Lessons for –er suffix (meaning)

Day One:
Hand out copies of the following story and have the students take turns reading it out loud.

One day the village woodworker found that the soles of his shoes were coming apart. On his way to the cobbler’s house, he met the local baker as he was coming out of the miller’s shop carrying a bag of flour. After greeting the baker, the woodworker pointed to his shoes and told him that he was off to the cobbler’s to get them mended. “Ah,” remarked the baker, “I just saw the cobbler in the hardware store talking to Nick, the owner.” The woodworker, glad to know that he didn’t have to walk across town to the cobbler’s shop, thanked the baker and quickly headed to the hardware store.

However, by the time he arrived at the store, the woodworker was informed by the owner that the cobbler had already come and gone. But, since he was there, the woodworker decided to buy a few things that he needed. He bought a new sander, a ruler, a box cutter, a grinder and finally a bird feeder. However, as he picked up the box of items he had just purchased, the woodworker realized that his purchases were far too heavy to carry all the way to the cobbler.

While the woodworker was pondering what he should do, he spied some glue. “That’s it!” he thought, “I’ll just buy some glue and clamps and temporarily glue my soles back together.” While he was sitting, waiting for the glue to dry, the woodworker put his hand into his coat pocket and pulled out a small sack that his wife had put there before he had set out on his journey. When he opened it, he saw a piece of her peach cobbler. About this time, Nick, the store owner, walked by and laughed, “Oh, I see you found a cobbler after all!”

• After reading the story, ask the students to go through the story and pick out all of the words that end with –er. Write them on the board in two columns (without labeling the columns): divide the words between professions and objects (cobbler can go in both).
• Ask the students if they notice anything about the words in the column listing: woodworker, baker, owner, miller, and cobbler?
  ○ All of the words are what people are called that do those professions (e.g., a baker is one who bakes, etc.)
Brainstorm other examples (what do their parents do?): teacher, gardener, banker, etc. (Write them up.)

- Now ask: could the -er ending be used to show more than someone’s profession? What about traveler, kayaker, climber, swimmer and jogger? (As a side note, ask students why swimmer and jogger have double letters: 1-1-1 Rule!). Have students come up with a few more examples and add those to the list.

- Turn to the second column- what is the same with the words: sander, grinder, cutter, ruler, bird feeder and cobbler? They, too, end in -er.
  Note: explain that a cobbler is a type of dessert that has been around for hundreds of years. Unlike pies and cakes, which were baked using recipes, cobblers were just “cobbled together” using whatever ingredients (fruits, flour, sweeteners) were on hand.

- What part of speech is: grind, cut, rule, feed, and cobble? (verbs)
- If we add -er onto these verbs what do they become? Nouns that are used to do those things. So: a grinder is an object that grinds and a cutter is an object that cuts, etc… go through the rest. What about the words: bake, mill, own… what part of speech are they? (Verbs- “I bake cakes, I mill flour, I own a bike.”) If we add -er onto these verbs what do they become? Nouns that describe someone who does those things.

- Help class come up with a rule to put into their main lesson book (tomorrow) that describes what happens when -er is added on to the end of a word: -er on the end of a word can mean, “One who….” For example, miller = one who mills, baker = one who bakes, owner = one who owns
- It can also mean “An object that …” For example: grinder = an object that grinds, feeder = object that feeds, cutter = object that cuts.

Day Two
(Before school: write each word on an index card (one card per student) player, hammer, letter, farmer, manager, screwdriver, painter, lighter, writer, stapler, paper, container, leader, ringer, her, power, worker, summer, singer, rubber. Also make three larger “signs” for:
  1. A speaker is one who speaks
  2. A marker can mark.
  3. The ‘er’ in tiger is part of the root word.)
Language Arts New Learning: root words that end in –er and review of –er suffix (30 min.)

- Review the words from the “woodworker’s story” still on the board.
- Ask student to come up and underline the main/root word in **baker, grinder, cobbler, and sander**.
- Point out that each of these words has a root or main word in it. Adding –er to those main words just changes it to mean “one who does that or an object that does it.” *(Point out that when a word ends in –e the –e is dropped before –er is added to avoid an –eer ending.)*

Share that sometimes when a word ends with /er/ the ER is not a special ending or suffix, it is actually part of the word- without it the word would make no sense. Examples: enter, river, mother, brother, sister…

- Show them the 3 signs about **speaker, tiger and marker**. Which word is ER essential for the word to make sense? (tiger), Which one does the –er ending mean “one who…” (speaker) and a marker is what? (An object that marks.)
- Tape these 3 words in different parts of the room then hand out index cards (one per student) each having a word on it that ends with –er. Have students find their “group” by asking themselves these three questions (written on board):
  1. “A (word on card) is a person who ______s.” (root word)
  2. “A (word on card) is something that can ______” (root word)
  3. “If I take away the ER it destroys the word.”

- Once she finds the answer that works for her word, she goes to the area of the room where the same kinds of words are gathering. Once all have found their group, each member of the group says her word and class agrees if she is in the right place. Take seats.

- Review –er written rules from yesterday. Write them into phonics rules journal and add a note: Sometimes the –er ending of a word is part of the word not a suffix ending.

- Over the next week, ask students to be on the look-out for –er words in their reading. As they find them, write them into their phonics rules book.
as examples of the different roles of –er. (Letting the students find their own examples is much more effective than you just providing words that they then copy.)