

# Dig back to the roots

## Objectives

To learn to build words from known prefixes, roots and suffixes. To learn how to identify roots within words.

## Background knowledge

A morpheme is the smallest linguistic unit that has meaning. For example, *unhelpful* consists of the morphemes *un-*, *help* and *-ful*. *Un* and *ful* are bound morphemes – they are not words in their own rights. However, *help* is a free morpheme as it is a word in its own right. Roots, such as *rupt* (meaning break) and *ignis* (meaning fire) are derivational but not actual words, however, they do still form word roots.

## Activities

These activities encourage children to identify the word roots. It is not necessary to use the term *morphemes* with the children.

### ● Photocopiable page 40 'Building from the roots'

Explain that many words are made up of a root plus prefixes and suffixes. Invite the children to work with a talk partner and dictionary to collect words that contain the roots on the photocopiable sheet. Share the first example and discuss the words that are given. Can they disassemble the words and identify the prefixes and suffixes?

### ● Photocopiable page 41 'Back to the roots'

Display a set of words on the board, such as *signal*, *signature*, *design*, *insignia* and *significant*. Can the children identify the common root? (*Sign* or *signi*.) Discuss the meaning of each word, using an online dictionary on the whiteboard if necessary. Establish a

meaning for the root by deciding what each definition has in common. (Sign, mark or seal.) Explain that these roots are derivations and do not necessarily form words that will stand alone as words (unlike in the previous activity). Let the children work with a talk partner to carry out the same activity for the groups of words on the photocopiable sheet.

### ● Photocopiable page 42 'Be afraid...be very afraid'

The word *phobia* comes from the ancient Greek word *phobos*, meaning a great fear. Children may be familiar with terms such as *arachnophobia* (fear of spiders). By combining Latin or Greek roots with this root word, they can invent new words. This shows clearly how words from Greek and Latin origins are combined to create the words that we use today.

## Further ideas

● **Game on:** Set up [www.prefixsuffix.com](http://www.prefixsuffix.com) as a favourite on the class computer. Direct children to the root search facility. Invite them to have a go at the site's vocabulary games.

● **Root race:** Put up a root word such as *colour* and challenge the children to come up with as many words as possible in pairs using the root, such as *discolouration*, *colourful*, *colouring*, *colourless* and *colourfully*. Share answers and praise new ambitious examples.



## What's on the CD-ROM

On the CD-ROM you will find:

- Printable versions of all three photocopiable pages.
- Answers to 'Back to the roots' and 'Be afraid...be very afraid'.
- Interactive version of 'Building from the roots'.