THEME

Learning from the spelling of < love >

Summary

Many youngsters arrive at school already knowing
how to spell the word <**love**>.

It is also one of the very many short and common words
which do not conform to the postulations of phonics.

It is an excellent springboard for meeting,
revisiting or discovering patterns of **real** spelling.

This theme will teach:

- that there is much to learn from single words,
  even when you are quite sure of how to write them;

- that complete English words do not have a final <**v**>;

- that the string <**uv**> is not an allowable string in English-origin
  words—<**ov**> is used instead;

- that only suffixes that begin with a vowel letter
  replace a final single 'silent' <**e**>;

- that there is spelling incoherence that is still allowed
  by editing houses, but we are not obliged to submit to them.

Personal Notes

Preparing for this theme

This theme is both recapitulation and anticipation. If you have a Tool Box you may already have worked the following teaching themes with your students.

Kit 1 Theme A — The basic < **i** / **y** > conventions

Kit 1 Theme D — Suffixing and the single silent < **e** >

This theme anticipates **Kit 4 Theme C** — The < **o** / **u** > partnership.

Real spellers learn from words whose spelling they already know

Most current school spelling activity concentrates on words that students can *not* spell, and assumes that mere 'correctness' is all that spelling needs.

These assumptions are limited, limiting and fundamentally false.

✔ **Ability to spell is really a mode of thinking that enables us to spell. Students have a right to be given sound orthographic thinking.**

The orderly rigour of English spelling is there for all to see

The high degree of order in the conceptual structure of English spelling is evident in the spellings themselves for all who have eyes to see.

✔ **Recognizing and formulating the conceptual structures of orthography should be a regular part of all real spelling activity.**

Taking a word that you *do* know how to spell as 'evidence' is productive for Two important reasons.

❶ **There is an identifiable reason for every English spelling.**

❷ **What is true of the reason(s) for one word's spelling could well be true for hundreds of other words.**

It's all very well knowing how to spell a word such as < **accommodation** > correctly, but it isn't really much use to you unless you know *why* the spelling of the word is as it is!


Personal Notes

An example of a simple word whose spelling is very productive

Why is the spelling of < **rough** > what it is? Here are brief notes for you.

✔ **You will notice how each point that springs from this spelling of < rough > is of much wider relevance than < rough > itself.**

1 There are two homophonic spellings for the pronunciation / **rʌf** /: < **rough** > and < **ruff** >. When two words have the same pronunciation but have different *meanings* they have different *spellings* too, if that is possible.

2 In order to serve this **homophone principle**, the spelling system has evolved different ways of representing the same phoneme.
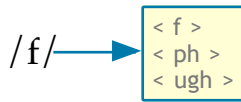
/ **f** / → < f > < ph > < ugh >   Three graphemes can represent the phoneme / **f** /. The digraph < **ph** > is reserved for words of Greek origin (like < **ph**oneme >). That leaves < **f** > and < **ugh** > to represent each of our differently-meaning homophones.

3 Since < **ruff** > is already in use for one of the meanings (it is related to < **ruffle** >) we only have < **ugh** > left for the other homophone.

4 The basic grapheme structure would be < **r + u + ugh** >, but that results in < *****ruugh** >, and < **uu** > is a non-allowable string in an English word.

Why is it not allowable? Because < **u+u** > gives 'double U', which is already in use for another letter of the alphabet.

5 When for any reason you cannot use < **u** >, what do you use instead? You use the nearest vowel letter to it, which you already know from the standard arrangement of the vowel letters. That nearest vowel letter is < **o** >.

a e i **o u**
y
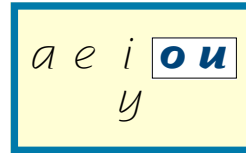
✔ **The spelling < rough >, then, is perfectly 'regular' and knowing why its spelling is as it is allows you to put these same principles and patterns into practice in hundreds of other words.**
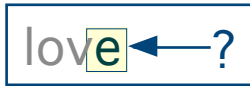
CLICK HERE to view a Podcast on the spelling of < **rough** >.

Personal Notes

The main theme

*Our theme on the spelling of < **love** > takes this simple, basic word that all your students probably already know how to spell and draws information from that spelling that reinforces and extends their general orthographic thinking.*

Why is there a final 'silent' <e> in the spelling of <love>?

love ⟵———?

There is nothing 'magic' about spelling!

Ask any adult why < **love** > has a final <**e**> and the knee-jerk response will probably be to talk about what many call the 'magic' <**e**>—a term that is absurd because there is nothing 'magic' about the spelling conventions!

It isn't, of course, the 'magic' <**e**>; if it were, then <**love**> would rhyme with <**stove**>, and it doesn't.

The real reason for this final <**e**> is one of the real spelling conventions.

✔ **No complete word of English origin ends with <-v > —
you must write <ve> instead.**

Ask your students to spell the following words, making sure that they justify the final single 'silent' <**e**> in each case.

> give   have   native   live (the verb)

✘ **In none of these words is the final single silent < e > used to show
that the previous vowel is 'long'—that is, representing its name.**

Personal Notes

Other letters that are not final in base words

Ask your students if they can suggest other letters that can not, or just do not, appear finally in base words.

Here is a list of them so you can make your own choice of which of these letters you will discuss with your students.

Letters that do not occur finally

|	
\<i\>	No complete English word has a final letter \<**i**\>; if you do see a word that has a final \<**i**\> it is not English, not complete, or both.
\<v\> **\<u\>**	It is a convention not to write a final \<**v**\>; write \<**ve**\> instead. Both \<**v**\> and \<**u**\> were originally different forms of the same letter (they didn't separate until comparatively recently). That is why what applies to \<**v**\> also applies to \<**u**\>.
\<j\>	The grapheme \<**j**\> is only initial (\<**major**\> is a loan word from Latin). If you need to write /dʒ/ in any other position you write \<**g**\>, which ***must*** be followed by \<**e**\> \<**i**\> or \<**y**\>.
\<q\>	There is no grapheme \<**q**\>. The *letter* \<q\> only appears in the digraph \<**qu**\>. (There is also a final French trigraph \<**que**\>.)

To be really comprehensive you could also mention \<**a**\> and \<**o**\>. They occur only rarely in final position in English-origin words.

* Native English bases happen not to end with the ***grapheme*** \<**a**\>. For instance, \<**banana**\> is clearly, like the fruit so named, of foreign origin. The digraph \<**ea**\>, though, does occur finally in monosyllables.

* Native English ***polysyllables*** don't have final \<**o**\>.

Of course, all this is mainly for your own background information, but I know many young students who are fascinated by this sort of information. Your own judgement will determine whether you share any of it, and with whom.

Personal Notes

Why is <love> spelled with <o>, and not <u>?
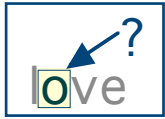
This diagram indicates a further question that needs to be asked about the spelling of <**love**>.

Why is there an <**o**> here when the way we pronounce it /lʌv/ suggests that we should write a <**u**>?"

Students who have had phonics inflicted on them will certainly be foxed – as they would be if you asked the same question about the <**o**> in <**o**ne>!

The real spelling convention is this.

✔ **Don't write <uv> in a word of English origin – write <ov> instead.**

Start a collection of words where the pronunciation would, at first, suggest a spelling <**uv**> but where we actually write <**ov**>. Your collection could eventually contain such words as these:

> love   dove   above glove
> oven   cover shovel

A historical reason for the <*uv> convention

We saw in the table on page 5 that the letters <**u**> and <**v**> were originally, and until comparatively recently, different forms of the same letter. Writing <**vv**> <**uu**> or <**uv**> would have 'collided' with the letter <**w**>.

An important point to make about real spelling patterns

These two patterns about avoiding both a final <**v**> and the string <**uv**> are excellent examples of what real spelling is about.

Take the opportunity to remind your students of this good news.

✔ **Most real spelling patterns are about what letters can be used where and in what combinations. Relatively few are about trying to pin down and chase how we think we are pronouncing words.**

Personal Notes

When the final <e> is replaced by a following suffix

In **Kit 1 Theme D** you meet an important spelling pattern.

✔ **A vowel suffix replaces a final single 'silent' <e>.**

Visit, or revisit, this pattern with this word sum and asking your students to help you to complete it.

love + ing ➔ ?

The result, of course, will be: love/ + ing ➔ loving

Word sums should always be 'spelled out'. It helps to internalise both the spelling and the thinking process which produces it. In this case the 'spelling out' is: "L—O—V no <e>, pause, I—N—G."

Points to remember about this suffixing pattern

- Establish tight habits of systematic thinking that match the rigour and order of the spelling system itself. The way we present real spelling processes must match this rigour.

- Get the wording of the patterns exact:
  — "Does the suffix begin with a vowel *letter*?"
  — "Does the base or stem taking the suffix end with a single 'silent' <**e**>?"

- Do the 'workings' of the word sum – that is, when you have decided that the final single silent <**e**> of <**love**> is going to be replaced, cross it out. The physical action reinforces the conceptual process.

You could use these word sums to consolidate this pattern.

have + ing ➔ ?	please + ant ➔ ?	create + ion ➔ ?
be + ing ➔ ?	store + age ➔ ?	agree + ing ➔ ?

Be careful!
- The final <**e**> of <b**e**> is single, but it isn't 'silent'.
- The final <**e**> of <**agree**> is neither 'single' nor 'silent'. It is a component of the digraph <**ee**>.

Personal Notes

Which <e> is it in <loved>?

Write out and work through this word sum with your students.

$$lov\cancel{e} + ed ➔ loving$$

It will be spelled out as, "L—O—V **no <e>**, pause, E—D."

Pose this question to your word detectives: "Which <e> is it in <**lov**ed> — the <e> of <lov**e**> or the <e> of <-**ed**>?"

The answer is clear from the word sum: it is the <e> of <-**ed**> which has *replaced* the <e> of <**love**>.

Here are some further cases of an <e> of the suffix which will replace the <e> of the word it's suffixed to.

brave + est ➔ ?   large + er ➔ ?   nurse + ery ➔ ?

Work through them both in writing on the board and also orally by spelling out the result.

When the final <e> is not replaced by a suffix

Write this word sum and complete it with your students' help.

$$love + ly ➔ ?$$

The result, of course, should be this.

$$love + ly ➔ lovely$$

It will be spelled out as, "L—O—V—E, pause, L—Y."

This time the <e> is not replaced. Why?

Because the suffix does not begin with a vowel letter. It is a 'consonant suffix' and, as such, is rather boring because it makes nothing interesting happen!

You could use these word sums to consolidate this pattern.

nice + ly ➔ ?   enlarge + ment ➔ ?   peace + ful ➔ ?

Work through them in writing on the board and orally by spelling out the result.

Personal Notes

Misbehaviour!

Write this word sum and complete it with your students' help.

$$love + able \rightarrow ?$$

The result, of course, should be:

$$lov\cancel{e} + able \rightarrow lovable$$

It will be spelled out as,   "L—O—V no < e >, pause, A—B—L—E."

✔ **So < lovable > without the < e > is the consistent spelling.**

Many publishing houses, however, do allow the spelling < lov**e**able > which keeps the < **e** > and consequently flies in the face of a clear and straightforward spelling pattern.

Since these publishing houses do allow the inconsistent spelling we could hardly mark < **loveable** > as 'wrong'. But I do recommend that such a blatant inconsistency should be discussed with students. These words are prime candidates for spelling simplification.

For your reference here are more of these inconsistent spellings.

blameable	giveable	hireable	likeable
nameable	saleable	sizeable	timeable

In none of these cases would I actually teach these forms, I would merely tolerate them, and with bad grace at that!

The spelling of < loveliness >

Remind your students of the pattern about < **i** > and < **y** > that they may have met in **Kit 1 Theme A** .

✔ **You can write the letter < y > at the end of a word, but you don't keep < y > inside a word unless you know a good reason to keep it there.**

Write out and work through this word sum with your students.

$$lovely + ness \rightarrow ?$$

Personal Notes

The < y > is fine in < **lovely** > because it is at the end of the word. But the moment we add a suffix, it isn't at the end of the new word any more, so has to be replaced with < **i** >. The full sum, then, is this.

$$\text{lovel}\cancel{y}^{\,\textbf{i}} + \text{ness} \rightarrow \text{loveliness}$$

It will be spelled out as, "L—O—V—E, pause, L — **change the < y > to < i >**, pause, N—E double S."

Summing up

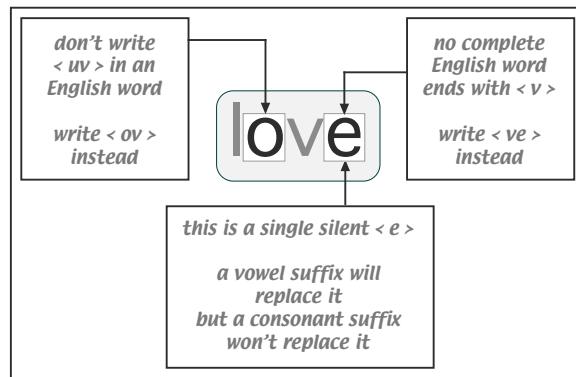This theme's important point is worth repeating to your students.

✔ **There are things to learn about real spelling even from single words whose spelling you are quite sure of.**

As a teacher you should take the point that it is equally valid to base a spelling episode on a word that students are familiar with as it is with one they have difficulty with.

A diagrammatic summary

You could use this OHP transparency to talk through the main lessons that you can draw from this simple word < **love** >.

1 K (i) OHP TRANSPARENCY **for photocopying**

don't write < uv > in an English word		*no complete English word ends with < v >*
write < ov > instead	love	*write < ve > instead*
	this is a single silent < e >	
	a vowel suffix will replace it but a consonant suffix won't replace it	

Personal Notes

Matrices for consolidation

You could give your students this set of matrices to complete the theme.

As always, there will be plenty of opportunity for vocabulary extension which grows from them.

1 K (ii) MATRICES **for photocopying**

love	ing	ly
	ed er es able ably	
	ly	er est ness
	less	ness ly
	bird lorn	
	sick	ness

	mis		ing	s
un	for	**give**	es er en able ably ness	

mis	be	**have**	es er ed	
			i	our or

re		**cover**	s er ing ed able age	
	un			
re	dis		y	es

en	**large**	es er est ing ed ly ish	
		ment	s

NOTES on these matrices

- **Both the British spelling <behaviour> and the American spelling <behavior> can be built from the matrix on the base element <have>.**

- **The <i> element in the matrix on the base element <have> is technically a 'connecting vowel letter' rather than a suffix. These 'connecting vowel letters' are explained in Kit 6 Theme H**

- **In the matrix on the base element <love> the words <lovebird> and <lovelorn> are 'compound' words. Kit 1 Theme H explains compounds.**

Other themes that may come up

The trigraph <ugh>

Though the spelling of <**rough**> is frequently stated in school spelling sources to be 'irregular', we have seen that it is a perfectly 'well-behaved' spelling.

Many schemes, systems, methods and 'experts' is are unaware of the trigraph <**ugh**> and the circumstances of its use. You can find material for working with the trigraph <**ugh**> in **Kit 2 Theme E** and in **Kit 6 Theme I**.

Final 'silent' <e>

The most frequent function of the final 'silent' < **e** >is to signal that a previous single-letter vowel grapheme, from which it is separated by a consonant grapheme, is representing the pronunciation of its name.

b**a**th**e**   th**e**m**e**   r**i**p**e**   str**o**k**e**   c**u**t**e**

When, very occasionally, the previous single-letter vowel grapheme is < **y** > it is treated as if it were < **i** >: < anal**yse** >.

A different final < e >: preventing a word from being taken as a plural

If a word is not a plural, it will not look even as if it *might* be a plural.

- Why does < **please** > have a final <**e** >? Because otherwise we would assume the structure < plea + s ➜ **pleas** >, "more than a single plea". Compare also < **laps** > / < **lapse** > and < **brows** > / < **browse** >.
- Words such as < **goose** >and < **house** > also have this final < **e** >. This is not because there are actually singulars <*goo > or <*hou >, but because:
  — once a spelling convention is in place it is applied consistently;
  — the reader who, by definition, is reconstructing sense and meaning from spellings, is spared any ambiguity.

Personal Notes

The spelling of <you>

The spelling of the pronoun <**you**>, with its final letter <**u**>, is mainly the result of its grammatical development. It replaced <**ye**>, the plural of <**thou**>.

- It was originally the 'oblique case' of <**ye**> — just as <**him**> is the oblique form of <**he**>, <**her**> is the oblique form of <**she**>, <**me**> is the oblique form of <**I**>, <**them**> is the oblique form of <**they**>, and <**us**> is the oblique form of <**we**>.
- Except for the religious context, the singular pronoun <**thou**> was already dropping out of use in Shakespeare's time. For a while both <**ye**> and <**you**> took its place, but eventually <**ye**> dropped out of use entirely, except in 'frozen expressions' like, "ye gods!".
- The pronunciation of <**you**> originally rhymed with <**cow**>. Indeed, it was still pronounced /jɑʊ/ in this way when I was a child in Birmingham. The Early Middle English spelling of the word was often <**eow**>.
- The expected modern spelling, then, might be thought to be <**yow**>. It isn't so for possibly two reasons:
  — the digraph <**ow**> is not available for /uː/;
  — it may have been assimilated by 'folk memory' to the spelling <**thou**> which it replaced.

The spelling of <a>

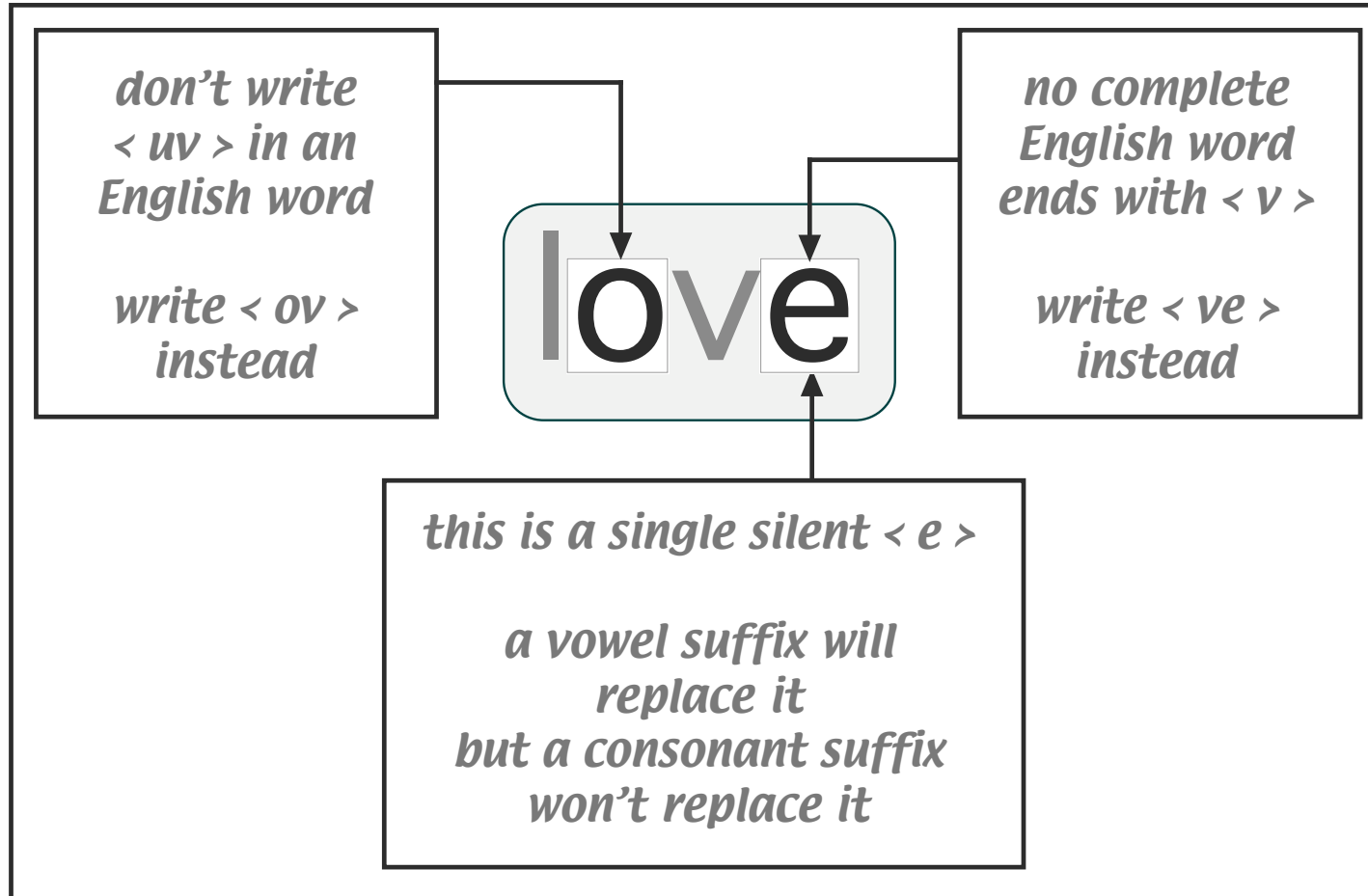The indefinite article <**a**> is a clip of the full form <**an**> (it is from the same Old English root as <**one**>).

There are actually two forms of the English indefinite article: <**a**(n)> and <**any**>. "**An** apple" is "**any** apple". Teaching <**an**> and <**any**> together stops the common misspelling <*eny> at source!

Polysyllabic bases that have final <o>

There is material on polysyllabic bases with final <**o**> in **Kit 4 Theme D**.

Personal Notes

*don't write
< uv > in an
English word*

*write < ov >
instead*

love

*no complete
English word
ends with < v >*

*write < ve >
instead*

this is a single silent < e >

*a vowel suffix will
replace it
but a consonant suffix
won't replace it*

	ing	ly
	ed er es able ably	

love

ly	er est ness
less	ness ly
bird lorn	
sick	ness

mis		ing	s
un	for	**give**	es er en able ably ness

mis	be	**have**	es er ed
			i	our or

re		**cover**	s er ing ed able age
	un		
re	dis		y	es

en	**large**	es er est ing ed ly ish
		ment	s