

Foundations for Literacy IV

FFL 4.3

W-h Digraph & Y as a Vowel

PART I

W-h Digraph

To begin this lesson, ask your students if they had a special blanket or stuffed animal or something else they treasured as a little one—and maybe even still treasure today. Discussions like these are a great for promoting positive student affect. When students feel joyful, interested, and alert, they are more inclined to enjoy academic success because they're open to learning.



Read: *Where's My Teddy*, by Jez Alborough

Note the w-h in *Where's* is a digraph we have yet to explicitly discuss. In this digraph however, we don't hear a unique, unexpected sound. W-h either says /w/ or /h/. So, we make either the sound of the first letter /w/ OR the sound of the second letter /h/. Note with your students that w-h rarely says /h/.

w-h Mini Poster

materials include: w-h mini posters, white crayons, watercolor paints, paint brushes, cups, water, wipes

Provide each student with a white mini poster that has a light outline of the letters w-h. Ask the students to notice the spelling of the word *white* on their white crayons and then use that white crayon to color the w and h using heavy, dark strokes so that no paper is seen through the crayon markings.

Acknowledge that it's a bit of a boring task but it's quick and they'll see why it's important very soon.

When the students have finished their coloring, present the watercolor paints, water, and paint brushes. Instruct the students to wet their brushes, choose one dark paint color from the palette, and then swish their paint brushes over and over the paint puck until color fills the brush bristles. Next, your scholars are to paint their mini posters, with broad, sweeping strokes. With wet brushes, they'll move their brushes from left to right across the page and sweep from right to left, back and forth, again and again until no white remains—except for the w-h which resists the paint and remains white. Most kids are surprised that the paint does not adhere to the crayon. This **crayon resist** painting is a fun way to help kids remember that w-h *usually* says /w/ as it does in the word *white*.

Explain that with digraphs c-h, t-h, and s-h, a completely unexpected sound is made. We hear neither of the two letters' sounds represented in those digraphs. However, with w-h there is no unique, unexpected sound. With w-h, we either say /w/ (most common) or /h/ (rare).

Invite your students to decode the w-h word cards remembering that w-h *usually* says /w/. When the w-h in a word says /w/, the kids will place that word card under the w portion of the header. When the word has a w-h that says /h/, the kids will place that word under the h portion of the header.

*Note with your students that most words with w-h saying /h/ are words that are derived from the words *who* and *whole*.

Remembering Important Question Words

materials include: question word lists, large question marks (for recording question words), pencils

Have each student sit knee-to-knee with another student or with you. They can be sitting in chairs, or they can be sitting cross-legged on the floor. We're going to teach students to clap (like pat-a-cake) by asking them to clap their hands in front of their chests, and then clap their partners' right hands, and then clap both their own hands in front of their chests again, and then clap their partners' left hands. They'll continue clapping, practicing until they can do the clapping while maintaining somewhat of a steady beat.

Provide the question word lists to the students and ask them to repeat the question words with you, over and over again, while clapping with their partners. They'll continue until the kids can repeat the question words from memory with confidence and accuracy. We're promoting rote memory here, to be sure, but we're making it fun. Once you do this activity, your kids will have a hard time forgetting those question words. There are so many good things happening that help kids with recall. The beat, repetition, crossing the mid-line, and focusing on fun all help the lesson to become *sticky* (not easily forgotten). This is beneficial because our kids should be able to answer each of the questions—*who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, *which*, and *how* (especially the first four) when retelling what they're reading.

When our kids listen to or read a story, they should be able to say much about WHO the story is about (character), WHAT the story is about (problem), WHEN the story took place (setting- e.g., long ago, present time, in the future, winter, spring, summer, fall, daytime, nighttime, etc.), and WHERE the story took place (also, setting). The other question words can be used, too, to learn what the kids are understanding about what they've heard and/or read. WHY did the event happen (or even why did the author write the book/what was the author's purpose)? WHICH action or event caused the problem, and HOW was the problem solved?

Please take the time to work through the questions word with the story *Where is My Teddy*. Next, try working through the question words with another story or movie with which most students are familiar.

We certainly want our scholars to monitor their own understanding as they read. That means we need them to recognize when they are **not** understanding. Having these question words automatically accessible can help students determine whether they're getting the image(s) and message(s) the text is conveying.

These Foundations for Literacy lessons are primarily focused on decoding and encoding, but the whole point of reading is for our students to understand what they read. Even at the word level, we must ensure our kids are gaining meaning from the words they're decoding.

Ask your students to write each question word, in order, inside the large question mark outline. They'll begin by writing *who* at the top. Please have the students underline the sound the w-h represents in each word. They will underline either the w or the h. Continue in this manner until all question words are written inside the question mark. The word *how* will be "banished" to the dot of the question mark.

Ask your students what makes *how* different from the other question words we're learning to spell. Of course, this question word is the only one that begins with the letter h.

Share with your students that many kids confuse *who* and *how*. Explain that since we know o-w says /Ow! / or /Oh! / (It **doesn't** say /oo /), h-o-w could never say *who*. That first sound in *who* is /h /, and that could be really tricky . . . unless you've learned that **w-h can say /w / or /h /**.

Another thing that makes *who* tricky is that most short words that end with o have an open vowel rule in play and the o says its name. **Do, to, and who are big-time rule-breakers.**

Be sure to share that each of the "question words" can also be used in such a way that they are not functioning as question words.

She doesn't know who I am.

I love what you said.

Dad gets nervous when it storms.

He can't remember where he put his phone.

Sam wasn't sure why I was calling.

I couldn't decide which book was my favorite.

My brother didn't know how long it'd take.

We want our kids equipped to read and spell question words accurately, and we want them to know that these words can be used as a framework for providing a solid text summary.

w-h Treat

materials include: Whoppers Malted Milk Balls (Whoppers labels if desired)



Contractions

Write the word *Where's* (From *Where's My Teddy*) on a dry erase board and note with your students that the word *Where's* is a contraction. Remind your students that even the tiny marks (like apostrophes we see within these contracted words) indicate something important and we must pay attention to them.

Say: Often, an apostrophe (Point upward to remind your students that an apostrophe /UP-os-tro-pee / is UP in the air, up above the base line—the line upon which the letters are written.) and it indicates that one or more letters have been removed from the very place we find that apostrophe. Ask the students to observe the word *where's* and to try to determine which letter was omitted. It will help if you use the contraction in a sentence.

Note that often, in contractions, the first word remains intact, and the letters are missing from the second word. It's not always the case, but it often is.

Note that when we put the two words together to make a compound word, both words remain intact. When we put the two words together to make a contraction, a letter or two (or even more) gets *squashed out*. When we're writing the way we talk, we use the apostrophe to show that we *know* one or more letters *would* be there in standard writing, but that we've decided to omit the letters and sounds to make the words flow more smoothly as we do in informal speech.

Have your students try to determine which letters have been *squished out* of the following contractions:

wasn't
you've
she'll
I'd
let's (let + us, a bit antiquated)
you're
I'm
don't
he's
they're
we've
she'd

Whistle Candy

Just for fun, we're including a piece of whistle candy for your students to enjoy. 😊



PART II

Y as a Vowel



Check out the title of **Where's My Teddy, by Jez Alborough** once again. Notice with your students the sounds made for the y's in *my* (/eye/) and *teddy* (/ee/).

Y Sounds Like /I /or /ee/

materials include: Pixy Stix with triangle with “y as a vowel rule reminders” taped to the top, y as a vowel word cards with header (Cut top off the document before cutting word cards apart. This will be your header,) information pages (When a y Sounds Like an e . . . + examples)

The word cards will be cut apart and then sorted according to the sounds the y's make in each of the words. Some will have y's saying /eye/ while the others will have y's saying /ee/. Note that there are two “rule breakers” and students will have to “flip” to the other sounds (for the y's) to make a word they know.

Give your students Pixy Stix reminder wands. Note that when y's are at the ends of short, little words, the y usually says /eye/. When y's are at the ends of longer words, the y usually says /ee/. But, if that doesn't make a word we know, we can just “flip it” to the other sound. (It works like a charm!)

Direct your students to put the tips of their fingers and thumbs from one hand together at the top of the rule reminder triangle that's taped to their Pixy Stix. Have them slide their fingers and thumbs down the edges of the triangle, just a little, stopping toward the top of the triangle and say, “When y comes at the ends of *short little words*, the y usually says, /eye/.” Have them slide their fingers and thumbs downward so they're farther apart and toward the bottom of the triangle and say, “When a y comes at the ends of *longer words*, the y usually says /ee/.” Note that on the Pixy Stix the y in *Pixy* says /ee/.

Using the Pixy Stix reminder wands as reminders of the rule, students will decode lots of words with y's acting like vowels at the ends of words.

When your students get to a word like *cozy* or *baby* or *dopy*, share the “When y Sounds Like an e, It Often Acts Like an e” information page. Y's can do magic. They can tell vowels to say their names. Draw a rainbow from the y's (on the information page) to the vowels to show that the y can “jump” and do magic. You may also want to note that the y doesn't make the i say its name in *Pixy* because there are two sounds for x and—even though it's only one letter—those two sounds are blocking any magic from the y.

Be sure your students are reading the words aloud to you. This is not a visual sort. It's a sort that leans into the sounds represented by letters—and we're also noticing that these y's are acting like vowels.

Y Sounds Like /eye/or /ee/ Spelling

materials include: spelling practice page

Ask your students to spell 5-7 words from the word sort. Be sure the students think first about the sound for the y and then write the words in the correct column. You may have them indicate their thinking by placing their pencils in the column where they *think* each word will go, and then when you confirm they're correct, they may begin stretching the sounds and spelling the words using what they now know about how words work.

Y Sounds Acting Like a Vowel Within Words

materials include: Y within words information page, Mystery Flavor Dum Dum suckers

Share with your students that when we see a y within words and it's acting like a vowel, the y will likely sound like a short i and say /i/ like in *mystery*. Notice, too, that when y's are *within* words, they're often the second sound. Have your students complete the practice page decoding words and drawing lines to connect those words they've decoded with the corresponding images.

Y Sounds Acting Like a Vowel Treat

materials include: Cry Baby bubble gum 😊

Provide a piece of Cry Baby bubble gum for your students to try. Notice together that the y in baby sounds like an e and it acts like an e—it does magic. 😊 This gum is so sour it just might bring water to your eyes!

Dictated Sentence and Decoding Sentence Practice Page

materials include: dictated sentence practice pages, pencils

Students will be challenged to write one sentence from the dictated sentence page for this lesson. You will read one sentence aloud, as many times as needed, as the students record that sentence on their papers—using capitals, spaces, and end marks. Of course, you'll also coach them to correctly use the phonics rule you've been teaching in this lesson (and in previous lessons).

TIP: With the dictated sentence page in front of your students, on their tables or at their desks, have them flip the paper upside down and fold on the dotted line so the handwriting lines show at the bottoms of their papers. When done this way, it'll be easy for your students to flip that fold back up to check their sentence writing with the one on the page. Your students' sentences will be right side up when they unfold them to check their work.

This self-checking promotes skilled reading and writing. And remember, this work is not to be graded. This is our practice. We want to use no-stakes assessments, so our kids feel comfortable taking risks and trying out the skills they're learning.

Finally, your scholars will practice decoding words, featuring this new learning, as they decode the remaining sentences.