

Three Tiers of Vocabulary

Bringing Words to Life; Beck, McKeown, & Kucan 2013

Tier 1

Basic words or ideas that are known by students

These rarely require direct instruction

Examples: food, sleep, more

Tier 2

Useful words that are likely to appear frequently in a variety of texts

These words are often found in written text, but infrequently in conversation, thus students are less likely to learn them independently

Examples: drowsy, consequence, envious, benefit, annual, pace

Tier 3

Low-frequency words, limited to specific domains

Best learned in content areas

Examples: fission, summon, botanist, porous

Criteria for Selection of Tier 2 Words

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Importance & Utility

Words that characteristic of written text and appear frequently across a variety of domains

Ask yourself, “How generally useful is this word? Will students encounter it in a variety of texts/subjects?”

Conceptual Understanding

Words for which students understand the general concept but provide precision and specificity in describing the concept

Ask yourself, “How does the word relate to others students know or have been learning? Will students have other ways of expressing the concepts represented by the words?”

Instructional Potential

Words that are more than one-dimensional, and offer a variety of contexts and uses to explore

Ask yourself, “What does the word contribute to a text or situation?”

Sorting Activity

Aunt

Grin

Smile

Funny

Peninsula

Compute

Run

Photosynthesis

Isosceles

Impact

Bound

Mutualism

Magnetism

Compare

Computer

Recipe for a Name

by Ron Anahaw



chocolate chip cookies
Steven Giacomelli from Pixabay

It was Jem's first day at his new school, and he was nervous. He wasn't sure how he should introduce himself to his classmates.

"Jem" was easier for most people than "Janaldo Marcos." If he told everyone "Janaldo Marcos," they might have a tough time saying his name. And if they had a tough time saying his name, they wouldn't want to hang out with him. And if they didn't want to hang out with him, he would have no friends, and would end up starting a weird YouTube channel about bugs and growing a weird mustache like his Tito Anthony and...

Jem decided that he would introduce himself simply as "Jem." Then he noticed that his teacher, Ms. Weaver, had left a nametag on his desk that said "Janaldo Marcos."

Jem hurriedly erased "Janaldo Marcos" on the nametag and wrote in "Jem"-no mustache for him today! Realizing that the boy sitting next to him was staring at the new name, Jem squirmed in his seat, feeling tense, but the other boy said nothing.

Ms. Weaver smiled, said "Good morning, everyone," and began taking attendance, reading names off the class list.

"Rebecca Álvarez?"

"Here!"

As Ms. Weaver read each student's name, Jem realized that his name was still written "Janaldo Marcos" on the list, and not "Jem." Ms. Weaver would call him "Janaldo Marcos" first and he'd end up with no friends. He started imagining himself with the mustache again...oh no...

"And our new student... Janaldo Marcos Sayo?" Even worse, she said his first name wrong, and that made Jem feel so embarrassed. She pronounced it "Ha-NAL-doe" instead of "Juh-NAWL-doe."

"Ha-NAL-doe MAR-cose Sayo?" Ms. Weaver repeated.

Jem raised his hand but said nothing. "Welcome!" Ms. Weaver said cheerily, before moving on. Soon, she finished reading the names.

"All right, is everyone settled in?"

Jem responded "Yes!" with the other fourth-graders.

Ms. Weaver took a piece of chalk and wrote the word ingredients on the board. "For science today, we are going to examine the ingredients that make up my favorite food. And that food is..." She turned around and wrote something else on the board: Chocolate Chip Cookies. The class broke out in a loud buzz!

"Wow, I'm glad that you are all so excited," Ms. Weaver said. "All right, who can tell me what everyone's favorite part of a chocolate chip cookie is?"

"The chocolate chips!" everyone answered.

"Mine, too! But we can't forget the other ingredients," she said, writing a list of the different

elements that go into a chocolate chip cookie- sugar, butter, flour, baking soda, and eggs.

Ms. Weaver pointed to each ingredient and explained what its role was: "Sugar and butter make the texture and taste of a cookie, which can make it chewy or hard, very sweet or less sweet. Flour gives the cookie a body, and baking soda shapes that body by making it rise. And eggs bring all those components together!" Next, she taped an illustration of a chocolate chip cookie up on the board and said, "In the end, each ingredient is important, and the cookie wouldn't be the same without it." Ms. Weaver continued on, explaining more about the science of baking... but Jem was distracted, fretting about what he might say to Ms. Weaver about the way she pronounced his name.

At the end of the morning, the students headed out to lunch, but Jem waited for a minute, then haltingly stepped up to Ms. Weaver's desk.

"Hello, Ha-NAL-doe MAR-cos, how can I help you?" she asked.

"Hi," Jem said. "I wanted to let you know that my first name is said *Juh-NAWL-doe*, not Ha-NAL-doe."

"Oh my, I am so sorry to hear that I pronounced it incorrectly," she replied. "*Juh-NAWL-doe*, am I saying it properly now?"

"Yes, Ms. Weaver, thank you," Jem replied, paused, then added, "It's kind of like a chocolate chip cookie."

"How's that?" Ms. Weaver responded, looking puzzled.

"My name also has ingredients. The 'Jan' comes from January, when I was born, 'Aldo' is from my dad's name, 'Ronaldo,' and 'Marcos' is from my mom's name, 'Marcielle.'"

Ms. Weaver broke out in a wide grin and said, "It *is* like a chocolate chip cookie! Thank you for sharing your name's recipe with me, Janaldo Marcos."

Janaldo Marcos smiled back and left for lunch, ready to share his name's recipe with anyone who would ask.

Angel Falls

This text is provided courtesy of Vanderbilt University: Center for Latin American Studies.



This is a photo of Angel Falls.
Yosemite, CC BY 3.0

Angel Falls is the tallest waterfall in the world! You can find this special waterfall in Venezuela, a country in South America. The waterfall is located in Venezuela's Gran Sabana region, where the Indigenous Pemon Indians have lived for a long time. The water in Angel Falls drops from the top of a mountain called Auyán-Tepuí, which means Devil's Mountain in the Pemon language. It falls 979 meters, or 3,212 feet. That means Angel Falls is about 19 times higher than Niagara Falls!

The waterfall got its current name from James Crawford Angel. In the 1930s, James flew his plane over the waterfall while he was looking for gold. He spotted the falls, but didn't stop. A few years later, he returned and flew over the waterfall again, landing at the top. But his plane got stuck there! He and his companions had to hike down the mountain through the wilderness for 11 days until they reached Kamarata, a Pemon village, and found help. After James's adventure, people all over the world started talking about this waterfall and wanting to see it. They gave credit to James Crawford Angel for discovering the waterfall, so they started calling it "Angel Falls" after him.

While Angel Falls is the name that most people around the world use today, it is far from its only name. In Venezuela, the waterfall is called Salto Ángel, the Spanish version of Angel Falls. Additionally, long before James spotted the waterfall, the Indigenous Pemon Indians who lived there called it Kerepakupai-Merú, meaning "waterfall of the deepest place," or Parakupá Vená, meaning "the fall from the highest point." In 2009, the president of Venezuela wanted people to go back to calling the waterfall Kerepakupai-Merú.

Today, Angel Falls is a famous attraction in Venezuela. It is part of a national park there. Tourists have been allowed to visit it by boat or plane since 1990. If the waterfall is gentle enough when you visit, you can even swim in the natural pools at the bottom of Angel Falls!

Excerpt from *The Giver*, pages 4-5

"I apologize for inconveniencing my learning community." Asher ran through the standard apology phrase rapidly, still catching his breath. The instructor and class waited patiently for his explanation. The students had all been grinning, because they had listened to Asher's explanations so many times before.

"I left home at the correct time but when I was riding along near the hatchery, the crew was separating salmon. I guess I just got distraught watching them."

"I apologize to my classmates," Asher concluded. He smoothed his rumpled tunic and sat down.

"I accept your apology, Asher." The class recited the standard response in unison. Many of the students were biting their lips to keep from laughing.

"I accept your apology, Asher," the Instructor said. He was smiling. "And I thank you, because once again you have provided an opportunity for a lesson in language. 'Distraught' is too strong an adjective to describe salmon viewing." He turned and wrote "distraught" on the instructional board. Beside it he wrote "distracted".

Jonas, nearing his home now, smiled at the recollection. Thinking still, as he wheeled his bike into its narrow port beside the door, he realized that frightened was the wrong word to describe his feelings, now that December was almost here. It was too strong an adjective.

He had waited a long time for this special December. Now that it was almost upon him, he wasn't frightened, but he was...eager, he decided. He was eager for it to come. And he was excited, certainly. All of the Elevens were excited about the event that would be coming soon.

Augusta Savage: Teacher and Sculptor of the Harlem Renaissance

by Caitlyn Meagher



Augusta Savage
U.S. Gov Archives

The Harlem Renaissance was a golden age for African American culture. During the 1920s and 1930s, Harlem, New York City became a place where Black art, fashion, music, politics, and literature flourished. Augusta Savage was one of the leading artists of the Harlem Renaissance. Her desire to educate and support young artists fueled her.

Born on February 29, 1892, Augusta Savage grew up in Green Cove Springs, Florida. This brick-making town had a lot of natural red clay. As a child, Savage started to create sculptures with this natural clay. However, once her family moved away, she could not find any clay to sculpt. In 1919, a local potter gave her some clay to use. She sculpted figures and was awarded a special local prize. With this encouragement, Savage moved to Jacksonville, Florida. There, she sculpted portraits of prominent Black people in the local community.

Savage decided to move to New York City in the 1920s to study art. She graduated early from Cooper Union School of Art. She created busts of important African Americans, such as W.E.B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey. Savage gained recognition for her impressive sculpting skills. At 30 years old, Savage got a scholarship to the Fontainebleau School of Arts in Paris. However, once the school committee found out she was Black, they cancelled her scholarship. Even with this setback, Savage made it to Paris and spent three years there. She exhibited her work at the Grand Palais, a historic museum and gallery in Paris. After that, she returned to the United States during the Great Depression, when many artists faced severe economic strife. Her efforts to help fellow artists began.

Savage established the Savage Studio of Arts and Crafts in 1932 and became an influential art teacher in

Harlem. She urged the government to help young artists find work during this time of financial struggle. At the time, the Works Progress Administration was helping to employ artists. This employment program was created by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in response to the Great Depression. Savage fought to include Black artists in these WPA projects. In 1937, she was appointed the first director of the Harlem Community Art Center.



Augusta Savage sculpture "The Harp"

Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

Soon after, Savage was commissioned by the New York World's Fair to create a sculpture recognizing the musical talents of African Americans. She sculpted *The Harp*, her largest commissioned art piece. She spent almost two years creating the 16-foot piece. *The Harp* showed a group of 12 Black singers sculpted at different heights to resemble the strings of the harp. This sculpture was made from painted plaster. There were no funds to cast the sculpture in metal or bronze. Sculptures made from plaster do not last very long and are quite fragile. There was also no place to store *The Harp*. After the fair in 1939, the plaster sculpture was unfortunately destroyed. After this event, Savage took a step back from the art world. She spent the rest of her years teaching children, writing, and spending time with her family. She died on March 26, 1962.

Augusta Savage believed that art had the power to change young people's lives. She said, "...if I can inspire one of these youngsters to develop the talent I know they possess, then my monument will be in their work." One of her best known works was *Gamin*, an informal sculpted portrait of her young nephew. Thousands of kids came to see this sculpture when it was on exhibit. They saw themselves reflected in this piece. Savage's talent and commitment to her community was an inspiration to many.

Introducing Word Meanings

1. Pre-teach any vocabulary that may hinder the students' comprehension of the overall text .
2. As targeted Tier two words occur in the text, provide a student friendly definition (use everyday language).
 - Collins COBUILD English Language Dictionary
 - <https://www.merriam-webster.com/> (click student definition)
 - <https://kids.wordsmyth.net/>
3. After reading, revisit the targeted words in the text and have students rate familiarity.

4	3	2	1
Know it well, can explain, use it	Know something about it, can relate it to a situation	Have seen or heard the word	Do not know the word

Bringing Words to Life, Pg. 18

4. Provide examples of the words used in different contexts.
 - This school year we have read two *genres* of text, historical fiction and realistic fiction.
 - We generally have a *modest* amount of homework, so you should have no problem completing it before your after school activities.
*provide visuals as necessary
5. Provide a brief opportunity for students to interact with the word(s).
 - What is your favorite *genre* of text?
 - Which would cost a *modest* amount of money? A canoe, fishing boat or yacht?
6. Add words to a vocabulary list posted in the classroom.
*Older students can record words and student friendly definitions in a vocabulary notebook.

Adapted from: *Bringing Words to Life. Robust Vocabulary Instruction.* Beck, I., McKeown, G. and Kucan, L., 2013.

Instructing Word Understanding and Use- Younger Students

1. Explore facets of word meaning.

Examples/Non-Examples:

★ If I say something that is difficult, say “complicated”. If I say something that is easy, say “simple”.

- figuring out a multi-step math problem
- drawing a smiley face
- brushing your teeth
- learning to tie shoes
- learning a new game
- lining up in a straight line

★ Ask questions that have students generate reasons and examples.

- What is your favorite genre to read? Why?
- Figuring out a word problem can be complicated? What are some things you could do to make it less difficult?

★ Students fill in the missing word.

- If a task were < > you might be tempted to give up and not complete the task. (complicated)
- I am almost finished with the mystery book I'm reading, so I will need to find a new book that is within that < >.
- The main < > in the book displays different < > traits throughout the story.
- I can tell roller skating is < > for you because you never fall down.

★ Students generate their own examples of words.

- If you were the main character in a book, what personality traits would you have?
- Name an activity or task that was complicated to complete.

Word Associations:

★ Match the situation with the vocabulary word.

genre/character

- The student enjoyed reading fantasy books, but he knew he needed to read a historical fiction book for social studies class.

simple/complicated

- She had practiced the piano piece so many times that she didn't need to look at the sheet music anymore to play the song.

★ Students think of an association (person, common experience, movie, book etc.) and explain the connection.

- Word: personality
- Association: My dog, Fozzie
- Explanation: My dog Fozzie has a playful personality because he is always dropping toys in my lap, ready to play.

★ Students act out or draw a picture that is associated with the words.

2. Explore word relationships.

★ Ask questions using two of the vocabulary words.

- Do you like to read stories where the main character has an evil personality or a courageous personality?
- When people first learn how to ride a bike, do you think that it is a simple or complicated task?

★ Ask questions related to one context that use all of the targeted words.

- Do you think simple stories would have at least 5 characters? Why or Why not?
- What genres do you think have the most complicated stories?
- How would you describe the main character's personality in the story we are reading?

★ Use the vocabulary word wall to sort the words into categories

★ **Return to the text context to reinforce the idea that understanding vocabulary helps with comprehension.**

- What were some of the genres mentioned in the article that we read?

3. Students use vocabulary words.

★ **Provide students with sentence stems to complete (prevents minimally informative sentences).**

- Mysteries can sometimes be complicated stories because < >.
- My favorite genre to read is < > because < >.

★ **Students say or write their own sentences using the words.** (Provide visuals if needed)

★ **Across classes, challenge students to use targeted vocabulary words in their verbal or written responses across all classes.**

***Don't forget to include vocabulary words that students have previously learned within instructional activities.**

Adapted from: *Bringing Words to Life. Robust Vocabulary Instruction.* Beck, I., McKeown, G. and Kucan, L., 2013.

Instructing Word Understanding and Use- Older Students

1. Explore facets of word meaning.

Examples/Non-Examples:

★ Choose a situation or example that best illustrates the word.

Which one of these situations would be considered *dire*?

- A fire engulfs a family's home and leaves them without food, clothing and shelter.
- A small fire occurs in a family's garage so they can't park their cars in there for several weeks.

If I say something that would be considered a *modest* result or outcome, say "*modest*".

- When comparing the store's earnings from last year there was a 10% increase.
- The singer was hoping to sign a record deal, but ended up accepting a job as a back-up singer.
- The population of the small town grew by 80% over the last 10 years.

Word Associations:

★ Match the situation with any of the vocabulary words that could be associated with it.

formerly/security/poverty/protest

- The union workers held a strike because they believed they weren't being paid a fair wage.
- Before the teacher got married, her name was Ms. Jones, but now it's Mrs. Brown.
- Many families in South Sudan (Northeast Africa) do not have enough money to meet their basic needs such as food to eat, clothing to wear, and a house to live in.
- The union employees were unsure if they would have a job after the strike was over.

★ **Pose a situation, context, or example and apply as many target words as possible.**

A student visits a large city for the first time.

Example student responses:

- The student might have observed that the city is in dire need of parking because there was not a spot to be found.
- The student might have observed an apartment building that was formerly a church.
- The student might have observed people experiencing poverty which made him thankful for his family's financial security.

★ **Students think of an association (person, common experience, movie, book etc.) and explain the connection.**

- Word: protest
- Association: Patriots during the Revolutionary War
- Explanation: Many of the patriots protested the taxes that they were made to pay to the King of England.

★ **Students act out or draw a picture that is associated with the words.**

2. Explore word relationships.

★ **Describe how two words could be connected or related.**

- dire/poverty (ex. A person could be in dire need of assistance because they are in a state of poverty.)
- formerly/poverty (ex. A person who formerly experienced poverty would value every cent she earned.

★ **Respond to the following questions:**

- Do people who live in poverty have financial security? Why or Why not?
- Would an individual living in a modest home be in dire need of basic essentials ?
- Why might people earning a modest income develop a spending budget to maintain financial security?

★ **Fill-in Analogies**

- Having job security means that a person is not in danger of

losing their job, while a person who < > may end up living in poverty.

- Someone who has financial security is most likely able to take a vacation every year, whereas a person earning a modest salary may need to < >.

★ **Use vocabulary notebooks to sort the words into categories.**

★ **Return to the text context to reinforce the idea that understanding vocabulary helps with comprehension.**

- How do we know that when Maggie Lena Draper was born, her mom was not a slave? (targeting formerly)

3. Students use vocabulary words.

★ **Provide students with sentence stems to complete.**

(prevents minimally informative sentences)

- The family made a modest amount of money so < >.
- After hearing the animal shelters plea for help, I could tell their situation was dire because < >.

★ **Students write their own sentences using the words.**

(Provide visuals if needed)

★ **Present a situation or context and have the students write a paragraph using the target words.**

- Describe a situation that may have caused a person to have to live in poverty? Why is this situation dire? Include these vocabulary words within your paragraph.

★ **Challenge students to use targeted vocabulary words in their verbal and written responses across classes.**

***Don't forget to include vocabulary words that students have previously learned within these activities.**

Adapted from: *Bringing Words to Life. Robust Vocabulary Instruction.* Beck, I., McKeown, G. and Kucan, L., 2013.

References

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