

It's Raining Whats and Whats?

Colloquial Language

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Grade Level	8th Grade	**Time Frame**	1-2 class period(s)
Subject	English/Language Arts	**Duration**	120 minutes

Essential Question

Do colloquialisms make our language confusing or give it clarity?

Summary

Colloquial language is informal and consists of words or phrases known primarily to native speakers of a language. In this lesson, students will examine not only how familiar they are with English colloquialisms, but also how often these colloquialisms are used in our speaking and writing, and the effect that using colloquial language may have on nonnative English speakers. Students work toward answering the question, "Where and when is it appropriate to use colloquial language?"

Snapshot

Engage

Students view a series of images and try to identify the different colloquialisms that they represent.

Explore

Students explore colloquial phrases used in a variety of languages through a Card Sort activity.

Explain

After reading two short articles, students identify and evaluate the positive and negative effects of colloquial language, as well as discuss appropriate audiences for use of this type of language.

Extend

Students revise a piece of their own writing or an excerpt from *The Outsiders* to either incorporate more colloquial language remove colloquial language.

Evaluate

Choosing a piece of the text that they modified, students create a Cognitive Comic that illustrates how meaning is either confused or clarified with more or less colloquial language.

Standards

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

KLA 404: Use the word or phrase most appropriate in terms of the content of the sentence when the vocabulary is relatively common

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

L&C 401: A score in this range indicates that the writer is able to: -Make adequate word choices that convey the argument with clarity -Make stylistic choices, including voice, tone, and diction, that are appropriate for the given writing purpose and topic

Oklahoma Academic Standards: English Language Arts (Grade 8)

8.4.R.1: Analyze the relationships among synonyms, antonyms, and analogies.
8.4.W.2: Select language in writing to create a specific effect according to purpose.
8.7.R: Determine the intended purposes of techniques used for rhetorical effects in a variety of alphabetic, aural, visual, spatial, and/or gestural content from various perspectives.

Attachments

- Avoiding Colloquial Lauguage—It's Raining Whats and Whats - Spanish.docx
- Avoiding Colloquial Lauguage—It's Raining Whats and Whats - Spanish.pdf
- Avoiding Colloquial Lauguage—It's Raining Whats and Whats.docx
- Avoiding Colloquial Lauguage—It's Raining Whats and Whats.pdf
- Cognitive Comics Template—It's Raining Whats and Whats - Spanish.docx
- Cognitive Comics Template—It's Raining Whats and Whats - Spanish.pdf
- Cognitive Comics Template—It's Raining Whats and Whats.docx
- Cognitive Comics Template—It's Raining Whats and Whats.pdf
- Hey Y'all, It's OK To Use Colloquialisms Sometimes—It's Raining Whats and Whats - Spanish.docx
- Hey Y'all, It's OK To Use Colloquialisms Sometimes—It's Raining Whats and Whats - Spanish.pdf
- Hey Y'all, It's OK To Use Colloquialisms Sometimes—It's Raining Whats and Whats.docx
- Hey Y'all, It's OK To Use Colloquialisms Sometimes—It's Raining Whats and Whats.pdf
- Idioms From Around The World Card Sort—It's Raining Whats and Whats - Spanish.docx
- Idioms From Around The World Card Sort—It's Raining Whats and Whats - Spanish.pdf
- Idioms From Around The World Card Sort—It's Raining Whats and Whats.docx
- Idioms From Around The World Card Sort—It's Raining Whats and Whats.pdf
- Idioms from Around the World—It's Raining Whats and Whats - Spanish.docx
- Idioms from Around the World—It's Raining Whats and Whats - Spanish.pdf
- Idioms from Around the World—It's Raining Whats and Whats.docx
- Idioms from Around the World—It's Raining Whats and Whats.pdf
- Lesson Slides—It's Raining Whats and Whats.pptx
- The Outsiders Excerpt—It's Raining Whats and Whats - Spanish.docx
- The Outsiders Excerpt—It's Raining Whats and Whats - Spanish.pdf
- The Outsiders Excerpt—It's Raining Whats and Whats.docx
- The Outsiders Excerpt—It's Raining Whats and Whats.pdf

Materials

- Lesson slides (attached)
- Idioms from Around the World Card Sort (attached; one per group of 2-4 students)
- Idioms from Around the World handout (attached; optional, one per student)
- "Hey Y'all It's Okay to Use Colloquialisms in Writing (Sometimes)" article (attached; one per student)
- "Avoiding Colloquial Language" article (attached; one per student)
- *The Outsiders* excerpt (attached; optional)
- Cognitive Comics Template (attached; one per student)

- Envelopes or paper clips
- Highlighters

Engage

Teacher's Note: Activity Preparation

Before you begin this portion of the lesson, print and cut out the attached **Idioms from Around the World Card Sort** activity. You'll need one set of cards for each group of 2-4 students. Organize each set of cards using envelopes or paper clips.

Use the attached **Lesson Slides** to follow along with the lesson.

To begin, display **slide 2** and introduce the definition of "colloquial language" to students. Ask students for some examples of regional phrases (e.g., "y'all") or idioms (e.g., "It's raining cats and dogs") they have heard or seen.

After a brief discussion, move through **slides 3–7.** Pause at each slide, and let students look at the image. Then, ask which common colloquial phrase or idiom is being represented and what it means. (Click each slide a second time to reveal the phrase.)

- **Slide 3:** Chip on your shoulder—The act of holding a grudge or grievance that easily provokes a conflict or feeling entitled.
- **Slide 4:** Couch potato—Someone who is acting lazily or being inactive.
- **Slide 5:** Break a leg—A good luck wish before a performance or task.
- **Slide 6:** Beat around the bush—To omit the most pertinent information or avoid saying what is meant.
- **Slide 7:** Raining cats and dogs—A torrential or heavy downpour.

Encourage students to think about how colloquial language is unique to certain geographic and cultural regions and might suit certain genres and audiences better than others.

Can they think of reasons why? What would it be like for a nonnative English speaker to hear someone assert that the sky was raining cats and dogs? Would it be appropriate to incorporate a phrase like "cool as a cucumber" or "beating around the bush" in a college entrance essay? What about in a letter to a friend?

Display **slide 8** and introduce the essential question: *Do colloquialisms make our language confusing or give it clarity?*

Sample Student Responses:

Some students might feel that colloquial language, such as the use of idioms or regional terms, makes it difficult for nonnative speakers or those from a different region to understand what is meant. Others might feel that the use of such terms adds richness and depth to language that comes from unique phrases that are special to a certain group of people. Use these points for discussion to segue to the next activity.

Display **slide 9** and introduce the learning objectives for the lesson. Tell students that by the end of the lesson, they will be able to do the following:

- Explore colloquial phrases in a variety of languages.
- Identify and evaluate the positive and negative effects of colloquial language.
- Revise a text of their choosing to incorporate or remove colloquial language based on the genre of the text and the audience.

Explore

For the next activity, sort students into groups of 2-4.

Display **slide 10** and pass out a set of the prepared **Idioms From Around the World Card Sort** cards to each group.

Introduce the Card Sort strategy to students. The Card Sort contains various idiomatic phrases from around the world. Remind students that these are phrases used colloquially in different countries—the same way we'd use phrases such as, "It's raining cats and dogs."

Begin the 8-minute timer and ask students to try to match the phrases with their corresponding explanations.

After students have completed their matches, discuss them as a class, and, optionally, pass out the attached **Idioms From Around the World** handout, which students can use to check their matches.

Optional Extension

Categorizing the Cards - As an optional extension, challenge students to identify their own categories that they could use to sort the idiomatic phrases. For example, phrases that involve animals, body parts, types of food, etc., or idioms that share similarities with idioms in English.

After the Card Sort, engage students in a whole-class discussion. Ask them what stood out to them about the phrases. Which idioms were strange or funny? Which ones made sense? Which idioms could they see incorporated into their own language? If students developed their own categories for the idioms, what categories did they identify and why?

Having now looked at and pondered idioms from different countries, display **slide 11** and revisit the essential question: Do colloquialisms make our language confusing or give it clarity?

Optional Modification for Distance Learning

To make the Card Sort activity accessible for distance learners, you can provide the link for students to print and cut out on their own. Or use a web-based platform (e.g. Google Classroom) or a digital platform for sorting (e.g., Amplify Classroom, Quizlet) to create a digital card sort. Students can organize the cards and describe their thought processes for each step as part of an online discussion.

Explain

There are two articles attached to this lesson—**Avoiding Colloquial Language** and **Hey Y'all It's Okay to Use Colloquialisms (Sometimes)**—that examine different sides of where and when to use colloquial language.

Pass out copies of both articles to each student. Additionally, pass out two highlighters.

Introduce students to the Categorical Highlighting strategy and ask them to use this strategy to annotate their articles.

In one color, they should highlight positive effects and uses of colloquial language, and in another color, they should highlight negative effects and uses of colloquial language.

After students have finished reading, come back together for a whole-group reflection. Ask students to offer their thoughts regarding the pros and cons of colloquialism use by using a graphic organizer like the one below:

	WHO	WHEN	WHERE
WHY			
WHY NOT			

Graphic Organizer for Article Analysis

Emphasize to students that using colloquial language is natural for us, like a common code that small groups of us share. Though, as with any part of language that not all users understand, there are pros and cons.

Ask students to consider when they might want to be mindful of not using colloquial language.

Sample Student Responses

- WHO: You would want to use colloquial language with friends or casual acquaintances, but not with a formal audience.
- WHEN: You would want to use colloquial language when you want to sound friendly, but not when you might want to sound serious or gain the respect of your audience.
- WHERE: You would want to use colloquial language when you're just hanging out, but not in a job interview.

Extend

Students now have the option to revise either a piece of their own writing or an excerpt from *The Outsiders* to do one of the following:

1. Incorporate more colloquial language.
2. Replace instances of colloquial language with more formal language.

Either assign or let students choose whether they are incorporating more colloquial language or removing colloquial language but keep instructions simple for students. **(Do not have them do both.)**

Teacher's Note: Selecting a Piece of Writing to Revise

If you would like students to revise a piece of their own writing, consider asking them to use a piece on which they have worked recently. The most appropriate length would be 1-2 paragraphs. The piece can be fiction or nonfiction. If you would like students to practice on a piece of published text, consider using the attached ***The Outsiders*** **Excerpt**.

Teacher's Note: Customizing Your Slide Show

Slides 13–16 have been created to meet the needs of each of the four revision scenarios. Display only the slide(s) that include the instructions that you want your students to follow.

Note that slides 13-16 all display by default. To hide certain slides, navigate to the editing view of the Lesson Slides. Then, in the left-hand column, right-click on a slide and select "Hide Slide" in the menu.

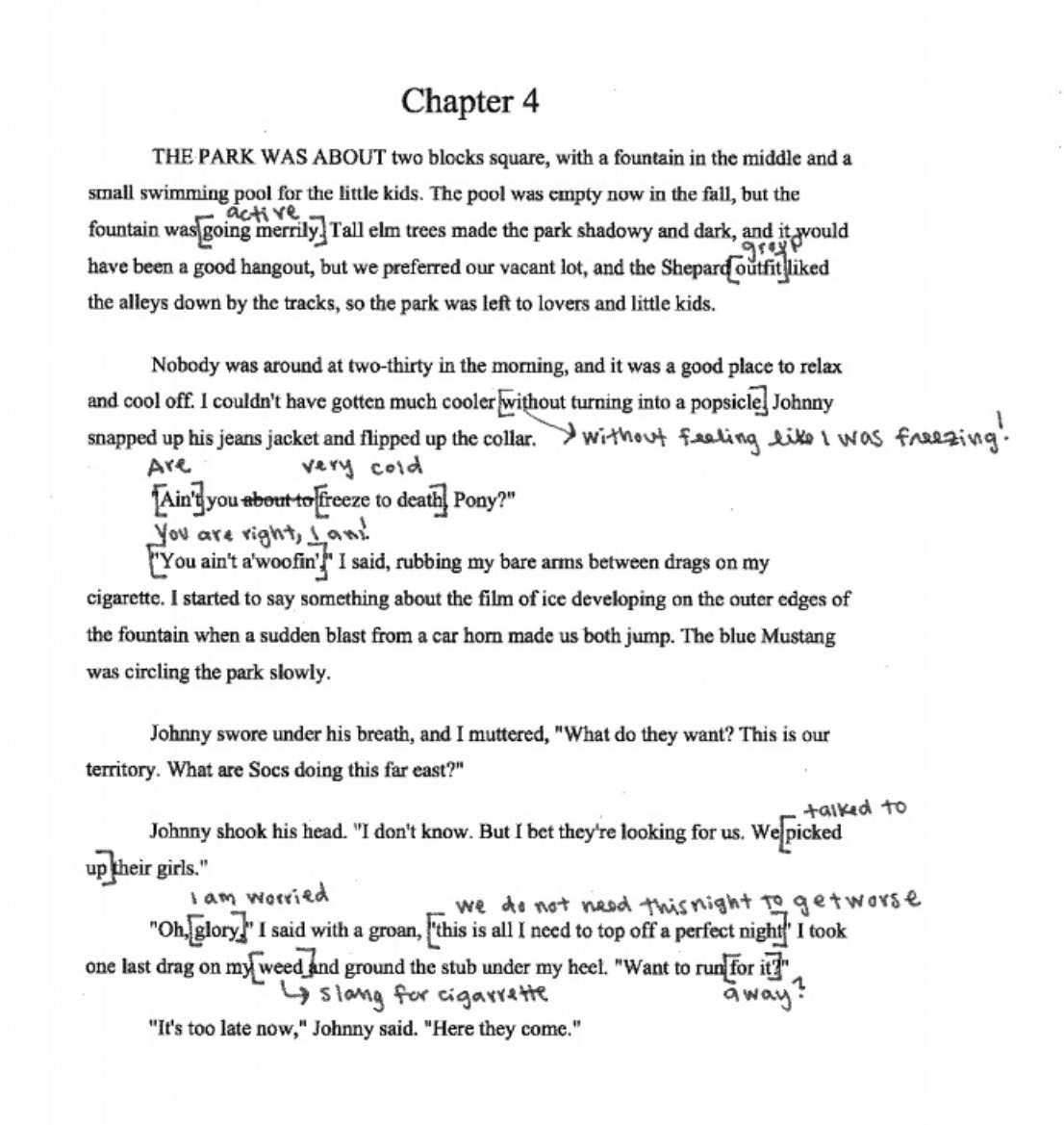
As students revise their pieces of selected text, ask them guiding questions, such as the following:

- "Where can you insert idioms?" or "Where can you take idioms out and replace them with straightforward language?"
- "Where can text such as greetings or references be replaced with regional colloquialisms?" or "Where can regional colloquialisms be replaced with straightforward greetings or references?"

Optional Differentiation

To integrate differentiated learning into this activity, challenge students who are adding colloquial language to select a phrase from the "Idioms from Around the World" list to integrate into their revised passages.

Because they're working with a short piece of writing, the revision process will likely not take long. After students revise their texts, have them rewrite the revised passages on another sheet of paper.



Chapter 4

THE PARK WAS ABOUT two blocks square, with a fountain in the middle and a small swimming pool for the little kids. The pool was empty now in the fall, but the fountain was going merrily. Tall elm trees made the park shadowy and dark, and it would have been a good hangout, but we preferred our vacant lot, and the Shepard outfit liked the alleys down by the tracks, so the park was left to lovers and little kids.

Nobody was around at two-thirty in the morning, and it was a good place to relax and cool off. I couldn't have gotten much cooler without turning into a popsicle. Johnny snapped up his jeans jacket and flipped up the collar. "Ain't you ~~about to~~ freeze to death, Pony?"

"You ain't a'woofin'," I said, rubbing my bare arms between drags on my cigarette. I started to say something about the film of ice developing on the outer edges of the fountain when a sudden blast from a car horn made us both jump. The blue Mustang was circling the park slowly.

Johnny swore under his breath, and I muttered, "What do they want? This is our territory. What are Socs doing this far east?"

Johnny shook his head. "I don't know. But I bet they're looking for us. We picked up their girls."

"Oh, glory," I said with a groan, "this is all I need to top off a perfect night." I took one last drag on my weed and ground the stub under my heel. "Want to run for it?"

"It's too late now," Johnny said. "Here they come."

Above: an example of replacing colloquial language in The Outsiders with more formal and straightforward language.

Invite students to volunteer to read their original and revised passages out loud to compare the differences.

Evaluate

Pass out the attached **Cognitive Comics Template.**

Invite students to demonstrate the effects of colloquial language on speakers, listeners, or events, through their own Cognitive Comic.

Students' comics should illustrate how meaning can change depending on the addition or subtraction of colloquial language. (Students can use the provided **Cognitive Comics Template** or create their own template if they want more or fewer frames.)

Share the directions with students that are detailed on **slides 17 and 18:**

1. Choose one sentence from your passage that included a revision (colloquial language was either added or removed).
2. In your frames, decide how the meaning of the communication in your passage would "look" and which characters were involved.
3. Your comic should show a "before, during, after" flow that demonstrates the effect that colloquial language had in the text as a result of your revision.
4. Keep in mind the Essential Question: How do colloquialisms make our language confusing or give it clarity? This is your theme!

Teacher's Note: Keep in Mind

Encourage students to keep a few questions in mind while they create their comics. Are their comics showing how colloquial language can make communication clearer? Are they showing how colloquial language can be confusing? How? What is the best way to depict that change in perspective or confusion in the comics?

When students are finished, have them share their comics within small groups or with the whole class. You might also consider having students post their comics on the classroom wall to be used as Anchor Charts.

Now that students have had a chance to engage with colloquial language in a variety of ways, revisit the essential question on **slide 19** one last time: *Do colloquialisms make our language confusing or give it clarity?* What do students think? Have their opinions changed from the beginning of the lesson to the end? If so, how? If not, why?

Teacher's Note: Continue the Learning

For more study and practice related to word choice and the use of informal language in writing, refer to the related lesson "Is Pizza Epic?"

Resources

- K20 Center. (n.d.). Amplify classroom. Tech Tools. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/1081
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Anchor charts. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/58
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Card sort. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/147
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Categorical highlighting. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/192
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Cognitive comics. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/198
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Google classroom. Tech Tools. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/628
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Quizlet. Tech Tools. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/666
- K20 Center. (2021, September 21). K20 Center 8-minute timer. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-21YM7Ey7k