

R-Controlled Vowels

Hold Mr. R and listen to what he whispers to you. Then tell the class:

Mr. R has a surprise for us today!

First he wants three volunteers to build the word *cap*.

Distribute the Mr. C, Ms. A, and Ms. P puppets to students who will form the word *cap*. Blend and read the word with the class: /c/ - /ă/ - /p/.

Which of her vowel sounds does Ms. A make in the word *cap*? (short /ă/)

Now Mr. R wants to take Ms. P's place in the word.

Give the Mr. R puppet to a volunteer, and have that person stand at the end of the word. Continue:

Look! Mr. R has helped to form the word *car*.

Let's blend and say this word together: /c/ - /ă/ - /r/.

Does Ms. A make a different sound in this word? Listen carefully while we say it again: /cär/. (Emphasize the vowel sound as you say the word.)

Does Ms. A make her /ă/ sound in the word *car*? (no) Does she make her /ā/ sound? (no)

Mr. R, why does Ms. A make a new sound—/ä/—when you stand beside her in this word?

After Mr. R whispers in your ear, tell the class:

Mr. R says this is the surprise he told us about. In English, when the letter r follows a vowel, it often changes the way that vowel is pronounced.

When the letter r follows the vowel a in words such as *car*, the r causes the letter a to make the /ä/ sound. Mr. R changes the sounds of the other vowels as well.

When r follows o in words such as *for*, the letter o has the /ô/ sound.

And when r follows e, i, or u in words such as *her*, *girl*, and *curl*, the vowels have the /û/ sound.

To demonstrate that the letter r affects the sounds of vowels, have students build words such as those shown below.

Words with R-Controlled Vowels

/ä/	arm	art	bar	bark	barn	car	card	cart	chart
	dark	dart	far	farm	hard	harm	harp	jar	lark
	mark	park	part	star	start	tar	yarn		
/ô/	born	cord	cork	corn	for	fork	form	fort	horn
	north	porch	pork	port	short	sort	sport	torn	worn
/û/	fern	her	herd	term					
	bird	birth	dirt	firm	first	girl	shirt	sir	skirt
	blur	burn	curl	fur	hurt	spur	turn		

