

ABSTRACTING

Open the class by asking the students if they can define the verb abstract. Then explain that if we look up the word *abstract* in a dictionary, we would find a group of seemingly unrelated definitions. Depending on the dictionary, we find such definitions *as a summary; an essence of a larger part; to separate*; and many others.

For our purposes, we can paraphrase Robert Potter in his book, *Making Sense*:

In General Semantic usage, the verb “abstract” means *to move to a different level, leaving characteristics out*. The process is known as ABSTRACTION. We practice abstraction when we recognize something on the basis of just a few features. We also practice abstraction when we receive information with any of our five senses, and only choose to process a small amount of that information.

Ask your students to consider this: If they have a brother or sister, or a pet cat or dog, how much information do they need to take in to recognize them? Would you need to check your dog’s collar, or ask your sibling for a picture I.D? If, at a quick glance, you can recognize anyone of them, then you have *abstracted* a little of the information available to you to make the recognition.

For homework, ask your students to look up in the dictionary, the following words.

Abstract
Abstracting
Abstraction

When we meet again we will check and see if you have a grasp of these words.

These lessons possess a great deal of potential if time were available. Some students will comprehend the structural differential, while some may not. Primarily focus on the point that we often say or hear things that are really not tied to the event, but rather are people’s unfounded opinions.