

Word classes and lexical choices

- Verbs
- Nouns
- Adverbs
- Adjectives

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Verbs



A verb is a **DOING WORD**.

All grammatically correct sentences need a verb – something must be happening.

Examples of verbs are:

- Run
- Running
- Ran
- Jump
- Jumping
- Jumped
- Walk
- Walking
- Walked

Nouns



Nouns are NAMING words.

All grammatically correct sentences need at least one noun – called the subject of the sentence – which is performing the action of the verb.

Examples of nouns are:

- Table
- Chair
- Mug
- Happiness
- Idea
- Fame
- Charlotte
- England
- I / you / he / she / it

Adjectives



Adjectives DESCRIBE a NOUN. They are describing words.

Examples of adjectives are:

- Big
- Small
- Beautiful
- Exciting
- Deplorable
- Ambitious
- Accurate
- Balanced
- Descriptive

Adverbs



Adverbs describe how a **VERB** is done. They describe **HOW, WHEN, WHERE, HOW MUCH** and **HOW OFTEN** an action is done.

Many, although not all, end in “-ly”

Examples of adverbs are:

- Slowly
- Quickly
- Badly
- Entirely
- Well
- Above
- Always
- Sometimes
- Yesterday

19th Century non-fiction

From the letters of Isabella Bird, a British explorer, describing seeing surfers for the first time in Hawaii in 1875.



What they seek is a very high breaker, on the top of which they leap from behind, lying face downwards on their boards. As the wave speeds on, and the bottom strikes the ground, the top breaks into a huge comber. The swimmers appeared posing themselves on its highest edge by dexterous movements of their hands and feet, keeping just at the top of the curl, but always apparently coming down hill with a slanting motion.

So they rode in majestically, always just ahead of the breaker, carried shorewards by its mighty impulse at the rate of forty miles an hour, as the more daring riders knelt and even stood on their surf-boards, waving their arms and uttering exultant cries. They were always apparently on the verge of engulfment by the fierce breaker whose towering white crest was ever above and just behind them, but just as one expected to see them dashed to pieces, they either waded quietly ashore, or sliding off their boards, dived under the surf, and were next seen far out at sea, as a number of heads bobbing about like corks in smooth water, preparing for fresh exploits.

Pause the video!

See if you can identify the word classes of the underlined words.

Answers!



Word	Word class
Breaker	Noun
Speeds	Verb
Comber	Noun
Dexterous	Adjective
Motion	Noun
Majestically	Adverb
Daring	Adjective
Exultant	Adjective
Dashed	Verb
Corks	Noun
Exploits	Noun

Using different word choices can create tone



Tone means mood – the way that the writer wants you, the reader, to feel.
For example:

Harker **plunged** through the **decrepit forest, desperate** to find Mina

Harker **wandered** through the **ancient woodland, longing to see** Mina

Harker **ambled** through the **dappled glades, hoping to see** Mina.

In all three sentences the character is doing the same thing – travelling through the trees and looking for Mina. However, the word choices make a huge difference to how we picture the scenario. We FEEL differently about the situation in each.

Connotations

A connotation is an **IDEA** or **FEELING** that a word makes you think of via association.

When writers choose words, they think about the connotations as well as the meaning of the word.

Words can have **POSITIVE**, **NEGATIVE** or **NEUTRAL** connotations as well as more specific connotations, such as connotations of **VIOLENCE**.

Connotations

Example:

Scrooge is **thrifty**.

You **hurt** my feelings

Scrooge is **a regular saver**.

You **broke** my heart

Scrooge is **stingy**.

You **eviscerated** me

Semantic fields

A semantic field is a group of words that all share a similar **MEANING** or **CONNOTATION**. The word “semantic” means meaning!

For example, in a story about sailing we might have a semantic field of the ocean, using words such as **WAVES**, **SPRAY**, **CURRENT** and **WATER**.

In a horror story, we might see a semantic field of darkness, using words such as **DINGY**, **UNLIT** and **DIM**.

Semantic fields can be positive, negative or neutral.

20th Century fiction

From Jigs and Reels, a short story by Joanne Harris. This extract describes a very old teacher, Mr. Fisher, as he recalls books and stories from his past.



Mr Fisher remembered a time – surely, not so long ago – when books were golden, when imaginations soared, when the world was filled with stories which ran like gazelles and pounced like tigers and exploded like rockets, illuminating minds and hearts. He had seen it happen; had seen whole classes swept away in the fever. In those days, there were heroes; there were dragons and dinosaurs; there were space adventurers and soldiers of fortune and giant apes. In those days, thought Mr Fisher, we dreamed in colour, though films were in black and white, and good always triumphed in the end.

Pause the video!

Read the following extract and sort the underlined words into:

- Semantic field of light and colour
- Semantic field of childhood and adventure

ANSWERS!

Semantic field of light and colour

Golden
Illuminating
Colour
Black and white

Semantic field of childhood and
adventure

Rockets
Heroes
Dragons
Dinosaurs
Space adventurers
Soldiers of fortune