

Wockyjabber

Keep this lesson light. *Wockyjabber* is not a grammar lesson, nor should it be turned into one. Rather, it is a form of wordplay (i.e., playing around with words), an essential human use of language consistent with the work of James Moffett and Betty Jane Wagner as well as Linda Gibson Geller. (See Moffett and Wagner's *Student-Centered Language Arts and Reading K-12*, 4th edition [Heinemann, 1993] and Geller's *Wordplay and Language Learning for Children* [NCTE, 1985].) Having said that, students do, in fact, reinforce grammar concepts in the activity (either conscious knowledge of grammar or their subconscious understanding dictated by syntax). That should suffice.

Step 1 (10–15 minutes): Read Lewis Carroll's nonsense poem "jabberwocky" aloud—skillfully with whatever bombast you can muster! Pretend like it means something. Allow students to respond. Nudge them with questions like "What's this about, would you say?" or "How do you feel about what happened to . . . ?"

Once the secret's out, give students copies of the poem. Then on the board list several nouns, verbs, and adjectives that Lewis Carroll coined in the poem. If students don't know parts of speech, you can list *things, actions, and attributes/describers*.

Step 2 (15 minutes): Distribute to pairs and threesomes examples of discourse such as: a Dear Abby letter, a letter to the editor, a menu from a local eatery, a brochure advertising a local attraction, the Gettysburg Address, morning announcements, lyrics to a hit song, Lady Macbeth's "Out Out" soliloquy, and so on. Have students rewrite their text, substituting as they do at least three verbs, nouns, and adjectives they coin. (For less sophisticated kids, highlight selected words to replace using three different marker colors, yellow for verbs, pink for nouns, and so forth.)

Step 3 (10+ minutes): Read aloud, giggle, enjoy!

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