

The War of the Words

Grammar and Parts of Speech

K20 Center, Gage Jeter, Adam Zodrow
Published by *K20 Center*

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons CC BY-SA 4.0 License

Grade Level	9th – 12th Grade	**Time Frame**	3-4 class period(s)
Subject	English/Language Arts	**Duration**	150 minutes

Essential Question

How can our word choice affect the message we want to convey as writers?

Summary

Of all of the amazing skills that students possess, perhaps there is none greater than the ability to argue! Throw a grammar lesson in front of them, and most tune out immediately—the subject matter simply does not get them excited--but tell your students that the goal for the day is to get into an argument and win, and you might just have them hooked. In this lesson, students will identify and use the four main parts of speech in order to develop a basic understanding of how word choice affects perception. Through writing, debating, and presenting, students will collaboratively argue for a particular part of speech's usefulness. Students will also apply what they learn to other genres of writing. While this lesson is currently aligned only to 11th grade standards, it would be appropriate to teach in grades 9 through 12, adjusting standards as needed.

Snapshot

Engage

Students complete a Quick Write centered on parts of speech. Interesting rules limit how students can respond to questions about their lives.

Explore

Students transform sentences through their word choices. They then discover how writing changes when key adjectives, adverbs, verbs, and nouns are omitted or included.

Explain

Students collaboratively strategize to convince their classmates that one part of speech is superior to another by using debate techniques such as constructing a logical argument and offering rebuttals to defend their position.

Extend

Students locate real-world instances of parts of speech playing a significant role in how ideas are expressed in the media.

Evaluate

Students' presentations of their group project in the Explain section are evaluated using a set of criteria.

Students metacognitively reflect on their learning.

Standards

ACT College and Career Readiness Standards - Reading (6-12)

WME301: Analyze how the choice of a specific word or phrase shapes meaning or tone in somewhat challenging passages when the effect is simple

Oklahoma Academic Standards: English Language Arts (Grade 9)

9.3.W.3: Compose argumentative essays, reviews, or op-eds that:
- introduce precise, informed claims
- include a defensible thesis
- acknowledge counterclaims or alternate perspectives
- organize claims, counterclaims, and evidence in a logical sequence
- provide the most relevant evidence to develop balanced arguments, using credible sources
- use sentence variety and word choice to create clarity and concision
- use style and tone that suits the audience and purpose

9.3.W.4: Blend narrative, informative, and argumentative writing to suit their audience and purpose.
9.5.W.3: Recognize and correct misplaced and dangling modifiers.

Attachments

- Lesson-Slides-The-War-of-the-Words.pptx
- Nazi-Thief-Caught-Stealing-US-Military-Documents-The-War-of-the-Words - Spanish.docx
- Nazi-Thief-Caught-Stealing-US-Military-Documents-The-War-of-the-Words - Spanish.pdf
- Nazi-Thief-Caught-Stealing-US-Military-Documents-The-War-of-the-Words.docx
- Nazi-Thief-Caught-Stealing-US-Military-Documents-The-War-of-the-Words.pdf
- The-Power-of-Words-The-War-of-the-Words - Spanish.docx
- The-Power-of-Words-The-War-of-the-Words - Spanish.pdf
- The-Power-of-Words-The-War-of-the-Words.docx
- The-Power-of-Words-The-War-of-the-Words.pdf
- Thief-Caught-Stealing-Documents-The-War-of-the-Words - Spanish.docx
- Thief-Caught-Stealing-Documents-The-War-of-the-Words - Spanish.pdf
- Thief-Caught-Stealing-Documents-The-War-of-the-Words.docx
- Thief-Caught-Stealing-Documents-The-War-of-the-Words.pdf
- Vocabulary-Terms-and-Examples-The-War-of-the-Words - Spanish.docx
- Vocabulary-Terms-and-Examples-The-War-of-the-Words - Spanish.pdf
- Vocabulary-Terms-and-Examples-The-War-of-the-Words.docx
- Vocabulary-Terms-and-Examples-The-War-of-the-Words.pdf

Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- The Power of Words (attached; one per student)
- Thief Caught Stealing Documents (attached; one per student)
- Nazi Thief Caught Stealing U.S. Military Documents (attached; one per student)
- Vocabulary Terms and Examples (attached; one per student)
- Computer and projector
- Student devices
- Wifi or internet connection
- Student notebook or paper
- Pen or Pencil
- Markers, crayons, or colored pencils (optional)
- Poster paper or construction paper (optional)

Engage

In the Lesson Slides, introduce students to the essential question on **slide 3** and the objectives on **slide 4**.

Go to **slide 5,** which poses a very simple question to the students: *"Which of the four main parts of speech do you feel is the most important to the English language?"* As you click through the slide, each click shows one of the parts of speech; noun, adjective, verb, and adverb. Many students may have a difficult time remembering the details of the four main parts of speech. If this is the case, pass out the attached **Vocabulary Terms and Examples** handout which defines and provides each part of speech for the students. Call on individual students to explain the function, or definition, of each of these.

Once you have taken students through a brief review discussion, ask them to bring out their journals, or something to write on. Go to **slide 6**, and have them use the Quick Write strategy for a few minutes on the following prompt: *"Which of the four main parts of speech, (noun, adjective, verb, adverb) do you feel is the most important to the English language?"*

Give students about 5-10 minutes to think on this question and respond in writing.

Teacher's Note

Some students will want to share what they have written, but tell them you want to wait and hear their thoughts a little bit later in the lesson. Students will be asked later in the lesson to formulate an argument to defend their thoughts about the four main parts of speech.

Explore

Transition by informing your students that you want them to experience the importance of each of the parts of speech. Tell them that for the next couple of minutes, they get to write about themselves, but that you, as the teacher, are going to place some interesting rules on how they can write.

Lead students through the following writing exercises :

- Go to **slide 7**. In two sentences, tell me about your dream car. Tell me what it is that you like so much about this car, but I want you to write this sentence without using any adjectives. (Give students about 3-4 minutes to write.)
- Go to **slide 8**. In one sentence, tell me what you want to be when you get older. What do you want to do with your life? I want you to write this sentence without using any nouns.
- Go to **slide 9**. In one sentence, tell me what you ate for lunch yesterday. Did you enjoy your lunch? You can't use any adverbs in your sentences. (Remind students that adverbs can tell "How? When? And To what extent?" These are words like "extremely," "very," "yesterday").
- Go to **slide 10**. Finally, tell me what you plan on doing when school gets out today. This can be as short or long as you want, but you can't use any verbs. (Remember, verbs describe actions. This may be very difficult for most students. That's the idea!)

Go to **slide 11**. Facilitate a class discussion around which questions were easier to answer and which rule was the hardest to follow. Provide students with time to discuss what was easiest and what was most difficult.

Go to **slide 12**. To further emphasize the idea of how all four parts of speech are important to effectively communicate, pass out the attached **The Power of Words** handout with the series of simple sentences which are devoid of important parts of speech. Allow students to play with these sentences, adding necessary words, and discuss how basic sentences can be completely transformed by the words they choose to use. More direction is provided in the handout's directions.

Pass out the attached sample news report, **Thief Caught Stealing Documents,** and instruct students to read it individually.

Teacher's Note

You will notice that this article is quite simple, with no adjectives or adverbs. Don't point this out to students right now. Simply let them read the article to gather factual information.

Instruct students to verbally summarize the article in their own words to a partner.

Ask students: *"Have readers been given any information that would indicate the author's opinion concerning the events that take place in the article?"*

Teacher's Note

The goal here is for students to notice that the article is quite neutral in tone. The author simply presents the facts of the situation without giving any indication of his/her own opinion.

Next, give students the attached **Nazi Thief Caught Stealing U.S. Military Documents** handout. This contains the same article, only some important adjectives and adverbs have been inserted that provide more detail and set the tone of the article in a quite different way.

It is clear now that this is a story about a Nazi sneaking into a government facility. Notice that the date has been further explained as being in 1944, during World War II.

Encourage students to spend about five minutes reading through the article. Tell them to circle or highlight any adjectives and adverbs that the author uses to provide details on the event that has taken place.

Teacher's Note

Students will most likely begin to notice that this is the same article. The goal here is for students to begin seeing that adjectives and adverbs can completely transform the way that writers communicate ideas.

Go to **slide 13**. Open the floor for discussions about the article. Take students through a discussion about the differences between the two articles. Guiding questions for discussion include:

- What differences do you notice between the two articles?
- Are these two articles recounting the same event?
- Does one version of the article force the reader to assume certain things?
- Do you, as readers, get a better sense of the author's opinion in the second article?
- What are some words that helped you understand the author's opinion?
- Which article seems to make the event out to be a much bigger deal?
- What details have been included to provide the reader with more important information?
- Did this article seem as big of a deal before the adjectives and adverbs were included?

Explain

This is the portion of the lesson in which students put their knowledge of the different parts of speech to the test and battle it out! As a simple grammar formative assessment, students should group up according to the parts of speech and prepare a basic argument to debate why their specific part of speech is the most important.

Go to **slide 14**. Assign each of the students one of the parts of speech, and have them group up according to their assignment.

Teacher's Note

One group should be assigned nouns, one group should be assigned verbs, one should be assigned adjectives, and the last group should be assigned adverbs. Don't let students choose the part of speech to which they are assigned. It will be a much more meaningful learning experience for them to have to see points of view other than their own.

Once students are in their groups, tell them that, as a team, they are going to defend the part of speech that they have been assigned.

Teacher's Note

Obviously, we can't truly settle the debate. The goal of this debate is to get students to see just how important ALL of the four parts of speech really are.

Give the groups about 10 minutes to develop basic arguments for their parts of speech. Tell them that, not only do you want them to convince the class of the importance of their part of speech, you want them to convince the others that the other three parts are less significant.

Notice how the examples below show the importance of the part of speech as well as how a weakness of the other parts of speech. If students struggle initially, providing them with an example would be helpful.

Sample Student Argument For Adjectives

Without adjectives, every sentence would be boring and lifeless. There would be no detail! Also, nouns are important, but without adjectives the nouns have no idea who they are! The sentences are just boring! Nobody wants to be dull and boring. It is clear that adjectives are the most important part of speech.

Sample Student Argument For Nouns

Nouns are the subjects of the sentence! Without us the sentence would not exist! Sure, adjectives help us describe ourselves, but without nouns, adjectives wouldn't have anything to describe. Adjectives are worthless without nouns! Nobody can argue against the fact that nouns are the most important part of speech.

Sample Student Argument For Adverbs

Okay, okay. Nobody is saying that adjectives and nouns aren't important. But without adverbs, sentences would have no timing. We would never know when something took place. Did it happen yesterday? This morning? Tomorrow? We wouldn't know. Plus, adjectives are kind of unimportant without adverbs. A fire engine can be red, but throw in an adverb, and that fire engine is brilliantly red! Obviously, adverbs are the most important.

Sample Student Argument For Verbs

All of you have really great arguments, but without us, the verbs, nothing ever happens. Do you need to get some groceries? You have to use a verb to go to the grocery store. Are you playing football? You need a verb to throw the winning touchdown. Without verbs, nouns have nothing to do. And if nouns have nothing to do, that means that adjectives have nothing to describe. And if adjectives have nothing to describe, that means that adverbs have no adjectives to attach themselves to. It's clear that verbs are the most important.

To conclude this section, students need access to a computer lab. Instruct students to develop a brief presentation, explaining their understanding of the role that their part of speech plays in communication.

Go to **slide 15**. Tell students: As a group, I want you to develop a simple slide deck presentation that communicates some of the points you made in your argument. The presentation needs to include the following elements:

- A brief definition of your part of speech: Provide a formal definition from a dictionary or online resource as well as a definition in your own words.
- Samples of sentences using your part of speech effectively: Highlight or underline the part of speech for those of us viewing your presentation.
- List out the two or three statements you used to defend your part of speech as the most important of the four parts of speech.
- Finally, give some example sentences showing how communication can breakdown without your part of speech (i.e., Sentences without nouns won't make much sense, or sentences without verbs will have no action, etc.).

Teacher's Note

If computer access is not an option, students can create a poster using markers, colored pencils, and/or crayons.

Students should present their arguments to their classmates. Groups should be prepared to offer rebuttals to those who might oppose their argument (i.e., the other groups).

Extend

To further extend this lesson, get your students looking for the parts of speech in everyday life. These extensions reinforce the importance of how language drives communication and alters our perception of what is going on in the world around us.

Go to **slide 16**. Challenge students to pay close attention to news reports, television ads, billboards, and even music they listen to. Ask them to bring in examples of how certain parts of speech play significant roles in how ideas are expressed.

One great example might be the coverage of current events, such as an election. Perhaps students can gather reports of candidates from various news sources around the country to examine how the choice of words used by different media outlets reflects the varying perspectives and opinions of the wars.

Perhaps students can assist your front office in writing the daily announcements. Ask your principal if students can take the morning announcements and spice them up with a few adjectives and adverbs.

Evaluate

Student presentations should be evaluated using the criteria mentioned in the Explore section.

Go to **slide 16**. As a reflective evaluative piece, students could complete a 3-2-1. This instructional strategy allows students to reflect on their learning. You can pose the following three questions for students to answer:

- What are 3 things you learned?
- What are 2 questions you still have?
- What is 1 thing you found interesting?

Students could share out their 3-2-1 responses with a small group or in a whole-class setting.

Resources

- K20 Center. (n.d.) 3-2-1. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/117
- K20 Center. (n.d.) Quick Write. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/1127