

Lesson: The Power of Action! Discovering Verbs in Literature

Materials Needed

- A copy of a "living book" with rich, descriptive language (e.g., *The Wind in the Willows* by Kenneth Grahame, *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett, or a narrative poem). This lesson will use a passage from *The Wind in the Willows*.
- A dedicated notebook for language arts or grammar.
- A good quality pen or pencil.
- Small slips of paper and a hat or bowl (optional, for an extension activity).

Learning Objectives

By the end of this 25-30 minute lesson, the student will be able to:

- Define a verb in their own words as a word of "action" or "being."
- Identify at least 10-15 action verbs within a selected literary passage.
- Demonstrate their understanding by physically acting out verbs.
- Apply their knowledge by using strong, vivid verbs in a short, original written narration.

Lesson Plan & Procedure

1. The Spark: Introduction to Action (5 minutes)

The goal here is to introduce the concept of a verb through physical experience, not by stating a formal definition.

- **Teacher:** "I have a few instructions for you. Please listen carefully and do exactly as I say."
- Give a series of simple, one-word commands: "**Stand.**" "**Stretch.**" "**Jump.**" "**Turn.**" "**Sit.**"
- After the student has completed the actions, ask: "What did all of my instruction words ask you to do?" Guide them to the answer that the words were all *actions*.
- **Teacher:** "Exactly! You were *doing* something. In grammar, we have a special name for these 'doing' words. We call them verbs. Verbs give power and life to our sentences. Today, we are going to become verb detectives and hunt for them in a wonderful story."

2. Living Literature & Narration (10 minutes)

This part connects the abstract idea of grammar to the beauty of well-crafted sentences. The focus is on observation and comprehension first.

- **Read Aloud:** Read the following passage from Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* aloud with expression. The student should just listen and enjoy the story.

"He thought his happiness was complete when, as he meandered aimlessly along, suddenly he stood by the edge of a full-fed river. Never in his life had he seen a river before—this sleek, sinuous, full-bodied animal, chasing and chuckling, gripping things with a gurgle and leaving them with a laugh, to fling itself on fresh playmates that shook themselves free, and were caught and held again. All was a-shake and a-shiver—glints and

gleams and sparkles, rustle and swirl, chatter and bubble. The Mole was bewitched, entranced, fascinated."

- **Narration:** Ask the student to narrate the passage back to you. "Tell me in your own words what that passage was about. What did the Mole see and how did the river behave?" This assesses their comprehension and is a core Charlotte Mason practice. Listen for any action words they naturally use.

3. The Verb Hunt: Active Analysis (5 minutes)

Now, the student actively engages with the text to apply their new knowledge.

- **Teacher:** "That was a wonderful narration! Now, let's look at that passage together in the book. Armed with our new knowledge about verbs, let's hunt for all the action words Mr. Grahame used to make his river feel so alive. Let's list them in your notebook."
- Read through the passage again, either together or having the student read it. As you find a verb, have the student write it down in their notebook under the heading "River Verbs."
- Your list might include: **thought, meandered, stood, seen, chasing, chuckling, gripping, leaving, fling, shook, were caught, held, was, bewitched, entranced, fascinated.**
- Briefly point out that even "was" and "were" are verbs—they show a state of **being**. Don't dwell on this, but plant the seed. "The Mole **was** bewitched." It's something he **is**.

4. Application & Creativity: Writing with Power (5-10 minutes)

This final step solidifies learning by moving from recognition to creation. It gives the student a chance to use verbs with purpose.

- **Teacher:** "Look at our list! No wonder that river felt so real. The author chose amazing verbs. Now it's your turn. I want you to write two or three sentences describing an animal you know well. It could be a cat, a dog, or a squirrel outside. Your mission is to use the most interesting and powerful verbs you can think of. Instead of 'The dog walked,' what could you write?" (e.g., "The dog *trotted*," "*bounded*," "*galloped*," "*sniffed*.")
- Give the student time to think and write in their notebook. The goal is not a long story, but a short, powerful description focused on strong verb choice.
- When they are finished, ask them to read their sentences aloud and share which verbs they are most proud of. Offer sincere praise for their choices.

Teacher's Notes & Differentiation

- **For a student needing more support:** During the "Verb Hunt," provide a copy of the passage where you have already underlined the verbs. Their task is then to copy the list into their notebook and perhaps act a few out. For the writing portion, you could brainstorm a list of strong verbs together before they begin writing.
- **For a student needing a challenge:** Ask them to categorize the verbs from the list into "vigorous actions" (chasing, fling) and "gentle actions" (meandered, stood). During the creative writing, challenge them to include at least one "being" verb (is, are, was, were) in addition to their action verbs.
- **Fun Extension (Verb Charades):** Write the verbs you found on slips of paper, fold them, and place them in a bowl. Take turns drawing a verb and acting it out for the other person to guess. This is a joyful way to reinforce the lesson.