

Fictionary

J. Stamm, 12/1992

Requirements:

1. At least four people. More players only make it more fun. But 10 might be the most you'd want.
2. The minimum age is probably about 8. Try a few rounds and see. Often kids have some of the best answers.
3. At least one dictionary, the bigger the better. If more are available, then players can be looking for a good word while waiting for their turn to be the reader — as long as they don't look up the word being played!
4. Many small blank sheets of paper, all the same size and color.. ("Many" here means the number of words to be played **times** the number of players.)
5. A pen or sharp pencil for each person.
6. A convenient writing surface for each person.

The Basic Idea: (one "round")

One person starts out as **the reader**, let's say Eric. He chooses a word from the dictionary that no one has ever heard of, and announces the word and its spelling to the players. Each player then thinks up a meaning for the word, writes it down, folds the paper in half, then hands it to Eric. Meanwhile, Eric writes down the actual definition of the word from the dictionary, then folds the paper in half (so it looks the same as all of the others). Then Eric reads all the definitions out loud and the other players try to guess which is the correct one. Points are scored for guessing the correct definition, having one's made-up definition guessed by other players, or by Eric if anyone was fooled into not guessing the actual definition. Fooling someone means that a word was found with such a different meaning from the sound or sense of the word, that no one was able to guess the correct definition.

The Overall Structure:

The game consists of many "rounds." One word is played per round. After each round, the next player becomes the reader and chooses a word.

Follow a clockwise rotation around the room. A "complete rotation" occurs when everyone has had one turn. It is recommended to play several complete rotations, especially for smaller groups, to allow for a fair point distribution among the players. Always end the game at the end of a complete rotation, again to allow for fair point distribution.

"LET THE GAMES BEGIN:"

Before the start of the game, choose someone to keep score. Next, pick someone to be the first reader. For the following example of one round of play, let's say this is Jennifer.

One "Round:"

1. Jennifer scans through the dictionary looking for a word that no one else has ever heard of. She questions the group on potential words. If she feels that someone may have some familiarity with the word in question, she is free to choose another. It is her decision whether or not to play a particular word.

Note 1: If there are multiple definitions given in the dictionary for a chosen word, she may choose any one meaning she likes.

2. When a suitable word is found, Jennifer announces the word and its spelling to the group.
3. Each player then writes down the word, their first name, takes a few minutes of thought, then writes down a made-up meaning for the word.

Note 2: No dictionaries are to be used by the other players to come up with definitions. Answers are to be thought up totally by the players themselves. That's part of the fun, and it will be surprising how many made-up definitions work. People sometimes choose the most absurd answer and sometimes the simplest.

4. Meanwhile, Jennifer writes down the word and its correct meaning on a slip of paper and folds it half.
5. After completing an answer, each player folds his or her paper in half and hands it direct to Jennifer.

***Note 3:** As Jennifer receives the players' definitions, she should read all of them to herself. If there is any obvious error or something she does not understand, she can immediately review it with the person who wrote it. She can also laugh or otherwise react at the answers now without giving away the fact that they are not the actual one. When she reads them out loud, she should keep a straight face while reading each one the same. She can even try to laugh while reading the actual meaning (but that may be giving away too much of her possible strategy).*

***Note 4:** When the person on Jennifer's left has handed in his or her paper, he or she becomes the next **reader** and may begin looking for the next word to be played.*

6. Next, Jennifer reads all of the definitions aloud. She should be careful not to let the other players see the handwriting on the papers. She should read each as if it's the correct answer.
7. As Jennifer reads the definitions, each player is to determine which one they feel is the actual meaning.

***Note 5:** She may have to reread a definition or read through all of the definitions several times before everyone makes up their mind. But keep this to a reasonable limit, maybe three times. If a player has to guess at the meaning, so be it; that's part of the fun, too. And often first impressions are correct..*

8. In clockwise order, starting at the person on Jennifer's left, Jennifer is to ask each person to choose which meaning they feel is the actual one.
9. After everyone has chosen, Jennifer reads the word aloud and its actual meaning.
10. That's the end of the round. Record all the points that were scored, and then return to step 1 for the next round and advance to the next person in the rotation.

Scoring Points:

- One point is scored by a player who chooses the actual definition.
- One point is scored by player A for each person that chooses player A's answer.
- One point is scored by **the reader** (Jennifer in the example) for each person that does not guess the actual definition.

Final Note:

Note 6: It must be decided beforehand by the group, if a player may be allowed to choose his or her own answer. This "trick" can quickly throw someone off the trail.

Example:

Suppose Mary gives her definition for a word as "a bright yellow flower indigenous to Australia". And upon hearing the definitions, Pete thinks to himself, "I'll bet that's not the correct meaning. That sounds like Mary's answer". Well, if Mary then chooses her **own** answer, Pete might then think, "If Mary chose that answer, then perhaps it **is** the correct answer". This is a good way for Mary to score points, but it may well be considered unethical. And, obviously, a player does not get a point for choosing his or her own answer.

That's it, ENJOY - !!

J.R.S.