

Name _____

Date _____

Onomatopoeia

Reading/discussion

Here is an interesting word you may not have heard before: onomatopoeia. It is pronounced like this: on-uh-mat-uh-pee-uh. Onomatopoeia comes from two Greek words meaning making names or making words. In this case the words imitate a sound made by the thing which is named. For example a zip or zipper is named for the sound it makes when you fasten it, and many birds are named for their call. Think of the cuckoo, the whippoorwill or the killdeer.

The word onomatopoeia itself had been around for almost 500 years and is often used by poets and writers as a **literary device** to help them convey a mood or emotions. Here are two very different examples:

The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
And murmuring of innumerable bees.
(*Come Down, O Maid* by Alfred Tennyson)

A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
And blue spurt of a lighted match,
(*Meeting at Night* by Robert Browning)

Read both excerpts a couple of times. How do they make you feel? How have the words the poets have chosen helped them to communicate a particular mood.

Onomatopoeia can even be used in jokes. Here is an old 'knock, knock' joke:

Knock-knock Who's there?
Boo
Boo who?
Don't cry, I was only joking

Small children love onomatopoeic words, using themselves to make up names as they learn to speak. A dog may be called a 'Woof' and a cow a "Moo", for example. Many nursery rhymes and children's songs reflect children's love of imitative words – Baa, baa black sheep, is one. How many can you think of?

Name _____

Date _____

Activities:

A. List the words

With your partner or group list as many onomatopoeic words as you can. Here are a few to get you started:

achoo

boing

crunch

drip

B. Use the words

Now write a poem using some of the words you have listed. The poem can be happy or sad or funny. Choose words which you think fit best with the type of poem you are writing. Remember the examples by Tennyson and Browning. Perhaps you can make up some words of your own?

Name _____

Date _____

Answer Sheet

Activity A

There are hundreds of onomatopoeic words from which the children can choose. and they may make up their own as long as their choices fit the definition of onomatopoeia. Here is a list of examples but it is far from exhaustive:

bang	pow
bash	quack
beep	roar
boom	rumble
buzz,	screech
clatter	sizzle
clink	slam
crunch	snap
crush	splash
fizz	squish
flutter	twang
gouge	vroom
grind	whirr
gurgle	whoosh
hiccup	woof
hiss	zap
meow	zoom

Activity B

This is a creative activity and as such there is no right or wrong way of approaching it. However the poem should include onomatopoeic words which enhance the meaning and/or feeling of the writing.