

English Is Hard

Phonics

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Grade Level	6th – 8th Grade	**Time Frame**	2-3 class period(s)
Subject	English/Language Arts	**Duration**	180 minutes

Essential Question

How do language patterns affect word knowledge? Why might learning proper pronunciation be important?

Summary

This lesson uses the book "P Is for Pterodactyl: The Worst Alphabet Book Ever" by Raj Haldar and Chris Carpenter to teach digraphs and nuances of phonetics in the English language. Students will brainstorm to identify other digraph words in their vocabularies, write and draw their own pages for a sequel to "P Is for Pterodactyl," and create Anchor Charts to teach the class how to pronounce difficult sounds in words. This lesson includes optional modifications for distance learning. Resources for use in Google Classroom are included.

Snapshot

Engage

Students engage with a short script. Then, the class reads "P Is For Pterodactyl: The Worst Alphabet Book Ever."

Explore

Using the ABC Graffiti strategy, students brainstorm words that do not start with the sound associated with their first letter (like "pterodactyl").

Explain

Students learn the definition of a digraph and create pages for a class sequel to "P Is For Pterodactyl" using ideas from the Explore phase.

Extend

In groups, students choose digraphs and create anchor charts to explain their pronunciations to the class.

Evaluate

Students' anchor charts and book pages are used to assess their understanding.

Standards

Oklahoma Academic Standards: English Language Arts (Grade 7)

7.1.S.1: Work effectively and respectfully in diverse groups by showing willingness to make necessary compromises to accomplish a goal, sharing responsibility for collaborative work, and recognizing individual contributions.

Oklahoma Academic Standards: English Language Arts (Grade 7)

8.1.S.1: Work effectively and respectfully in diverse groups by showing willingness to make necessary compromises to accomplish a goal, sharing responsibility for collaborative work, and recognizing individual contributions

Attachments

- Anchor Chart Rubric—English Is Hard - Spanish.docx
- Anchor Chart Rubric—English Is Hard - Spanish.pdf
- Anchor Chart Rubric—English Is Hard.docx
- Anchor Chart Rubric—English Is Hard.pdf
- Digraph Book Rubric—English Is Hard - Spanish.docx
- Digraph Book Rubric—English Is Hard - Spanish.pdf
- Digraph Book Rubric—English Is Hard.docx
- Digraph Book Rubric—English Is Hard.pdf
- Digraph Mini-Posters—English Is Hard - Spanish.docx
- Digraph Mini-Posters—English Is Hard - Spanish.pdf
- Digraph Mini-Posters—English Is Hard.docx
- Digraph Mini-Posters—English Is Hard.pdf
- Engage Activity Script—English Is Hard.docx
- Engage Activity Script—English Is Hard.pdf
- Lesson Slides—English Is Hard.pptx

Materials

- Engage Activity Script (attached)
- Lesson Slides (attached)
- Digraph Mini-Posters (attached)
- Anchor Chart Rubric (attached; one per student)
- Digraph Book Page Rubric (attached, optional)
- P Is For Pterodactyl: The Worst Alphabet Book Ever (physical copy or read-along video; embedded and linked below)
- Tablet paper, chart paper, or similar
- Markers
- Computer paper
- Colored pencils, crayons, other art supplies
- Book Creator application (optional)

Engage

Teacher's Note: Preparation

To engage students at the beginning of this lesson, it may be helpful to rehearse the attached **Engage Activity Script** a few times prior to delivering it to the class. The script involves pronouncing specific common words phonetically, instead of conventionally, and may require a little practice.

Teacher's Note: Standards Alignment

While this lesson is aligned to eighth grade standards, it can be re-aligned and taught in sixth and seventh grades.

To begin the lesson, read the attached **Engage Activity Script**. After you finish, pause to give the class time to think. Ask students to share their thoughts. Now use the attached **Lesson Slides** to guide the lesson. Explain that the lesson's title, "English is Hard" refers to the fact that our English language rules have many exceptions. While English can be a challenging language to learn, linguists generally agree that it is not the most difficult. Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, Russian, and Finnish are all thought to be more difficult. In this lesson, students will be learning about one of those exceptions, digraphs, so they can recognize them and understand how they function within the language.

Display **slide 3** and read this lesson's guiding questions: *How do language patterns affect word knowledge? Why might learning proper pronunciation be important?* Ask for volunteers to share ideas in a brief class discussion.

After the discussion, read aloud to the class "P is for Pterodactyl: The Worst Alphabet Book Ever." If you do not have access to a physical copy of the book, use a read-along like the one embedded below (also linked here and on **slide 4**).

Embedded video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=05WDZHddoKw

Explore

Move to **slide 5**. Use these prompts (shown below) to begin a class discussion on the book:

- Were there any words that surprised you?
- Did seeing the spelling of a word and then hearing the pronunciation surprise you?
- How do you know how to pronounce new words? Do you sound them out?
- What would happen if you sounded out any of the words from the book?
- How do you learn how to pronounce words that do not follow phonetic rules?

Sort the class into groups of 3–4 students. Facilitate a brief group brainstorm with the prompt on **slide 6**: *What words start with a letter that does not use the letter's sound?* If necessary, provide examples like mnemonic for M or pneumonia for P. After allowing 1–2 minutes for groups to think about the question, pass out tablet paper (or similar) and markers to each group.

Move to **slide 7.** Ask each group to create a graffiti poster similar to the one pictured on the slide, with the letters A through Z listed in 2–3 columns. Then, use the ABC Graffiti strategy and ask each group to brainstorm words beginning with a letter that does not use that letter's sound, writing down each word next to the appropriate letter on the poster.

Give students 4–5 minutes to brainstorm. Once time is up, ask groups to rotate clockwise to the next graffiti poster. Groups rotate to the next group's poster; give each group 1-2 minutes to add any additional digraphs they might know. Then, rotate again. Repeat this process until all groups have rotated back to their own poster.

Teacher's Note: Scaffolding

If students struggle to fill out their posters, consider allowing them to use words from "P is for Pterodactyl," a dictionary, a thesaurus, the Internet, or other resources.

Ask students to return to their seats. Discuss the graffiti posters with the class by pointing out unique words beyond what the class read in "P for Pterodactyl."

Optional Modification For Distance Learning: Brainstorm

For the first activity, consider using an interactive word cloud application such as Mentimeter. This allows students to submit their brainstormed words. Once all of the students have had a chance to add to the brainstorm, share with the class the generated word cloud. The words that were most often submitted by your students appear larger, while less frequently submitted words appear smaller. Download all attachments to use this lesson in Google Classroom.

Optional Modification For Distance Learning: Poster

In the second activity, posters can be created digitally by students (Canva or similar). Then, you can substitute a peer review activity with a website such as VoiceThread. With VoiceThread, you can upload students' posters to the site beforehand. Then, students can choose whether they would like to make a quick video, a voice memo, or a written note to give feedback on other students' posters. Download all attachments to use this lesson in Google Classroom.

Explain

Move to **slide 8**. Let students read the definition of a digraph: a combination of two letters representing one sound, as in *ph* and *ey*. Ask the class if the words they brainstormed were digraphs. Let students look over their charts and briefly check the words on their posters.

Move to **slide 9**. Pass out blank computer paper and colored pencils or crayons. Tell students the class will be writing a sequel to "P is for Pterodactyl." Each student is responsible for creating one page in this new book. Pass out the attached **Digraph Book Rubric** and review the expectations for the book page.

Assign a letter to each student. Note: If your class is larger than the number of alphabet letters, you can assign multiple students to the same letter. Following the directions on slide 9, ask each student to think of a digraph word for their letter—using the ABC graffiti charts as inspiration—and develop a page with an illustration and a sentence showing how the word is used in context. Complete this activity by asking students to read their pages aloud, per the instructions on **slide 10**.

Optional: Cross-Curricular Opportunity

Optionally, consider having your students come up with only a word and sentence. Then, work with an art teacher whose class can develop illustrations for your students' page concepts.

Optional Modification For Distance Learning

To make use of the above activity in an online or distance learning environment, consider having your class create the book digitally with an application like Book Creator. Additionally, once finished, consider having students read their sequel to a class of younger students, if possible. Attached, you will find a **Digraph Book Rubric** to guide and assess the key elements of each book page if you wish to use this option. Download all attachments to use this lesson in Google Classroom.

Extend

Print and hang the attached **Digraph Mini-Posters** around the room. Ask students to stand next to the digraph they would want to teach to the class.

Teacher's Note: Even Grouping

If student groups are very unequal, or one digraph sign has no students, ask a few volunteers to move groups in order to cover all content equally. If necessary, you can also rule that, once three people or four people are standing at one digraph, that digraph is "closed" to others.

Once students have selected their digraphs, pass out a copy of the attached **Anchor Chart Rubric** to each student, along with markers and tablet paper (or similar). Invite each group to create an Anchor Chart on their selected digraph, including a rule for the digraph's pronunciation, an example sentence, and an illustration. The rubric functions as a guide for each group to follow, as they must incorporate the "Required Elements" column of the rubric into their Anchor Chart.

Sample Student Response: Anchor Chart Example

A group who chose the digraph *pt* might make up the rule, "When P and T are walking, T does all the talking." The same group might include an illustration of a pterodactyl with the example sentence, "The pterodactyl has a large wingspan and teeth!"

Optional Or Alternative Activity : Chant It, Sing It, Rap It

If you prefer a shorter activity, consider using the Chant It, Sing It, Rap It activity on **slide 11** instead of the Anchor Chart activity. To use the Chant It, Sing It, Rap It strategy, begin the Extend phase the same way—ask students to stand by the digraph mini-poster they are most interested in. Invite the resulting groups of students to create a rap, chant, or song that informs the class how to correctly pronounce that word. **(Note:** Slide 11 is hidden by default. Should you decide to use this activity, right-click slide 11 and toggle "Hide Slide" in the resulting drop-down menu.)

Optional Modification For Distance Learning: Magnetic Statements

To make the Magnetic Statements activity accessible in an online or distance learning environment, consider using an application such as Google Slides to allow virtual collaboration for all students while creating an Anchor Chart. Download all attachments to use this lesson in Google Classroom.

Optional Modification For Distance Learning: Chant It, Sing It, Rap It

For online or distance learning, you can use an application such as Canva's video feature to have students record themselves sharing their Chant It, Sing It, Rap It activity. Download all attachments to use this lesson in Google Classroom.

Evaluate

Students' Anchor Charts or book pages are suitable assessments for this lesson. The Anchor Chart Rubric and Digraph Book Page Rubric (if used) can be grading tools for these projects. You may also create your own rubrics based on the needs of your students.

Resources

- K20 Center. (n.d.). ABC Graffiti. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/b30762a7557ba0b391f207f4c600badd
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Anchor charts. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/64f2b35101a470dda36d44421900af08
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Book creator. Tech Tools. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/610
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Canva. Tech Tools. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/612
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Chant it, sing it, rap it. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/d9908066f654727934df7bf4f5066ebf
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Google classroom. Tech Tools. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/628
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Mentimeter. Tech Tools. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/645
- K20 center. (n.d.). Padlet. Tech Tools. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/1077
- Mr. Paulson Reads (March 25, 2019). PifP. Youtube. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=05WDZHddoKw