

QUICK AND EASY SPONGE ACTIVITIES for Upper Elementary and Middle School

1. Read aloud a short story, or a couple of paragraphs from a familiar story or a class novel. Every so often, pause and draw out a selected word - on this word, students must call out a replacement word. You will say, "Yes, that's right (and here, reread the sentence, replacing - with emphasis - one of the words called out by your students, for the word written in your text)."
2. Each student will draw a map of his or her own desert island. What would be on each person's island? Encourage them to think not only of the usual tropical paradise, but also to consider their needs, such as water supplies, food, etc.
3. Consider the texture: You will ask five students to come up to the board (or however many can fit comfortably at the board). You will say, "Please try to draw what I have on my mind." Start with an image or an object, but don't make it too simple. Describe the texture, the sound, the taste, smell, touch, etc. by using words such as rough, sharp, hollow, deep, immense, sturdy... before getting into specific colors and shapes. Students can then have a turn playing your role for the next five at the board, using only adjectives to describe the object; you may wish to consider omitting all color and shape words until they have passed ten adjectives, for instance. You could also line up students in teams, so that the student guessing the correct object will win a point for his or her team, and that team will be the next to describe their object.
4. Find some bizarre objects in your kitchen drawer, gizmos and gadgets, and bring them to class. Put them all into a paper bag so that students have no previous knowledge of what's in your bag. Divide your students into two or three teams, and then hand out an object to each team. Give them one or two minutes to work together on a skit that explains how to use that object, inferring what it is with their skit. They must write down what they think the object is before beginning their skit; the other students will try to guess what they are acting out and what the object is.
5. Tell your students that someone just came up to them with a very long story, lots of gesticulating, some weeping, a few long sighs, throwing arms up in the air, a few short laughs and a couple of loud bellows, and then waited expectantly for their replies. The only problem is, this person spoke in a language that none of them understood - and now it's up to your students to try to correctly interpret the story and identify this person's request.
6. People Numbers: Each student takes their favorite number, draws a large version of it to cover the paper, and then creates a person from that number.
7. Double this! Start with the first student doubling 1 plus 1; easy enough, then the next person must double the answer, and so on and so forth - until it takes a pencil and paper to come up with the correct answer. You can divide students into teams to create a competition, seeing which team finishes first. Make sure there are the same number of students on each team. They can race to the board for the answer for more drama in the game.
8. What was that? Give students a challenging list of vocabulary words, entries they most likely will not be familiar with. They must then consider the word, create a definition, and use it in a sentence. Only after doing so, they will look up the word, rewrite the definition in their own words, and use it in a sentence which defines it correctly. Both versions will be shared with the class, and students must guess which definition is correct.
9. Obfuscation: This time, students will be given vocabulary words from their spelling texts, so that they are more or less familiar with the terms. However, instead of giving a clear definition of the word, they must give a convoluted and deliberately confusing definition. They can use expressions such as, "in other words", or, "what I mean is", and "well, it really wasn't like that, but more like...", etc., extending the definition as long as possible - and seeing how clarity counts.
10. 50 Years from Now: Start this one going around the class, simply by saying, "50 years from now..." and adding in your own answer, such as, "Cars will be obsolete. Instead, people will transport on insect belts." - or some such thing, you get the idea. Answers can be as fantastical as students wish, and you can gather all answers into a "50 Years From Now" class book. Have your class artists illustrate the book as well.