

ASL (American Sign Language) Fingerspelling Meets Iditarod Vocabulary Terms

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Discipline / Subject: English Language Arts, Humanities, ASL

Topic: ASL (American Sign Language) Fingerspelling, Iditarod Vocabulary, Constructing Sentences, Drawing Inferences, Deducing

Grade Level: 5-12

Resources / References / Materials Teacher Needs:

- Access to the internet and a visualizer or projector
- Copies of the ASL fingerspelled alphabet
- Copies of the assignment and a model of the assignment
- List of the common Iditarod terms and their definitions

Lesson Summary:

Students will be introduced to the ASL (American Sign Language) fingerspelled alphabet and have an opportunity to practice fingerspelling. After developing a brief understanding of the fingerspelled alphabet, students will complete their ASL Iditarod dictionary entry; students must define a particular word, determine its part of speech, use the word in an original sentence in order to demonstrate an understanding of its meaning, research any facts about the word and include a picture or illustration which depicts the meaning of the word. After this work is completed, students will have an opportunity to practice fingerspelling each of the words. Additionally, students will be challenged to identify particular vocabulary words based on the “limited” information that is presented.

Standard's Addressed: (Local, State, or National)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.6

Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas efficiently as well as to interact and collaborate with others.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.5

Integrate multimedia and visual displays into presentations to clarify information, strengthen claims and evidence, and add interest.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.8.1

Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.8.2

Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.8.3

Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.8.4

Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words or phrases based on *grade 8 reading and content*, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.8.5.B

Use the relationship between particular words to better understand each of the words.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.8.6

Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

Fingerspelling and Fingerreading Standards (k-2):

KEY IDEAS: 1. Demonstrate understanding of ways fingerspelled signs are formed and their uses.

1.C. Engage in creative use of fingerspelling (e.g., fs F-A-L-L-I-N-G L-E-A-F).

INITIALIZED and LEXICALIZED FORMS: 1. Demonstrate understanding of initialized and lexicalized forms of fingerspelled words.

1. B. Can fingerspell words, including short words and names of people or places (e.g., own name, fs T-A-R-G-E-T, fs J-O-H-N).

<p>Learning Objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students will understand and recognize ASL as a form of communication. 2. Students will be able to determine the meaning of a word by using context clues, recalling background knowledge, and drawing inferences. 3. Students will demonstrate their understanding of words by crafting original sentences that reveal a contextual understanding of the word's denotation. 4. Students will develop a stronger understanding of the common Iditarod terms and their meanings. 	<p>Method of assessment for learning</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students have successfully defined the Iditarod vocabulary word(s), they have used it in a sentence which reflects an understanding of the meaning, they have provided some facts and information about their word(s), and they determined the part(s) of speech. Students have also included a picture or illustration which depicts the meaning of the word. 2. Students have used their prior knowledge of the vocabulary words, and have drawn inferences, in order to identify the words which have been defined, used in context, and illustrated by the other students in the class. 3. Students have practiced fingerspelling and demonstrate an understanding about the ASL manual alphabet.
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<p>Procedural Activities</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review the common Iditarod terms and definitions with your students. <i>-Note: the list is extensive and you may choose to reduce the number of words.</i> 2. Engage in a classroom discussion about ASL and fingerspelling: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is it? • Who needs to use it? • When a person needs to use sign language, what challenges do they encounter? • Do you know any person who speaks using sign language? • Do any of you already know how to sign? • Why is sign language important and beneficial? 3. Give each student a copy of the fingerspelled alphabet. Versions can be found here. 4. Play a video of a person signing each letter of the alphabet. A video can be found here. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This video may be more beneficial for younger students. 5. Model how to sign each letter of the alphabet for your students. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice as a class, have students practice with each other, and have students practice independently.
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6. After practicing the alphabet, challenge students to spell their name.
 - Have students fingerspell their name and share with a partner.
7. Set up various stations around the room. At each station, post one of the Iditarod terms. Have students practice how to fingerspell that particular word. Have students rotate so they have an opportunity to travel to most or all of the stations (you may choose to have students travel with their copy of the fingerspelled alphabet).
8. After this is completed, assign each student a different Iditarod vocabulary term.
 - Students should NOT share their term with others.
 - You may decide to have students work in pairs. If that is the case, give each pairing one particular Iditarod vocabulary term.
9. Give every student a copy of the assignment, "Iditarod Dictionary."
 - Review the directions as a class and answer all questions.
10. Review the models of the assignment so students understand what they are expected to do.
11. When students complete their assignment, hang up and display every poster in different locations around the room.
 - Each poster and location should represent a different station.
 - Have the students start at their location (their poster).
12. Give each student an answer sheet/ word bank.
 - *Note: You will have to create your own answer sheet so that it reflects the number of stations in your classroom and the words which your students defined. You can reference or use the example below.*
13. Review the instructions with the students and explain the directions regarding how they will rotate.
14. After every student has traveled to each station and recorded their answers, review the answers as a class.
 - Have the students present their posters.
 - Presenters can model how to fingerspell their word to the class, guide the class in practicing how to fingerspell their word, and share the information on their poster.

Materials Students Need:

- Copies of the ASL fingerspelled alphabet
- Copies of the assignment, “Iditarod Dictionary”
- Answer Sheets
- Access to models of the assignment
- Iditarod terms and definitions
- Access to technology i.e. Chromebooks, laptops, desktops, tablets, etc.
- Access to the [Iditarod website](#) and or/a copy of the Iditarod terms and definitions

Technology Utilized to Enhance Learning:

- You can download an ASL Font, “Gallaudet Font,” [using this resource](#)
- Computer/ Laptop
- Visualizer
- Projector
- An ASL fingerspelling word generator/ printer can be [found here](#)

Other Information:

- Students can complete the ASL word search puzzle if they finish early or you can assign it for homework/enrichment.

Modifications for Special Learners/ Enrichment Opportunities:

- Provide students with a copy of the words, definitions, and the ASL fingerspelled alphabet.
- Provide scaffolding- i.e. consider having students complete this assignment using the same term and definition from one of the models. Provide students with the word, in fingerspelled format, and give them the definition. Then, have students complete the rest of the requirements.
- Have students record themselves fingerspelling their word; when students arrive to each station, they can watch the video. Then, you can compile all of the videos to make one anthology.
- Provide students with a template.
- Challenge students to research and identify whether or not any of the Iditarod terms have signs. Many words in the English language do not have ASL signs. If a student has a word which does not have an ASL sign and can only be fingerspelled, have them create an original sign and share it with the class.
- Have students [read about Patsy Ann](#). Have students [watch this video](#) about Patsy Ann that is told in American Sign Language.

Common Iditarod Terminology

Note: terms and definitions were accessed from the [Iditarod website](#)

ATV: All terrain vehicle. (You might also hear the word 4 wheeler)

Alaskan Husky: A northern breed of dogs that have the natural traits to stay healthy in Alaska's climate

Big Su: Refers to the Big Susitna River

Boonies: A non-rural or urban area, generally an area where no one lives

Booties: A type of sock that is made to protect the dog's feet from small cuts and sores. These were originally made out of various materials, i.e., denim, polar fleece, trigger cloth, etc. and are now made out of more enduring materials such as cordura.

Burled Arch: The finish line in Nome.

By-Pass Mail: Service provided by US Mail System for remote villages to get mail and goods delivered. By-Pass Mail has been used to ship everything from toilet paper to refrigerators.

COMMS: Volunteers who work in the area of communications. Their main job is to facilitate communications from headquarters to checkpoints or checkpoints to headquarters. COMMS volunteers are responsible to send the race data (musher in times, number of dogs, out times) from the checkpoints to Race Stats volunteers who have the responsibility to update the racer's progress. COMMS volunteers who are on the trail work long shifts and along with race communications, often must help check mushers into checkpoints, park teams, and even cook or make coffee for those at the checkpoint.

Come Gee! Come Haw! Commands for 180 degree turns in either direction.

Dog in Basket: dog being carried in the sled

Double Lead: Two dogs who lead the team side by side.

Gangline: The line (cable) that connects the sled to the team of dogs.

Gee: Command for right turn

GPS Tracker: Devices that are attached to the sleds and provide location data on each musher.

Haw: Command for left turn

Heet: Alcohol based fuel used by mushers in their cook stoves on the trail.

Hike! All Right! Let's Go! Commands to start the team

Husky: Any northern type dog.

Indian Dog: An Alaskan Husky from an Indian village.

Last Frontier: Alaska's State motto. Alaska was the last frontier in the United States

Lead Dog or Leader: Dog who runs in front of others. Generally must be both intelligent and fast.

Line Out! Command to lead dog to pull the team out straight from the sled. Used mostly while hooking dogs into team or unhooking them.

Malamute: Term often used by old timers for any sled dog. Larger husky

Mush! Traditionally, 'Mush!' was considered to be a phrase used to get a dog team moving forward. Mush is rarely used today but when reading short stories or books, you may find the term used. The more common words such as: Hike! Let's go! or a whistle or vocal sound – are commands to start the team. Mushers don't really need to say anything to the team to get them to go, when they feel the pull (release) of the sled hook or whatever is holding them in place, they are off and running. Mush is sometimes also used as a general term to mean – moving forward.

Musher: The person who drives the dog team. Mushers are also called drivers.

Mushing: The art of driving a dog team. Let's go mushing! (Driving a team or riding in the sled.)

Neck Line: Line that connects dog's collar to tow line and between the two collars of a double lead.

Outside: Any place in the lower 48 states.

Overflow: When the ice gets so thick that the water has nowhere to go, it pushes up and over the ice. This overflow often gets a thin layer of ice when the temperature drops making it dangerous to cross.

Pacing: Leading a team with some sort of motorized vehicle that can set the 'pace' at a specific speed.

Pedaling: Pushing the sled with one foot while the other remains on the runner

Returning Dog (formerly referred to as a “dropped dog”): A dog that the musher has dropped from his team at a checkpoint. The dog is cared for by a team of veterinarians at the checkpoint until it is flown back to Anchorage to the musher’s handlers. Once arriving in Anchorage, dropped dogs are cared for by veterinarians and vet techs until the dogs are picked up by a musher’s family dog handlers

Rigging: Collection of lines to which dogs are attached. Includes tow line, tug lines and neck lines

Rookie: A musher who is running the race for the first time or who has never completed the race

Route: The direction or the trail one is following. In the even years (2016, 2018, 2020) the northern route is taken. In the odd years (2017, 2019, 2021) the southern route is taken. However, the route on any year may be changed in order to make sure the route is the safest route for dogs and mushers. [View route information here.](#)

Runners: The two bottom pieces of the sled which come in contact with the snow. They extend back of the basket for the driver to stand on. Runner bottoms are usually wood, covered with plastic or Teflon. This plastic or Teflon comes in direct contact with the trail. It is usually replaced if damaged or different kinds of trail conditions call for different kinds of runner plastic.

Siberian Husky: Medium sized (average 50 pounds) northern breed of dog, recognized by the American Kennel Club. Siberians usually have blue eyes

Slats: Thin strips of wood which make up the bottom of a wooden sled basket. Modern day sleds have a more stable bottom such as a sheet of plastic as the bottom for their basket

Snow Hook or Ice Hook: Heavy piece of metal attached to sled by line. The snow hook is embedded in the snow in order to hold the team and sled for a short period of time. Mushers often carry more than one snow hook. Snow hooks are used to hold a sled in place, not to stop a moving sled. Think of it as an emergency break.

Snub Line: Rope attached to the sled which is used to tie the sled to a tree or other object

Stake: Metal or wooden post driven into the ground to which dog is tied

Swing Dog or Dogs: Dog that runs directly behind the leader and are further identified as right or left swing depending on which side of the tow line the dog is positioned. The dog’s job is to help “swing” the team during the turns or curves.

Team Dog: Any dog other than those described above.

Termination Dust: The first snow that covers the top of the mountain in the fall, called so because this is a sign of the termination of summer in Alaska.

Tether Line: A long, strong line out system with shorter pieces of strong line extending from it that are used to stake out a team securely and safely.

Toggles: Small pieces of ivory or wood used by Eskimos to fasten tug lines to harnesses – Today toggles may be made of different kinds of materials, such as a strong plastic

Tow Line: More commonly called gangline, is a long line or coated cable that is attached to the sled and runs the length of the team to the front leaders. All dogs are attached on either side of the gangline by tug lines. This is the main connection that allows the dogs to pull the sled safely.

Trail!: Request for right-of-way on the trail which means that the driver in front must yield to the driver wanting to pass

Tug Line: Line that connects dog's harness to the tow line.

Veterinarian – Doctors that provide medical care to the dogs before, during, and after the race. These doctors are experts in their field of veterinarian medicine. The dogs are priority 1 and teams of veterinarians are staged at the start, restart, and every checkpoint during the race. Dogs of the Iditarod go through medical exams prior to the race to make sure they are healthy and meet the standards of good health or they are not allowed to race

Wasilla: A city in Alaska and the home of the Iditarod Trail Committee Headquarters

Wheel Dogs or Wheelers: Dogs placed directly in front of the sled. Their job is to pull the sled out and around corners or trees and are generally considered to be the strongest dogs on the team

Whoa!: Command used to halt the team, accompanied by heavy pressure on the drag brake



Name: _____

Block: _____

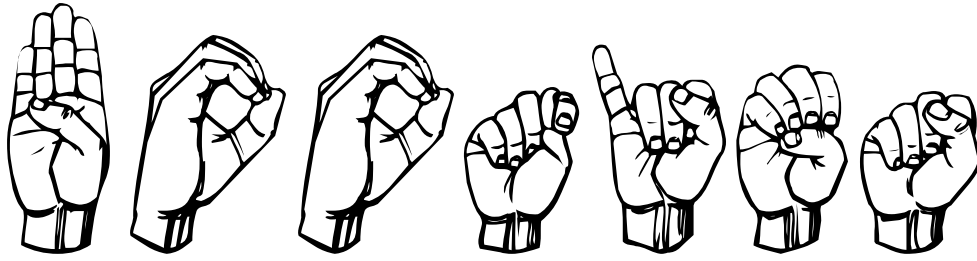
Date: _____



Iditarod Dictionary

You have been assigned a particular Iditarod term. Your job is to create a poster in which you do all of the following things:

- Define the term you were given
- Identify the term's part of speech
- Craft an original sentence (**Instead of using the word in your sentence, leave a blank space where the word should appear**)
 - The sentence should provide context to show that you understand the meaning of the term
- Research any fun facts or interesting information which is related to your term
 - Include at least one fun or interesting fact about your term
- Draw or locate a picture which helps depict the meaning of the term
- Using the manual letters/signs from the fingerspelled ASL alphabet, write your term
 - This should be large and serve as the heading/ title of your poster
 - ****With the exception of writing your term using signs from the ASL alphabet, DO NOT write your term anywhere else on your poster****
 - The **ONLY** form that your term should be written in is by manual letters from the ASL alphabet



Definition: A type of sock that is made to protect the dogs' feet from small cuts and sores. These were originally made out of various materials, i.e., denim, polar fleece, trigger cloth, etc. and are now made out of more enduring materials such as cordura.

Part of Speech: Noun

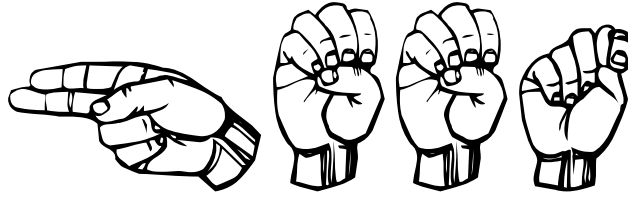
Sentence: The musher anticipated that the terrain was going to be rough; subsequently, in order to protect her dogs' feet, she made sure to put _____ on all of the dogs.

Fun Fact(s):

- These come in different sizes- small, medium and large
- During the Iditarod, mushers must ALWAYS carry 8 of these for each dog in the sled or in use
- Mushers will often use between 1,500-3,000 of these during the Iditarod (sometimes even more!)



Photo credit: Terrie Henke



Definition: Alcohol-based fuel used by most mushers in their cook stoves on the trail.

Part of Speech: Noun

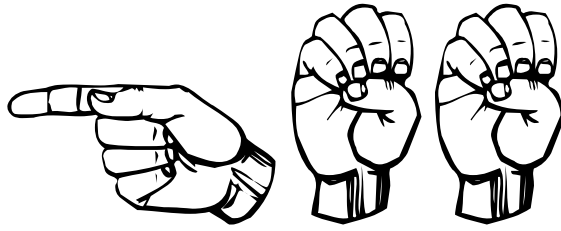
Sentence: While stopping along the trail for a break in between checkpoints, the musher used _____ in order to start the flame for the cooker.

Fun Fact(s):

- This fuel, while sold in the yellow bottle, is methyl alcohol based
- Mushers often use close to two bottles of this fuel when they need to melt and heat up water for their dogs
- Mushers must always carry an adequate amount of fuel which will bring at least three gallons of water to a boil
- During the Iditarod, all of the mushers will collectively use about \$20,000 worth of this fuel



[Above] Cindy Abbott, two-time Iditarod finisher, uses this fuel to heat up water in the cooking pot



Definition: The command for right turn.

Part of Speech: Noun

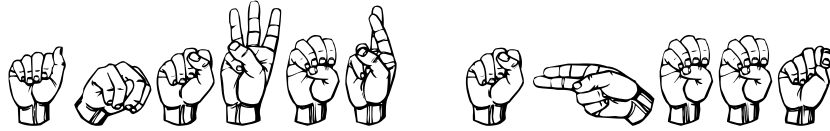
Sentence: Wanting to avoid the fallen tree limb in the middle of the trail, the musher shouted the command, "_____," and the team successfully avoided the obstruction by turning right.

Fun Fact(s):

- When mushers use consistent commands, dogs can more easily run with various teams
- Dogs are NOT driven by reins, but rather by voice commands



Name: _____
 Block: _____
 Date: _____

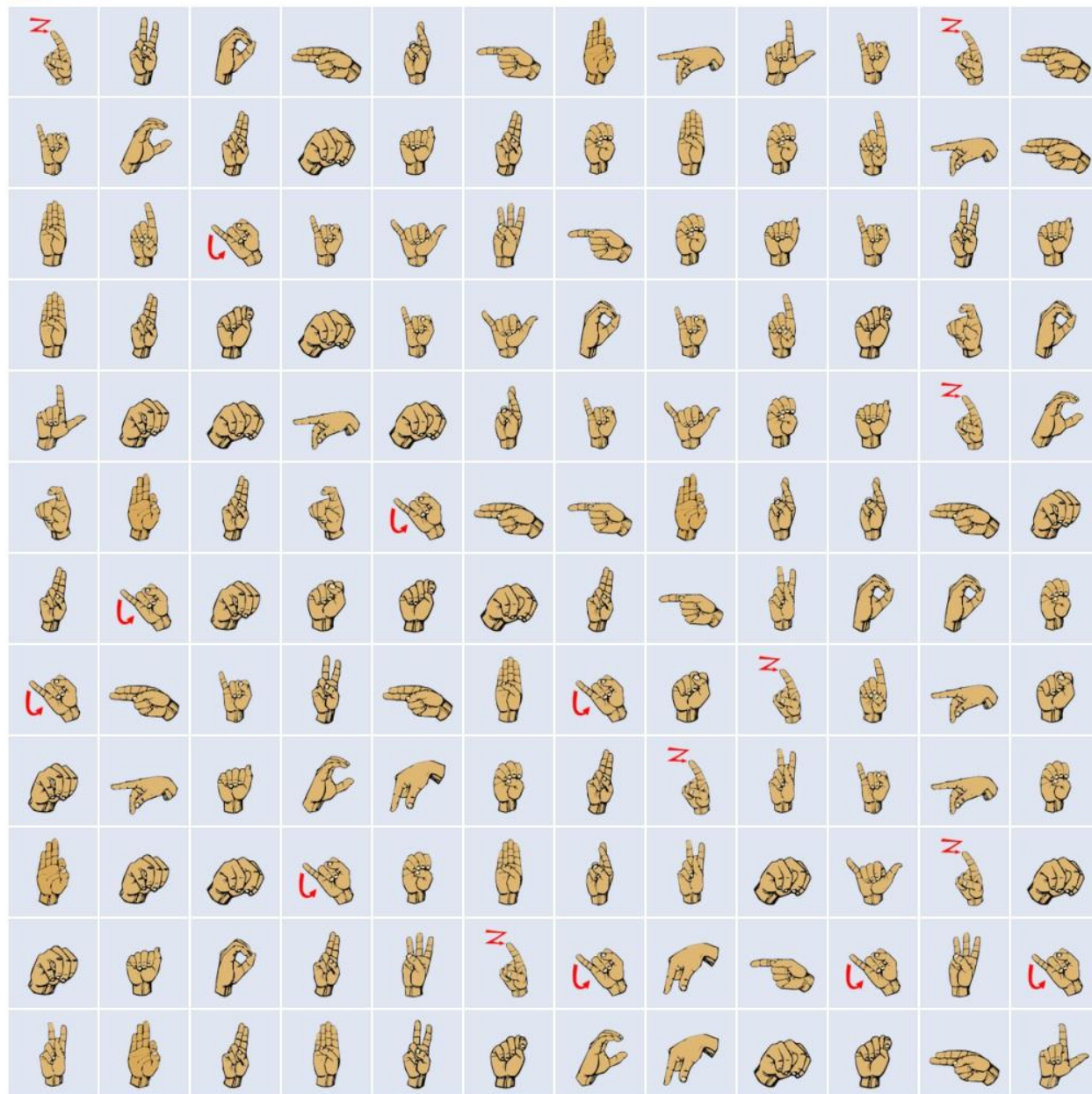


Answer Sheet

Directions: When you arrive to each station, look at the ASL manual letters on the poster and try to fingerspell that particular word (although you will not immediately know what the word is, try your best). After you have spent 1-2 minutes fingerspelling, read the definition, part of speech, sentence, and look at the picture. Based on your understanding and knowledge of the common Iditarod terms, try to determine what word is being described at that station. Record your answers below. Also, look at the words in the word bank. Those words represent all of the terms that will appear on the posters. Each word will only be used once.

Station 1	
Station 2	
Station 3	
Station 4	
Station 5	
Station 6	
Station 7	
Station 8	
Station 9	
Station 10	
Station 11	
Station 12	

WORD BANK



WORDS

-- LEADER -- MUSER -- HUSKY -- GEE -- HAW -- IDITAROD --

Create your own ASL fingerspelling word search puzzles online at www.signlanguageforum.com/asl/