

Literacy Tips



Tips for middle school educators on various topics such as grammar, writing, reading, spelling, vocabulary, cooperative learning and more.

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Tip #53: Vocabulary Strategies

There are so many powerful vocabulary strategies floating around. I thought it was time to highlight a few of my favorites and hopefully showcase a couple of new ones for the veteran teachers. I often get overwhelmed with all of the choices. You might consider recycling just a few of these strategies throughout your team. Once you teach these strategies, your teammates can reinforce them in the content area classes.

Three past tips have been on vocabulary instruction. Look back at tip #16 (KIM and Pane It/Retain It), tip #19B (Concept ABC), and tip #45 (Feature Analysis). By the way, I am creating a table of contents for all of these random tips to help you and I stay better organized in the future. You can expect that with hard copies of this year's tips in the fall.

So are there more vocabulary strategies to add to your bag of tricks? You bet!

Target Word

[Target Word](#) is an adaptation of one of Janet Allen's vocabulary strategies. This strategy has students brainstorming characteristics of the word as well as characteristics that the word doesn't have. In addition, it provides an opportunity for students to find examples of the word being used in real life situations.

Vocabulary Survey

The [Vocabulary Survey](#) is another adaptation of Janet Allen's. You can see that I depend on her a lot. Words, Words, Words (Stenhouse 1999) is chock full of her vocabulary strategies. In this activity, you highlight a handful of words you want the students to learn. Type up the sentences from the selection that you are reading that contains these words. Then ask students to place each word in the appropriate category:

- 1) I know nothing about this word,
- 2) I think I might know the meaning of this word, or
- 3) I definitely know what this word means.

This will activate their prior knowledge, allow them to discuss words in advance with partners, and help them to look for these words as they read.

Vocabulary Cartoons

Vocabulary Cartoons are published by New Monic Books, Inc. They use humor as a way to help students learn the SAT words. Even though our goal is not to teach the SAT vocabulary, their strategy is really fun. It involves art, higher-level thinking, writing meaningful sentences, and making weird connections. The best way to see an example of this strategy is by visiting their web site at:

www.vocabularycartoons.com



On their home page, you will see a vocabulary cartoon for "fathom." Using their steps as a pattern, I created [a rubric for evaluating student vocabulary cartoons](#). I must tell you that this is the one vocabulary strategy my students asked to do over and over again. They were very motivated by it and told me that they remembered the word meanings for a long time.

Three-Tiered Approach to Vocabulary

Last but not least, a little research for you. Think about which vocabulary words are the most useful to select to improve comprehension. A popular approach is the three-tiered one of Isabel Beck and Margaret McKeown. You can find a reference to their work and a great explanation in this attached newsletter that focuses on vocabulary (see p. 2).

Tier One

The most basic words (talk, play, sad)

Tier Two

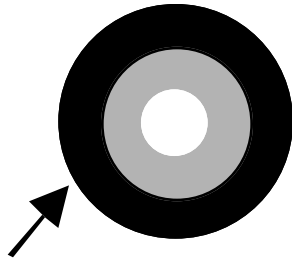
High frequency words for mature, literate individuals (transform, ability, suggestion)

Tier Three

Low frequency words limited to specific domains (genotype, isotope)

It is recommended that teachers select words for instruction from Tier Two. Be sure to glance at p. 3 in this newsletter because they offer a twist to Vocabulary Cartoons that involves fewer steps but still relies on the idea of making weird or silly connections.

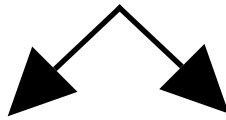




TARGET WORD

Context

(Copy down sentence from text which surrounds the target word.)



What it is...

What it isn't...



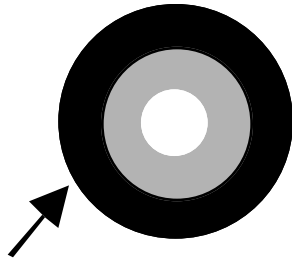
I'd probably find this word in these contexts...

(places, events, people, situations, etc.)



I'll remember this word by connecting it to...

(mental image, mnemonic, another term, etc.)



TARGET WORD

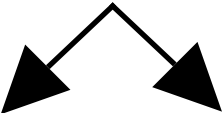
vex

Context

(Copy down sentence from text which surrounds the target word.)

"...for it was not the old man who vexed me, but his Evil Eye."

-The Tell-Tale Heart by Edgar Allan Poe



What it is...

annoy

irritate

distress

What it isn't...

feeling good

staying calm

joyful



I'd probably find this word in these contexts...

(places, events, people, situations, etc.)

people talking about their feelings, political debates, arguments



I'll remember this word by connecting it to...

(mental image, mnemonic, another term, etc.)

vex reminds me of the word hex, so I will remember that I am annoyed and irritated by the hex that was put on me by the evil magician

Name _____

“The Tell-Tale Heart” Vocabulary

Period _____

Directions: Sit with a partner and look at the underlined word as I read the sentence in which we find the word in the short story “The Tell-Tale Heart.” After hearing the sentence, you and your partner need to decide if you know a meaning for the word, think you know the meaning for the word, or still need help in finding a meaning.

1. Above all was the sense of hearing acute.
2. ... for it was not the man who vexed me, but his Evil Eye.
3. Never before that night had I *felt* the extent of my own powers - of my sagacity.
4. ... it was the low stifled sound that arises from the bottom of the soul when overcharged with awe.
5. It increased my fury, as the beating of a drum stimulates the soldier into courage.
6. “...while I myself, in the wild audacity of my perfect triumph, placed my own seat upon the very spot beneath which reposed the corpse of the victim.
7. I could bear those hypocritical smiles no longer! I felt I must scream or die!
8. I resolved to open a little - a very, very little crevice in the lantern.
9. So I opened it - you cannot imagine how stealthily, stealthily...

I still need help finding a meaning for this word.	I think I know the meaning of this word. (Record it.)	I know the meaning. (Record it.)
<i>(Write the word only.)</i>	<i>(Write the word and its meaning.)</i>	<i>(Write the word and its meaning.)</i>

Name: _____

Period: _____



VOCABULARY CARTOON



REQUIREMENTS	Y	N
Entry word		
Pronunciation		
Definition		
Sounds like or link		
Cartoon in color		
Caption includes link		
Meaningful sentence #1		
Meaningful sentence #2		
Meaningful sentence #3		
Neat and easy to read		
Spelling (90-100% correct)		

Self-evaluation: _____

My grade:

Teacher grade:

Name: _____

Period: _____



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