

Worksheet 1 – The Lost Sword The Lost Sounds

A silent letter is a letter that does not produce a sound in a particular word e.g. the 'w' in *sword*. Silent letters may seem useless but some actually do serve a purpose. For example, silent letters can help clarify homophones such as in/inn, be/ bee, aid/aide and our/hour. They can also offer insights into a word's origin (e.g. the 'b' in *debt* reflects its Latin origin '*debitum*') and assist with how a word is pronounced (e.g. bit/ bite). Most silent letters however make spelling and reading certain words difficult as they offer no clue as to how a word is spelt or pronounced.

Task 1: Rewrite the sentences from *The Lost Sword* below inserting the missing silent letter in each. Beside each sentence, make a list of other words that share the same silent letter using words from the table to assist you.

1. At a massive desk by the window, a han__some man sat at the phone.
2. I understand you are something of a sc__olar, Clive?
3. Can you g__ess what it is?
4. "Well," said Clive, "it's o__vious really."
5. "For centuries," said the guide, the famous s__ord was thought lost."
6. They should have arrived at the s__ene of the crime by now.
7. "It's true, dam__it. He got away. I lost him right here." Clive pointed at the Metro.
8. "Brain," said Jo. "They won't lis__en."
9. Brain was sawing away at his bonds with a pocket __nife.
10. "We'll either drown or freeze to death. And all because you cou__dn't act responsibly."

should	guitar	exhibit	guide	overwhelming
answer	ghost	knucklehead	autumn	catacombs
hour	wrist	calm	descent	echoing
scissors	castle	guilt	tomb	doubt
handkerchief	hymn	ballet	known	knight
whisper	numbskull	wrapped	wrong	guest
scent	thyme	Wednesday	knucklehead	calf
subtle	would	built	talk	meanwhile

Task 2: Identify the missing silent letter that these words share:

- a) cou__, __neumonia, __psychology, recei__t
- b) ai__le, debri__, frac__a__, I__land, vi__count

Challenge! Can you find the word in *The Lost Sword* that has a silent 'z'?

Extension Activities:

- Study the etymology of particular silent letters and/or clusters (such as 'gh'). Where did these words originate? Why did they later become silent? Present an oral report to an audience about the history of silent letters.