Vocabulary Filters: A Framework for Choosing Which Words to Teach in Stories

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1. **The nature and quantity of the "unique" words of narratives**

   (i.e., words beyond the core vocabulary)

2. **Choosing words to teach: The Vocabulary Filter™ Process**

3. **Strategies for teaching "narrative" words**

   ❖ As part of Vocabulary Filters, two of the components of instruction:

   - A metalinguistic stance

   - Direct instruction of semantic clusters, morphological families, & word changes

   ❖ Indirect instruction is also critical:

   - Extensive reading with records

   - Read-alouds

   - Exceptional Expressions in Everyday Events (E4)

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The nature and quantity of the "unique" words of narratives (i.e., words beyond the core vocabulary)

Words in American Schoolbooks

Legend:
- 6=135,473
- 5=13,882
- 4=2980
- 3=1676
- 2=620
- 1=203
- 0=107
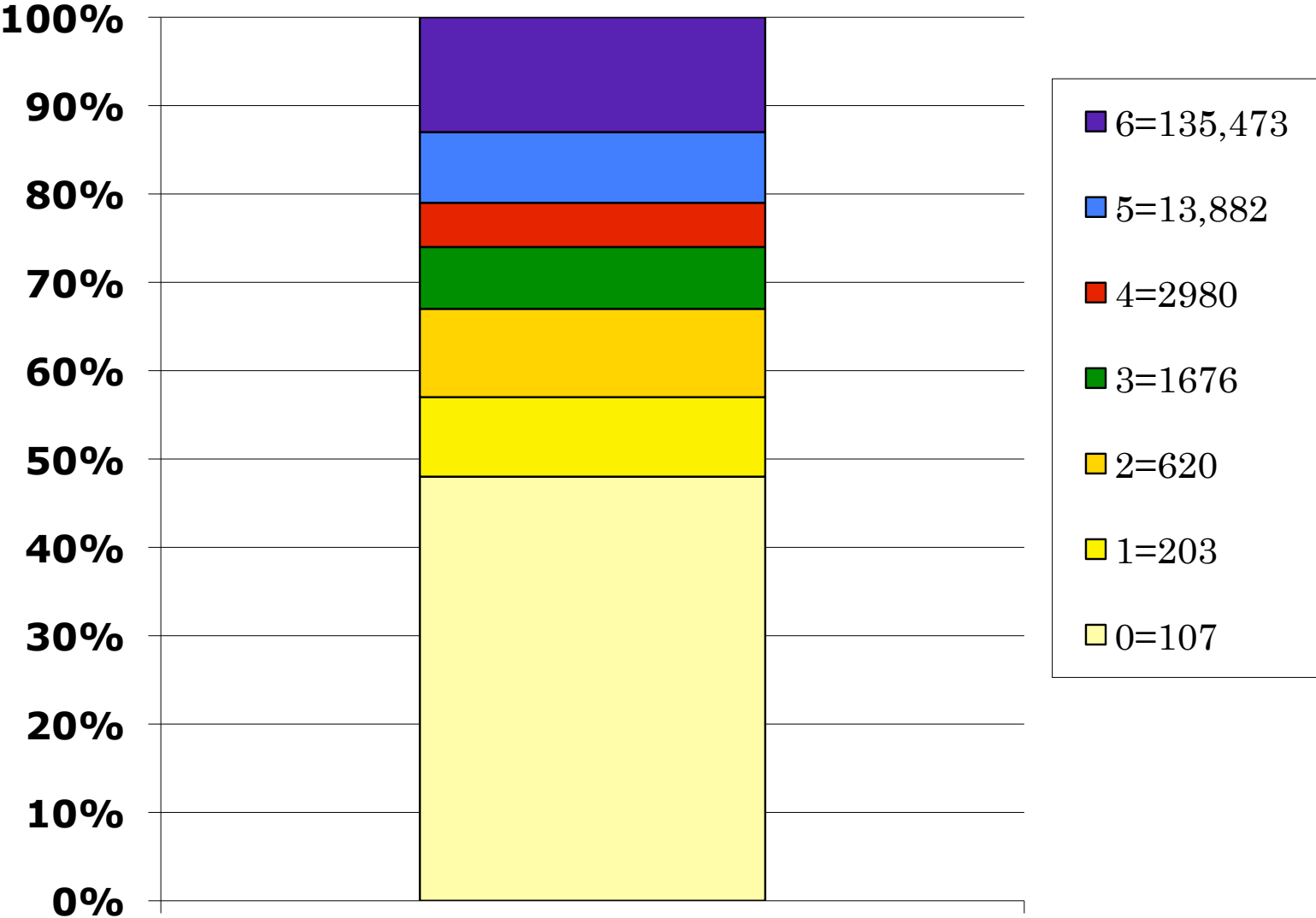
% of 17.25 million words

(Zeno et al., 1995)
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Sources of English

Greek/Latin
Specialized words
used mostly in
science
EX: thermometer,
geography
New Words through compounding
of word parts:
thermosphere, geopolitical

Romance
1066 (Norman Conquest)-1399 (Henry IV, a
native Anglo-Saxon speaker assumes throne):
French is spoken by upper classes; English by
lower-classes. French loan words remain.
EX: frigid, perspiration, soil
New Words through derivations: frigidity,
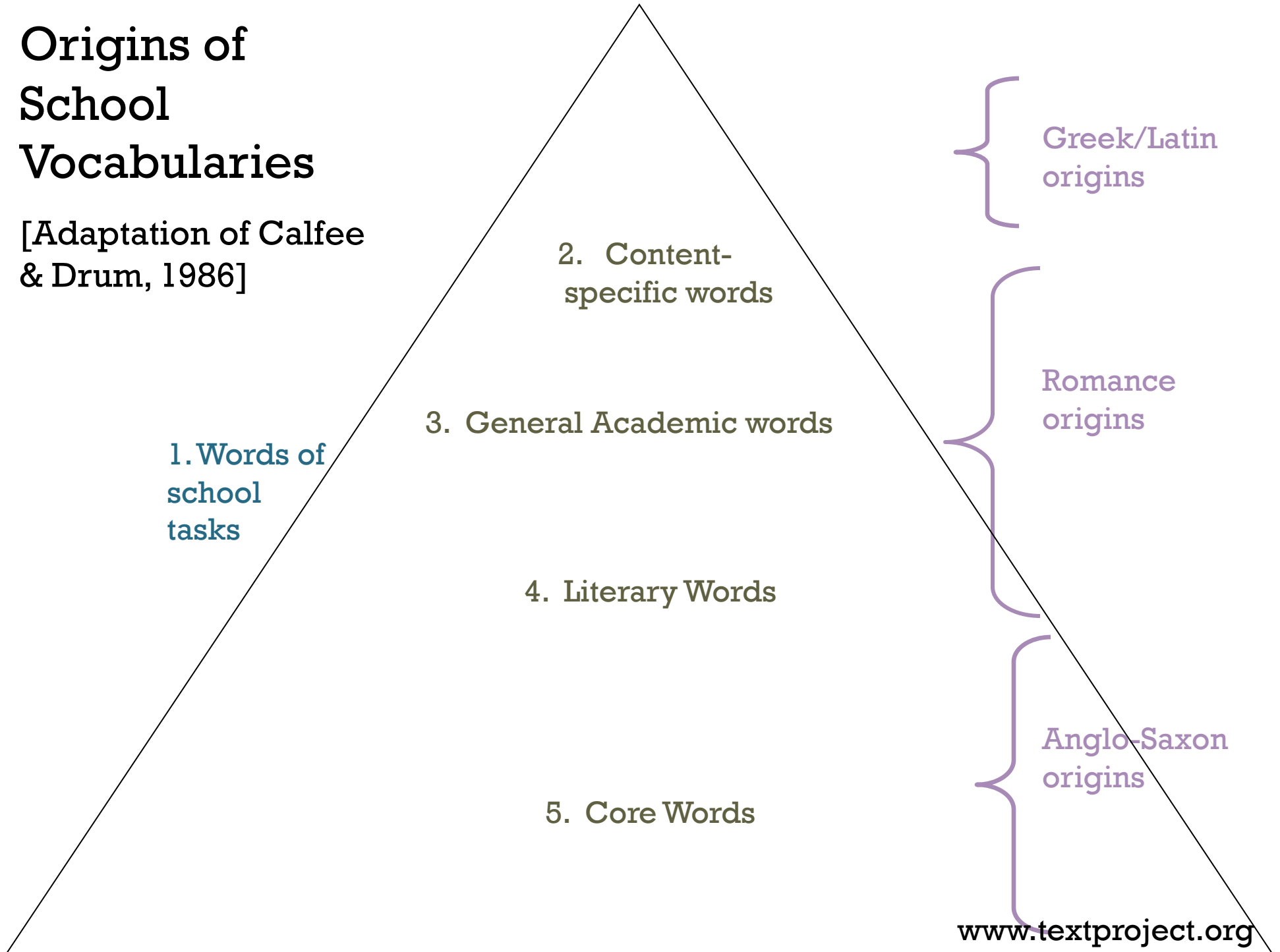**frigidness, refrigerator**

Anglo-Saxon
Common, everyday, down-to-earth words
EX: cold, sweat, dirt
New Words through compounding: cold-blooded, cold-natured,
cold-drink, cold-running

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Origins of School Vocabularies

[Adaptation of Calfee & Drum, 1986]

Greek/Latin origins

Romance origins

Anglo-Saxon origins

2. Content-specific words

3. General Academic words

1. Words of school tasks

4. Literary Words

5. Core Words

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What's different in the vocabularies of narrative & informational texts?

Percentage of *conceptually complex words* is higher in informational than in narrative texts. It is conceptual complexity of words that influences learning.
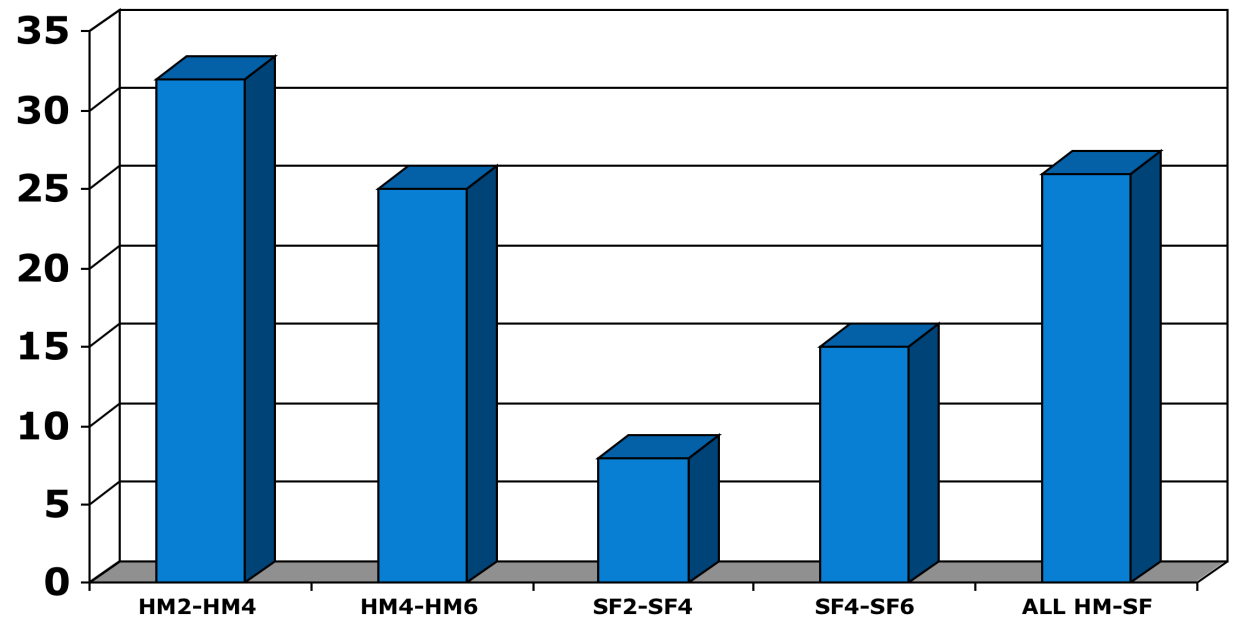
	Categories 1-3	Category 4
Narrative	100% (slithering, wincing, kindling, gestures)	
Science	64% (absorb, microscope)	36% (e.g.: fermentation, cytoplasm)

Rare words are repeated more frequently in informational than narrative texts.
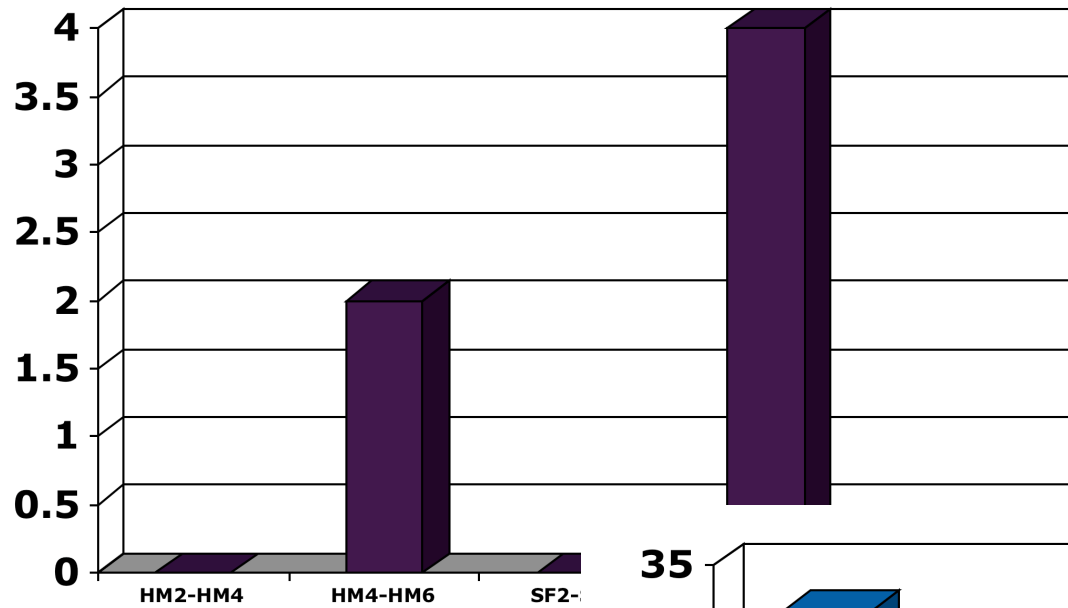
Reading/Language Arts

Science

HM2-HM4 HM4-HM6 SF2-SF4 SF4-SF6 ALL HM-SF

Concepts/vocabulary is less specified in standards

Content Area	Sample Words
Civics	abuse of power, campaign, elected representative, geographical representation, individual liberty, Labor Day, national origin, patriotism, school board, Uncle Sam, welfare
English Language Arts	abbreviation, capitalization, e-mail, genre, illustration, learning log, paragraph, reading strategy, table, verb
Geography	billboards, discovery, fall line, harbor, Japan, land clearing, national capital, Pacific rim, rain forest, technology, vegetation region
Mathematics	addend, capacity, equation, gram, improbability, mass, obtuse angle, quotient, sample, unit conversion
Science	bedrock, Earth's axis, gases, inherited characteristic, magnetic attraction, ocean currents, recycle, technology, water capacity

From Marzano (2004)

Choosing words to teach in narrative texts: The Vocabulary Filter™ Process

The Focus Words in a Unit in a Core Reading Program (Gr. 4)

The Stranger	Adelina's Whales	How Night Came from the Sea	Eyes of the Storm	The Great Kapok Tree
parlor	rumbling	massive	forecasts	dangle
draft	tropical	coward	inland	pollinate
frost	biologist	gleamed	expected	wondrous
terror	bluff	chorus	shatter	fragrant
fascinated	lagoon	shimmering	destruction	pollen
quaint	encounter*	brilliant	surge	canopy
timid	exhaling*	dwells*	potential*	dappled
etched		reigns*	withstand*	slithered
drab*			wreckage*	gash*
hermit*				lulled*
hypnotized*				

*not tested

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The Stranger (Chris van Allsburg): (Grade 4, Theme 3, Story 1)

draft
etched
fascinated
frost
parlor
terror
timid
drab*
hermit*
hypnotized*

*Not tested words

Filter #1: Words You Already Know

The new word can be explained easily/quickly with a synonym or, possibly, a phrase with words that students recognize and understand. [And it is a word that is likely already known by most students.]

The new word is likely easy to read (i.e., it has one-two syllables).

Highlighted vocabulary	44
Filter 1	10
	34

draft
etched
fascinated
frost
parlor
terror
timid
drab*
hermit*
hypnotized*

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Filter #2: Words you can picture

If an illustration/photo communicates a concept efficaciously, use it (especially for English Language Learners).

Highlighted vocabulary	34 (44-10)
Filter 2	12
	22

draft
etched
fascinated
frost
parlor
terror
timid
drab*
hermit*
hypnotized*

1. *etched*: carved or engraved

Words and a picture have been _____ onto this piece of metal.

2. *draft*: a breeze or air moving

The windmill is making a _____ that is lifting off the seeds from the plants.

3. *frost*: ice

The branches of the trees are covered with _____.

4. *hermit*: a person who chooses to live alone, often very quietly

The _____ lived alone far from town in the woods. He spent his days in silence.

Filters 3 & 4: The "Focus" Words

- The 22 words that remain after Filters 1 and 2 have been applied become the focus words for the next two filters.
  - For *The Stranger:* *3 words:*

draft
etched
fascinated
frost
parlor
terror
timid
drab*
hermit*
hypnotized*

Filter #3: Word Meaning Families

Words belong to particular semantic groups: The words within these semantic groups have connotations, nuances, and specific meanings that are associated but often have distinct applications.

Particular semantic groups are likely more critical for comprehension of narratives than other groups of words. In particular, words that give insights into the thinking/traits of characters or the circumstances of plot/resolution are important:

- Cognitive/perceptual actions
- Communication
- Feelings and values

Vocabulary Megaclusters™

Narrative Dominant

Vocabulary Megacluster	Examples
Emotions/Attitudes	frightened, upset
Character Traits	lazy, faithful
Social Relationships	potential, unique

Narrative/Content Shared

Vocabulary Megacluster	Examples
Communication	announce, warn
Characters	politicians, neighbors
Action & Motion	nudged, juggling
Comparatives & Causes	transformed, spectacular
Place/Events	Mexico, festivals
Physical Attributes (Objects, Events, Time)	patterns, overnight
Social Systems	movie, soccer

Content Dominant

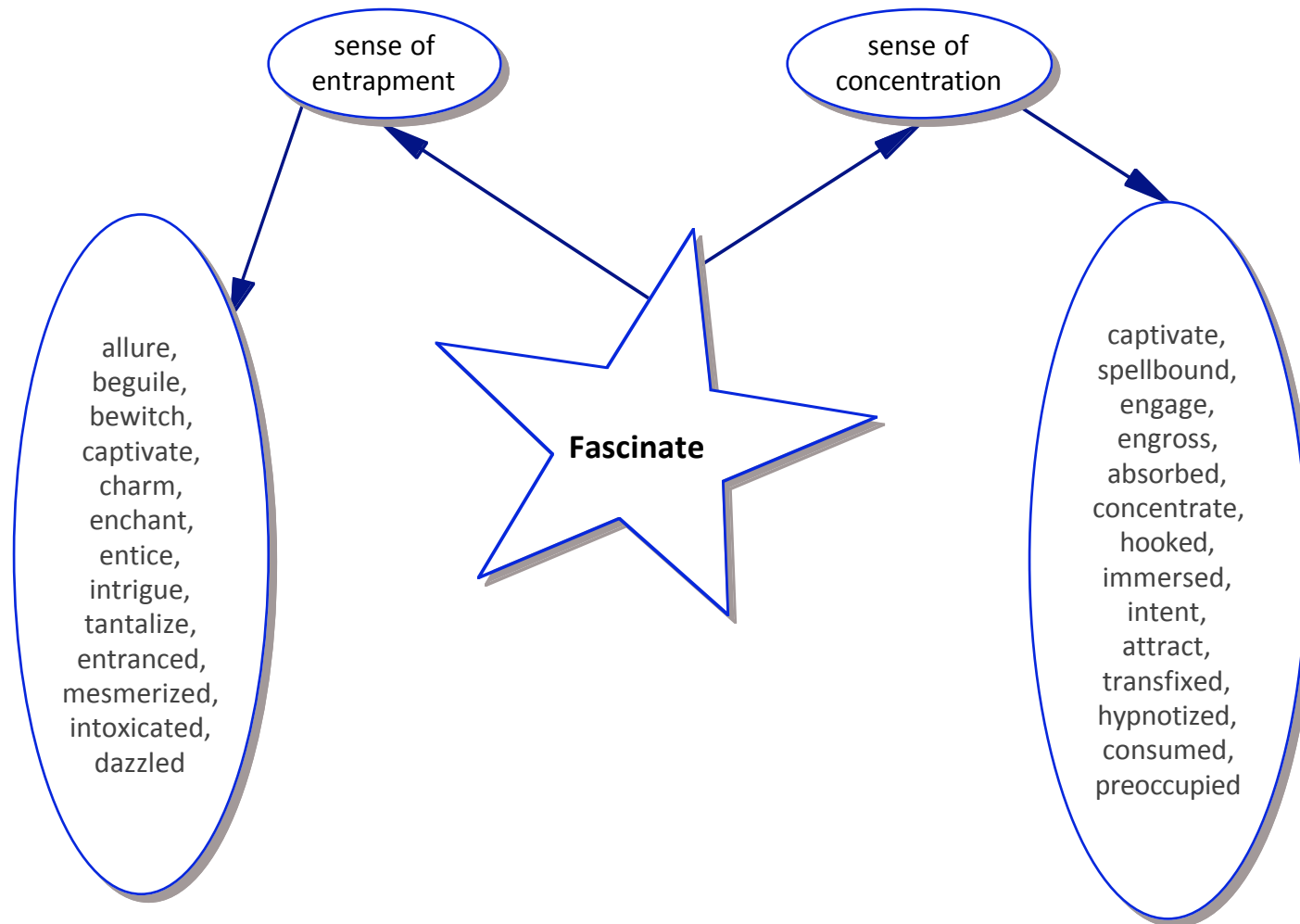| Vocabulary Megacluster	Examples
Human Body	sweat, gash
Natural Environment	sloth, hurricanes
Machines	plastic, computer

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Focusing On The Meaning Of A Focus Word:
Part 1: Identify the key meaning (and part of speech) as well as
the origin of the word (because knowing the origin helps you
know how a word acts in English)

Fascinate
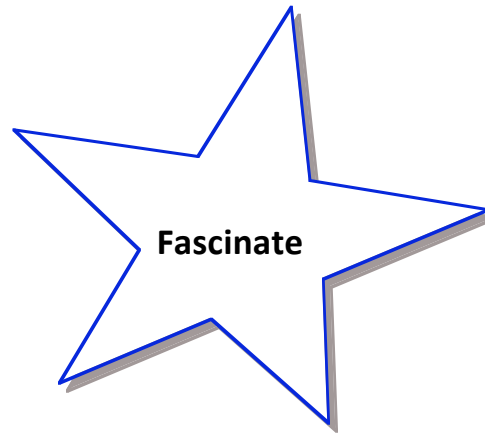
Parts of speech	adjective or verb
Definition	to interest you very much
Etymology	from the Latin word *fascinum* meaning use of (evil) magic

Focusing On The Meaning Of A Focus Word:
Part 2: Using thesauruses, generate semantic families

sense of entrapment

sense of concentration

Fascinate

allure, beguile, bewitch, captivate, charm, enchant, entice, intrigue, tantalize, entranced, mesmerized, intoxicated, dazzled

captivate, spellbound, engage, engross, absorbed, concentrate, hooked, immersed, intent, attract, transfixed, hypnotized, consumed, preoccupied
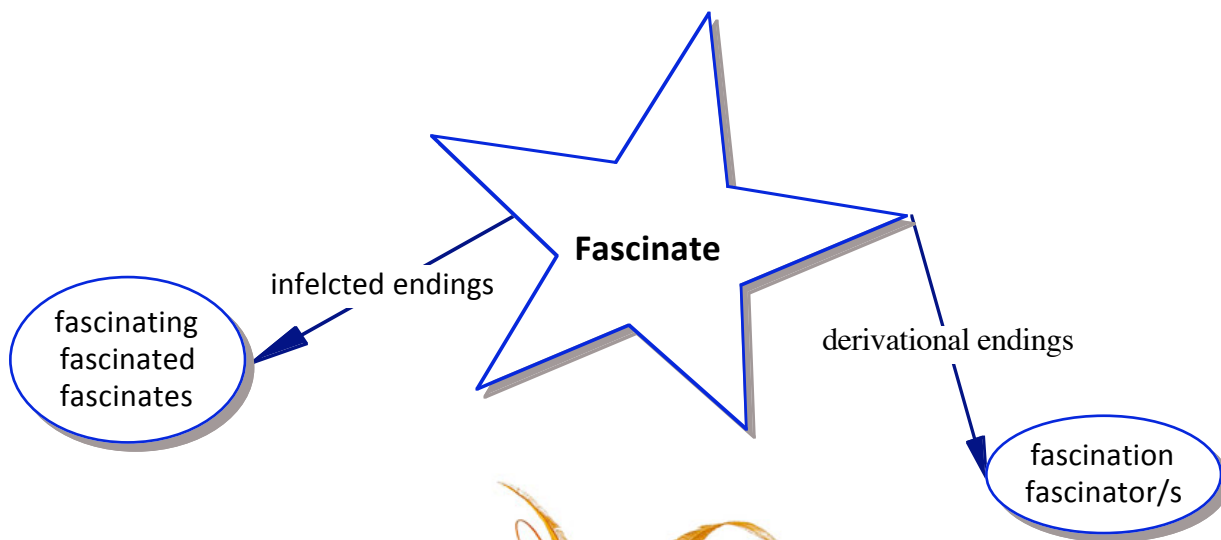
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Focusing On The Meaning Of A Focus Word:

Part 3: Use the word in a variety of contexts, including
comparing/contrasting the meanings of words within the same
semantic family.
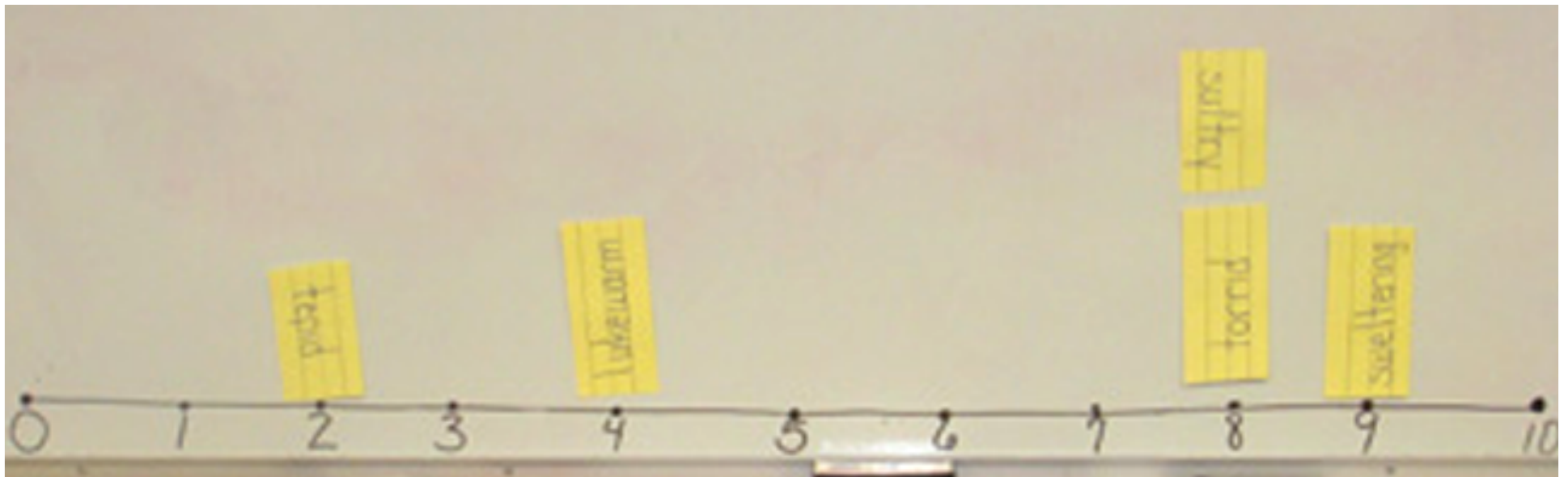
Filter #4: Word Part Families

- Many words belong to families of words that have the same root words and meanings.

- Many words that came to English from French/Latin share a common root word with Spanish words

Fascinate

fascinating
fascinated
fascinates

infelcted endings

derivational endings

fascination
fascinator/s

Filter #5: Word Changes

- Many words in English, especially those that are used frequently, have multiple meanings.

- When words are in compound words or phrases, they may take on unique meanings. These meanings can be idiosyncratic.

- Some words share the same pronunciation with other words, even though they are spelled differently.

For the fifth filter--Word Changes--all of the words in the group are considered.
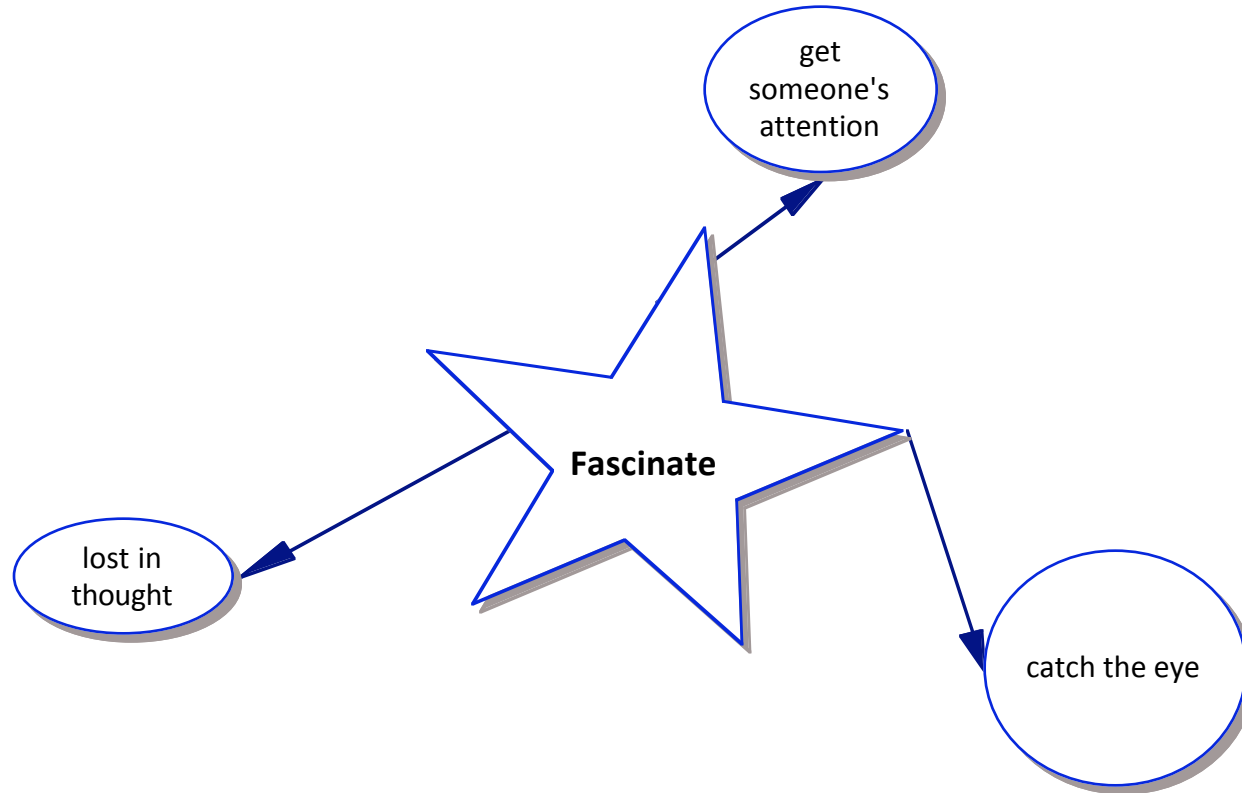
Word Changes

WORD REMINDER
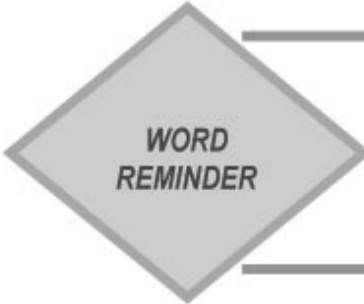
Sometimes, the same word can have different meanings. Words often change their meanings when they are in special phrases called idioms.

Word Change 1: Compound Words

Hermit You now know the meaning of the word *hermit*. The word *hermit* is used in several compound words that name animals. Write a sentence about what you think these animals might be like.

	Animal characteristics
Hermit crab	
hermit-bird	
hermit sheep	

Word Change 2: Idioms & Phrases

get someone's attention

Fascinate

lost in thought

catch the eye

Word Change 3: Many different meanings

draft   The word **draft** comes from an old word (*draught*) that means *to draw, or pull in*. Today we usually spell the word as *draft*. Draft has come to mean many things. Write about what you think the meaning might be.

	I think that this could mean….
Draft/draught horse	
Drafted into the army	
Rough **draft**	
Draft of money	
Air **draft**	
Drafting table	
Football **draft** picks	

Word Change 4: Examine connections between English words and those in Latin-based languages

English	Common root word	Spanish word
hermit	eremita	ermitas
fascinate	fascinare	fascinado
hypnotize	hypno	hypnotizado
timid	timidus	timido

Word Summary
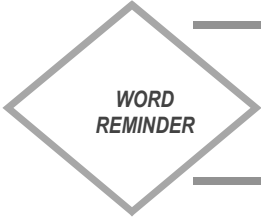
WORD REMINDER — Words are part of families or networks. When you learn the members of a word's family, your vocabulary grows.

WORDS THAT I LEARNED WITH THE STORY, *THE STRANGER*

Story Word	Word Meaning Family	Word Part Family	Multiple Meanings	Compound Words & Idioms
drab				
draft				
etched				
fascinated				
frost				
hermit				
hypnotized				
parlor				
timid				

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The Vocabulary Filter Process™

A way of teaching the critical and/or identified words from a narrative text in a core reading program

Every word in English can't be taught. For example, a new invention brings with it new words and new meanings to existing words. BUT: We can support students in developing a metalinguistic sense about English vocabulary.

3. Strategies for teaching "narrative" words

As part of Vocabulary Filters, two of the components of instruction:

- A metalinguistic stance
- Direct instruction of semantic clusters, morphological families, & word changes

Indirect instruction is also critical:

- Extensive reading with records
- Read-alouds
- Exceptional Expressions in Everyday Events (E4)

Talk

Exceptional Expressions for Everyday Events

Talking is, of course, a ubiquitous human activity. In schools, students talk to one another in the classroom, on the playground, or in the lunchroom. Teachers talk to give instruction or to counsel students. Students talk to teachers to respond to questions or to express a concern. Describing different types of talking is one way to bring exceptional expressions into everyday events.

The word *talk* can be used as a verb as well as a noun. *To talk* is to communicate verbally, through speaking rather than writing. Since the way we talk carries with it our emotions and goals, spoken communication can take many forms. Shouting, whispering, and preaching convey very different attitudes on the part of the speaker, which in turn will affect the reactions of those who hear what is said.

Talk as a noun is the act of verbally communicating. A teacher can have a talk with his or her students about bullying. As with the verb *talk*, there are a variety of synonyms for the noun *talk*. For example, a teacher can have a serious discussion or conversation about bullying.

Follow-Ups

- How is articulating different from talking?

- How might a discussion be different from an utterance? A speech?

The Spanish Connection

Talk comes from a Middle English word, *talkien* or *talken*. The Spanish word for *to talk* is *hablar*. *Hablar* is not a Spanish cognate of *to talk*.

Word Changes

- Some synonyms of *talk* are also used as both verbs and nouns, for example, *chat*, *lecture*, and *gossip*.

- Many of the idioms and common phrases for *talk* incorporate the mannerism and intent of the speaker. For example, a person who "talks big" is someone who is boasting. "To talk in circles" is to repeat the same idea in a different manner that reveals nothing new and may even confuse the listener.

Graphic organizer for semantic family and morphological family of this everyday word and 31 others can be found at www.textproject.org