

Dictionary and Thesaurus

Non-fiction

Content domain focus:

2b retrieve and record information/identify key details from fiction and non-fiction

2d make inferences from the text/explain and justify inferences with evidence from the text

2h make comparisons within the text

Text summary

The extract is taken from the combined version of the *Oxford Concise School Dictionary* and the *Oxford Concise School Thesaurus*.

Unit summary

The unit focuses on information retrieval and knowledge of, or ability to work out, the organisation of individual entries. It also asks the children to make comparisons between the two reference texts in order to clarify their respective purpose.



Teaching prompts

- Either ask the children to tackle the task cold, in order to find out what they know and can do in relation to the two reference texts, or prompt them by asking: *Why would you use a dictionary? Why would you consult a thesaurus?*
- Explain that this particular example is taken from a reference book that combines the two in a parallel text.
- You could point out that the dictionary uses US spellings of *emphasise* and *organise*, or ask the children to point them out themselves.

Revisiting the text

- When the children have completed the task, check the answers with them to see how they have done. Pay particular attention to the structuring of the answer to question 10.
- Depending on the outcome, you may wish to look at other entries to see how a dictionary and thesaurus differ in terms of focus, or to clarify the way in which individual entries are set out.
- Many children have access to a dictionary and a thesaurus but tend not to use them. This is often because finding the entry they want takes a disproportionate amount of effort and time. This can be speeded up by simple tips and practice on location, scanning and retrieval – perhaps in competition – as part of a class game.



Answers

1. emotion, emulsion [2b]
2. emotion, empty [2b]
3. two [2b]
4. emphases [2d]
5. It is a guide to pronunciation. [2d]
6. emphasise [2b]
7. It gives an example of how to use the word. [2d]
8. Accept answers for the sentence "This year ..." that use one of the synonyms given in the text, e.g. "This year there is a special **importance** given to creative writing." [2b]
9. A dictionary tells you the **meaning/correct spelling** of a word.
A thesaurus gives you **alternative words** with a **similar meaning**. [2h]
10. Any reasoned answer should be accepted, e.g. once you know what the word means, you might want to find other words you could use with a similar meaning. [2h]



Assessment

For some questions, straightforward location and retrieval are required, to encourage the children to find their way around the text. For others (e.g. questions 4, 5, 7 and 9), the children need to interpret what they find in the absence of a key, so this requires an element of deduction, and therefore qualifies as inference.

Year 5 children should be familiar with the use of both a dictionary and a thesaurus, so most questions should prove accessible to most children.

A child who can accurately answer questions 1–8, and provide a reasoned answer to questions 9 and 10, is operating securely within the expected standard.

Next steps

This test could prove a useful diagnostic guide to how well the children understand the role of a dictionary and a thesaurus, and how well they can find their way around the entries.

Where the children appear to struggle, and observation of children tackling the test would be useful here, confidence and understanding could be reinforced through further activities and games related to both dictionaries and thesauruses.