



Euphemism: Lesson Plan

Topic	
Euphemisms are innocuous, inoffensive, or circumlocutory terms or phrases substituted for something unpleasant or obscene. Negative euphemisms diminish the force of the unpleasant topic while positive euphemisms inflate the term up for substitution, making it sound more important.	
Possible subjects/classes	Time needed
Public Speaking/Debate, English, History, Politics	30-45 minutes
Video link:	
https://academy4sc.org/video/euphemism-the-good-speech/	
Objective: <i>What will students know/be able to do at the end of class?</i>	
Students will be able to... <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Define euphemism.• Recognize euphemisms in speech and writing.• List the different ways euphemisms can be used.	
Key Concepts & Vocabulary	
Rhetoric, Rhetorical Device	
Materials Needed	
Worksheet. Whiteboard/chalkboard, Paper and bucket (to pull papers out of).	
Before you watch	
Put three direct, harsh, or unpleasant words or phrases in three separate columns on the board (for example, "He's an idiot," "I got fired from my job," and "She died last night"). Have students come up to the board and fill in "nicer," more pleasant ways of saying the same thing. Explain that they have just created euphemisms.	
While you watch	

1. Define euphemism.
2. Which three topics often get euphemized?
3. Name the two types of euphemisms.

After you watch/discussion questions

1. Why might euphemisms be difficult to detect?
2. What might be some strategies for identifying euphemisms?
3. When should you use euphemisms? When should you avoid them?

Activity Ideas

- Complete the Worksheet individually and discuss answers as a class.
- Present one relevant euphemism, whether it be from a book or textbook the class has recently read. Write the euphemism on the board and have students brainstorm its full meaning in groups. Come together to discuss the meaning in context and the effects of using this rhetorical device on past and present readers.
- Write down several terms or topics that could be euphemized, each on their own individual piece of paper. Use the following website for ideas and examples:
<https://examples.yourdictionary.com/examples-of-euphemism.html>.
 Have students form groups of 2-4. Put the papers in a bucket and have students pick one per group. In their groups, students will work together to come up with euphemisms for the term or topic written on the paper.

Sources/places to learn more

1. "Euphemism." *Oxford English Dictionary*, 1989,
www.oed.com/view/Entry/65021?redirectedFrom=euphemism.
2. "Euphemism." *Women and Language*, vol. 30, no. 1, 2007, p. 54. Gale Academic OneFile,
https://link-gale-com.exlibris.colgate.edu/apps/doc/A167507781/AONE?u=nyl_ce_colgul&sid=AONE&xid=5d95bc61.
3. "Euphemism—Dictionary Definition." *Vocabulary.com*,
www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/euphemism.
4. Mahmood, Zaynab. "A Linguistic Study of Euphemism in English." 2017. *University of AL Qadisiyah*.
<http://qu.edu.iq/repository/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/engs-14.pdf>.



5. Pan, Qi. "A Tentative Study on the Functions and Applications of English Euphemism." *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*. Vol. 3, No. 11, 2013, pp. 2107-2111.