

***Building Vocabulary  
for Success with  
Content Area Reading  
for All Students***

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- I. Current Research About Vocabulary Instruction**
1. Vocabulary is the single most important aspect in building comprehension.
  2. The vocabulary knowledge gap between strong and weak students widens as children advance in school.
  3. Students need approximately ten exposures to new words to insure long term recall.
  4. Defining vocabulary is only a first step in mastering new words.
  5. Only a limited number of words can be learned through independent reading.
  6. Select vocabulary for direct instruction.
  7. Connect vocabulary to background knowledge.
  8. Memorizing definitions is an ineffective approach to vocabulary.
  9. Teach a maximum of 8-10 words a week through direct instruction.
  10. Provide review and assessment of vocabulary learning.

- II. Understanding Vocabulary for Instruction**
1. **Words that Should NOT Be Used for Instruction**
    - a. Words cannot be explained in easy to understand language.  
Example: uniaxial, saponify
    - b. Words that students have few opportunities to use.  
Example: natatorium, puncheon
  2. **Three Tiers of Words**

Tier 1: basic words  
Example: happy, sad, sleep, man, teacher

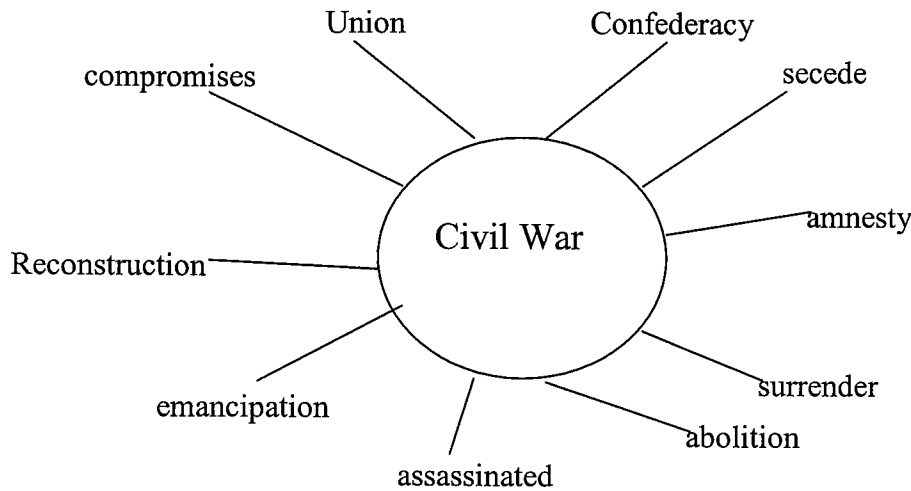
Tier 2: high frequency but challenging  
Example: industrious, clarify, boycott

Tier 3: infrequently used words  
Example: isotope, hieroglyphics, astrolabe

- III. Vocabulary Teaching Strategies**
1. **Using Context Clues**
    - a. Provide meaning through definitions
    - b. Provide meaning through examples
    - c. Provide examples through contrast
  2. **Teach Vocabulary for Each New Unit**
    - A. Identify 10 new words  
**Civil War and Reconstruction Vocabulary**

union	abolition
confederacy	compromise
secede	Reconstruction
amnesty	assassinated
surrender	emancipation

**B. Connect Vocabulary to Background Knowledge**



**C. Teach difficult vocabulary before reading content area material.**

1. *Autobiography of Frederick Douglass:*

“I was not about twelve years old, and the thought of being a slave for life began to bear heavily upon my heart...Every little while, I could hear something about the abolitionists..

My old master, Captain Anthony, died...Now all the property of my old master was in the hands of strangers... My determination to run away was again revived.

My free life began on the third of September, 1938. On the morning of the 4<sup>th</sup> of that month...I found myself in the big city of New York, a *free man*; one more added to the mighty throng (crowd) which...surged (rushed) to and fro...

I soon found that New York was not quite so free or so safe a refuge as I had supposed, and a send of loneliness and insecurity again oppressed me most sadly. I chanced to meet on the street, a few hours after my landing, a fugitive slave whom I had once known well...He told me that...there were hired men of my own color who would betray me for a few dollars...

I was indeed free—from slavery, but free from food and shelter as well.”

*America’s History: Land of Liberty*, 2006, pp. 172-173.

2. *Gettysburg Address, 1863:*

First Sentence:

“Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Final Sentence:

...this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

Modern English:

First Sentence:

*Eighty-seven years ago in 1776, our leaders created a new nation based on the idea of liberty. The United States would exist to prove the statement that “all men are created equal.*

Final Sentence:

*...this nation, under God, will have a government that allows equality and liberty for all people. We must make sure that this democratic government will never be destroyed.*

*America’s History: Land of Liberty, pp. 220-221.*

D. Teach Academic Vocabulary and Testing Language

1. Academic Words: categorize, summarize, clarify, rephrase, define [www.englishcompanion.com/pdfDocs/acvocabulary2.pdf](http://www.englishcompanion.com/pdfDocs/acvocabulary2.pdf)

2. Teach Test Vocabulary and Language Patterns

a. Academic Vocabulary

- |                 |              |
|-----------------|--------------|
| 1. Explain      | 6. Predict   |
| 2. Describe     | 7. Summarize |
| 3. Define       | 8. Conclude  |
| 4. Compare      | 9. Analyze   |
| 5. Characterize | 10. Respond  |

b. Testing Language

1. What does the information suggest?
2. What was a major cause?
3. What was most closely associated with?
4. Which of the following \_\_\_\_\_?
5. What conclusion can be drawn?
6. Which point of view \_\_\_\_\_?
7. What does this statement illustrate?
8. All of the following are true except \_\_\_\_\_?
9. The event was characterized by \_\_\_\_\_?
10. What would be the best title \_\_\_\_\_?

