

# Unconventional vowels

## Objective

Y4. T3. W5.

To explore the occurrence of certain letter strings.

## Guided work

1. If possible use this lesson on a Monday, as an extra aide-mémoire. List the following words on the board: Monday, come, above, done, won, was, want, watch, swan, quarrel.

2. Ask the children to read aloud each of these familiar words. Read the words again yourself, sounding the vowels as they might logically be said – so they sound funny: won: wonn (short 'o', sounding like 'wan'); Monday: short 'o', 'Monnday'; done: long 'o', like 'dough-n'; come: like 'comb...'; want: short 'a' to rhyme with 'pant'; watch (short 'a' to rhyme with 'patch'), and so on. Explain that you are reading them like this to draw attention to the sound variance of the vowels from their usual sounds.

3. Ask the children to explain how they managed to read the words correctly the first time. (They know the rules and have learned exceptions, probably without realising it.) Point out that reading words like these, even out of context, is easier than writing them. Spelling them in the middle of a piece of writing is more difficult as they may have to stop and think – especially when the words are uncommon or multi-syllabled (for example, squander, squadron or comfortable).

4. Write these three words on the board, asking the children to help you to spell them by applying the following rules: short 'a' is pretending to be short 'o'; short 'o' is playing at being short 'u'. Demonstrate the pronunciation (phonetic) symbol (as used in dictionaries) for a short vowel: such as ă.

5. Ask the children to infer rules regarding these spellings and pronunciations. Ask: Which consonants or letter strings preceding 'a' are likely to alter the sound of the vowel 'a'? ('w', 'sw', 'qu', 'squ'.) Can such a simple rule be applied to the letter 'o'? (No – these exceptions must be learned and remembered.)

## Independent work

- Distribute copies of photocopiable page 19 and ask the children to sort the words according to their vowel sounds and/or spelling.
- Invite the children to practise spelling and vocabulary by using words from the photocopiable page to rephrase the following sentences – some containing more than one word to be changed.

- Don't waste cash. (Don't *squander* money.)
- A summer bird flew by on the first day of the week. (A *swallow* flew by on Monday.)
- A stinging insect is cleaning its face. (A *wasp* is *washing* its face.)

## Further challenge

- Using their photocopiable page as a word bank, challenge the children to invent clue-sentences for their partner to try and rephrase, by substituting a synonym from the word bank, as in the second independent work activity.

## Plenary

- Invite two children to represent each respective tug-of-war team from the photocopiable page. Ask them to read aloud a roll of honour of all the words in their team.