

GRADE 3 English Language Arts: Diphthong *OU* says /ow/

Summary of Learning Opportunity

This Grade 3 class is made up of students at varying stages of English comprehension. To meet this class where they are, I chose the Grade 1 proficiency descriptor on vowel diphthongs /ow/ to build foundational knowledge in a meaningful way and work towards grade level proficiency. Using an AI-generated text, students explored the various pronunciations of OU in both speaking and writing and used drawings to further showcase their understanding and comprehension.

English
Language Arts
3

Learning
Standards

- Develop and apply expanding word knowledge.
- Communicate in sentences and paragraphs, applying conventions of Canadian spelling, grammar and punctuation.
- Word patterns, word families

Foundational ELA Connections

Instruction and Assessment

Lesson:

- I began the lesson by explicitly teaching that OU can make different sounds in English. One common pronunciation is /ow/, but it can also make /oo/ (group, you) or /uh/ (could, would).
- I chose the word “cloud” to write on the board to demonstrate how to decode the word and how O and U together make /ow/.
- Using individual whiteboards, the students practiced writing dictated words as the teacher circulated and observed.

Classwork (speed drawing):

- Students fold a standard sheet of paper into eight squares and write their names on the back
- Teacher chooses eight OU words from the reading text and students write one word in each square on their paper
- Students choose one word and draw a picture below it to correspond with the word
- Students then pass their papers to a classmate, and the above step is repeated until all eight squares are filled. This helps students practice decoding and demonstrating their understanding of the word.

Individual work (decoding in connected text):

- Students read the AI-generated text “The Mysterious House on the Hill.”
- Students identify all the OU words by underlining them
- Students make a chart of OU words by sound.

Assessment: I based my assessment of the students’ work on the competency learning standards as well as the Proficiency Descriptors in the [K-4 ELA Foundational Learning Progressions](#), focusing mainly on the Skills Reading and Spelling: Word Level, and Writing.

The Mysterious House on the Hill

One cloudy afternoon, Mia and her cousin Louis set out on an adventure through the woods near their town. They had heard rumors about a mysterious house on the hill where strange sounds would bounce through the trees.

As they climbed higher, the wind howled louder. “Do you think we’ll find it?” Mia asked, trying to sound brave.

“I’m sure it’s just an old house with a leaky roof,” Louis said, though his voice shook a little.

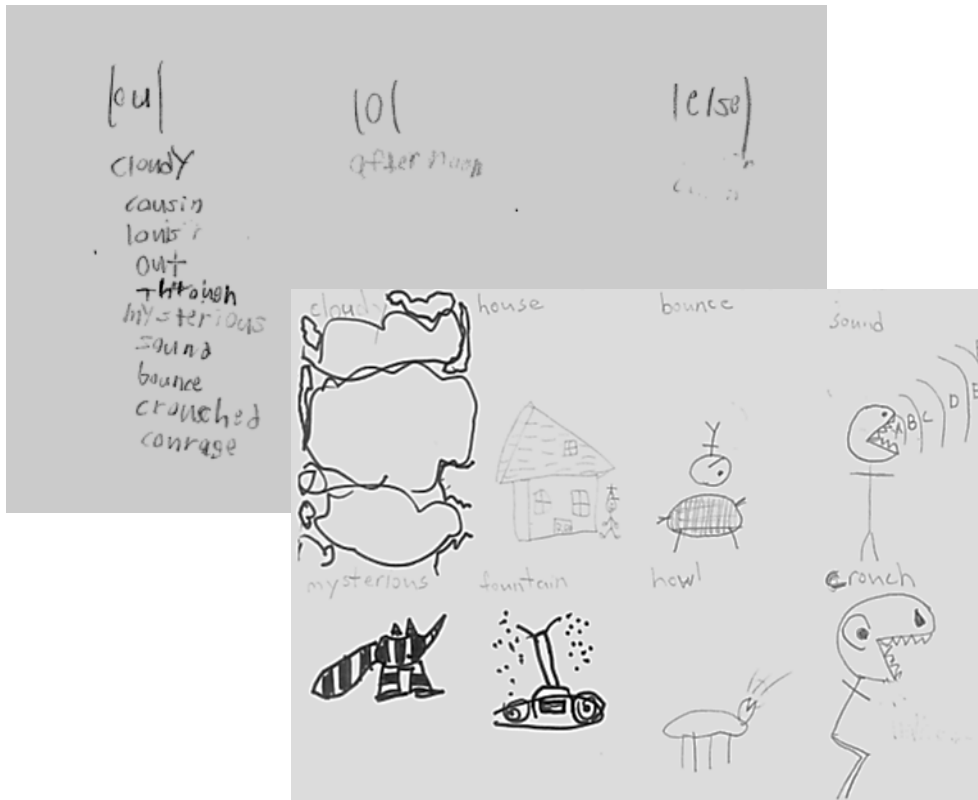
Suddenly, they heard a loud *crash!* A branch had fallen just a few feet behind them. Mia let out a shout, and they both crouched down to stay safe.

When they reached the top, they saw it – a run-down house with a crooked fountain out front. The door was open just a crack. Mia and Louis looked at each other and took a deep breath.

“Let’s go!” they said together. With courage in their hearts, they stepped through the doorway, ready to find out what the mystery was all about.

LITERACY: Reading and
Spelling: Word Level –
Phonics

Demonstrations of Student Learning, Teacher Assessment and Reflection



Student A:

Student A was also able to draw relevant pictures to demonstrate their understanding of their classmates' vocabulary words.

They were able to accurately read aloud the "Mysterious House on the Hill" text to the teacher and decode the OU words correctly.

The student wrote and correctly sorted the OU words in the text that make the /ow/ sound.

Teacher's Reflection

The proficiency descriptor for vowel diphthongs like /ou/ and /ow/ is part of the Gr 1 curriculum, but I chose to use it in a Gr 3 class early in the year because it fits where my students are in their learning. This lesson gave us a chance to revisit and build that knowledge in an engaging way. Using a Gr 1 descriptor in Gr 3 doesn't mean lowering expectations, but reflects a responsive, student-centered approach. I am able to support students in moving toward grade-level goals and differentiate using texts appropriate for their age.

Students learn and apply vowel patterns in reading and writing at different stages of their development. By coming back to diphthongs like /ou/ and /ow/, students had the chance to solidify these decoding and spelling skills. Targeted phonics instruction can happen at any level.

By taking the time to support students in strengthening key skills, I helped to build their confidence, close learning gaps, and move them forward on their literacy path.



Student B:

Student B was able to draw relevant pictures to define the vocabulary words written on their classmates' papers.

They were able to accurately read aloud the text to the teacher and decode OU words correctly.

The student wrote and correctly sorted the OU words in the text that make the /ow/ sound.