

An experiment with verse by Simon Mumford

Age:	Young adults / Adults
Level:	Intermediate
Objective:	to practise verb + gerund/infinitive through the medium of poetry
Key skills:	speaking
Materials:	whiteboard; one copy of Worksheets 1, 2 and 3 for each student

Introduction

This lesson involves a slight deception in order to start a discussion about the use of poetry in language learning, as the focus of the introduction is on literary poetry. This is intended to get students thinking about poetry as a learning tool, and more generally, different ways of learning. This discussion is just as important to the lesson as the grammar point: verbs followed by gerund and infinitive.

Procedure

1. Write on the board the following excerpt from the poem 'I wandered lonely as a cloud' by William Wordsworth:

*I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;*

Explain any words necessary, e.g. *o'er* = over; *vale* = valley; *all at once* = suddenly; *on high* = high above; *host* = group. Note that all these are poetic in style.

Read the poem aloud.

2. Ask students if they think that poetry is useful in language learning. Encourage students to be honest and say that poetry is not very useful if that is what they really believe.
3. Tell the students that they are going to take part in an experiment to see if poetry is helpful in language learning. Tell them they will do an exercise, read a poem and then do a similar exercise. They will then

compare their performances on the two exercises.

4. Give out Worksheet 1 and give them a few minutes to complete the exercise. Explain any vocabulary they do not understand e.g. *resist*, *refuse*, *regret*. Tell them to guess the answer if they are not familiar with these structures. Don't give them any grammar help at this stage, i.e. don't tell them the answers. Tell them that they will mark their own exercises later.
5. Give out a copy of Worksheet 2. Ask students to read through the poem quietly. Give a summary of the grammar if necessary, as follows: Some verbs can be immediately followed by other verbs. Depending on the verbs, the following verbs have either the *-ing* form (as in verse 1) or infinitive (*to* + base form) (as in verse 2). A number of verbs can be followed by verbs with either form. These can be divided into two groups, those in which the different forms cause no difference in meaning (as in verse 3) and those that change meaning (as in verse 4). Verse 5 gives an example of a verb that changes meaning: *try to lift* means to make an effort, *try lifting* means to experiment with a new approach. The verbs in italics are examples of each type.
6. After a brief explanation of features of the poem (the lines in each verse loosely rhyme, *meaning* is reduced to *meanin'* so that it rhymes with *begin*), Practise the poem with the class, reading aloud as a model, emphasizing the verbs in italics. Give students the opportunity to practise in groups.
7. Collect all copies of the poems and tell the students to turn over the exercise on Worksheet 1. Give out Worksheet 3 and tell them to complete the exercise in the same way as on Worksheet 1.
8. When they have finished, give out the poem again and ask them to use it to mark Worksheets 1 and 3. Students then count their scores and report the differences between the two to the class. If students have improved, you can ask whether the poem was responsible for the improvement. Depending on your class, you could extend the discussion to whether this was an effective way of learning compared to other methods.

KEY:

Worksheet 1: 1. watching; 2. jogging; 3. to fix; 4. to speak; 5. to listen / listening; 6. buying; 7. to cry / crying; 8. to be / being; 9. to watch / watching; 10. crashing; 11. to work / working; 12. to give; 13. to tidy / tidying; 14. swimming; 15. to keep

Worksheet 3: 1. hearing; 2. flying; 3. to carry; 4. to sign; 5. to play / playing; 6. upsetting; 7. to play / playing; 8. to sing / singing; 9. to get up / getting up; 10. making; 11. to pay / paying; 12. to behave; 13. to dance / dancing; 14. using; 15. to carry

Read the sentences and circle the correct answer.

1. I dislike **watching** / **to watch** football.
2. I don't understand **to jog** / **jogging**. It's such a stupid way to take exercise.
3. I'm going to help John **to fix** / **fixing** his bike.
4. Why did he refuse **to speak** / **speaking** to you?
5. I love to **listen** / **listening** to the sound of the sea.
6. You can't resist **to buy** / **buying** new shoes, can you?
7. Please don't start **to cry** / **crying**!
8. I will no longer continue **to be** / **being** responsible for your expenses.
9. Why doesn't he like **to watch** / **watching** TV?
10. Fortunately, I avoided **to crash** / **crashing** into the car in front.
11. She quite likes teaching but she prefers **to work** / **working** in a bank.
12. My boss promised **to give** / **giving** me a day off next week.
13. Let's begin **to tidy** / **tidying** the house, shall we?
14. I need a new hobby. I think I'll try to **swim** / **swimming**.
15. I worked until after midnight. I drank coffee to try **to keep** / **keeping** awake.

Gerund and infinitive poem

Some verbs are followed by verbs with *-ing* at the end,
Don't *avoid, resist* or *dislike* learning these, but *understand*.

You should know that others are followed by a verb with *to*,
Learn them! I won't *refuse* to *promise* to *help* you.

Others have *to* or *-ing* with no change of meanin',
Including *continue, like, love, prefer, start* and *begin*.

Others take *to* or *-ing*, but the meaning changes,
You'll *regret* not *trying* to *remember* these dangers!

For example, if you try *to lift* it, it means it's difficult,
But if you try *lifting* it, it's a kind of experiment.

Read the sentences and circle the correct answer.

1. She disliked **to hear / hearing** that dreadful voice
2. He understands **to fly / flying**, his father's a pilot.
3. Can you help me **to carry / carrying** this suitcase?
4. I refuse **to sign / signing** that paper.
5. When I was young I loved **to play / playing** in this wood.
6. Why is it so hard for you to resist **to upset / upsetting** her?
7. He's been happier since he started **to play / playing** the guitar.
8. Please continue **to sing / singing**! It's beautiful!
9. I can't remember if they like **to get up / getting up** early.
10. I must avoid **to make / making** that mistake again
11. We prefer **to pay / paying** more because you get better quality.
12. Do you promise **to behave / behaving** yourself at the party?
13. Suddenly he began **to dance / dancing** like a madman.
14. Why don't you try **to use / using** these tables for your party?
15. It was so heavy! We tried **to carry / carrying** it but it weighed a ton.