

TEACHER'S NOTES

**Mx**

www.macmillandictionary.com

**Overview:** Suggestions for using the **Macmillan Dictionary BuzzWord** article on **Mx** 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 individually. When they have completed the exercise, check the answers as a class, asking students to explain each answer by identifying relevant parts of the text (see the Key for suggestions).
5. Exercise 3 explores some of the more difficult vocabulary items in the text. Ask students to complete the exercise in pairs without looking back at the article, guessing any answers they're unsure about. Then ask them to read the article again, looking out for the words in context – do they want to change any of their answers? Check the answers as a class.
6. Exercise 4 is a matching activity which builds six sentences based on the text. Ask students to complete it as quickly as possible, only looking back at the text if unsure. Point out that the prepositions at the beginning of a–f will be a clue to the correct pairings (what words can precede them?). Check the answers as a class.
7. Extending the gender theme, Exercise 5 highlights some vocabulary where gender is intrinsic to meaning. Complete as a class activity. Some of the words have direct male/female equivalents – what are they? (*fiancé, divorcée, hero, widow*). If time permits, point out that English is increasingly favouring 'inclusive' vocabulary. Words such as *actor* and *heir* are no longer gender-specific (use of *actress/heiress*, etc is diminishing). Gender-neutral terms such as *firefighter, police officer, spokesperson*, etc are now often used in place of *fireman, policeman, spokesman*, etc.
8. Exercise 6 takes a brief look at forms of address and how it's important to choose the right term in a particular context (point out that failure to do so may appear rude). Ask students to complete the exercise in pairs, where necessary looking up information in the Macmillan Dictionary, which gives comprehensive examples of the different usages. Check the answers as a class.
9. As a final discussion, ask students about forms of address in their own language(s). How do these compare with English? Do students think that *Mx* will become a permanent feature of English? Is there any such equivalent in their own language(s)?

Go to the **Macmillan Dictionary BuzzWord** article at:  
[www.macmillandictionary.com/buzzword/entries/mx.html](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/buzzword/entries/mx.html)

### 1 Find the information

Read the *BuzzWord* article on *Mx* and answer these questions.

- Which English pronouns are sometimes used as a way to avoid specifying gender?
- Give two examples of words used to describe an identity which isn't only masculine or feminine.
- How many ways are there to say the word *Mx*?
- Which city council was one of the first in the UK to use the title *Mx*?
- In what decade did the title *Mx* first appear?
- According to the author, what title do some women dislike?

### 2 Comprehension check

Are these statements true (T) or false (F) according to the text?

- Gender-neutral pronouns have been easily accepted and used in English.
- Mx* is sometimes used by people who don't want a title to show whether they are male or female.
- In 2015, *Mx* was recognized by the UK postal service.
- The concept of a gender-neutral title is new for the 21st century.
- One of the earliest written appearances of *Mx* was in the USA.
- The title *Ms* was first used in the 1970s.

### 3 What do they mean?

Choose the correct meaning for the words/phrases 1–8.

- pedant
  - a person who gives too much importance to formal rules
  - a person who is an expert on a particular subject
- tenacious
  - very determined
  - easily understood
- honorific
  - an award given to someone
  - a title given to someone
- fusion
  - a process in which one thing is made to look like another
  - a process in which two things combine to form something new
- track record
  - the past performance of something
  - the past advantages of something

WORKSHEET

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6. fill a void
  - a. to replace something with something better
  - b. to provide something that is needed
7. underpin
  - a. to be an important basic part of something
  - b. to be the most difficult part of something
8. etiquette
  - a. a set of rules for behaving correctly in social situations
  - b. a set of rules for being polite to women

**4 Rebuild the text**

Match the sentence halves.

- |                                                |                                              |
|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Mx</i> is gaining acceptance             | a. of <i>Mr</i> , <i>Ms</i> or <i>Miss</i> . |
| 2. Language reflects our changing perspectives | b. than it looks.                            |
| 3. <i>Mx</i> can be used in place              | c. in gender politics.                       |
| 4. The city council began                      | d. as a gender-neutral title.                |
| 5. <i>Mx</i> is much older                     | e. to allow its use on forms.                |
| 6. Its original use was tied up                | f. on the world.                             |

**5 Male or female?**

Do the words in the box describe men or women? Put them in the correct place in the table.

bachelor	butler	bride	divorcé	fiancée
heroine	lord	maid	widower	

Women	Men

**6 Forms of address**

Circle the correct word to complete the sentences.

1. Would you like to come this way, *Mrs/madam* Atkins?
2. I think he's the vicar at St Mary's, so maybe you should write 'Dear *Dr/Prof./Rev.* Bell'.
3. Are you ready to order, *mister/sir/Mr*?
4. I'm not sure if she's married, so I'll call her *Mrs/Ms* Lee.
5. Excuse me, *girl/miss*, have you dropped your glove?
6. I'm sorry, *madam/Mrs*, room 239 is currently unavailable.

KEY

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KEY

**1 Find the information**

1. *they and their*
2. possible answers: *non-binary, transgender, third gender*
3. three
4. Brighton and Hove
5. the 1970s
6. Ms

**2 Comprehension check**

1. F (paragraph 1: they have 'struggled their way into wider acceptance')
2. T (paragraph 2: *Mx* is 'an option for people who don't want their gender revealed through a title')
3. T (paragraph 3: *Mx* was recognized across various UK institutions, including Royal Mail)
4. F (paragraph 5: the first use of *Mx* dates back to the 1970s)
5. T (paragraph 5: 'it appeared in an American magazine called *Single Parent*.')
6. F (paragraph 6: Ms 'dates back to 1901')

**3 What do they mean?**

1. a
2. a
3. b
4. b
5. a
6. b
7. a
8. a

**4 Rebuild the text**

1. d
2. f
3. a
4. e
5. b
6. c

**5 Male or female?**

Women	Men
bride	bachelor
fiancée	butler
heroine	divorcé
maid	lord
	widower

**6 Forms of address**

1. Mrs
2. Rev.
3. sir
4. Ms
5. miss
6. madam