

Examining How Inventions or Events Change the English Language — Grade Eight

Ohio Standards Connections

Acquisition of Vocabulary

Benchmark D

Explain how different events have influenced and changed the English language.

(Grades 8 - 10)

Indicator 5

Examine and discuss the ways that different events (e.g., cultural, political, social, technological, and scientific events) impact and change the English language.

(Grade 8)

Lesson Summary:

Students will increase their vocabulary by examining, discussing and analyzing the ways that cultural, political, social, technological and scientific events impact and change the English language.

Estimated Duration: *Two hours and 30 minutes.*

Commentary:

Like other languages, English has changed greatly through the years. Words come from multiple origins, ranging from the influence of classical languages, such as Latin and Greek, to the impact of technological and scientific advances. To prepare for this lesson, teachers should review key events that either have changed or had an impact on our English language and should pose a series of questions to help engage the students.

Examples of these questions are:

- What makes language change?
- Are there words that you use in your vocabulary that may not have been used by your parents or grandparents when they were your age? What new technologies or scientific discoveries, for example, have influenced words in your vocabulary that may not have been used by previous generations?
- Are there any words used in American culture that might not have equivalents in other cultures? Do people from all cultures know, for instance, what a shopping mall or a hot tub is?

These questions will serve as a natural progression into the suggested pre-assessment activities in this lesson. The pre-assessment may be set-up as a large group discussion or could be set-up as group work for students. Each group could, for example, be asked to examine a particular decade in time, considering how the events of that decade may have had an impact on the language of the people living then.

This lesson was part of a pilot test conducted by The Ohio Department of Education. One of the teachers who tested this lesson said,

"Students in my class enjoyed brainstorming new technology words. It prompted good discussion among students and teachers, as well as additional research at home for several students. We used two 80-minute blocks, and some students still were not finished with their posters and collages. This topic generated a lot of excitement and discussion. We would use this lesson again because it covers one of the benchmarks in an interesting way and was successful in teaching students new terms." This same teacher suggested generating a "word wall" for the class. This suggestion is further detailed under the "Key Vocabulary" header of this lesson.

Pre-Assessment:

- Give students a short passage of Shakespearean text (an excerpt from a

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passage with several examples of idiomatic, slang, or period expressions) and excerpts from a current technology manual.

- Explain to students how time, inventions and cultural change influence language.
- Ask students to independently brainstorm ways that language might change, and ask them what events might cause language to change. When computers were invented, for example, a word like "mouse" took on a new meaning.
- Invite students to share these ideas with the class.

Scoring Guidelines:

Students are able to generate a list of events and words that demonstrate a change in the English language.

Post-Assessment:

- Student groups create a poster display of their work.

Scoring Guidelines:

3 = Words used on the poster demonstrate a cause and effect relationship to an event and the students can explain their choices.

2 = Words used on the poster demonstrate a cause and effect relationship to an event but students cannot successfully explain that relationship.

1 = Words used on the poster show no understanding of the evolution of change in the English language.

0 = No poster was created.

Instructional Procedures:

1. Review a list of events that might cause language to change. This list might include:
 - New technology, such as computers, CD-ROM, big screen TV, tanning beds.
 - Interactions between different cultures, such as Spanish-speaking immigrants with American culture.
 - Historical events, such as September 11, 2001 or Sputnik.
 - Scientific discoveries, such as the discovery of genes.
 - Youth culture's influences, such as slang like "Hip Hop" that emerges from the music scene.
2. Divide the class into groups of three to four.
3. Invite each group to select a topic from the list. Through discussion, identify specific words or language changes that resulted from an event, discovery or cultural change. Be sure to provide dictionaries, encyclopedias and other relevant resources for the groups to use.
4. Have each group feature their list of words and descriptions of their origins on a poster.
5. Ask each group to prepare a 5-10 minute presentation in which each member of the group demonstrates what he/she learned through group discussions and research and to support the presentation with the poster.

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Differentiated Instructional Support:

Instruction is differentiated according to learner needs, to help all learners either meet the intent of the specified indicator(s) or, if the indicator is already met, to advance beyond the specified indicators(s).

- Instead of using literary texts as examples of language change, use the lyrics of songs from different cultures and eras.
- Have students research the origin of words created in the political history of the United States.
- Introduce students to new publications that may illustrate new terms that relate to new inventions. A computer manual, for example, would offer many terms that may not have been in existence years ago. A manual from another era, when covered wagons or blacksmiths were common, may offer examples of terms that are now obsolete.

Extension:

- Have students predict what changes in the English language will occur between now and when they are thirty.

Homework Options and Home Connections:

- Have students ask their parents to create a list of words they used in high school. See if the students can explain why those words were created or ceased to be used.

Interdisciplinary Connections:

- If the curriculum offers an elective course, like multi-media communications, the teacher of the course may be invited to speak with students about new equipment that carries names that were not used in the English language prior to the invention of the equipment.
- Invite the computer specialist of the building to speak with students at the conclusion of this lesson.

Materials/Resources Needed:

For the teacher: Colored pencils, magazines, scissors, markers, glue sticks, paper and copies of a variety of texts.

For the students: Colored pencils, magazines, scissors, markers, glue sticks, paper and copies of a variety of texts.

Key Vocabulary:

The class could design a "word wall" at the conclusion of the lesson that may have, for example, some of the following words on it:

- Web site
- Mother Board
- Claymation
- Software
- Internet
- CD-ROM
- High density definition
- Word processing

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Technology Connections:

- Encourage students to use computer graphics to create the post-assessment poster.
- Recommend appropriate software programs to students who would use them to create their post-assessment products.
- This lesson is enhanced if students have access to computers at home or at school.
- Computers may prove useful to students when designing the poster or when researching word origins.