

**Bewitched by Words**  
based on **Bringing Words to Life**  
by Beck, McKeown & Kucan

**2005 International  
SIM Conference**

presented by Peggy Graving-Reyes and  
Jeffrey Reyes  
contentliteracy@comcast.net

**Goals for Vocabulary  
Instruction**

- Become interested and aware of words in and beyond school
- "Ownership"—keep using words
- Alertness for the unknown
- Depth of understanding
- An insatiable curiosity

**The Problem**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Grade
  - Higher SES knew 2X as lower SES
- Seniors
  - Top of class knew 4X as lower
  - High 3rd Graders = low Seniors

**How do students  
learn vocabulary?**

**1. Context**

- Only works if students read a lot!

**2. Direct Teaching**

**3. Oral Discussion**

**Too many words...  
too little time?**

- **Preteach selected words**  
5-10/week...approx. 400/year  
Students are your "barometer!"
- **Provide meanings as encountered**

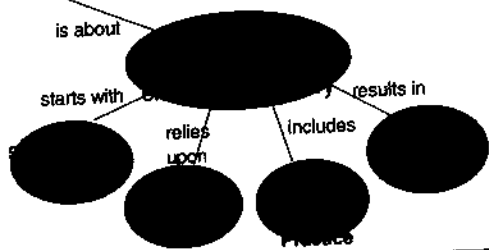
**What are the Standards?**

- Identify idioms, analogies, metaphors & similes in prose & poetry
- Understand Greek, Latin, and Anglo-Saxon roots and affixes
- Clarify word meanings
- Use word meanings within appropriate context
- Understand concepts in content areas

*from California State HS Standards*

## Bringing Words to Life:

### Robust Vocabulary Instruction



## What is Word Knowledge?

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

## Your Turn

- tyranny
- surreptitious
- grapnel
- purport
- sensitive
- dubious

## Word Selection

- **Tier 1** Most basic words  
clock, baby, happy
- **Tier 3** Frequency of use quite low; limited domains (content areas):  
isotope, lathe, refinery
- **Tier 2** High frequency for mature language users; variety of domains:  
coincidence, industrious, fortunate

## Chosen Words Must...

- Appear frequently
- Be of high utility
- Expand existing student knowledge
- Appear across content areas

## Tier 2 Words

Johnny Harrington was a kind master who treated his servants fairly. He was also a successful wool merchant and his business required that he travel often. In his absence, his servants would tend to the fields and cattle and maintain the upkeep of his mansion. They performed their duties happily, for they felt fortunate to have such a benevolent and

## Criteria for Tier Two

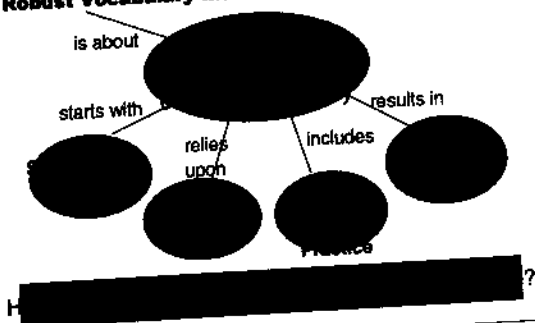
- **Importance and utility**
  - mature language users consider ordinary
  - across domains or subject areas
- **Instructional potential**
  - work with in a variety of ways;
  - build connections
- **Conceptual understanding**
  - provide precision in describing the concept

## Tier Thinking...

Identify

- Most important words
  - sectionalism • hypothesis
  - attribute • characteristic
- Words that deepen understanding & build connections to other words and concepts
- Essential words for text

## Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction



## Check for Prior Knowledge

... Keep it simple

1. **Make lists for students**
2. **Quick Writes**
3. **Check class—"thumbs up"**  
occasional individual checks
4. **Look for group mastery rate**

**Introduce words  
with student-  
friendly  
definitions.**

## During Reading

- Simply, briefly define unknown words
- Involve in "derive-meaning process" --  
provide guidance quickly if students  
do not know word.

## Engaging Students while Introducing New Words

- **Word Associations**
- **Have You Ever?**
- **Idea Completions**

## Word Associations

After presenting explanations for *accomplice*, *virtuoso*, *philanthropist*, and *novice*...

- Which word goes with crook?
- Which word goes with "gift to build a new hospital?"
- Which word goes with piano?
- Which word goes with kindergartner?

## Have you ever?

Helps students create a place for the word in their vocabularies:

Describe a time when you might  
urge someone,  
commend someone,  
banter with someone...

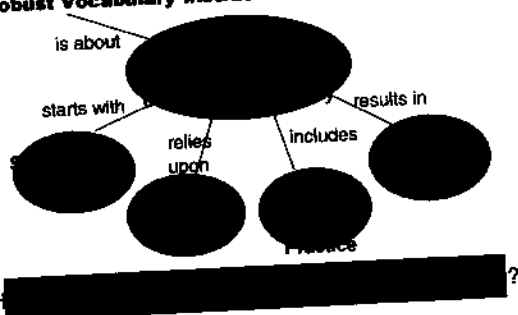
## Idea Completions

Provide students with sentence stems rather than asking them to write a sentence using the new words:

- The skiing teacher said Maria was a novice on the ski slopes because...
- The audience asked the virtuoso to play another piece of music because...

## Bringing Words to Life:

Robust Vocabulary Instruction



## Practice Activities

- **Drama**
- **Facets of Word Meaning**
- **Relationship Questions**
- **Other Features**
- **Teacher Opportunities**

## Drama

(Students working on group project. Ryan grabs Julie's pencil.)

Julie: It baffles me why you're such a buffoon.

Ryan: Oh, don't be so antagonistic.

Andrew: Cut out the bantering, you two. We have work to do here.

## Facets of Meaning

Increases flexibility

Label as Example or Nonexample:

### banter

A husband and wife argue about what to have for dinner.

A husband and wife kid each other about who ate more at dinner.

## Relationship Questions

- Could a virtuoso be a rival?
- Could an apprentice be a liability?
- Is a scientist an artist?
- Could enlightenment lead to discontent?
- Would you rather be cynical or naive?

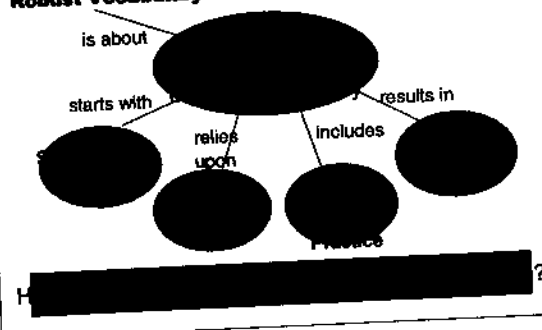
## The Most Important Ingredient...The Teacher!

*"The teacher who is alert to opportunities for using sophisticated, interesting, and precise language is probably the most important element in such a [literacy rich] environment.*

*They play with words, rejoice in word lore, and model a genuine fascination for the feelings and images that words can evoke and create."* (p. 128)

## Bringing Words to Life:

### Robust Vocabulary Instruction



## Beyond the Classroom

- Notice situations where words are used outside of class.
- To what extent do they embody love, hatred, loneliness, or indifference to society?
- What is the relationship toward others that leads one to become a misanthrope or a philanthropist?

## **Assessment Continuum**

Place words or phrases on the continuum and explain their placement:

How much energy does it take to ...?

1. Meander down a hallway?
2. Vault over a car?
3. Banter with your best friend for an hour?
4. Berate someone at the top of your voice?
5. Stalk a turtle?

## **What really works?**

- Select words for explicit teaching (Tier 2)
- Developing student-friendly explanations & engage students immediately

## **What really works?**

- Create meaningful practice activities
- Get students thinking about, using, and noticing new words both within and outside the classroom

## **The 5-day Cycle used in Research**

- Day 1: Introduce with pictures and log friendly definitions
- Days 2-4: Meaning-making Activities
- Day 5: Assessments

## **What's Different for Secondary Students?**

- Build knowledge of similarities and differences between words
- Explore complex dimensions of a word's meaning and the relationships that exist to other words

## **What's Different for Secondary Students?**

- Anchor more to text
- Teach both the word and a greater depth of understanding
- Attend to how authors use words and the deliberateness with which they choose them

## **Tier 2 Words**

Johnny Harrington was a kind master who treated his servants fairly. He was also a successful wool merchant and his business required that he travel often. In his absence, his servants would tend to the fields and cattle and maintain the upkeep of his mansion. They performed their duties happily, for they felt fortunate to have such a benevolent and trusting master.

## **You Try It!**

The servants never comment on this strange occurrence [finding the kitchen clean even though none of them were seen doing the cleaning], each servant hoping the other had tended the chores. Never would they mention the loud noises they'd heard emerging from the kitchen in the middle of the night. Nor would they admit to pulling the covers under their chins as they listened to the sound of haunting laughter that drifted down the halls to their bedrooms each night. In reality, they knew there was a more sinister reason behind their good fortune.