

# Boredom Busters

Bored? Fear not! We got you. This week on *Today, Explained*, we set sail on the Emotion Ocean, found ourselves in the belly of a whale, and learned how creativity is the best way to bust the boredom blues.

## Materials Needed:

- Paper
- Something to write with

Let's play a game! If you've ever played Mad Libs, you already know how to play this one. If you haven't played Mad Libs before, it's super easy to learn. You can play it on your own or with others, and the game is always changing so you can play it over and over!

There's a story below but there are words missing. If you're in single-player mode, use the prompts to fill in the blanks, read, laugh, and repeat with new words in the blanks. If you are in multiplayer mode, **don't show the others the story**. Ask them the prompts (noun, verb, adjective), fill in the blanks, read, laugh, and repeat with someone else.

## Noun

A person, place, thing, thought, or idea

Grandma

Key West

hunger

## Adjective

A word that describes how the **noun** looks, feels, or sounds

fuzzy

wet

angry

## Verb

A word to describe the actions of the **noun**

run

swim

eat

## Practice Activity

Welcome aboard the S.S. (name your favorite creature **noun**) Express!

This ship is famous for how it (one thing a vehicle does **verb**).

Prepare to set sail on the (one word for today's weather **adjective**) Emotion Ocean!

Our (favorite smell or flavor **adjective**) cruise will have you

(one silly thing a body does **-ing verb**) like a (type of baby toy **noun**).

## Activity 1

Ahoy! Welcome aboard the S.S. **noun** as we set sail on the **adjective** Emotion

Ocean! This boredom-busting cruise will have you and your **noun**

**-ing verb** with delight. Behold the **adjective** scenery as we pass the **adjective**

Gulf of Knowledge. Make sure to keep a lookout as we pass The Point. If you're

**adjective** you may even see a Bored Whale **-ing verb**! So **verb** your sense

of adventure and get ready to cast off with Captain and the **noun**!

Bon Voyage!

## Activity 2

Boredom cured? No? On a scale of 0-10 — with zero being the least bored you've ever been and 10 being ready to fall asleep from boredom — your Bored Score is probably down to a ... WHAT! IT'S A 7?! Okay, we've got work to do. (Seriously, it's a 7?)

Your boredom-busting mission, should you choose to accept it, is to use the 10 color-coded words from your Mad Lib awesomeness and write a 10-line poem. So let's take stock.



Fill in your words from your story

<b>Nouns</b>				
<b>Verbs</b>				
<b>Adjectives</b>				

Now to use these tools. Let's select a theme, like a topic for your poem. A theme is an idea plus your opinion. Maybe you've been thinking about summer cookouts (idea) and how watermelon makes them perfect (opinion). Maybe you're crafting a music playlist (idea) but only acoustic songs fit the mood (opinion).

**Set a 3-minute timer and brainstorm every theme that comes to mind. Write down every idea that pops into your head without listening to the little voice that may be telling you this is ridiculous. A brainstorm is for all the ideas. Mind blank? Ask someone else a question like, "What are 3 good things and 3 bad things about eating breakfast for dinner every night?" and see if that shakes more ideas out of your brain.**

With a theme (loosely) in mind, number the 10 lines of your poem and write your poem using one highlighted word per line, in any order. **Switch up your line length.** Try having some lines be a full sentence, while other lines are just a few words. **Change up your line order.** How does the poem shift if line 1 and line 10 swap places? **Play with the poem's layout.** Maybe lines 1-6 form a clear grouping (called a stanza), but you find lines 7-8 and lines 9-10 begging to stand apart as their own two-line couplets? **Explore the white space.** How does the rhythm shift if you position a few lines on opposite sides of the page? Take the pressure off yourself and **don't rhyme line endings.**

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

4 \_\_\_\_\_

5 \_\_\_\_\_

6 \_\_\_\_\_

7 \_\_\_\_\_

8 \_\_\_\_\_

9 \_\_\_\_\_

10 \_\_\_\_\_

## Discussion Guide

Although your Bored Score hopefully plummeted during Activity 2, let's take no chances. In the words of novelist Christopher Moore, "Boredom can be a lethal thing on a small island." In pursuit of a TBKO (total boredom knockout), let's imagine a world where boredom doesn't exist. Yup, bye-bye boredom, time to take a forever nap. Ah, but we can't change the world that quickly. Wait, we can? But I can't. Wait, we can? But you can't. Ah yes, poets notice the details. Changing the world is something we do together; neither you nor I can do it in isolation. Poets, artists, and other creatives regularly call on one another to brainstorm together, even when they can't physically connect.

The year 2020 has highlighted time and again the opportunities for interconnectedness, especially when pushing for positive social change. Deepa Iyer, a South Asian American activist, says, "An effective, healthy, and sustainable social change ecosystem requires different actors to play these roles, and often, at different times."

Spend a few moments looking at Deepa Iyer's Medium post "**My Role in a Social Change Ecosystem.**" Which roles are most natural to you? Map your friends and family members onto the different roles. After doing this, which roles are over- or underrepresented in your ecosystem?

<https://medium.com/@dviyer/my-role-in-a-social-change-ecosystem-a-mid-year-check-in-1d852589cdb1>



Getty Images

**"The world changes according to the way people see it, and if you alter even but a millimeter the way people look at reality, then you can change it."**

—James Baldwin

**“Don’t let anybody, anybody convince you this is the way the world is and therefore must be. It must be the way it ought to be.”**

–Toni Morrison



Timothy Fadek/Getty Images

## Bonus Activity

Some research finds that across countries, cultures, and languages, humans can identify these emotions — **anger, contempt, disgust, fear, joy, sadness, and surprise** — just from facial expressions. That’s some powerful poetry.

Joy



Sadness



Fear



Surprise



Disgust



Contempt



Anger



## The Seven Universal Facial Expressions

*Adapted from  
David Matsumoto,  
2008*

## **Let's pick one of these emotions and take your poem back to the mirror!**

By moving through this process, you can create a whole new voice for your poem.

Read your poem on repeat:

- First, focus on your eyes and mouth.
- Next, add hand gestures.
- Then experiment with volume and speed. Speed up loud, slow down soft, then try it the other way with fast softness and loud slowness.
- Try producing the words from different places: your nose, throat, chest, or stomach.
- Alternate sitting, standing, and walking while you speak. How does your poem change based on what your body is doing?
- Explore filling in other details: accent, age, gender.

Now that you have your new voice, let's revisit the 10-line poem you wrote.

Does it hang together? If not, remix it. Try moving lines around, adding words, sharpening it until you're satisfied. Now it's time to host your own Poetry Jam Session! What props, costumes, and accessories would help bring your new voice to life? Invite your family members to read (and dress-up) too! Have a few friends explore through this activity, then assemble your crew, and have a Poetry Jam Session over video.

## **TBKO Activity (for Heavyweight Boredom)**

Select your favorite line from your poem. Chant it like you're leading a march and imagine the group you're leading chanting something back. Can you create a call-and-response feeling within the lines? How might exploring a new voice help you connect to your world and make it better?

Remember that thing called boredom? Barely? Not at all? Mission accomplished!

Please snap photos of your favorite lines, record a selfie from your practice session, scan your Social Change Ecosystem, or screenshot your Poetry Jam Session. Share your experience on Twitter and Instagram with #TodayExplainedLearning. Can't wait to see you next month for more *Today, Explained to Kids!*

*Activity and discussion guide developed by early childhood education specialists  
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