



Author: Kathy Weeden
Illustrator: Kim Drane
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Blurb

Phonobet, a very clever rhyming text, takes an onomatopoeic romp through the 44 phonemes of Australian (and British) English, comparing sounds to trees, bees, trains, robots, monkeys, pirates and more.

Children will enjoy Kim Drane's bold, colourful and fun-filled illustrations, which pop on the page.

So, once you know the Phonobet, I'm certain that you'll find

A wacky world of wonder words with sounds of every kind,

The sounds are yours to say and sing and twist and taste and chew.

And then, what should you do with them? Well, that's up to you.

About the Creators

Kathy Weeden is a Canberra-based music and learning support teacher, with experience in classrooms from K to 12.

Kim Drane (kimdrane.com) is a 2D animator and illustrator based in Melbourne. Her designs are bright, colourful and full of happiness.

Phonobet Teachers Notes

Recommended for: Preschool to Year 2

Word rhythms

Words with 'b, d, j and g' make fantastic rhythms. Pick different objects with these sounds in their names and have students put them in different orders to make different rhythms. For example, you could use a 'digger', then maybe a 'big digger', and best of all a 'bigger digger'. Students might also think of examples from the breakfast table: Juice jug, bowl, dirty dishes, jam. These can even be combined for a truly funky rap: Boom boom, bigger digger, jam de jam de jam!

Tongue twisters

Robot sounds (approximants) are some of the twistiest sounds in English, which makes them excellent for tongue twisters. Have students come up with a phrase using lots of robot sounds and challenge their friends to say it. With younger students it may be best to focus on phrases using a single sound. Here are a few possible phrases:

Rory the Woolly Warrior Ram
Wily Riley the Unruly Lamb
Loyal Ryan the Royal Lion
Willy the Really Weary Wolf
Warrick and Yorrick the Well-read Yetis
Yani the Yodelling Yak

Humming through your nose

Give each student a small mirror they can hold under their nose. Have each student make an 'm' sound and notice how the mirror mists up. Now have them pinch their nose and try to make the same sound. They will notice that it isn't possible, or that it ends up sounding more like 'b'. Discuss how the nasal (humming) sounds rely on air coming out our nose rather than our mouth.

Picture hunt

The illustrations contain many objects whose names contain the target sounds. Challenge your students to find these objects. See if they can also find objects in their environment with the target sounds. If students are still developing their awareness of sounds, it will help to give very specific clues. E.g. for 'sh': "I can see something that goes on your feet." "Shoes!"

Beginning or end

Choosing a particular focus sound, say a range of words and have students discern whether the focus sound appears at the beginning or end. Choose single syllable words with no more than one consonant at the beginning and end to start with: ship, wish, fish, shoe, cash. Using actions here may help: tap your chest during the initial sound, move hand through the air during the vowel, and land it on your knee for the final consonant. You could have students then show you whether they think the sound is at the beginning or end by tapping their chest or knee. For more movement, you could have them run to one side of the room or another.

Vowel discrimination

Choose two vowel sounds and write them on whiteboards in different parts of the classroom. Say a word and have students decide which vowel they hear, then run to the corresponding whiteboard. When students are ready for a greater challenge, introduce more vowels. The same activity can be used to practice discriminating between similar consonants: f/th, w//r, s/sh etc.

Sound scapes

Working in groups, have students use vocal sounds (not necessarily just phonemes) to create different scenes: e.g. a busy city, a rainy day in the garden, a windy day at the beach.

History hunt

Prompt students to look at the consonant letters in the tree and vowel letters on the mouth page. Count the letters and compare to the numbers in the text: "Did you notice that there are twenty-four consonants but only twenty-one consonant letters? And how about the twenty vowels with only five vowel letters?" Use this as a springboard to discuss and explore the history of the alphabet and English spelling. At appropriate points in the students reading development, you can also introduce the following concepts about the alphabetic code:

- a sound can be written with a letter
- a sound can be written with more than one letter
- spelling patterns can represent more than one sound
- sounds can be written more than one way

The other friend, morphology

The Phonobet is introduced as one of the alphabet's friends. Discuss: what other friends might the alphabet have, that help us learn to read? Use this as a springboard into discussing morphology: how the meaningful parts of a word can affect how it is written. (e.g. -ed in wished)

Sounds with attitude

Sound symbolism refers to the connection that has formed between sound and meaning. Some consonants and consonant clusters have become associated with certain moods or ideas. For example, words beginning with 'gr' are associated with a bad mood: grouchy, grumble, growl, grumpy, groan. Sounds beginning with 'sl' can have a wet or smooth quality: slick, slide, slippery, slice. One study found that people associated 'baluba' with a rounder shape and 'takete' with a more angular shape. Have students make up names for objects and characters based on sounds that mirror their characteristics.

Pirate Boy

Explore the 'ay, ee, igh oy' sounds with the following rhyme:

*Ahay ahee ahigh ahoy,
I'd like to be a pirate boy,
in rain or shine, the sea all mine,
and coins would be my favourite toy.*

Have students identify which words have one of the 'pirate' sounds (focus on one at a time), and then decide on an action to match that sound. Say the rhyme, doing the action every time that sound appears. To increase the challenge, add different actions for the other sounds and try to do them together.

Cow on the Loo

The same process can be used with the following rhyme for 'ou, oe and oo'.

*A cow at home on the loo
is frowning down at her poo
for every cow knows that when she goes
its meant to be brown, not blue.*

