

TEACHER'S NOTES

rat tail

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**Overview:** Suggestions for using the **Macmillan Dictionary BuzzWord** article on *rat tail* and the associated worksheet.

**Total time for worksheet activities:** 45 minutes

**Suggested level:** Upper intermediate and above

1. If you intend to use the worksheets in class, go to the *BuzzWord* article at the web address given at the beginning of the worksheet and print off a copy of the article. Make a copy of the worksheet and the *BuzzWord* article for each student. You might find it helpful not to print a copy of the Key for each student but to check the answers as a class.
2. If the members of your class all have computer access, ask them to open the worksheet before they go to the *BuzzWord* article link. Make sure they do not scroll down to the Key until they have completed each exercise.
3. Encourage students to read through the questions in Exercise 1 before they look at the *BuzzWord* article. Ask them to read through the whole article carefully and answer the questions. Tell them to compare their answers with a partner. Then check the answers as a class.
4. Ask students to complete Exercise 2 independently and then compare their answers with a partner. Check the answers as a class.
5. Exercise 3 highlights the meaning of some higher level verbs within the text. Ask students to complete the exercise in pairs, reminding them that they only need to look in the paragraph specified for each verb. Check the answers as a class.
6. Exercise 4 introduces vocabulary connected with hair and hairstyles. As an opener and an aid to understanding, you might like to provide some simple images or photos of different hairstyles (very easily sourced on the internet). Ask the students to complete the exercise and if they need extra support, start by pointing out some of the words on the images (e.g. *fringe* (NB. *bangs* in US usage), *perm*, *blonde* etc) to help them make the connection to the definitions. Check the answers as a class. Possible follow up activities could include spoken or written descriptions of hairstyle images, with revision or introduction of other relevant vocabulary, e.g. adjectives *curly*, *straight*, *wavy*, and nouns *afro*, *bob*, *plait/braid*, etc – the Macmillan Dictionary page link included in the article has some other examples which students might find interesting.
7. Point out to students that *rat tail* as a description of a hairstyle is an example of the use of metaphor. English has a wide range of idiomatic expressions and metaphors based on animals, though these usually refer to abstract concepts (rather than concrete ones like in *rat tail*). Exercise 5 explores the meaning of six examples which are relatively common in informal English. Complete the exercise as a class activity.
8. Exercise 6 puts the six expressions from the previous exercise in context. Ask students to complete the exercise independently. Check the answers as a class. As a wind up, ask students if they can give examples of animal metaphors from their own languages. Which animals are used? And what concepts do they represent? Is there any overlap with English? Encourage students to explain and discuss these examples in English.

WORKSHEET

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Go to the **Macmillan Dictionary BuzzWord** article at:

[www.macmillandictionary.com/buzzword/entries/rat-tail.html](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/buzzword/entries/rat-tail.html)

**1 Find the information**

Read the **BuzzWord** article on *rat tail* and answer these questions.

1. Is the rat tail hairstyle usually worn by men or women?
2. Why does the author think that some celebrities wear this hairstyle?
3. Which sportsman has famously worn a rat tail in the past few years?
4. What is a *Mohican/Mohawk*?
5. What does the expression *rats' tails* describe?
6. Give one example of an earlier metaphor that the expression *rat tail* is based on.

**2 Comprehension check**

Choose the correct answer according to the text.

1. You might find an example of a rat tail ...
  - a. in a museum
  - b. on the high street
  - c. in a biology lab
2. The rat tail is ...
  - a. a short piece of hair
  - b. a long piece of hair
  - c. a curly piece of hair
3. The rat tail is ...
  - a. a hairstyle most people like
  - b. a hairstyle most people don't like
  - c. a hairstyle most people have an opinion about
4. The *beehive* was popular in ...
  - a. the 1960s
  - b. the 1980s
  - c. the 1990s
5. A hairstyle which is short at the front and sides and long at the back is called ...
  - a. a mullet
  - b. a fauxhawk
  - c. a flattop

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6. The word *pigtail* dates back to ... .
- the early 19th century
  - the 1950s
  - the mid-18th century

**3 Find the verb**

Look in the text and find the following verbs. The first letters are given.

- a phrasal verb meaning *to bring something such as a feeling or memory to your mind*  
 (paragraph 1) c\_\_\_\_\_ u\_\_\_\_
- a verb meaning *to cut the body of a dead animal into parts in order to examine it*  
 (paragraph 1) d\_\_\_\_\_
- a verb meaning *to bring a particular emotion into your mind*  
 (paragraph 3) e\_\_\_\_\_
- a verb meaning *to accept a new idea*  
 (paragraph 3) e\_\_\_\_\_
- a verb meaning *to suddenly start an activity that has a powerful effect*  
 (paragraph 4) u\_\_\_\_\_
- a verb meaning *to play the part of a person in a film, play, etc*  
 (paragraph 5) p\_\_\_\_\_

**4 Describing hair**

Match the two parts of the definitions.

- |                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| 1. A ponytail is          | a. hair that hangs down over your forehead.   |
| 2. Bunches are            | b. a chemical hair treatment that makes straight hair curly.                                      |
| 3. Shoulder-length        | c. is a haircut that is very short on the sides and the back of the head.                         |
| 4. Auburn                 | d. hair reaches down to your shoulders.   |
| 5. A fringe is short      | e. long hair that is tied at the back of the head and hangs down.                                 |
| 6. Blonde                 | f. hair is brownish-red in colour.  |
| 7. A short back and sides | g. a girl's hairstyle in which the hair is tied together in two parts on either side of her head. |
| 8. A perm is              | h. hair is pale yellow in colour.   |

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**5 Animal metaphors**

Tick the definition which matches the animal metaphor.

1. *rat race*
  - a way of life where there is a lot of competition and people are too busy to relax
  - a way of life where people work quickly and are very successful
2. *fat cat*
  - a very large and greedy person
  - a very rich and powerful person
3. *cold fish*
  - someone who is not friendly
  - someone who is not fashionable
4. *lion's share*
  - the best part of something
  - the largest part of something
5. *red herring*
  - something that is interesting and helps you pay attention to what you should be concentrating on
  - something that is not relevant and takes your attention away from what you should be concentrating on
6. *dark horse*
  - someone with a secret that surprises you when you finally discover it
  - someone with a secret that makes you feel sad when you finally discover it

**6 Using animal metaphors**

Complete the sentences with the correct animal metaphors from Exercise 5.

cold fish	fat cats	rat race
dark horse	lion's share	red herring

1. What, Mick's getting married? He's a \_\_\_\_\_; I didn't know he had a girlfriend!
2. It looked as though the chef was involved, but he wasn't, that was just a \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Don't worry if Angie is unfriendly, she's always been a bit of a \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The \_\_\_\_\_ who run the bank are making millions of dollars.
5. They inherited some of Eva's money, but the \_\_\_\_\_ went to her grandchildren.
6. I quit my job. I had to get out of the \_\_\_\_\_ and try doing something different.

KEY

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KEY

**1 Find the information**

1. men
2. because it is likely to attract publicity
3. (Argentine footballer) Rodrigo Palacio
4. a hairstyle in which the hair on both sides of the head is cut off, leaving a wide strip of hair in the middle which sticks up
5. long, lank and untidy strands of hair
6. *ponytail/pigtail*

**2 Comprehension check**

1. b
2. b
3. c
4. a
5. a
6. c

**3 Find the verb**

1. conjure up
2. dissect
3. evoke
4. embrace
5. unleash
6. portray

**4 Describing hair**

1. e
2. g
3. d
4. f
5. a
6. h
7. c
8. b

**5 Animal metaphors**

1. definition 1
2. definition 2
3. definition 1
4. definition 2
5. definition 2
6. definition 1

**6 Using animal metaphors**

1. dark horse
2. red herring
3. cold fish
4. fat cats
5. lion's share
6. rat race