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Brown Bag Mystery Game

Materials

- paper lunch bag for each student
- 3" x 5" (8 cm x 13 cm) card for each student

Directions

1. Ask each student to bring from home one small object that has something to do with the outdoors, wilderness survival, or events that have already occurred in *My Side of the Mountain*.
2. Pass out a paper bag to each student. Ask each student to put his or her object into the bag.
3. Stress to the students that their objects are not to be discussed or shown to anyone else prior to the game.
4. Each student should write a brief description of the object in the bag on a 3" x 5" (8 cm x 13 cm) card. Encourage each student to be creative and enigmatic in this description so as not to give away the item's identity.

Game Rules (tell the students at the outset of the game)

1. If teammates shout out guesses, the team forfeits its turn and play reverts to the other team.
2. Synonyms must be accepted. (For example, flower for dandelion.)
3. The person who is guessing should not be allowed to hold, feel, or in any way touch the bag.

Playing the Game

1. Divide the class into two teams.
2. Have a student from Team 1 stand in front of the class holding his or her bag and 3" x 5" (8 cm x 13 cm) card. A student from Team 2 comes up, reads the description aloud, and makes a guess about what's in the bag.
3. If the player guesses correctly, the object is shown and Team 2 gets a point.
4. If the player guesses incorrectly, a player from Team 1 comes up, reads the description aloud, and makes a guess about what's in the bag.
5. If the player guesses correctly, the object is shown and Team 1 gets a point.
6. If the player guesses incorrectly, a new player from Team 2 comes up and repeats the process.
7. Play continues until someone guesses correctly what is in each student's bag. The team with the most points wins.

Some Item Ideas (Only share a few of these with your students and only if they're at a loss as to how to complete the assignment.)

tree bark	leaf	feather	grass	cattail head
twig	blueberry jam	chestnut	flint and steel	stone

After the Game

- Discuss the clue words in the descriptions that helped the listeners figure out the item's identity.
- Discuss how each item has already been used or how it may be used later in the story.
- For a challenging critical thinking activity, divide the students into groups of three. Ask the group members to remove the items from their bags and try to identify every characteristic that their items have in common (e.g., all found outdoors, all made of molecules, etc.).

Create Portmanteau Words

Skillful authors sometimes invent new words when they feel there is no appropriate word in our language for what they want to say. These words are called *portmanteau words*.

Portmanteau means combining two words to create a new word. Two portmanteau words you might know are:

chortle (a combination of chuckle and snort)

scurrying (a combination of hurrying and scramble)

Jean Craighead George included several portmanteau words in *My Side of the Mountain*.

Directions: Read the quotes below. Highlight (or underline) the portmanteau word in each. On the lines provided, write the two words you believe the author combined.

_____ + _____ 1. “He came down headfirst to our private bath, a scrabbly, skinny young raccoon.”

_____ + _____ 2. “Small pinfeathers were sticking out of (Frightful’s) stroobly down, like feathers in an Indian quiver.”

_____ + _____ 3. “. . . a scuttering and scraping of boots on the rocks.”

_____ + _____ 4. “Frightful fluffed her nubby feathers and shook.”

_____ + _____ 5. “(The raccoon) was chittering . . .”

Now that you understand the concept, try creating two portmanteau words yourself. Use your portmanteau words in a sentence so the reader has a context to understand the word. Challenge your classmates or teacher to figure out the two words you combined by reading the sentence that you created.

1. _____ + _____

2. _____ + _____
