

The Morphological Mystery of the Forest

Learning objective: To identify and understand the impact of prefixes and suffixes on word meaning and word class.

Read the passage below carefully. Use your knowledge of root words to help you decipher the meaning of the more complex vocabulary. Answer the questions in full sentences.

In the heart of the ancient Whispering Woods, Pip the caterpillar spent his days deciphering the secret language of the forest. He discovered that by adding small additions to root words, the entire meaning could be transformed. Pip observed a group of squirrels who were busy preparing for winter. One squirrel was incredibly 'careless' with his acorn collection, leaving them scattered across the path. Pip noted how the suffix '-less' instantly changed the noun into an adjective, implying a lack of care. Nearby, a group of bees were working in a 'disorganised' fashion. Pip chuckled, knowing that the prefix 'dis-' meant the opposite of organised. He scribbled in his notebook, 'Understanding these tiny word-builders is like having a key to a hidden door.' He felt truly 'joyful' as he realised that language was a construction kit. By adding prefixes like 'un-' or 're-', or suffixes like '-ful' or '-ment', he could reshape his world. Pip knew that to be a great writer, one must always be 'thoughtful' about the building blocks of every sentence, ensuring no meaning was ever 'misunderstood' by his fellow forest friends.

Word bank: prefix · suffix · root word · morpheme · misunderstand · careless · unhappy · joyful

1. Identify two words from the text that use a suffix and explain what that specific suffix does to the root word. (2 marks)

2. What prefix does Pip find in the text, and what does it tell us about how the bees were working? (2 marks)

3. Why does Pip describe language as a 'construction kit'? Provide evidence from the text to support your inference. (2 marks)

4. Based on the text, why might the squirrel be considered 'careless' compared to the other animals Pip observed? (2 marks)

5. Do you agree with Pip that understanding prefixes and suffixes is like having a 'key to a hidden door'? Justify your answer using your own experience with words. (2 marks)

Draw: Draw a 'Word Tree' where the trunk is a root word (e.g., 'help') and the branches are adorned with leaves containing different prefixes and suffixes (e.g., 'un-', 'ful', '-less', 're-').

Extension challenge: Choose three root words of your own. For each root word, create a table showing at least four different words you can form by adding various prefixes and suffixes. Write a short paragraph explaining how changing these affixes alters the grammatical function of the word.