

Word Charades

GRADE LEVELS

K–5 (*pacing will vary based on grade level*)

DURATION

45 minutes for 5-8 words

VOCABULARY

The vocabulary list is provided in the Teacher Toolkit. The group consensus step is flexible, so resist the urge to complete the entire list in one session. You can always return to it later or choose words that students have the most difficulty defining.

LESSON INFORMATION

This lesson integrates basic acting tools (body, voice, and imagination) for students to act out vocabulary words. By using movement to embody the meaning of each word, students are more likely to retain its meaning and concept. It is a fun way to differentiate instruction to help students learn and remember the meaning of words.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, students will:

- Build a deeper, more durable understanding of each vocabulary word by physically embodying its meaning
- Learn that they carry a set of actor tools wherever they go — body, voice, and imagination
- Work together to negotiate and agree on a shared physical representation of each word
- Recall each word's meaning by linking it to the frozen picture they created

MATERIALS & PREPARATION

- Vocabulary list (provided)
- Wipe-off board, Smartboard, or large Post-it easel pad with the vocabulary words written on it, visible to everyone in the class. (You will need to cover, flip, or erase this during the final guessing round — plan for that now.)
- Space to form a large circle, or enough room beside tables/desks for each student to move their whole body freely
- Notecards with one vocabulary word written on one side — one card per word

SUGGESTED TIMING

SEGMENT	TIME
Warm-Up	10 min
Instruction / Practice (See, Say, Embody)	20 min
Activities	10 min
Closure / Reflection	5 min

Lesson Sequence

WARM-UP (10 MIN)

- 1. Introduce the actor's tools.** Explain that each person carries a set of acting tools with them all the time: their body, voice, and imagination. Actors use these tools to create characters and tell stories. Today, we are going to use them to work on our vocabulary words.
- 2. Introduce and practice “actor neutral.”** What actor neutral looks like: Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and firmly planted, hips centered, arms hanging comfortably at your sides, shoulders relaxed, head resting comfortably, and face as expressionless as possible. Be still and silent.

How to practice it:

- a. Have students get into actor neutral so they understand what it looks and feels like.
- b. Ask them to make a shape with their body that is not actor neutral. This uses their body and imagination; their voice tool stays off for now. You can suggest a shape — a giant tree, a timid mouse, an angry tiger, etc.

- c. Ask them to freeze that shape. Practice the freeze deliberately — it will come in handy later. Remind them that actors always have control of their body tool, so this is control practice.
- d. Tell students that when you say, “actor neutral,” they transition back into actor neutral.
- e. Run several rounds.

Through this process students are also learning to create a frozen picture with their body, which is the foundation for the vocabulary lesson.

INSTRUCTION / PRACTICE (20 MIN)

Using their acting tools, students will create one frozen picture to represent each vocabulary word on the list.

This is done **as a whole class** — one agreed-upon frozen picture per word, rather than each student inventing their own. This is a chance to think and talk more deeply about what each word means, and it folds in the dynamics of group negotiation.

To keep consensus moving: for each word, take 2–3 quick pitches from volunteers, then settle it with a fast thumbs vote. Adapt this to whatever framework you already use to manage group decisions in your classroom — the goal is to keep the momentum moving, so you get through the whole list.

1. **See, Say, Embody.** For each word:

- See the word written on the board
- Say the word aloud as a group, using your voice tool
- Embody the word by creating one agreed-upon frozen picture, using your imagination and body tools

2. **Practice moving from actor neutral into the frozen picture** for each word several times, so students remember which picture goes with which word.

3. **Each time, make sure students say the word aloud** as they move into its frozen picture.

ACTIVITIES (10 MIN)

Now that the class has a working vocabulary with a frozen picture for each word, you can play with it. Use the notecards two ways:

1. **Word-to-picture (caller names the word).** One student draws a card and announces the word to the class but does not make the picture. The rest of the class makes the frozen picture that corresponds to the word.

- 2. Picture-to-word recall (silent caller).** Cover or flip the board first, and keep the notecard hidden. One student draws a card and, without saying the word, makes its frozen picture. The rest of the class recalls and names the word.

Because the class built these pictures together, the second activity works as a recall-and-naming game rather than a true “stump the room” guessing challenge. If you want genuine guessing, introduce a new word here that the class has not yet pictured, and let the caller invent a picture for it on the spot.

CLOSURE / REFLECTION (5 MIN)

- Which actor tools were easier to use than others? Which do you like using most, and why?
- Was it easier to come up with a frozen picture when you were more sure of what the word meant?
- If you were unsure of a word's meaning, was it harder to come up with a good picture?
- Are there other ways you use your actor's tools every day?

POST-LESSON TEACHER REFLECTION

1. *What went well?*
2. *What would I change next time?*
3. *Did the timing hold? How many words did we actually get through?*