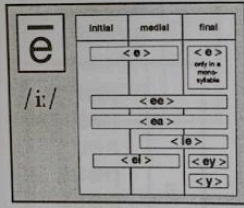


WORDWORKS NEWSLETTER #54

CF (iii) OHP TRANSPARENCY for photocopying



Digraphs for 'long e'

<been>

What does it mean?
Where have you been?
I've been to the zoo.
What have you been doing?
What have you been eating?

Leo said, "<been> is <being> but it has already happened."
be + ing → being

pet en → been

broke ten → broken

Other words with <-en>
eaten, forgotten, happens (is this a new word only?), seen, broken

Gr. 1 work on Smart Board

| | |
|---------------------------------|----------------|
| un | ness |
| mis | s |
| per | ing |
| hap "chance, fortune" | ed |
| | -stance |
| | less |
| | ly |
| | s |
| | lv |

<-en> suffix from <been> in <happen> too!

Eerie, eery (ī'ri), a. ARGH; or ? f. that word Fearful, timid. In mo notion of a vague super Fear-inspiring; gloomy z. Night comes dark and e adv. Ee'risness, a vague dread. Ee'risome a, we

<erie> or <eery>?

STRUCTURED WORD INQUIRY IN THE CLASSROOM

In this issue...

- Pete presenting at 54th **International Reading Association** Annual Convention Minneapolis May 3-7.
- Reverberations from WordWorks Workshops for NESAs in Cairo.
- A spectacular Word Detective Episode by a Grade 1 class in Beijing sparked by investigating the <ee> digraph.

Pete Presenting at 54th IRA Conference, May 3-7 in Minneapolis

For those who may be heading to this major reading conference, Pete will presenting a poster on the vocabulary results of his morphological intervention on May 5 from 2 - 3:30. Come on by to say hi!

This is the same study (Bowers & Kirby, 2009) was just published in *Reading and Writing*. See abstract [here](#).

Reverberations from Cairo NESAs conference

Pete presented two 4-hour institutes and an extra short session for a group of literacy coaches at the [NESAs 2009 Spring Educators Conference](#) in Cairo (April 4-7). Since then a great deal of interest for working with us has begun. If you are interested in our [3-day summer courses](#) in July, book a spot soon while there is room!



Scenes from previous WW Summer Courses

Keep an eye out for future WordWorks in Asia...

Word Detective Episodes: Learn from Grade students' investigation of <ee>!

I was so impressed by the eMail I received the other day from Grade 1 teacher Sarah Smith (International School of Beijing) that I decided to publish this newsletter even though little time has passed since the previous issue. Sarah's email and the correspondences that followed provide such a rich example of the learning that happens

when a teacher designs lessons based on resources that precisely and accurately present how spelling works.



One of Pete's "Getting it Write" Institutes at NESAs

I encourage you to note how effectively Sarah guides her students learning even though she does not start with all the answers. Instead of being intimidated by not being certain of answers to her students' questions, Sarah pushes her own learning forward by using questions/observations of her Grade 1 students as an opportunity to model problem-solving the spelling/meaning connections in words.

The responses Melvyn and I offer Sarah and her students do not just target the words that sparked their questions. Instead we address their questions by targeting background knowledge that is relevant to countless other questions she and her students will encounter over the years.

As you enjoy this story of active, engaged Grade 1 learners (students and teacher), note how well it illustrates one of the quotes I used in the last newsletter:

"Education is the acquisition of the art of the utilization of knowledge." A.N. Whitehead

Here is the correspondence that sparked this newsletter...

Hi Pete and Melvyn.

My class was learning using Kit K, Theme F: Digraphs for 'long' <e>. At the end, there is a graph showing where we can find these digraphs in words. (I attached a picture for you.) The graph show that <ee> can represent the 'long' <e> phoneme in the initial part of a word. What words would these be?

Also, just after I taught them that <ee> is boring and only represents the 'long' <e> phoneme, I sent my little word detectives on a hunt for words with the 'long' <e> phoneme in them. Minutes later, one student came up to me to ask why <been> does not have the 'long' <e> sound if <ee> is boring and only represents the 'long' <e> phoneme. We wrote down the question to ponder and will revisit it today!

Sarah Smith
LES Grade 1

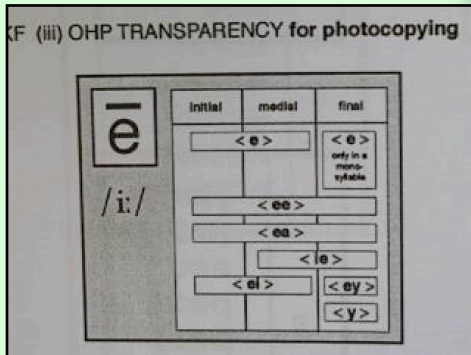
My response...

Hey Sarah!

These are brilliant questions to be investigating with your Grade 1 students. Here's a couple of quick responses....

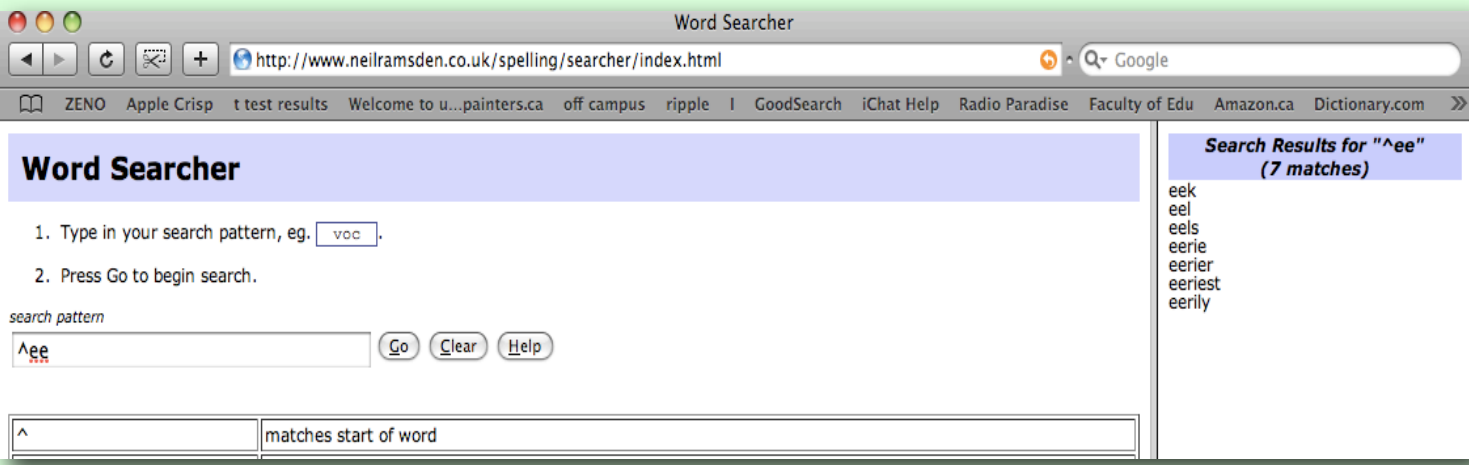
I couldn't think off the top of my head what words have an Initial <ee>. But fortunately, I don't need to keep these things in my head, 'cause my friend Neil (I cc'd him) created the Word Searcher for us. I hopped over there and typed ^ee in the "search pattern" box and found 7 words with an initial <ee>. Here's a shot of what I found at this link:

<http://www.neilramsdn.co.uk/spelling/searcher/index.html>



| | Kit K | Kit 1 | Kit 2 | Kit 3 | Kit 4 | Kit 5 | Kit 6 |
|---|--|--|--|--|---|--|---|
| A | Writing and recognising the vowel letters | The <i/y> conventions: the basic pattern | The trigraph <igh> 2: vowel letter + <igh> | Revisiting suffixing | Consonant letter doubling with polysyllables | The digraph <ui> - possible candidate for simplified spelling? | The variable suffix <-able> / <-ible> |
| B | The suffixes <-ly> and <-ful> | Plurals -1- whether to use <-es> or just <-s> | Grapheme alternatives <ck> / <ch> and <ctch> / <ch> | Class of words with Greek <-i> | Using more precise 'hard' and 'soft' base elements | Words which have an unexpected <-h> | Prefixes that have variable forms |
| C | The suffix <-ing> | When suffixes force doubling -1- monosyllables | The letter <v> and graphemes that contain it | Phonemes <-i> when stem changes, that concern them | Letters <e> and <es>: consonants that concern them | Fine tuning of the sufficing conventions | Eponyms |
| D | The phonology of <c> | The effect of suffixes on the single, silent <e> | Homophones 2 Single-element homophone pairs | 'Long' and 'short' <ea> / <ef> / <eg> / <el> / | Consonantising the plural of words with polysyllables | When to use the suffix <-er> instead of <-er> | Heteronyms and homographs |
| E | Counting syllables | The grapheme <igh> 1: consonant + <igh> | The trigraph <igh> and other graphemes for the phoneme /i/ | Base elements <v> and <sign> | Using the apostrophe 2: showing possession | Plurals -4- the finishing touches | An etymological project: the names of fabrics |
| F | Digraphs for 'long' <e> | Early word webs | Two important families: the 'wh-words' <cham / they / their> | The <i / y / o> consonants in the full story | The suffixes <-ion> <-ion> <-ion> | The suffixes <-ary> <-ary> <-ary> | Differences between American and British spelling |
| G | Phonological matrices -1- | 'Long' and 'short' vowels and the single, silent <e> | Graphemes for the 'long' /i/ | Initial <dge> or <g>? suffix <-age> | When to use the suffix <-s> instead of <-es> | Compounds -2- the finishing touches | IPA: International Phonetic Association symbol system |
| H | The suffix <-ed> | Compounds -1- they place in English orthography | Free base elements with final <-f> <-s> <-t> <-z> | A phonology of /f/: the full story | Steps of words from Greek -2- | Twin base elements | Connecting vowel letters |
| I | Early etymology -1- the families of <-bear> and <-two> | Homophones -1- | Free base elements with final <-f> <-s> <-t> <-z> | Three useful words: <disaster> <disaster> <disaster> | Double <cc> - is rare in English spelling | Portmanteau words (blends) | The grapheme <ugh> the full story |
| J | Digraphs for 'long' <e> | Phonological matrices -2- | The suffixes <-er> <-er> <-er> | The spelling of numbers | Choosing between final <ate> <-e> and <-ed> | The twin bases <-code> / <-code> <-code> <-code> | A project with the word <-privilege> |
| K | Early etymology -2- the family of <-one> | Learning from <-low> | Learning from the spelling of <-was> | Homophones -3- | Graphemes for the phoneme /f/ | Homophones -4- and homonyms | Words from Arabic |
| L | Early phonetics: 'testing' for consonants | Digraphs for the 'long' <e> | Naming the day of the week | Using the apostrophe 1: showing contraction | The suffixes <-y> <-y> <-y> | An etymological project: words to do with stars | Basic phonetics: voiced consonants; the shwa |

| | Kit K | Kit 1 | Kit 2 |
|---|---|--|--|
| A | Writing and recognising the vowel letters | The <i/y> conventions: the basic pattern | The trigraph <igh> 2: vowel letter + <igh> |
| B | The suffixes <-ly> and <-ful> | Plurals -1- whether to use <-es> or just <-s> | Grapheme alternatives <ck> / <k> and <tch> / <ch>? |
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| E | Counting syllables | The grapheme <igh> 1: consonant + <igh> | The trigraph <ugh> and other graphemes for the phoneme /u/ |
| F | Digraphs for 'long' <e> | Early word webs | Two important families: the 'wh-words' <them / they / their> |
| G | Phonological matrices -1- | 'Long' and 'short' vowels and the single, silent <e> | Graphemes for the 'long' /i/ |



I'm going to have to investigate the origin of the word <eerie> now. I'm curious about the final <ie>. I know that can be a "diminutive suffix", but I'm not at all sure that's what we have here. In terms of grapheme choices for the final phoneme of <eerie> there are other plausible choices

like <y>. I'm assuming that there is a good reason that we use the spelling <eerie> rather than <*eery>, but I'll have to investigate that further.

With what appears to be a rare initial <ee>, I'm sure there is something interesting to find out about this word. I suspect it is Old English, or perhaps it has some interesting story from another language. Something to consider anyway.

And on the question of <been>...

I have to tell you that this exact question from one of my Grade 4 students was critical for my own learning about graphemes and morphemes. After happily telling my students that a double <ee> can only represent the 'long <e>', a student pointed out that <been> clearly does not need to be pronounced this way. Your students are ahead at asking this in Grade 1!

I'm not going to give you an answer right now, but I will suggest that when you take this up with your class, you take the advice for how to investigate a spelling that I got from Real Spelling. Ask these questions...

- 1) What does the word mean?
- 2) How is it built?
- 3) What other related words can you think of?

You probably won't need to go farther than that before you start to see an answer.

I find question #1 frequently leads to answering question #2. For question #2, see if you can make a word sum. For Question #3 in this case you might try to make a little matrix.

Don't worry if you do all that and are still not certain of the answer, but do write back to tell me what you and your students are thinking!

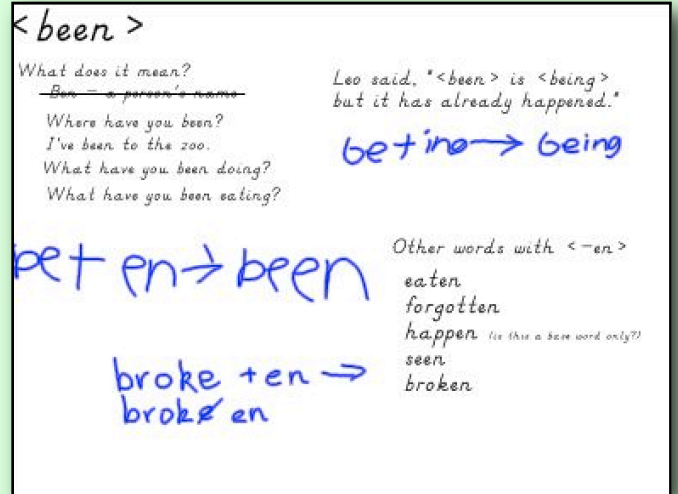
Cheers for now!
Pete

These emails were shared with ISB Elementary principal, Fiona Sheridan. She passed on this description of this Grade 1 session...

And one of our colleagues, Joan Hargrave, just told me she just witnessed a truly dazzling lesson in Sarah's class where they investigated <been>. Oh for the video camera when you need one!

Sarah, passed on this message with the following image of the student's investigation...

At least you can have a picture of what we did on the SmartBoard. All words were from the mouths of the kids!



Grade 1 students' investigation of <been>

Then cam Melvyn's response...

Dear Sarah,

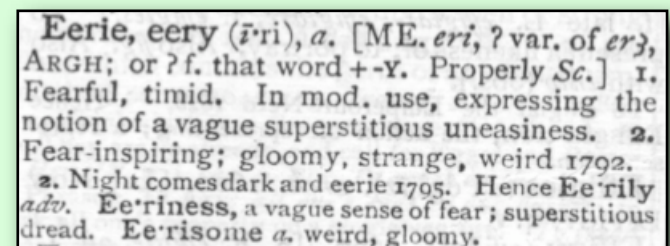
With Pete and me in different times zones, you can be sure of getting a pretty prompt response from one of the other of us! I've just arisen to swallow my first pre-dawn coffee and find - with pleasure - both your original mail and Pete's excellent response already in my mail box.

So - Pete has already covered the principal of the responses to your word detectives' excellent observations; here, then, are a few supplementary comments from me.

*** Put the new multimedia Kit 4 disk into your computer, open Theme L, and go to pages 9 and 10.

You will find mention of <ee>, the spelling <erie> and <been> on those pages.

Pete is right to find the spelling of <erie> rather eery. It's a comparative newcomer into Standard English; it is a Northern dialect word that was popularized by writers such as Sir Walter Scott at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The original spelling was, as I just wrote, <eery>; that's not surprising when we consider its derivations <eerily> and <eeriness> that would need to have been <eerily> and <eeriness> if <erie>



really were the coherent spelling. I'm not into incoherence myself - I leave that to the edubabblers and their spelling schemes and ideologies - so I always write the word as <eery>.

*** The structure of the spelling <been>

I guess that by now you will all have worked out that the letter sequence <ee> in <been> in neither the digraph <ee> nor double <ee> because its structure is <be + en>.

No orthographic unit crosses or straddles morpheme boundaries - especially phonological units.

This crucial and fundamental principle is totally absent from the edubabble "research" and the schemes that it generates, so it is worth repeating it -

No orthographic unit crosses or straddles morpheme boundaries - especially phonological units

- The first <e> of <been> is part of the representation of the base element <be>;
- the second <e> is part of the representation of the participle suffix <-en>;
- each <e> is in a different element as is, therefore, in a different morpheme from the other;
- consequently the successive <ee> in <been> is not an orthographic string, it is simply an ('accidental') letter sequence.

When first I realised this fact about the spelling <been> myself, I naturally posed the question as to how I could have gone so long without seeing such an obvious fact myself years before! I can be very good at not noticing what is right in front of my nose!

One factor as to why this can be the case is that the edubabble schemes - if they say anything at all about the suffix <-ed> - is that it is "THE past tense suffix". The implications of this deficient and misleading statement are:

- when we use the suffix <-ed> we are forming the past tense;
- since this is THE past tense suffix, it is the only "past tense" suffix;
- that <-ed> is only found with verbs.

All three inferences are false. To knock this particular piece of imprecision on the head, go to page 5 of Kit 4 Theme G of TBox 2. On it you will find both an explanation and a tutorial film on this important grammatical knowledge for teachers.

So what has this to do with <been>? Quite simply that the suffix <-en> is obscured in our minds by an assumption that only <-ed> is the English past suffix.

Wonderful stuff, Sarah.
Love to you all from France,
Melvyn

The '-ed form': a term from modern grammar

The '-ed form' is the name given by modern grammarians of English to the form of the verb that has also often been referred to as:

- the **past** participle;
- the **passive** participle;
- the **perfect** participle.

Referring to 'participles' is a necessary part of **grammatical** discourse, but **whether a word is a participle or not has no relevance to a spelling.**

▶ Whenever we are talking specifically about orthography we should use **only the term '-ed form'**.

Beware! Never refer to <-ed> as "the past tense suffix"!

The school schemes and systems often refer to <-ed> as '**the past tense suffix**'. This assertion implies that:

- 1 there is just one past tense suffix;
- 2 when we see <-ed> it has formed a past tense.

Wrong on both counts!

While <-ed> is often (**but certainly not always**) used to construct the past tense of a verb:

- <-en> <-n> and <-t> are also used to construct past tense forms;
- Many past tenses are formed **without a suffix**;
- the suffix <-ed> can also signal a passive sense in the **present and future tenses**, as well as the past tense;
- the suffix <-ed> can also form **adjectives**.

🚫 **Imprecision is a vice that is unacceptable in orthography.**

Call <-ed> '**A**' suffix for constructing many past tenses, if you must, but do not mislead yourself or any students you work with into thinking that:

- this is **the** way of constructing a past tense;
- that this is the **only function** of <-ed>.

👉 Move your mouse over the golden button to see this important point presented as a tutorial.

Kit 4 G : Using suffix <-t> instead of <-ed>: page 5

5 of Kit 4 Theme G of TBox 2

When Melvyn saw Sarah's students question about the word <happen> in their search for words with an <-en> suffix, he added in a follow up email...

Dear Sarah,
Just loved the snapshot of the SmartBoard.
Here's a matrix for investigating the question about whether <happen> is "a base word only".
Love from France,
Melvyn

| | | | |
|-------------|---------------------------------|------|----------------|
| un | hap "chance, fortune" | y | er |
| mis | | en | est |
| per | | | ly |
| | | | ness |
| | | | s |
| | | | ing |
| | | | ed |
| | | | -stance |
| | | less | ly |
| | | s | |
| | | ly | |
| slap | | | hazard |

The investigations continues...

Sarah and Melvyn continued when Sarah's class and another Grade 1 class at ISB got together and noticed something interesting about the word <seen>.

From Sarah:

*Oh, one more thing we did after all that investigating.... We invited Kris Bezzerides' class to come over so my kids could teach her kids about our investigation. From that interaction, more questions arose! We all agreed on how to make a word sum for <broken> but we had some trouble with <seen>. We all agreed that the final word <seen> is correct because we can't have three <e>s in a row *<seen>. With <broken> we decided that the word sum is broke + en - > broken and we when we read it we say "...is rewritten as <r><o><k> no <e> (pause) <e><n>".*

With <seen>, we feel uncomfortable saying "no <e>" when that <e> is part of the digraph <ee>. So do we say "...is rewritten as <s><ee> (pause) no <e>, <n>"? Then we are changing the suffix instead of the baseword. Hmmm.

Both of our classes will be looking into and trying to figure out the word sum.

For those who have our WordWorks [teacher's resource book](#), you will have found that this question is addressed with a matrix that produces the word <agreed>. I also just had a correspondence with a Grade 5 teacher who attended my sessions at NESAs who ran in to a similar question. When you work with fundamental patterns, the same questions keep arising!

Here's Melvyn's response to Sarah and Kim's classes about <seen>...

Dear Sarah,

Yet another mail from you that brings a contented smile to this Old Grouch's visage!

With <seen>, we feel uncomfortable saying "no <e>" when that <e> is part of the digraph <ee>. So do we say "...is rewritten as <s><ee> (pause) no <e>, <n>"? Then we are changing the suffix instead of the baseword. Hmmm.

You have - completely in the natural course of the real research that you and your excellent word detectives are engaging in so well - uncovered another aspect of our entirely regular English spelling system: orthographic conventions.

convention

An accepted rule or usage that is always applied.

In orthography, conventions always override other spelling patterns.

Here is an example of an orthographic convention.

- No complete English word may have final <v>; write <ve> instead.



You have discovered the Triple Letter Convention.

You can view a tutorial on this convention in the Real Spelling Gallery <<http://gallery.me.com/spelling>> in the 'Word Structure' Album.

Whatever orthographic construction you may have completed, it is never necessarily a complete spelling; you must always check for any orthographic conventions that might apply to that provisional spelling.

Your word sum, as a word sum, was complete as <see + e → seen>, and verbalized as, "S - double E -pause- E - N". Real spellers, who always automatically check for any relevant conventions, will then simply add, "and now apply the three letter convention".

Love (another spelling that conforms to not just to one, but two, orthographic conventions!) to you all from France,

Melvyn

And the piece de resistance?

When I asked Sarah for permission to use this correspondence, her response clarified something I missed at first. The Smart Board work from her class shown in this newsletter was done before she received emails from Melvyn or myself.

Sarah, who is in her first year of working with this instruction is already independently fostering this learning with her Grade 1's.

Clearly this linguistic content is not too advanced for teachers or Grade 1 students to take on and learn together. May more teachers follow Sarah's lead!

Until the next investigation!

Pete Bowers