

Words with Changed Meanings Over Time

There is an assumption in this lesson that you have already explored some of these key terms with your students. This is not the first morphology lesson they have encountered.

Review key terms with students: *morpheme, base/base element, suffix, prefix.*

morpheme - smallest unit of language that still holds meaning

base/base element - the primary word building morpheme that gives the word its definition/meaning/sense. Bases are considered either 'free' (a word on its own) or 'bound' (must be connected to an affix in order to be recognized as a word). Some resources use the word 'root' instead of base or base element. Depending on where your students are at in their understanding/ word study, they may not be familiar with bound bases at this point.

suffix - an affix that is added to the right of the base

prefix - an affix that is added to the left of the base

This review could be grounded with this written on the board:

prefix + base + suffix } all types of morphemes

Review/teach students how to read an *Etymonline* entry. [This video](#) may help with this.

Divide students into small groups. Some words have a more complex history than others. This allows you to differentiate amongst the groups.

Each group will get a word to study. You can make use of the resources provided in this lesson (see below) or students can visit etymonline.com to research their word. Words that students will be exploring in this lesson include

- terrific
- fond
- pretty
- silly
- nice
- neat
- smoothie

Each student will need a word study handout to capture their thinking. Alternatively, you can have students record their notes directly into their word study notebooks.

Groups will read through the information on the word and complete two tasks;

1. Develop a timeline from the word's first mention in English (first attested) to current meaning/use.
2. Explore how the word is built and brainstorming of the word family. After students have brainstormed the word family, they can create word sums for some of them (5-8). (Please note that some of the words will not have large word families.)

When groups have completed their investigations, they can share their discoveries with the class.

Lesson Resources

[Words with Changed Meanings Student Handout](#)

[Words with Changed Meanings](#)

[How to Read an Etymonline Entry](#)

Additional Resources

[Getting Started with Morphology](#)

This lesson was built with information from the [Online Etymology Dictionary](#). This is a great resource for anyone doing word study work. Bookmark it. There is also a Chrome Extension or a phone app that you can download.

[Here is video](#) that talks about **word sums** and how to read them.