

## Tom Swifties

A game which developed amongst language lovers back in the fifties was based on Tom Swift, the hero in a series of boys' adventure books who never simply 'said' anything, but always said it 'morosely', 'resignedly', etc. This adverbial inclination led to the 'Tom Swiftie', a kind of word game in which you have to link the adverb to the meaning of the phrase which is 'said' in such a way that it has a double meaning. For example, if poor Tom is hobbling around after a skiing accident and has mislaid his crutches we might say: "I've lost my crutches", said Tom *lamely*.

Here the word 'lamely' has the double meaning of a poor excuse and the difficulty Tom experiences in walking. If you like playing with words and their meanings this kind of thing can be immense fun and highly addictive. Like all puns the more outrageous it is the better; few (although some) Tom Swifties arise accidentally. In the box on the right you will find some more examples for your amusement - you should be able to work them out for yourself without too much trouble. Once you get the idea perhaps you might like to try and invent a few of your own. We'll publish the best here, propriety permitting.

- "Are you sure you wouldn't prefer a puppy", he asked *doggedly*.
- "Can I get you a drink", the waitress asked *fetchingly*.
- "I build bridges", he said *archly*.
- "I hate fairy tales", she declared *grimly*.
- "No thanks. I'm on a diet", he said *stoutly*.
- "The results of my ECG were reassuring", he said *wholeheartedly*.
- "Watch out for the kerb", he shouted *gutturally*.
- "Would you like a Pepsi", he asked *coaxingly*.
- "You'll find supper in the freezer", she replied *icily*.
- "I've bought you a negligée", he said *transparently*.
- "... and a lovely bikini", he added *briefly*.

Some typical Tom Swifties

## SWAPSHOP

Send in your teaching suggestions, ideas or anything you would like to share with your fellow teachers. However simple they may seem to you they could be new to someone else. The best ideas we receive will be published here.

Some brief examples below - yours could be longer:

### Hands up !

Do you sometimes have trouble getting the attention of a group of people after (for example) a pair exercise or group activity? Try as you will, some of them just go on talking? **Mario Rinvoluceri**, in Argentina recently on a lecture tour, solved the problem merely by raising his hand. As people began to notice they too, at his instigation, raised their hands. Result: attracted by all hands going up and keen to find out why, everyone quickly stopped talking and he was able to continue with his lecture.

### Keep to the right

When writing new vocabulary on the board, always write it in the same place. Draw a line from top to bottom, one fifth of the way from the right and write it in this right hand sector, leaving the other larger part of the board for other board work. That way students will focus on the new vocabulary as new vocabulary rather than having it scattered all over the place with your other blackboard work.

### The dictogloss

This is a technique which is said to have originated in Australia. Like a dictation, the students listen to a shortish passage but do not write anything down until all the passage has been dictated. Then they have to work in pairs or groups trying to reconstruct as much as possible of the original. **Herbert Puchta** demonstrated this at last year's FAAP conference, with the variation of playing a piece of relaxing music between the listening and the reconstruction.

### New uses for old readers

Do you have any old class readers that no one seems to want to read any more? Maybe they're boring, dated, or just visually unattractive and you can't seem to get your students interested in them. Here's an idea that's easy to prepare and can be fun for the students. Choosing a shortish text at a level a little lower than that of your students, separate the pages with a pair of scissors, paint out the page numbers and give the batch of pages to a small group to put in order. They'll most likely respond to the challenge and in order to solve the 'problem' will have to read and understand the text. Something to think about for Friday afternoons.

## Ode to the OED

Readers of *News & Views* might enjoy the following poem, celebrating the then 'new' edition of the Oxford English Dictionary (the one that weighs in at 62.6 kilos, costs \$2,500, has 21,728 pages and takes up 44 inches of shelf space) which appeared in April 1989 in *The Guardian*. It was written by Richard Boston, who offered apologies to Ogdon Nash and William McGonagall, both of whom he mercilessly parodies.

*St James Augustus Henry Murray*

*Didn't do things in a hurry.*

*The lexicographic work he started in 1879*

*Was - everyone agreed - extremely fine.*

*But it wasn't until 1928 that the letter Z was reached, and then there were supplements which by 1933 brought the OED up to twelve enormous tomes.*

*Which weighed a bit too much for the bookshelves of most people's homes.*

*Then came some more -*

*More Supplements, the volumes of which numbered four.*

*And now we have the mighty Second edition which incorporates Murray and the Supplements and a lot of new words, costs one and a half grand, weighs a hundredweight and its volumes number twenty.*

*Which is plenty.*

*It contains more than half a million words and two and a half million quotations, and was produced with the help of an IBM (OL) computer.*

*The result is more than the reading material carried on the train by your average commuter.*

*The longest definition you are likely to get*

*Is the 75,000 words devoted just to the verb Set.*

*And then there's a lung disease called pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanoconiosis*

*Which is what the longest word anyone knows is.*

Undoubtedly a great dictionary, the OED (in all senses of the word), if you've got a few bucks to spare, but certainly not the best thing for doing the crossword on the train on the way home.