

Emotive Language

If something is *emotive* it makes people emotional. If you had just had your new mountain bike stolen then your friends might avoid boasting about their bikes: bikes are an *emotive subject* for you at the moment. You feel very emotional. Newspapers often choose *emotive language* (words) to get their readers to react emotionally to a story. If you call an event a 'riot' rather than a 'disturbance' you are much more likely to get your readers excited.

Task One:

Below are four pairs of headlines. Decide which one of the pair is most likely to excite the reader, (a) or (b)? Give reasons for your choice.

1. (a) Scabs thrown out of the union
(b) Strike breakers must leave union

2. (a) School blaze
(b) Fire at school

3. (a) Skilful Owen
(b) Owen magic

4. (a) Lennox Lewis injured
(b) Lennox Lewis agony

Task Two:

Now read the headlines below. Re-write them, replacing the words in **bold** with more emotive words. The first two have been done for you as examples. If you find this difficult, try using a thesaurus to find alternative words.

1. **Man** hit by **robbers**.
(Pensioner hit by muggers)
2. One hundred peasants **killed** by troops.
(One hundred peasants slaughtered by troops)
3. **Argument** closes factory.
4. Train seats **cut** by **teenagers**.
5. Supporters **run onto** pitch.
6. Shortage of money creates **problems** in schools.
7. **Trouble** on roads after snowfall.
8. Player **hits** referee.
9. House prices **fall** in Stevenage.
10. Political meeting ends in **disturbance**.

Task Three:

Now read the *Daily Star's* report about a school 'riot'. The report uses a lot of emotive language. For example, it uses 'mob' instead of 'crowd' or 'group'; 'refused' instead of 'decided not to'.

As you read the article, make a list of emotive words that the reporter uses. Next to each word write a couple of alternative words that mean almost the same but are less *emotive*. Set your ideas out in a chart like the one below. Use a thesaurus to help you find the words you need.

EMOTIVE	LESS EMOTIVE	NEUTRAL
mob	gang	crowd
raced	ran	hurried

Bored pupils riot as staff walk out

A MOB of 300 youngsters ran riot through their school yesterday – because they were bored.

It happened when teachers at the 100-staff comprehensive refused to do dinner duties and walked out in a union dispute.

Only the headmaster and two teachers were on duty, and they were powerless to act.

People living nearby watched, terrified, as gangs of 15 and 16 year olds rampaged through the 1000-pupil school at Bideford, Devon, chanting "We want a riot" as they smashed windows.

Police who rushed to the giant complex in seven cars calmed the frantic pupils.

Hammers

As the afternoon lessons ended the youngsters said they were protesting about being confined to one playground.

"We were bored and had nothing to do," they said. "We will continue our action until the teachers dispute is over.

"We brought screwdrivers and hammers to school and stole knives from the canteen."

From: *The Star*

Task Four:

Now answer the following questions.

1. What quieter, less emotive words could the report have used instead of 'terrified' (paragraph 4) and 'frantic' (paragraph 5)?
2. How do you feel about:
 - a. the 'youngsters', and
 - b. the teachers who 'refused their dinner duties'?
3. Explain *how* the writer's choice of words makes us feel these things about the pupils and their teachers.

Task Five:

Your turn!

1. Write a newspaper report about a famous person (your choice) coming to open some new classrooms, arts or sports facilities at your school. Remember to use emotive language to make the day sound as exciting as possible.
2. When you have finished, underline or highlight all the emotive words and phrases you have used.
3. Swap with a partner and see if you can think of different emotive words or phrases to replace the ones they have used.