

2.5 Using Reader's Theatre to teach the past tense inflectional endings "-d" and "-ed"

Notes on the Phonics Focus

Why should the past tense inflectional endings "-d" and "-ed" be taught?

The past tense inflectional endings "-d" and "-ed" do not change the meaning of the words they are attached to. However, some students tend to find the pronunciations of these endings challenging. They have a habit of over-generalising their pronunciations. For instance, the "-ed" ending of the word "travelled" is commonly mispronounced as either "-ded", or not pronounced altogether.

Equipping students with phonics knowledge about the past tense inflectional endings not only raises their awareness of tenses when they are listening to English, but also enhances their ability to correctly pronounce inflected verbs during the production of spoken English.

What is a suitable language arts context for the learning and teaching of the past tense inflectional endings?

Reader's Theatre provides a good context for the learning and teaching of the past tense inflectional endings. The following teaching plan illustrates how the learning of the past tense inflectional endings "-d" and "-ed" can be incorporated into a lesson preparing students for taking part in a Reader's Theatre. Reader's Theatre is a style of theatre which allows students to hold scripts and read off their lines. It is an activity that lends itself particularly well to heightening students' awareness of the multiple pronunciations of some inflectional endings in English as students are required to pay attention to accurate pronunciation while reading out the script.

Suggested Activities

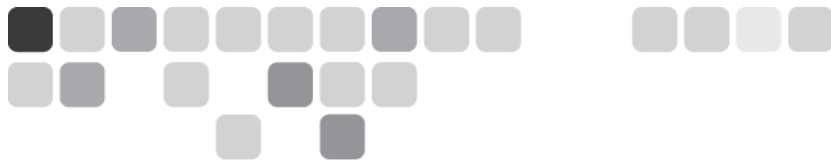
Level: S1-S2

Materials:

- The script for the Reader's Theatre *Nail Soup* (pp.75-76)
- Activity Sheet 1 (p.77)
- Activity Sheet 2 (p.78)
- An audio clip of the pronunciation of the past tense and past participle forms of verbs that end in either "-d" or "-ed" (Track 8 on the CD-ROM)

Objectives: Language-arts-related

- Understanding the function of the chorus in a play
- Creating an ending to the play
- Acting out the play with generally accurate pronunciation and line delivery



Phonics-related

- Understanding how the letter sound of the past tense inflectional endings “-d”/“-ed” varies depending on the letter sound preceding it

Prior knowledge:

- Ss have learnt the use of the simple past tense to present past events
- They have learnt how to form the past tense and past participle form of regular verbs.


Summary of the activities:

Students read a Reader’s Theatre script entitled *Nail Soup* and understand the plot with the help of questions. They then focus on the Chorus part, consider the use of the simple past tense in this part of the script, identify the past tense form of verbs and group these verbs according to the letter sounds they correspond to. They finally continue the script with the help of prompts before they act out the extended part of the script in groups of four.

Sharing learning intentions	
Step 1	Go through the objectives of the activities.
Presenting and reading the play	
Step 2	Give out the first half of the script for the Reader’s Theatre <i>Nail Soup</i> (p.75). Ask Ss the following questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is your favourite soup? How does it taste? - What is “Nail Soup”? - How would “Nail Soup” taste? Briefly introduce what the play is about and what Reader’s Theatre is.
Step 3	Ask Ss the following questions based on the list of characters and Lines 1 to 3 of the script: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who are the characters in the play? (<i>The man, three wizards, the chorus</i>) - What do the chorus do? (<i>They narrate the story.</i>) - Which character has the “dirty nail”? (<i>The man</i>) - What do you think the man would do with his “dirty nail”? (<i>Accept any reasonable suggestions</i>)
Step 4	Ask Ss to read Lines 4 to 20 of the script to confirm if their answer to the last question in Step 3 is correct or not. Ask any other comprehension questions on the rest of the script, if necessary.



Focusing on phonics

Step 5	Give out the second half of the script (p.76). Tell Ss to focus on the Chorus part of the script from Lines 5 to 69 and ask the following questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">– What tense is mainly used here? (The simple past tense)– Why is this tense used here? (The simple past tense is used to describe to the audience what happened.)
Step 6	Ask Ss to underline all the past tense verbs and the past participles that end in “-d” or “-ed”.
Step 7	Check if Ss have identified all the past tense verbs and the past participles that end in “-d” or “-ed”.
Step 8	Explain to Ss how the letter sound of the “-d”/“-ed” endings varies depending on the letter sound preceding it. Refer to the “-ed endings” section of the <i>Useful Groups of Letter Sounds</i> card for explanation, if necessary. Show the rules on a PowerPoint slide.
Step 9	Give out Activity Sheet 1 (p.77). Instruct Ss to group the underlined verbs according to the four letter sounds for the “-d”/“-ed” endings.
Step 10 	Check answers. Read out those verbs to show how they are pronounced. Alternatively, play Track 8 on the CD-ROM and let Ss listen to the pronunciation of those verbs.

Applying phonics

Step 11	Give out Activity Sheet 2 (p.78) and instruct Ss to form groups of four. Ask them to continue the script and provide an ending to the play. Remind Ss to use the past tense whenever appropriate.
Step 12	Tell Ss that they will act out the script in the following lesson(s). Remind them to practise their lines as a group, focusing on the accurate pronunciation of words and other relevant areas (e.g. pace, intonation, voice projection, body language).
Step 13	On the day of the performance, provide opportunities for Ss to offer feedback on others’ performance.

Reviewing progress

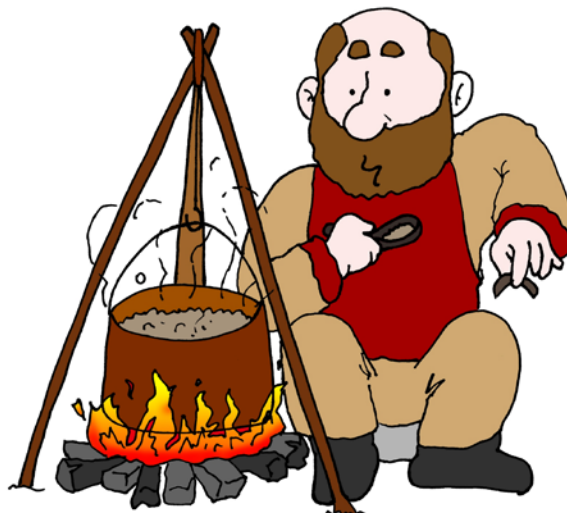
Step 14	Guide Ss to reflect on what they have learnt about the pronunciation of the past tense inflectional endings “-d” and “-ed”.
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The Script for the Reader's Theatre *Nail Soup*

LIST OF CHARACTERS

The Hungry Man
Three Mean Old Wizards
Chorus

- Chorus: Long ago, a man was walking along a road.
The cold wind was blowing. He was very hungry.
He had no money in his pocket. But he had... A big dirty nail!
- Man: I'm so hungry! I must find something to eat.
- 5 Chorus: When he entered a village, he knocked on the door of the first house...
He knocked and knocked. There were three mean old wizards behind
the door.
- Wizard 1: Good evening, Sir.
- Man: I wonder if you have some food to eat.
- 10 Wizard 2: WHAT?
- Man: Please...
- Wizard 3: I've no food in the house. You can come in for a few minutes and warm
yourself.
- Chorus: And so the man entered the house. He warmed himself with the fire.
- 15 They said nothing. He said nothing.
After a while, the man took out the nail...
- (The hungry man cleans the nail with his fingers.)*
- Man: Yesterday I made delicious soup with this nail.
- Wizard 1: *(Laughing)* Nonsense! You can't make soup with a nail.
- 20 Man: If you had a big pot of water, I could prove it.



Wizard 2: OK. You'd better prove it, or else, I'm going to kick you out.

Man: Thank you, Sirs.

Chorus: The old wizards put a big pot on the fire. The man dropped in the nail. After waiting ten minutes, he picked up the spoon and tasted the water.

25 Man: Delicious. BUT, it will be great if you have pepper and salt.

Chorus: The old wizards opened a cupboard. The man put in the pepper and salt. He tasted the water again.

Man: Mmmm... It will be perfect if you have some onions.
(The old wizards chop a big onion, and drop it into the pot.)

30 Man: Mmmm ... But, maybe it needs a carrot or two, and a little meat if you have it.
(The old wizards hurry away again and come back with carrots and a piece of meat.)
(The man puts them into the pot.)

Man: Of course, potatoes go very well in this soup.

35 *(The old wizards bring potatoes. The man drops them in and sits down by the fire.)*

Chorus: After half an hour, after he had added all the vegetables and meat, he tasted the soup again.

Man: Not long now, and doesn't it smell good?

Wizard 3: It smells great!

40 Man: That's perfect now. I hope, Sirs, you'll join me in eating this soup.

Wizard 1: (Smiling) Oh yes. That'll be great!
(The old wizards prepare the table.)

Chorus: The man poured the soup into big bowls. They sat down at the table.
(The man puts his spoon into the soup and then stops.)

45 Man: You've been so kind, I wish I had some wine for you to drink with the soup.

Wizard 2: I think I've a bottle somewhere.
(The old wizards soon come back with the wine and two glasses.)

Chorus: While the man and the old wizards ate the soup, and drank the wine, they talked and talked.

50 The old wizards brought out a loaf of bread, cheese, fruit and a big cake ... They told each other stories, laughed a lot, and had a happy evening ...

Wizard 3: It's getting late. I'll make up the bed for you. You'll be warm and comfortable there.

Man: That's very kind of you. Thank you so much.

55 *(The old wizards laugh and leave the room.)*
(The hungry man takes out the nail from the bottom of the soup pot, cleans it and puts it into his pocket.)

Chorus: Next morning, the man decided that it was time to leave and thanked the old wizards again.

60 Wizard 1: I'd never have believed you could make such a good soup with just an old nail.

Man: It's great, isn't it? *(Softly to himself)* It's what you add to it that makes all the difference.

Wizard 2: What did you say?

65 Man: Oh, nothing really. I've got to go now. Thank you once again, and goodbye.

Wizard 3: Goodbye. Take care. *(The old wizards exit.)*

Man: *(To the audience, taking out the nail.)* I may need this again tonight.
(The man exits.)

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Activity Sheet 1

Study Lines 5 to 69 of the script for *Nail Soup*. Underline all the past tense and past participle forms of verbs that end in either “-d” or “-ed”. Put these verbs into one of the four columns in the table below, based on how their endings are pronounced.

-t	-d	-ted	-ded

Answers

-t	-d	-ted	-ded
<i>knocked (Line 5)</i> <i>dropped (Line 23)</i> <i>picked (Line 24)</i> <i>talked (Line 49)</i> <i>laughed (Line 51)</i>	<i>entered (Lines 5 & 14)</i> <i>warmed (Line 14)</i> <i>opened (Line 26)</i> <i>poured (Line 43)</i> <i>believed (Line 60)</i>	<i>tasted (Lines 24, 27 & 37)</i>	<i>added (Line 36)</i> <i>decided (Line 58)</i>

Activity Sheet 2


Nail Soup, Any More?

In the space provided below, continue the script of *Nail Soup* from Line 69 onwards in no less than 150 words. Include at least two new characters in the script. Act out this part of the script in front of the class when it is ready.

Tips for the task:

- Use the appropriate tenses when continuing the script and handling the dialogues between characters and the Chorus part.
- Pay attention to the pronunciation of the past tense inflectional endings “-d” and “-ed” when acting out the script.

Chorus:	After the man thanked and said goodbye to the three mean old wizards, he continued his journey and reached an old village in the evening. He was hungry, again, so he thought it was time for his nail trick again.
Chorus:	Finally, the man...



References

Scripts for Reader's Theatre are readily available on the Internet. Below are some websites which provide scripts suitable for junior secondary students. Please note that, in some of the scripts, the "Chorus" part is replaced by the "Narrator" part, which essentially serves the same function.

Reader's Theatre Editions

www.aaronshp.com/rt/RTE08.html

Reader's Theatre Links

www.evsd.org/curriculum/tech/k5tech/teacher/readers theatreintro.htm

Reader's Theatre Scripts

bms.westport.k12.ct.us/mccormick/rt/rtscriphome.htm

Alternatively, excerpts from film/TV scripts can be used instead. Film/TV scripts should be carefully vetted for suitable themes and for adequate illustration of the target inflectional ending(s). The following websites provide scripts of popular films:

The Internet Movie Script Database

www.imsdb.com

Simply Scripts – Read Scripts Online (Movies)

www.simplyscripts.com/movie.html

Simply Scripts – Read Scripts Online (TV Shows)

www.simplyscripts.com/tv.html