

### Classroom Activities

#### 5. Loan words

**Objective:** To raise students' awareness of the shifting nature of languages in relation to one another and to understand and identify specific loan words in English.

To think about: Why does English need words from other countries when it has plenty already? Which words have travelled furthest?

Resources needed: map of the world, Etymological dictionaries, and 12 cards with words on.

This activity is looking at where words have come from. Some have travelled a long way. Explore as much as you can in the time and find some good examples of words which have travelled. Brainstorm some words that don't look or sound like most English words. Try to do this first, perhaps with one person jotting them down. If you get stuck, try the clues: a) Try some names of games, or kinds of food or musical instruments. b) If you are lucky enough to speak another language, are there any words from that language which are also used in English?

To get them going, children could pick one from a pile of cards, each with a word on (e.g. Pyjamas, Cocoa, Gondola, Hamburger, Yoghurt, Reggae, Teenagers, Anorak, Judo, Discotheque, Typhoon, and Magazine).

# How do you mean? Scheme of work

## Supplementary information

English has many words from Spanish. Some came directly into English, especially in the age of sea travel and conquest:

- ◆ cigar, armada, guerrilla, matador, mosquito, tornado.

Others have come to Spanish from one of the Indian languages of the Americas: potato and tomato, for example. Many Spanish words have entered American English from Latin America:

- ◆ canyon, lasso, mustang, rodeo.

Italian contributes to the English lexicon in many ways. The technical lexicon of classical music is almost wholly Italian:

- ◆ allegro, brio, forte, piano, pizzicato, sotto voce and so on.

In more recent times, Italian has contributed to the English lexicon by giving us the names of many foods and foodstuffs:

- ◆ ciabatta, lasagne, macaroni, pasta, spaghetti.

And the popularity or notoriety of organized crime, both in real life and in fiction, has given us another set of additions to the lexicon:

- ◆ osa nostra, mafia and vendetta.

Arabic words have usually come into English by way of another European language, especially Spanish:

- ◆ alcohol, alchemy, algebra, alkali, almanac, arsenal, assassin, cipher, elixir, mosque, naphtha, sugar, syrup, zenith, zero.
- ◆ hammock, hurricane, maize, tobacco (Caribbean)
- ◆ gull (Cornish)
- ◆ howitzer, robot (Czech)
- ◆ brogue, blarney, clan, plaid, shamrock (Gaelic and Irish)
- ◆ ukulele (Hawaiian)
- ◆ bungalow, dungarees, jodhpurs, jungle, loot, polo, pyjamas, shampoo, thug (Hindi)
- ◆ paprika (Hungarian)
- ◆ bonsai, sumo, origami (Japanese)
- ◆ bamboo, ketchup, orang-utan (Malay)
- ◆ paradise, lilac, bazaar, caravan, chess, shawl, khaki (Persian)
- ◆ taboo, tattoo (Polynesian)
- ◆ flamingo, marmalade, veranda (Portuguese)
- ◆ mammoth, soviet, vodka (Russian)
- ◆ coffee (Turkish)
- ◆ flannel (Welsh).

# How do you mean? Scheme of work

## 6. Rewriting the dictionary

**Objective:** demystifying the dictionary: additions can be made, dictionaries may be wrong.  
**Resources:** school dictionaries.

Begin by asking the students to describe and reflect on their relationship with the dictionary: when do they use it? Then ask them to consider its adequacy. How might they improve it? Are there new words to be composed? Take some Post-Its and create some new words to go in the dictionary. Interpolate the dictionary. If the dictionaries are used in the students' own classroom, you might consider leaving the interpolations in the dictionaries for a while after doing this exercise, and inviting further interpolations as and when required.

### Scaffolding students' learning

This activity could lead on from students' earlier work in inventing spells, especially if they have examined the source languages. Inventions can then take on some rigour as students attempt to adhere to the morphological rules of their chosen language. Turkish words can be built up with infixes as well as suffixes and prefixes. Some Italian and Spanish words can be expressed in diminutive forms, so students could try to employ similar rules in their inventions. (*An infix is an affix which is inserted into a stem to change its meaning. This is not really used when forming words in English but it is common in other languages*)

## 7. Making a dictionary entry

**Objective:** demystifying the dictionary: additions can be made, dictionaries may be wrong, to understand through practical applications the limitations of the lexicographer's art

Provide students with an example of a full dictionary entry (e.g. from the online Oxford English Dictionary – you can find some free ones at [www.blearning.co.uk/live/text/mean/oedonline](http://www.blearning.co.uk/live/text/mean/oedonline)) and get them to create their own entry for a word they don't think is in the dictionary yet. This could be a short familiar word, or for greater challenge could be a less familiar academic word or playground slang.

- ◆ Define the word formally in the same way the Oxford English Dictionary does.
- ◆ Find out something about its etymology (or mark it as "of unknown origin")
- ◆ Show the pronunciation for the word, using the International Phonetic Alphabet (there are lots of places on the web that show all the symbols for this – e.g.
- ◆ 3 Citations (from Google or quoted from speech )

# How do you mean? Scheme of work

## 8. Follow-up activities and further learning

Students could use an etymological dictionary to find something out about the history of their 'favourite word' (see above). This would take the learning about language change out of the speculative and into the factual. They might be able to create a history of the word and report on a number of its possible contexts and meanings over time. They might want to speculate about the reasons for semantic shift.

## Research Resources

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On the London Gifted & Talented and British Library websites there are a series of reproduction dictionary pages from various periods in history ([www.bllearning.co.uk/text/mean](http://www.bllearning.co.uk/text/mean)). In many cases, the word 'fabulous' has been chosen as the main excerpt from each dictionary. This should allow students to look closely at language change using primary sources. As whole pages are reproduced which include 'fabulous' (or a near equivalent), then it should be possible to spot other "f" words changing over time.

### Independent learning

For the more able students, there are plenty of research leads they could follow into personally defined activities around language. Some examples are:

Try and find an old dictionary from home or in a library, and try to isolate some examples of words that have changed their meaning in recent history (immediate examples from English are 'sad' or 'gay', but this activity could just as easily be done with a non-English dictionary).

Find some now-defunct words which appear in one of the old dictionaries on the British Library site, and develop a theory as to why they have fallen out of use, or dramatically changed their meaning (technological words are good here, or words relating to forgotten domestic practices).

Additionally ask students to choose a metaphorical expression that contains obscure vocabulary, e.g. "cock a snook", "carry a torch", "steal a march" or "I'll give you a bell." and trace its history using something like Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase or Fable.

# How do you mean? Scheme of work

## Pedagogical Approaches

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Most of the activities on the website and the classroom activities are based on a very open pedagogy, and their main purpose is to get students to articulate many rules that they already intuitively understand about language. It aims to help them “bump into learning”. This resource is aimed at bringing deep seated knowledge to cognitive level learning.

A further aim is to encourage critical thinking when faced with conflicting sources of authority in language. The first insight that is crucial for this is to understand that language is a shifting arrangement that is not fixed or pinned down even from moment to moment. Some of the implications of this line of thinking can be destabilising for the students’ conception of language rules, but looking again at assumptions about language can enormously deepen the students’ sophistication when dealing with unfamiliar words in multiple contexts.

However, if you have very able students who are very good at abstracting or applying explicit sets of rules, you could take them through the activities by deliberately spelling out the types of insights you think they might gain. First of all, you can make explicit that the dictionary is open to challenge as the source of authority about language and you could frame the activities as a way of exploring the cracks in the edifice of language.

Using this approach it also becomes easier to move into teaching some particular sets of knowledge. For instance, you can get students learning the international phonetic alphabet and attempting to apply it objectively to their own (or classmates’) accents and styles of pronunciation (this is an excellent extension activity from the Sound/Meaning Relationship set of activities). You could also begin to add rigour to their etymological observations, by telling them a series of morphological rules and seeing if they can find exceptions.

There is also a possible corpus-based approach, where students can investigate hypotheses about words by using the Oxford English Dictionary online, where it is possible to enter a text string e.g. \*cean or \*tion, and using this to discover relationships, abstract or concrete, between words that share common morphological features. This can extend into isolating rare text strings to identify loan words from other languages, or separating Anglo Saxon words in English from Latin or French ones.

## How to play games offline

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Why not play an *offline* version of the games with the whole class? The printable material below will give you the tools. We have also suggested ways in which the games could be played but of course you could invent your own.

### Wordstone Tower

- 1 Split the class into groups. Give each group a set of morpheme stones...including several blank stones.
- 2 Each group has to combine morphemes to come up with **four new words**.
- 3 Once they have agreed the words, they now have to come up with definitions for their words. Next they write a sentence/paragraph which contains their words. Finally, they create a piece of artwork to visualise their words.
- 4 In turn, each group then presents their four words to the whole class...
- 5 They write each word on the board.
- 6 Read out definitions and paragraphs that include their words.
- 7 Finally they present their artwork.
- 8 The rest of the class then vote on which word they think is the best from that group.
- 9 Each group ends up with their 'best' word as agreed by the rest of the class.

### Print outs needed

- ◆ Sets of morpheme stone.
- ◆ Blank morpheme stones.

# How do you mean? Scheme of work

## The Big Dig

Divide the class into pairs.

1. Place the 6 cards bearing a language title (the Language Cards) around the class and number them from one to six. So for example Greek is 1, Latin is 2, Old English is 3 and so on.
2. Now place the buried bones with their appropriate language card.
3. Next invite each pair in turn to throw a dice. If they throw a 1, they go to the language card that is number 1 (e.g. Greek) and select a bone. They throw the dice again and select another bone from the appropriate language card area.
4. The next pair then throws the dice to select two bones and so on.
5. When every pair has two bones, ask them to arrange the bones to invent an animal.
6. And now the fun begins; Rename their animal to give it a fun modern name and they can decide:
  - ◆ where their animal lives
  - ◆ what food it eats
  - ◆ where it sleeps
  - ◆ what its young look like
  - ◆ if it has any interesting characteristics
  - ◆ if it is poisonous....and so on.
7. Finally, create a piece 2D or 3D art work to represent their animal and introduce their new species to the rest of the class.

## Print outs needed

- ◆ Nets for two dice.
- ◆ Language cards for the six areas.
- ◆ 30 bones with definitions on the back... NB if you play in pairs for this game, you will need multiple copies of the bones because of the random nature of the dice.

# How do you mean? Scheme of work

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## Sound FX

### Playing in groups

- 1 Place the themed paired words (e.g. wet/dry) at either end of the classroom.
- 2 Divide the class into three equal groups. Give each group a set of nine words. Working collaboratively, ask the children to place their words along the scale and encourage reflection and discussion.
- 3 If all three groups are working on 'wet/dry' at the same time, it might be interesting for the whole class to come together at the end of the exercise and explore any similarities and differences.

### Print outs needed

- ◆ Themed paired words (possibly on A3).
- ◆ The nine words placed top, possibly on A4....

# How do you mean? Scheme of work

## Dictionary or Doom?

Print out the four banners (The Dictionary, The Doom Chute, The Vault and Our Favourite Word) and place them around the classroom.

- 1 Select 12 children and give each a word that is trying to compete for a place in the Dictionary.
- 2 The rest of the class are *the panel* and it's their job to decide which six words will end up in the dictionary.
- 3 The 12 children with the competing words are invited to step forward and give compelling reasons as to why their word should find its way into the dictionary.
- 4 The panel should hear all 12 words before voting takes place.
- 5 The panel decide which words go in the Vault... which words go in the Dictionary... and which words are banished to the Doom-Chute forever.
- 6 You may have to devise a strategy if the panel are undecided (for example, if two words are tying for the final place in the dictionary, why not invite them to come back up but this time give their own reasons why they should be placed in the dictionary).
- 7 Finally, ask the panel to vote on which is their favourite word of all. You could then compare your results with a parallel class.

## Print outs needed

- ◆ Four banner headings... The Dictionary, The Doom Chute, The Vault and Our Favourite Word on large A3 paper.
- ◆ The 12 dictionary words... with definitions to stick on back.