

ADAPTING SONGS FOR BEGINNING LEARNERS

As discussed in last week's Teacher's Corner, adapting materials involves carefully analyzing the material to be adapted based a number of factors. In this week's Teacher's Corner, teachers can follow along as the song "We Dig Worms" is slightly adapted by adding language and then used to conduct an activity for a beginning group of learners. The song comes from the American English compilation called *American Rhythms*; the entire compilation can be found on the [American English](#) site. The activity presented below adapts the song to meet the stated lesson objectives.

LEVEL

Beginning

LANGUAGE FOCUS

Listening

GOALS

During this activity, students will be able to:

- Identify previously studied vocabulary words related to animals and plants
- Define the word "dig" in the context of the song
- Selectively listen and choose the correct animal or plant when heard while listening to the song

MATERIALS

- Copy of original [song text](#)
- Technology to play [song recording](#)
- Copies of worksheet (see Appendix A)

PREPARATION

- Make enough copies of the worksheet (Appendix A) for each student.
- Prepare to have the song play from a set of speakers so students can listen.

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PROCEDURE

1. Write the word “dig” on the board and ask learners if they know its meaning.
 - a. Give students a chance to think about the meaning and share what they know.
 - b. After some ideas are shared, write the title of the song on the board, “We Dig Worms,” and ask them what this title means.
 - c. After a few more ideas are shared, write “We Like Worms” on the board and explain that in American English “to dig” can be used idiomatically to mean “to like.”
2. Remind students of some vocabulary they have discussed related to animals and plants.
 - a. Ask them for some of the words they have learned recently and write them on the board as they call the words out.
3. Model how they could use the word “dig” to explain what they like: for example, “I dig cats” or “I dig flowers.”
 - a. Have students turn to a neighbor and tell the neighbor what animal or plant they dig.
 - b. Have some students offer some examples of what they dig before introducing the song activity.
4. Tell students they are going to listen to the song “We Dig Worms” and listen for what animals and plants the singer digs.
 - a. Hand out copies of the worksheet with the adaptations to the song lyrics.
 - b. Give students a few minutes to study the lyrics before asking them to work with their neighbor to alternate reading lines aloud.
 - c. Circulate to help students with pronunciation of new words.
5. Bring the students back together and explain that now they will listen to the song and complete the worksheet. As they listen, tell them to circle the plant or animal the singer digs in each verse.
 - a. Play the song and have students listen and circle the correct answers as best they can.
6. At the end of the song, tell them they will listen again.

- a. If students feel confident in their answers, tell them to listen and check their answers the second time.
 - b. If students still need to identify answers, tell them that they will have a chance to try their missing answers again.
 - c. After listening again, give students a few minutes to consider their answers.
7. Ask students to return to working with their neighbors. Have students compare answers with their neighbors and change any answers they think might need changing.
 8. Students continue to work with their neighbors while the song is played one more time. During this third time to listen, students can work quietly with partners to check all of their work.
 9. Once the song is finished, ask each pair to read a line with the correct answer. Ask for confirmation from the rest of the class to ensure that all students recognize the correct answer.
 - a. If there is time, play the song again and have the students stand up and sing along to practice saying the words they listened for during the lesson.

VARIATIONS

This activity can be adapted to fit a multi-level group of beginners. Some students could receive a copy of the lyrics with a choice of words to listen for while more advanced learners receive a copy of the lyrics with the target vocabulary words not listed. The more advanced learners must write in the words that they hear rather than choose between two words.

APPENDIX A

We Dig Worms

by Zach Ladin

(4:53)

Instructions: For each line, choose the correct word from the two options. The first one has been done for you.

Lyrics:

(Hello, everybody! This is a little song I wrote about all the things in this big old world that I really dig. Here's how it goes...)

I dig worms/~~worns~~
You dig worms/~~worns~~
We dig worns/~~worms~~
Who digs worms/~~worns~~
I said, we dig worns/~~worms~~
because they're wild!

(Now, can you dig what I'm talking about?)

I dig pugs/~~bugs~~
You dig bugs/~~pugs~~
We dig bugs/~~pugs~~
Who digs pugs/~~bugs~~
I said, we dig bugs/~~pugs~~
because they rule!

I dig dish/~~fish~~
You dig fish dish
We dig fish/~~dish~~
Who digs dish/~~fish~~?
I said, we dig dish/~~fish~~
because they're slick!

Refrain

I've never met a living thing I didn't like.
No, nothing bothers me.
In this whole, wide world, I dig
Just about everything I see.

I dig dogs / frogs
You dig frogs / dogs
We dig frogs / dogs
Who digs dogs / frogs?
I said, we dig frogs / dogs
because they're smooth.

I dig snakes/~~cakes~~
You dig cakes/~~snakes~~
We dig snakes cakes
Who digs snakes cakes?

I said, we dig cakes snakes
because they're sssss-super!

I dig herds/birds
You dig herds/birds
We dig herds/birds
Who digs birds/herds?
I said, we dig herds/birds
because they're fly!

Refrain

(or smell. . .)

I dig skunks/bunks
You dig skunks/bunks
We dig bunks/skunks
Who digs bunks/skunks?
I said, we dig skunks/bunks
because they're sweet!

I dig cubs/grubs
You dig grubs/cubs
We dig grubs/cubs
Who digs cubs/grubs?
I said, we dig grubscubs
just like those skunks!

I dig pants/plants
You dig plants/pants
We dig plants/pants
Who digs pants/plants?
I said, we dig plants/pants because they're
great!

I've never met a living thing I didn't like.
No, nothing bothers me.
In this whole, wide world, I dig
Just about everything I see.

I dig mushrooms/brooms
You dig brooms/mushrooms
We dig mushrooms/brooms
Who digs brooms/mushrooms?
I said, we dig mushrooms/brooms
because they're fun - gi!

I dig lichen/hiking
You dig hiking/lichen
We dig lichen/hiking
Who digs hiking/lichen?
I said, we dig lichen/hiking,
we be liking!

I dig rocks/locks

You dig locks/rocks
We dig locks/rocks
Who digs locks/rocks?
I said, we did rocks/locks
because they rock!

Refrain

I dig otter/water
You dig otter/water
We dig water/otter
Who digs water/otter?
I said, we dig otter/water
because it's cool!

I dig air/pear
You dig air/pear
We dig pear/air
Who digs pear/air?
I said, we dig pear/air
because it's fresh!

I dig the fun/sun
You dig the fun/sun
We dig the fun/sun
Who digs the sun/fun?
I said, we dig the sun/fun
because it's hot!

Refrain

I dig Earth
You dig Earth
We dig Earth
Who digs Earth?
I said, we dig Earth because it's our home!
(repeated)