

When Milo and Tock arrive in Dictionopolis they discover that once a week The Word Market opens, so that people everywhere can “**buy the words they need or trade in words they haven’t used.**”

This is a wonderful starting point for tuition activities, here are a few popular ideas I’ve used in the past.

1. The Vocabulary Stall

You will need: **A good list of unusual words.**

These should be interesting to **look at** and appealing to say **out loud**. The examples from the chapter (*Chapter 4: Confusion in the Market Place*) are: “quagmire”, “flabbergast” and “upholstery.” I have included a list of mine but would encourage you to make one yourself, too. If you’d like more inspiration, I have the excellent “The Dictionary of Difficult Words” by Jane Soloman but there are many collections out there.

Small objects to write the words on.

I use ping pong balls, coloured to represent different parts of speech: **green** for nouns, **yellow** for verbs, **red** for adverbs, etc.

Objective: **Broaden a student’s vocabulary.**

Method: **Discuss the word.**

This works brilliantly as a regular weekly task. Let a student choose a ‘piece of vocabulary produce’ each week and spend 5 minutes at the start of your session discussing the use, etymology and contextual baggage that a word might have. What mood or intention does the word evoke, what style does it suit, what atmosphere does it create?

Use the word.

Aim to use the word in the session or that week’s homework assignment. More ideas on how to use these words below.

2. Market Trader

You will need: **Your small objects with vocabulary written/printed on.**

A price list spreadsheet / document

To keep track of the market value of various words to use in the game.

Objective: **To get students to use the vocabulary they have and stop relying on core vocab.**



Method:

Price up some words.

Take a piece of the student's creative writing and explain that you are going to 'price up' the descriptive vocabulary. Words can have a value of £1, £5, £10, £20, £50 or £100 depending on criteria to be decided by the teacher and student. The higher level the vocabulary, the higher the value of the word. You can then determine the overall worth of a piece of writing and set challenges to hit certain money goals.

For example, here are a bunch of synonyms that may be worth differing amounts:

"I had a good weekend"

<i>nice</i>	£1
<i>good</i>	£5
<i>positive</i>	£10
<i>decent</i>	£20
<i>satisfactory</i>	£50
<i>adequate</i>	£100

Given the example above, your student will most probably suggest a word such as "excellent", "extraordinary" or "fabulous." This is a good opportunity to discuss how, though undoubtedly higher level words, these alternatives are all strongly positive whereas "good" in the original sentence is only slightly positive. The aim is to keep the **meaning as much as possible** and avoid emotion inflating as a substitute for better vocabulary.

Tally some whole sentences.

Keep a record of the value you assign to different words. Use this resource to find totals for whole sentences.

£20

£10

£50

"I had a decent weekend, full of fine company and delectable food."

It's important to explain to the student that high vocabulary 'prices' don't always make for better writing. Some sentences may be too rich for the situation. Action and pace in storytelling often need a simple diet of core vocabulary. Explore how the different pound totals of sentences affect their tone and meaning.

Set students a budget for a story.

Set a budget for a sentence and let them try to get as close as possible. For example, you could ask them to write a £200 description of a secondary character in a story.

3. Word Larder

As promised, here are some interesting words to get you started. I have chosen words that appear in The Phantom Tollbooth but you can put together your own list from whatever source you choose!

quagmire	flabbergast	upholstery
balderdash	superfluous	famished
dejected	miscellaneous	hazardous
promontory	profusion	sombre
discord	exquisite	wretch
malicious	leer	brandish