Teaching synonyms and paraphrasing to year 5/6 students will improve comprehension

Teaching Unit

Session 1

Teaching Synonyms

- Teacher: What is a synonym?
- Children offer suggestions
- Teacher: Synonyms are words that have about the same or similar meanings. (This definition is then pinned up in the room).
- Teacher gives examples. Children offer more examples.
- Then a row of words are put out on the table.
- Children are given 4 flashcards with synonyms on them. They must put the correct synonyms under the appropriate words. As a group children discuss whether they think the words have the correct synonyms placed under them. Together they can choose to make changes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>unfair</th>
<th>wild</th>
<th>make</th>
<th>try</th>
<th>funny</th>
<th>ugly</th>
<th>woman</th>
<th>give</th>
<th>like</th>
<th>worry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One-sided</td>
<td>fierce</td>
<td>build</td>
<td>attempt</td>
<td>comical</td>
<td>horrible</td>
<td>lady</td>
<td>donate</td>
<td>desire</td>
<td>panic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unjust</td>
<td>ferocious</td>
<td>construct</td>
<td>experiment</td>
<td>amusing</td>
<td>grotesque</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>grant</td>
<td>enjoy</td>
<td>fret</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Teacher asks the children again what a synonym is.
- As a group the words with their synonyms are looked at, discussed and evaluated.
- Children are then put into pairs. They are given a w/s with a list of words and a list of matching synonyms. With their partner they must match them up. Then the pairs are brought back to the group and the work discussed and evaluated as a whole.
- Teacher: What did we learn today?
- What two words can define synonyms? (A: similar / same)
- Like synonyms both these words start with ‘s’ so that may be something that might help you to remember what the definition of a synonym is.

Session 2

- Teacher: What is a synonym?
- As a group children given words that they need to suggest a synonym/s for.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>strong</th>
<th>stop</th>
<th>scared</th>
<th>shy</th>
<th>sick</th>
<th>noise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rich</td>
<td>River</td>
<td>Job</td>
<td>Search</td>
<td>Distressed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pretty</td>
<td>sea</td>
<td>task</td>
<td>dazed</td>
<td>worried</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wealthy</td>
<td>creek</td>
<td>path</td>
<td>seek</td>
<td>excited</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spend</td>
<td>rain</td>
<td>modest</td>
<td>pot</td>
<td>angry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Children are then given the same thing again but there are a couple of synonyms for each word. They must choose which they are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Save</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Rotten</th>
<th>Rough</th>
<th>Pain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hold</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>give</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>keep</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

hold: wonderful, decayed, silky, agony
give: passable, spoiled, lumpy, ache
keep: all right, eatable, course, leg

• Children are given sentences with words or phrases underlined. They must try and think of synonyms for them.

Sentences taken from lesson 3 Book 4 Comprehensive Assessment of Reading Strategies (CARS) by Deborah Adcock. All texts levelled to year 4.

• Teacher: What are synonyms and how can we use them?
  Were the sentences easier to understand when we changed the underlined words?
  When might finding synonyms for words in a sentence or story be useful?

Session 3

• Teacher: What is a synonym?
  Were the sentences easier to understand when we changed the underlined words?
  When might finding synonyms for words in a sentence or story be useful?

• Teacher: When we alter words or phrases in a sentence or paragraph to make it easier to understand we are using a strategy called ‘paraphrasing’.

• Children copy the definition of paraphrasing from the board
  Paraphrasing is saying something in your own words

• Teacher: When I get a sentence that I find difficult to understand I paraphrase it to make it easier for me. To do this I underline words or phrases that I find difficult and I change them into easier to understand words.
  Children are shown some sentences and the teacher models this process. She underlines words or phrases that are difficult to understand.
  Sentences taken from lesson 1 Book 4 Comprehensive Assessment of Reading Strategies (CARS) by Deborah Adcock. All texts levelled to year 4.

• Children suggest possible synonyms that they might use to make these words easier to understand
  Reread the paraphrased sentence
  In pairs children are given sentences. They must underline words or phrases that they wish to change to make them easier to understand.
  Come back as a group and share which words they underlined
  Teacher: What have you learnt today?
  What is paraphrasing?
  When might you use it?
Session 4

- Teacher: What did we learn in our last lesson?
- As a group we look at the sentences we used yesterday and the words or phrases we underlined, we then put these in our own words using words that are easier to understand
- Teacher: How might this be useful if we had to read a text and answer comprehension questions on it?
- Teacher: What is paraphrasing and where might we use it?

Session 5

- Teacher: What did we learn in our last session?
- In pairs children given 2 sentences. They must underline difficult words or phrases and then change these into simpler ones
  Text: Miners Rest (p. 21)
- Text taken from Comprehension and Written Expression Year 6 by Alan Horsfield
- Come back as a group and discuss and correct what they have done
- In pairs children are given 3 more sentences. They must underline difficult words or phrases and then change these words/phrases into simpler ones
- Teacher: What did we do today?
  What is this strategy called?
  When might you use it?

Session 6

- Teacher: What did we learn in our last session?
- In pairs children given 2 sentences. They must underline difficult words or phrases and then change these into simpler ones
- Come back as a group and discuss and correct what they have done
  In pairs children are given 3 more sentences
  Text: Miner’s Rest (p.21)
  Text taken from Comprehension and Written Expression Year 6 by Alan Horsfield
- Come back as a group and correct what they have done
- They must underline difficult words or phrases and then change these into simpler ones
- Teacher: What did we do today?
  What is this strategy called?
  When might you use it?

Session 7

- Teacher: What did we learn in our last session?
- Individually children given 2 sentences. They must underline difficult words or phrases and then change these into simpler ones
- Come back as a group and discuss and correct what they have done
• Individually children are given 3 more sentences. They must underline difficult words or phrases and then change these into simpler ones
  Text: Miner’s Rest (p.21)
  Text taken from Comprehension and Written Expression Year 6 by Alan Horsfield
• Come back as a group and correct what they have done
• Teacher: What did we do today?
  What is this strategy called?
  When might you use it?

Session 8

• Teacher: What did we do in our last session?
• Teacher: Today we are going to continue paraphrasing but look at a whole paragraph rather than just individual sentences
  As a group we underline difficult words or phrases and then paraphrase these. Children are asked how doing a whole paragraph might make the paraphrasing easier. (Context might help them with some unknown words or phrases.)
  Text: Desert Gold (p. 49)
  Text taken from Comprehension and Written Expression Year 6 by Alan Horsfield
• Repeat the procedure as a whole group on another paragraph
• Teacher: What did we learn today?
  What is paraphrasing?
  How might paraphrasing a whole paragraph help us?

Session 9

• Teacher: What did we do in our last session?
• Teacher: Today we are going to continue paraphrasing looking at a whole paragraph rather than just individual sentences
• In pairs children are given a paragraph. They underline difficult words or phrases and then paraphrase these.
  Text: Desert Gold (p.49 )
  Text taken from Comprehension and Written Expression Year 6 by Alan Horsfield
• Discuss and correct as a whole group
• Repeat the procedure in pairs on another paragraph
• Discuss and correct as a whole group
• Teacher: What did we learn today?
  What is paraphrasing?
  How might paraphrasing a whole paragraph help us?
Session 10

- Teacher: What did we do in our last session?
- Teacher: Today we are going to continue paraphrasing looking at a whole paragraph rather than just individual sentences
- Individually children are given a paragraph. They underline difficult words or phrases and then paraphrase these.
  Text: Antarctica (p. 36)
  Text taken from Comprehension and Written Expression Year 6 by Alan Horsfield
- Discuss and correct as a whole group
- Repeat the procedure individually on another paragraph
- Discuss and correct as a whole group
- Teacher: What did we learn today?
  What is paraphrasing?
  How might paraphrasing a whole paragraph help us?
Method of marking paraphrasing test
For each word or phrase underlined children must give a synonym or a phrase for that word to be given a point. Students must maintain the meaning of the sentences whilst paraphrasing them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passage sentence</th>
<th>Number of ideas/points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The young man and his friend rode on the bike.</td>
<td>4 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They were enjoying themselves.</td>
<td>2 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The birds were singing in the trees.</td>
<td>3 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The two friends chatted. They were not paying attention to anything.</td>
<td>4 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They were supposed to watch where they were going.</td>
<td>4 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The track became narrow and twisted.</td>
<td>3 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suddenly it began to slope down and the bike sped up.</td>
<td>4 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People in the park watched and gasped as it went faster and faster.</td>
<td>5 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The two riders weren’t smiling and chatting any longer.</td>
<td>5 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Now they were gripping the bike as tightly as they could, showing fear on their faces.</td>
<td>6 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People in the park had stopped what they were doing and started to yell, “Stop” or “Be careful”.</td>
<td>6 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All of a <strong>sudden</strong> the <strong>path</strong> goes around a <strong>sharp curve</strong>.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ahead</strong> they see in the <strong>middle of the path</strong>, a <strong>huge stone</strong>.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The closer they get to it, the more <strong>enormous</strong> it becomes.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As they <strong>fly towards</strong> it, their <strong>hearts</strong> are <strong>beating louder and louder</strong> and they try to take <strong>avoidance action</strong>.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is <strong>loud thud</strong>, the <strong>front wheel</strong> <strong>crumples</strong> and the <strong>young couple</strong> is <strong>airborne</strong>, <strong>flying over the obstacle</strong> to the <strong>grass</strong> on the <strong>side</strong> of the <strong>path</strong>.</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>