

English

Lesson plan

Silent letters

with Michael McIntyre

1. Find out what your students know about 'silent letters' and then read through this paragraph and the info box.

Why are there silent letters in the English language?

Some letters in English are silent because they belong to rare sound combinations that English speakers find difficult to pronounce. English has borrowed many words from other languages, and because these borrowed words often follow different sound patterns, English speakers pronounce them differently from the original language.

Info box

- Silent letters are letters that will not be sounded out when a word is spoken.
- Silent letters can be both vowels and consonants
- In writing, silent letters can help differentiate homophones (words, that sound the same) such as: two, to and too
- Sometimes silent letters can provide information about the origin of the word.

For example, the p in the word psychology is silent. The word psychology comes from the Greek words 'psyche' (soul, mind, spirit) and 'logos' (study, discours, reason)

In English, the combination "ps" at the start of a word is not typical or natural.

Over time, English speakers began dropping the "p" sound to make pronunciation easier and more consistent with English phonetic patterns.

2. Here is a list of some words with silent letters. Without the help of the internet, can you think of ten more words with a silent letter?

knight
aisle
hour
honour comb
debt scissors
sandwich design
high white
knot walk

3. Michael McIntyre, a British Comedian, has recently shared his thoughts about how the English language would sound if silent letters weren't silent.

Watch the clip and listen carefully to Michael talking about words with silent letters.

https://youtu.be/BrJv_wUEKko?si=ChtMXNyjje8vu3S

Summarise his thoughts and answer following questions:

- When should 'Silent Letter Day' take place?
On a Wednesday, in autumn or February
- What should you do on 'Silent Letter Day'?
You should go climbing, or do knitting. A knife is the only cutlery you can use on 'Silent Letter Day'. Food is a buffet serving salmon, swordfish, sandwiches and yoghurt.
- What should be the symbol of 'Silent Letter Day'?
A gnome
- What two names with silent letters does Michael mention?
Chloe and Isla

4. Now watch the clip again and write down as many words mentioned with silent letters as you can recall.

hour, sandwich, half, subtle, knickers, knuckles, Wednesday, autumn, February, talking, walking, climbing, knitting, knife, buffet, salmon, swordfish, sandwiches, yoghurt, gnome, cupboard, wrapped, wrapping paper, scissors, honestly, known, listen, receipt, champagne, knock, Chloe, Isla, school, lasagne, knackered

5. Solve the Strands 😊

[Play](#)

Spangram (must be at least 6 letters):

Wednesday

Words:

hour

knife

buffet

scissors

receipt

knackered

It's silent

