INTERFACE

LESSON PLAN 39: FOUR WAYS TO USE WORDLE

Objective: Using words to visually represent thoughts and ideas

Age range: 5-16

39

WHAT IS WORDLE?

Wordle (**www.wordle.net**) is an online tool for generating 'word clouds' – these are images made of words. What it does is convert text that you provide into an image. The size of a word in the image is proportional to the number of times it appears in the original text. You can then alter your clouds with different fonts, layouts, and colour schemes, but you cannot edit the word list. (If you want to change the words you have to start again.)

The images you create with Wordle are yours to use in any way you choose. You can print them out, save as a PDF or screenshot, or post to the Wordle gallery. (Incidentally, no info is actually recorded by Wordle unless you save your image to the gallery.)

YOU WILL NEED

Computer. Internet access. Latest version of Java. Text to convert to an image.

DEVELOPING SKILLS

Words and language, presentation, visual representation, proportions

METHOD

1. Go to **www.wordle.net**
2. Click 'Create', paste in your text, and press 'Go'. (Incidentally, you can also link to copy a blog/Web pages.) Wordle will automatically draw a word cloud from the text you provide. On the menu bar, you will see 'Language', 'Font', 'Layout' and 'Color' options which allow you to modify your word cloud – or just click 'Randomise' and see what you get.

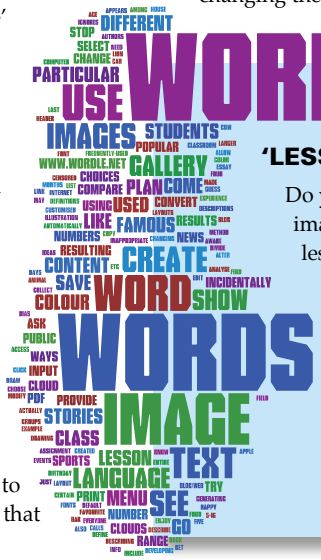
   Stop words – Wordle ignores what it calls 'stop words'. These are frequently-used but probably unimportant ones like 'the', 'and' and 'but'. To include them go to the 'Language' menu and turn off their removal.

   Numbers – By default, Wordle strips numbers from the text before drawing. Again, see the 'Language' menu to change that setting.

   Advanced – in the 'Advanced' menu option you can paste 'weighted words'. So, instead of typing in one word several times, you simply put the word or phrase and the number, such as yellow:12 or I read INTERFACE:23
3. When you're happy with it, you can print – on paper or as a PDF – or save to the site's public gallery for everyone to see and enjoy.
4. Four ways to use Wordle with your class

   - **Descriptions and definitions** – ask your students to come up with as many words as they can think of that describe or define a particular thing. It could be something simple like an object (car, house, apple, etc.) or an animal (lion, snake, cow, pig, and so on). You could try famous people, sports, events, places, or even concepts … whatever you like. Collect the words they come up with, input them, and create your Wordle, which will show the most popular and the range of word choices.

     You could divide up the class and get the groups to create Wordle images and see if the others can guess what it's describing.
   - **Classroom poll** – you can use Wordle to show the results of polls and surveys among your students. For example, ask them their favourite colour. On the resulting image, the larger the word the more popular that particular colour. You could try pets, birthday months, sports, or food. It could also be used to show 'Yes, No, Don't Know' results, or any number of choices.
   - **Usage of words** – you can input entire stories and find out the words that are used the most. You can compare essays of different students, or analyse the words used by famous authors or by politicians in famous speeches. You could select news stories to see what words are being used on particular stories, or on certain days, or compare for bias between different news sources.
   - **Customised images** – you can use a Wordle image as illustration for a piece of work, an assignment, or a project. Perhaps you've just come back from a field trip. When you've written up the experience, use the words to create an image for the title page. Or use the image as the header for your wiki or blog. Select all the words from your last 10 posts – the resulting image will be a reflection of the things you're writing about. And then update periodically to show changing themes and content.



'LESSON PLAN' WORDLE

Do you recognise these words? This is a Wordle image created using all the words in this lesson plan.

INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Please be aware that content on the Wordle website is not censored. There are images in the public gallery that may be unsuitable for your class to view.

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