



Playing with language

Two language games from Pie Corbett to have a go at.

Game 1: A League of Locusts

To play the game, work in pairs. One partner writes or selects a list of synonyms for the word *group* (see below) while the other writes a list of 'types', e.g. *types of insects, animals, dogs, cats, cars, toothpaste, characters, buildings, flowers, trees*, etc. Then bring the two lists together to create a new combination.

To demonstrate this game, here is my list of words to use instead of 'group', different types of insect and what happens when I combined them.

Group	Insect	Combination
<i>Band</i>	<i>Ant</i>	<i>A band of ants</i>
<i>Bunch</i>	<i>Bee</i>	<i>A bunch of bees</i>
<i>Choir</i>	<i>Beetle</i>	<i>A choir of beetles</i>
<i>Circle</i>	<i>Butterfly</i>	<i>A circle of butterflies</i>
<i>Clan</i>	<i>Cricket</i>	<i>A clan of crickets</i>
<i>Club</i>	<i>Daddy-long-legs</i>	<i>A club of daddy-long-legs</i>
<i>Company</i>	<i>Dragonfly</i>	<i>A company of dragonflies</i>
<i>Crowd</i>	<i>Earwig</i>	<i>A crowd of earwigs</i>
<i>Family</i>	<i>Glow-worm</i>	<i>A family of glow-worms</i>
<i>Galaxy</i>	<i>Gnat</i>	<i>A galaxy of gnats</i>
<i>Gang</i>	<i>Grasshopper</i>	<i>A gang of grasshoppers</i>
<i>League</i>	<i>Locust</i>	<i>A league of locusts</i>
<i>Library</i>	<i>Ladybird</i>	<i>A library of ladybirds</i>
<i>Party</i>	<i>Louse</i>	<i>A party of lice</i>
<i>School</i>	<i>Mosquito</i>	<i>A school of mosquitoes</i>
<i>Swarm</i>	<i>Moth</i>	<i>A swarm of moths</i>
<i>Team</i>	<i>Wasp</i>	<i>A team of wasps</i>

Here is a list of 'group' words to make it easier.

Flock	Swarm	Harvest	Convoy
Herd	School	Stash	Covey
Litter	Class	Assembly	Flock
Team	Clump	Muster	Gaggle
Gang	Packet	Rally	Hoard
Tower	Bundle	Round	Host
Band	Suit	Sum	Pack
Bunch	Chest	Assortment	Pride
Heap	Collection	Mass	Orchestra
String	Stack	Pile	Posse
Crowd	Pile	Set	Rabble
Amada	Bouquet	Stockpile	Ring
Fleet	Mob	Company	Society
Cover	Cluster	Congregation	Squad
Shoal	Gaggle	Gathering	Troupe
Flight	Clutch	Battery	Throng
Troop	Suite	Brood	Shiver
Army	Library	Clump	Descent
Pack	Array	Constellation	Streak
Wake	Pod	Universe	Parliament

Game 2: 16 things in a Hobbit's Knapsack

I developed this idea with Brian Moses about 38 years ago. In those days, we had our children writing lists along the lines of '*5 things you'd find in Margaret Thatcher's handbag*'. This is the version that I wrote at the time to use as a model for children. Ian McMillan has also written several similar list poems.

Six things found in a Hobbit's Knapsack

A wasp's sting to startle unwary goblins.

Two leather-bound books. One titled, 'Tunnel digging for beginners' and the other, 'Wolves and methods for their avoidance'.

A purse of never-ending wishes.

A pot of gold found at the end of a rainbow.

A pair of twelve league boots.

A fur-lined cape, the colour of rock, for keeping warm in the winter and using as camouflage.

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1. Read the model through and discuss the ideas.
2. Brainstorm a list of other possibilities.
3. Use shared writing to create a few lines
4. Inject a sense of urgency by giving a time limit for independent writing, to aid concentration.
5. Children share and polish their ideas.
6. Hear examples. Copy favourites for display or to make a booklet.

This is an example from working with a year six class.

We started with a rapid class brainstorm of possibilities: *a hammer forged from underground mines; a dagger for dragon attack; oat cake or seed cake; a small block of hardened cheese; a flagon of water for rehydration; a clarinet, reed pipe or recorder; flint and steel; a map of The Misty Mountains; a quill and slate for writing runes, communication or sending a message; a silver pen for writing which can only be read by the light of the moon; a diamond for bargaining; a sack for treasure; an invisibility cloak and some pork pie.*

We then did shared writing of a few lines:

A silver pen for secret statements concealed safely beneath a moonless night.

An enchanted reed pipe to fool your advancing foe by summoning a slither of moonlight.

Here is a list made by four of the year 6 children:

Sixteen things found in a Hobbit's Knapsack

Two fire-flies in a jam jar to light up your way.

A book of myths and legends though some would call them truths.

A quill of wise words that writes runes to summon a thread of starlight.

A silver pen that can only be seen by the light of the moon.

Gandalf's pocket-watch where you spin the hands to turn time.

An enchanted reed pipe for summoning a slither of moonlight to guide you in the night.

A charmed recorder for fooling or hypnotising your foe.

A cauldron of wishes at the edge of an inquisitive mind.

Homely, hard cheese for a fireless night.

A flagon of never-ending water to quench any dwarf's thirst.

A golden feather, plucked from the finest eagle and a strip of slate forged in goblin mines to contact the nearest village, using an ancient map of The Misty Mountains.

The fang of a dragon to slay fleeing foe.

A completely crystal dagger, able to pierce through any armour and wound even the deadliest of creatures.

A pair of relatively light boots which can endure months of crossing rivers, navigating woods and stumbling through seemingly endless caves and caverns.

A steel-lined cape to protect you from fire, piercing blades and the strongest of incantations.

Of course, the lists could be about what you would find in a troll's rucksack, a giant's suitcase, a unicorn's saddle bags or a goblin's backpack!

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