



*Education Pack*



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Printable activities

# *Pencil Pals*

Pencil Pals follows the adventures of Alien, Bee, Cockatoo and Dinosaur, four pencil topper friends who learn about language, literacy and storytelling through stories they read, write and share together.



## *Pencil Pals Classroom Ideas*

These classroom ideas were written by Sarah Norman, who is a NSW Department of Education primary school teacher currently working on the NSW Central Coast. Sarah completed her Early Childhood Education degree at Macquarie University, Sydney, before working as a Primary School Teacher on Sydney's Northern Beaches. Sarah won a NSW State NEiTA Award for Excellence in Teaching in 2009 after moving from preschool to primary teaching. She has maintained her passion for play-based cross curriculum approaches with an emphasis on tactile hands on learning in her classroom. Her philosophy incorporates lots of movement and drama rich learning experiences and she encourages children to develop a positive sense of self with the integration on wellbeing strategies daily. Her classroom is colourful, creative and a flexible learning environment to encourage a lifelong love of learning in her students.







The youngest of our pals, this little pink and purple triangular friend is full of questions and is excited to learn!



A busy little queen bee, this yellow ball of energy is always busying herself with something in the pencil cup.



The funny guy of the bunch, cracking jokes left right and centre. This little blue rectangular bird is inspired by the Red-tailed Black Cockatoo.



The wisest of our crew, Dino is slower moving than her pals. She considers her steps carefully and looks out for her friends.



## Episode 01: **SUPERLATIVES**

Dinosaur tells a story about two princesses who are best friends but also very competitive, and the Pencil Pals learn about superlatives.

This concept is most often introduced in Stage 2, however younger children could be introduced earlier to simple hands-on ideas.

Superlatives are super words, creating words from adjectives that have a higher value than the last word. For example: a word like 'good' can be enhanced by using 'better' or 'best', or a word like big could be enhanced by using 'bigger' or 'biggest'.

1

Using magazine images, brainstorm and write a variety of adjectives to match, putting them together in posters. E.g: A picture of a ring may be labelled with the word shiny. Once the pictures are labelled, students can then add superlatives to link to the words. E.g: shinier or shiniest.

2

Children could create artworks with three speech bubbles with the superlatives inside the speech bubbles. For example: Dino is big, bigger or the biggest in speech bubbles or Alien is cheeky, cheekier or the cheekiest.

3

Create a paper or cardboard ladder with a variety of words that enhance as the reader climbs the ladder. This could be created on the ground with chalk or the students could write the words on paddle pop sticks, slowly building words with greater value.

4

This activity would best suit Year 1 or 2. Students fold a piece of A4 paper in three sections. Starting with the first section, have the focus adjective written. Pass it onto the next person in the circle and see if they can add on a superlative. For example, student 1 would write 'long', fold it up and pass it to the next person. The second student would write 'longer', fold it again and pass it on, and the third student would write another greater superlative such as 'longest'.

5

Facilitate a talking circle. Have students seated in a circle. The first student names a noun like 'whale', the second student then says, "the whale was bigger than the dolphin", the third student says, "the dolphin was faster than the turtle" and so on.

## Episode 02: **VERBS**

Bee tells a story about the Loch Ness monster wanting to fly and a dragon who wants to learn to swim, as the Pencil Pals learn about verbs.

As we saw in the video, verbs are doing words or action words and they help us to tell a story. Think of some verbs. Do you remember any from the story? Let's brainstorm what we remember.

1

Play 'verb charades'. Think of a verb: Choose an action word and have students mime it for their peers. This can be played with the whole class or with a partner during literacy groups. Students may need word cards to help prompt.

2

Play 'Eye Spy'. For example:

"I spy with my little eye something I can drink from"

"I spy with my little eye something I can sit on"

"I spy with my little eye something I can draw on"

This could be played as a simple oral game or students could listen and then be writing the verbs they hear on an individual whiteboard. The list words they write could then be put into silly sentences in their writing.

3

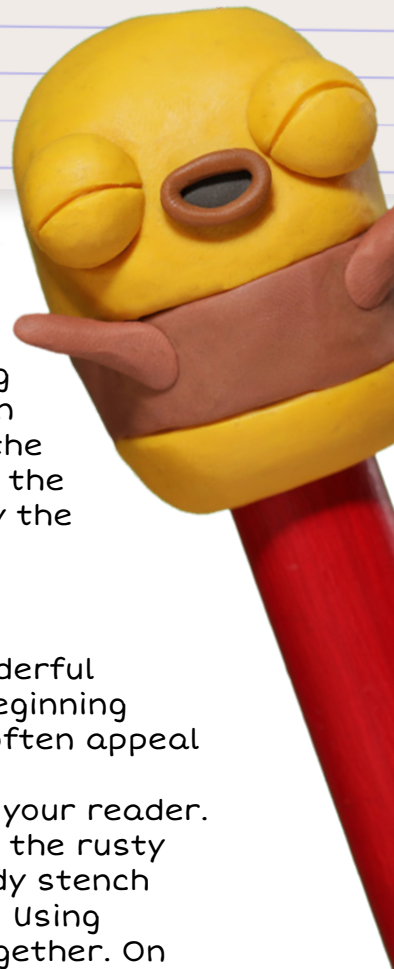
Play 'Pass the Verb'. Using a soft ball, pass it from student to student as each student says a verb. This can be played standing up around the classroom or by passing it around a circle. It can be played with the addition of adjectives and nouns too.

## Episode 03:

# TELLING A GOOD STORY



Bee attempts to tell a story about a hungry manatee but first has to learn how to make it interesting and avoid the story being boring, as the Pencil Pals learn the secret to a good story.



To ensure the smooth running of a story, structuring it from beginning to the end is vital. Breaking it down into smaller sections makes it more achievable for the students when planning it. The introduction includes the setting, the characters, the plot/problem and finally the resolution/conclusion.

1

Firstly, we need to ban the boring and create a wonderful opener to draw your reader in. Openers are those beginning sentences right at the start of our story and they often appeal to our senses.

We could do this by starting in the action, capturing your reader. For example, "Ouch, my finger seems to get stuck on the rusty key every time I open this sticky door." or "The mouldy stench hit the back of my throat as I bit into my sandwich". Using these examples brainstorm more catchy openers together. On whiteboards children can create an opener and read it aloud to their class.

2

You may like to create an exciting story bag filled with interesting pictures or objects to get the story started. Things like an old artifact, a letter, a shiny magic crystal, a key or an interesting box. Have the children pass the object around the circle and share some interesting sentence starters as a class to get the brainstorming happening. Using a concrete object will hopefully engage those visual learners.

3

A story graph is also a helpful idea to enable your students to see how the plot begins, how the problem builds and then finally how the story ends (concludes). This can be as simple as a curvy line highlighting the beginning of the story, the problem (good or bad) as the line increases like climbing a hill and the resolution/conclusion as the line comes back to where it started.



## *Ideas for Literacy Rotations*

1

Print a variety of story starters. Have the children read and classify them into two groups, discussing how we 'ban the boring' and look for the ones that grab our attention.

2

Story stones can be used with images of different characters, settings and a problem highlighted. Have children place them in three drawstring bags (1: Setting, 2: Characters and 3: Problem) and draw out three at random and use this as a base when creating a story.

3

Use an interesting prop or artifact to encourage descriptive language, focus on the use of adjectives.

4

Use graphic organisers to structure ideas more clearly before beginning a story.

5

Make a chatterbox to use as a structure scaffold, prompting questions like: Where is your story set? What can you hear? What can you see? One tab with characters. Describe your characters (appearance, personality), the problem (what is happening?) and resolution (how is the problem resolved?). Students could use these to discuss story ideas with their partners, a think pair share session before jotting ideas on a whiteboard.

6

Revise the use of conjunctions (joining words such as but, therefore, because, so) to expand on ideas, these joining words help us to extend our ideas and add more detail to our stories.

7

Discuss imagery, appealing to the five senses: sight, sound, touch, feel, taste.



## Episode 04:

# WORD FAMILIES

Cockatoo tells a story about a lonely goose who is looking for a friend, but can't find anyone whose name rhymes, as the Pencil Pals learn about word families.

1

Using a template of a tree titled 'Our Word Family Tree' have students write a cvc word (consonant, vowel, consonant word) such as hut on one of the leaves. Students then add words that end in the same sounds on the other leaves. Discuss rhyming and look at the patterns and graphemes in the words we write.

2

Play pass the word. Using a small soft ball have students seated in a circle. The first student holding the ball calls out a CVC word or a CCVC word and passes it to the next person and they need to think of a rhyming word. The game continues until the word is changed. The word can be changed at any time by anyone in the circle, so students need to be encouraged to pay attention and listen for the sound of the word.

3

Scatter a variety of words on the floor, lists of words from the same word families. Two students begin holding fly swatters. The first student taps a word and reads it aloud and the second student must find a word from the same word family and tap it quickly. If they make an error the next student challenges the winner.

4

Create a class Big Book with a word family theme, taking inspiration from stories such as 'Are you my Mother' but instead use character words from the same word family groups and send them on a mission to find the words they sound similar to.

5

Word family bingo and memory.

6

Word family dominoes.

## Episode 05:

# HOMOPHONES

With a little help from his friends, Alien tells a tale about a dragon's tail and the Pencil Pals learn about homophones.

Homophones are the words that sound the same when we hear them, but they have different meanings and spellings. Start a brainstorm.

1

Homophone memory is a great game to reinforce how the words look as ultimately when words sound the same, we need to rely on the way the words look.

Simple words such as to, two and too, be and bee, where, wear and were, see and sea, pear and pair.

2

Using the same cards, students could also play homophone snap.

3

Homophone chatterbox with phrases including two homophones. Once the student identifies the homophones within the sentence, they make meaning and then try to spell the words aloud. The chatterbox may have a sentence like 'I needed to wear my glasses to see properly at the sea' and the student needs to try to identify the two homophones and spell or write both words.



## Episode 06:

# DESCRIPTIVE WRITING

Cockatoo shares a story about Baker Mole who wanted to make the best loaf of bread in the whole world, and the Pencil Pals learn a trick to help with descriptive writing.

When we begin to write for an audience, we want to engage our readers. One way to do this is to add 'wow words' and think of our five senses when writing. This helps to create the imagery in a great story.

1

Food is always a wonderful creative writing prompt, something like a cupcake which could promote smelling, touching, tasting etc. Students can look at it, smell it, touch it and then taste it. Have the children describe the cupcake, thinking about how it feels, tastes, smells etc.

2

Start with a simple mind map to jot down ideas. Then use this to create imagery and detail. For example: My cupcake smells like my Nana's kitchen, my cupcake looks sparkly, fluffy and tempting, my cupcake feels warm in my hand and it tastes better than I expected. It's buttery and the surgery icing on top melts in my mouth!

3

Initiate a guessing game where students have to describe an object using only descriptive words. The class or a partner has to guess what the object is based on the description. For example, I feel rough, I am cold, I am hard, I smell like earth. I am a rock!



## Episode 07:

# THEIR, THERE AND THEY'RE

Alien tries to tell a story about pirates who sail the seven seas but keeps getting their, there and they're confused, so his friends help him to understand the difference.

These words are what we call homophones. Words that sound the same but are spelt differently and have different meanings.

1

Make some story posters to help remember the three different words

1A

They're is a contraction word, it is two words in one. (They are). We can see this and the apostrophe reminds us.

1B

'There' is the one we use for distance to something. Take off the T and we are left with here (a directional word). Draw a picture to remember it. We can include arrows in our picture to help remember the distance word.

1C

We remember 'their' because it has an 'i' in it and it is a belonging word: 'I belong'. Let's make a poster to help remember this too.

2

As a group, get the class to complete different sentences with the correct word. For example They're going to their blue car that is over there. This could be done together on a board or in small groups. Draw pictures to help tell their stories and remember which is which.

Some more examples:

\_\_\_\_\_ was a long wait before \_\_\_\_\_ luggage arrived at the gate, but \_\_\_\_\_ finally ready to head home.

\_\_\_\_\_ is no shortage of bugs in \_\_\_\_\_ backyard, \_\_\_\_\_ going to go catch some.

The boat over \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_ boat and \_\_\_\_\_ going to take me fishing next week.

Since \_\_\_\_\_ bus was late \_\_\_\_\_ just happy to finally get \_\_\_\_\_. I'm never going over \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ house again when \_\_\_\_\_ around.

## Episode 08:

# PERSONAL AND COLLECTIVE

Dinosaur tells a story about a group of space kids living on an asteroid together and the Pencil Pals learn the difference between personal and collective.

After watching, ask the students what a noun is. Write a word such as bird on the board and talk about the bird being the noun. Then discuss if there were more than one bird what would the group be called? Recap the words (I, my, mine and yours) as personal and (everyone, ours, theirs and we) as collective nouns, meaning a group.

1

Using classroom items like a lunchbox, a book or some sports equipment, have students create a mini play using personal and collective nouns in their dialogue. The theme of the mini plays could be sharing. Students could brainstorm and work on their ideas for ten minutes and then present them to their peers.

2

Create collective noun artworks using animals as a scaffold. Print a variety of animals for students to glue onto their artwork or have students draw them. After completing the artworks, the students could create an accompanying sentence using collective nouns. For example: a flock of flying birds or a happy herd of elephants to attach to their artwork. The artwork could be a mixed media focus with painting, collage and writing.

3

Using a soft ball, students can take it in turns to call out something that is collective eg this is our classroom, then before passing the ball on they must describe something that is owned by the receiver eg that is your green hat.

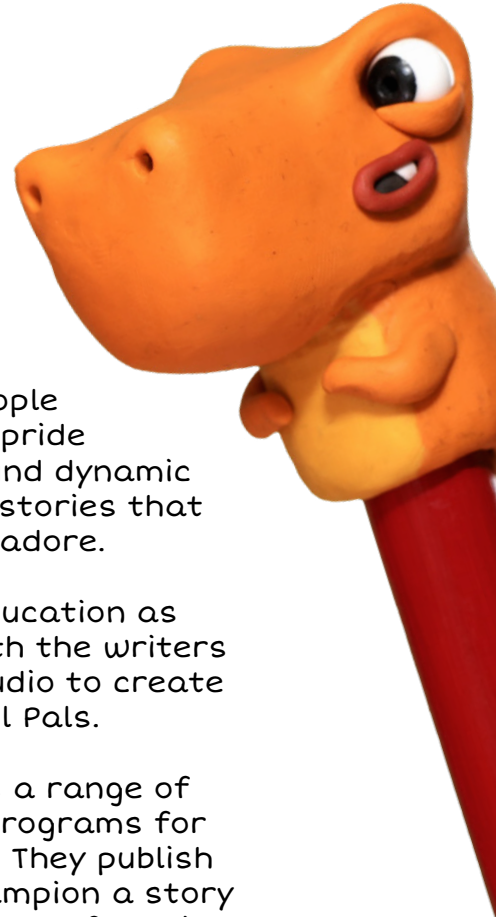
# The Pencil Pals Team

Pirate Size Productions develops and produces high quality entertainment for children, young people and families. As a narrative driven studio they pride themselves on telling innovative stories built around dynamic characters and rich worlds. Their vision is to tell stories that are bold, adventurous, and that audiences adore.

Pirate Size Productions is passionate about education as entertainment and were thrilled to team up with the writers and teachers at Melbourne Young Writers' Studio to create the lessons and storyworld of Pencil Pals.

Melbourne Young Writers' Studio offers a range of creative writing and story education programs for primary and secondary aged students. They publish original works by young writers and champion a story first approach to developing a lifelong love of stories, reading and writing.

The Pencil Pals are voiced by Pip Nixon (Alien), Abigail Bekele (Bee), Flynn Tinkler (Cockatoo), and Audrey Tinkler (Dinosaur). Written by the team at Melbourne Young Writers' Studio, Dan Nixon, Bonnie McRae, Gabriel Bergmoser, Damian Robb, Katherine Chloe Atkins, Eli Landes, and Timothy Foley, the animated world of Pencil Pals was brought to life by 2D Illustrator Peter McDonald, 2D Animator Elena Dunwoodie and Storyboard Artist, Animatics and Stop-Motion Animator Alyssa Smedley. Jemma Cotter filmed and edited the live action components, with David Goldsmith on colour grading. Jono Callow recorded and mixed all sound, and composed the music featuring The Stationery Orchestra (an orchestra made up of stationery sounds!). Under the direction of Alyssa Smedley, script produced by Dan Nixon and produced by Bryony McLachlan, all of Pirate Size Productions, the team has strived to create an engaging series that inspires, teaches, and most importantly entertains the audience.



# VERB CHARADES

Fly

Hide

Fall

Squat

Flap

Build

Freeze

Stand

Swim

Agree

Follow

Sit

Paddle

Disagree

Grow

Sweep

Dance

Invent

Iron

Surprise

Sing

Watch

Sew

Tiptoe

Skip

Listen

Knit

Ski

Jump

Smell

Lean

Wave

Sneeze

Touch

Measure

Wish

Whistle

Apologise

Mow

Shrink

Sleep

Bathe

Organise

Stretch

Paint

Bake

Open

Drink

Draw

Buy

Close

Explore

Coach

Climb

Pour

Walk

Eat

Crawl

Relax

Investigate

Laugh

Roll

Scrub

Shiver

Cry

Celebrate

Shake

Deliver

Vacuum

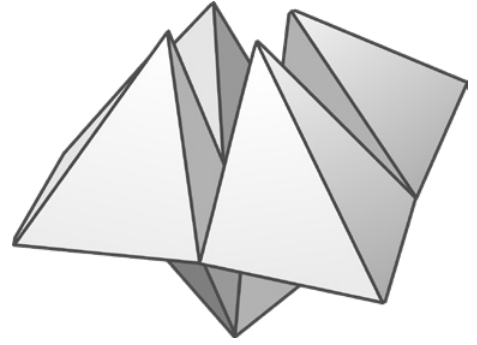
Drive

Skate

Turn

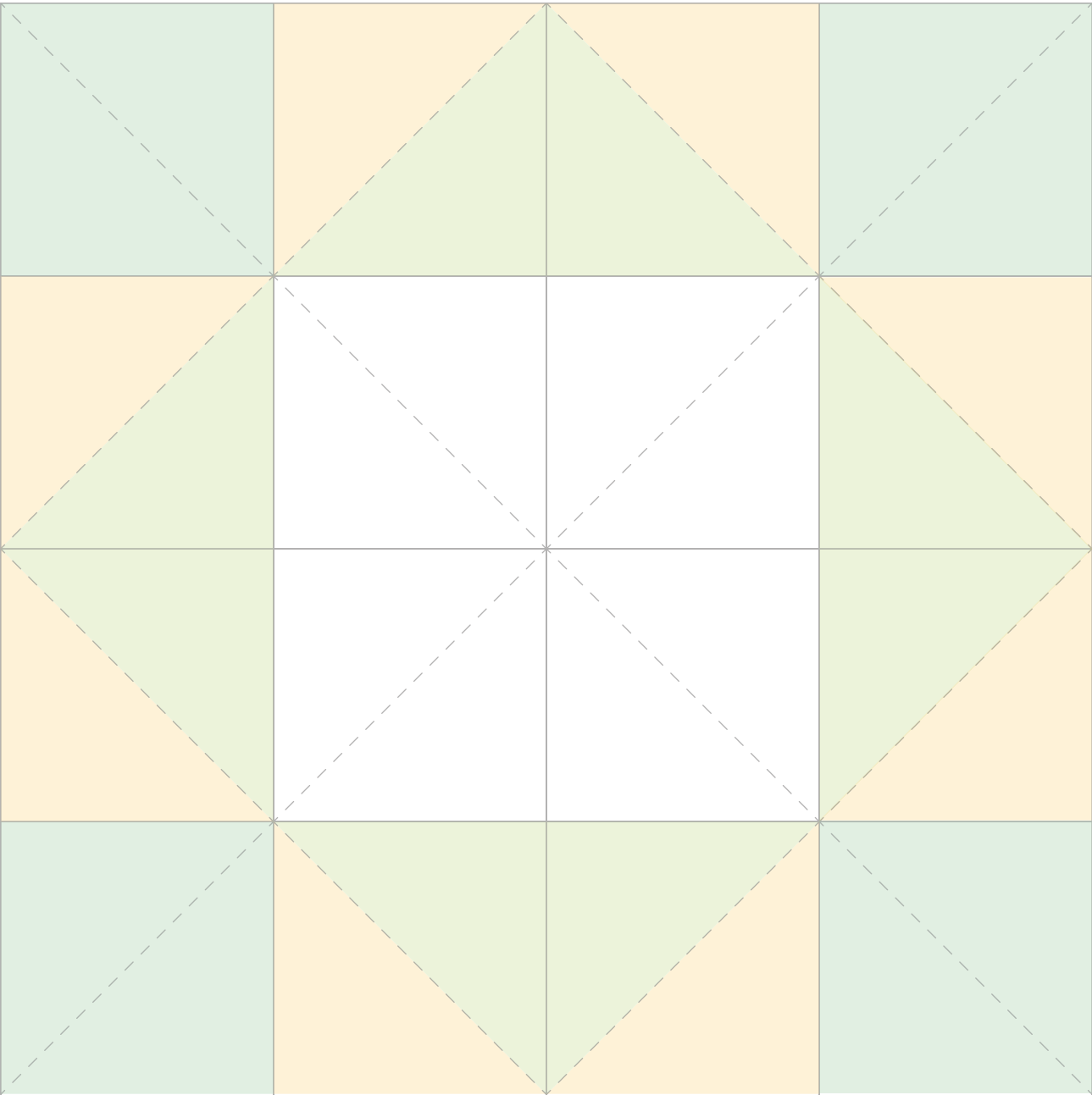


# STORY CHATTER BOX



|  |   |                                 |  |
|--|---|---------------------------------|--|
| In space                                     | a dragon named Paul<br>lost their favourite blanket | a mouse named Louise<br>is lost | Under the sea                              |
| a manatee named Sonja<br>can't fly           |   |                                 | a vampire named Tony<br>is really hungry   |
| a goblin named Fiona<br>is no good at skiing |   |                                 | a moose named Damien<br>can't get to sleep |
| In the bush                                  | an elephant named Manny<br>is protecting an egg     | an emu named Jayne<br>is lonely | In the kitchen                             |

# STORY CHATTER BOX - BLANK



# WORD FAMILY DOMINOES

|  |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| <p>Jar</p>    | <p>Rake</p>    | <p>Tree</p>    | <p>Draw</p>     | <p>Map</p>     |
| <p>Bake</p>   | <p>Bee</p>     | <p>Paw</p>     | <p>Clap</p>     | <p>Moose</p>   |
| <p>Goose</p>  | <p>Smell</p>   | <p>Crown</p>   | <p>Pan</p>      | <p>Rhino</p>   |
| <p>Bell</p>  | <p>Clown</p>  | <p>Can</p>    | <p>Dino</p>    | <p>Bug</p>    |
| <p>Jug</p>  | <p>Flag</p>  | <p>Rat</p>   | <p>Fin</p>    | <p>Wig</p>   |
| <p>Wag</p>  | <p>Cat</p>   | <p>Chin</p>  | <p>Pig</p>    | <p>Frog</p>  |
| <p>Log</p>  | <p>Leg</p>   | <p>Lip</p>   | <p>Truck</p>  | <p>Sock</p>  |
| <p>Peg</p>  | <p>Zip</p>   | <p>Duck</p>  | <p>Clock</p>  | <p>Car</p>   |

# HOMOPHONE SNAP - PAGE 1



eye



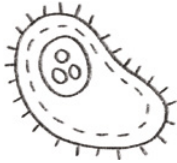
I



bare



bear



cell



sell



cent



scent



dear



deer



flour



flower



knight



night



meet



meat



whale



wail



toad



towed



# HOMOPHONE SNAP - PAGE 2

