

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.

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

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

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

- a) cou__, __neumonia, __sychology, recei__t
- b) ai__le, debri__, frac___, l__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.