The First Key to Unlocking Complex Text: A Generative Vocabulary

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Complex Text & Vocabulary

The Birchbark House

Startled, Omakayas slipped and spun her arms in wheels. She teetered, but somehow kept her balance. Two big, skipping hops, another leap, and she was on dry land. She stepped over spongy leaves and moss, into the woods where the sparrows sang nesting songs in delicate relays.

"Where are you?" Nokomis yelled again. "I found the tree!"

Volcanoes

The mountain seemed much the same as it had been for the past month. Suddenly, at 8:32 a.m., Mount St. Helens erupted with incredible force. The energy released in the eruption was equal to ten million tons of dynamite.

The eruption of Mount St. Helens was the most destructive in the history of the United States.

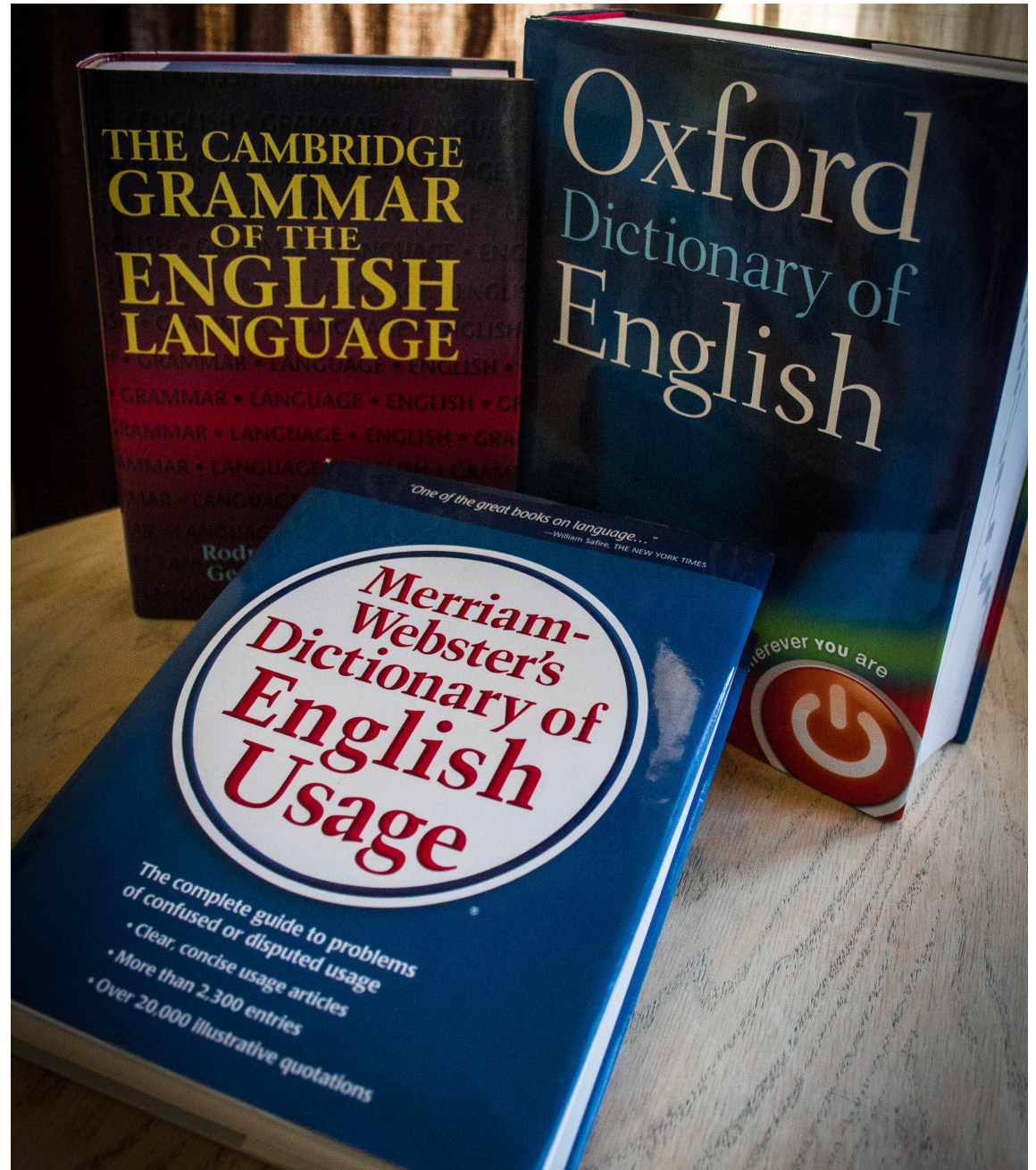# Word Fact #1: Knowledge is "stored" in texts,
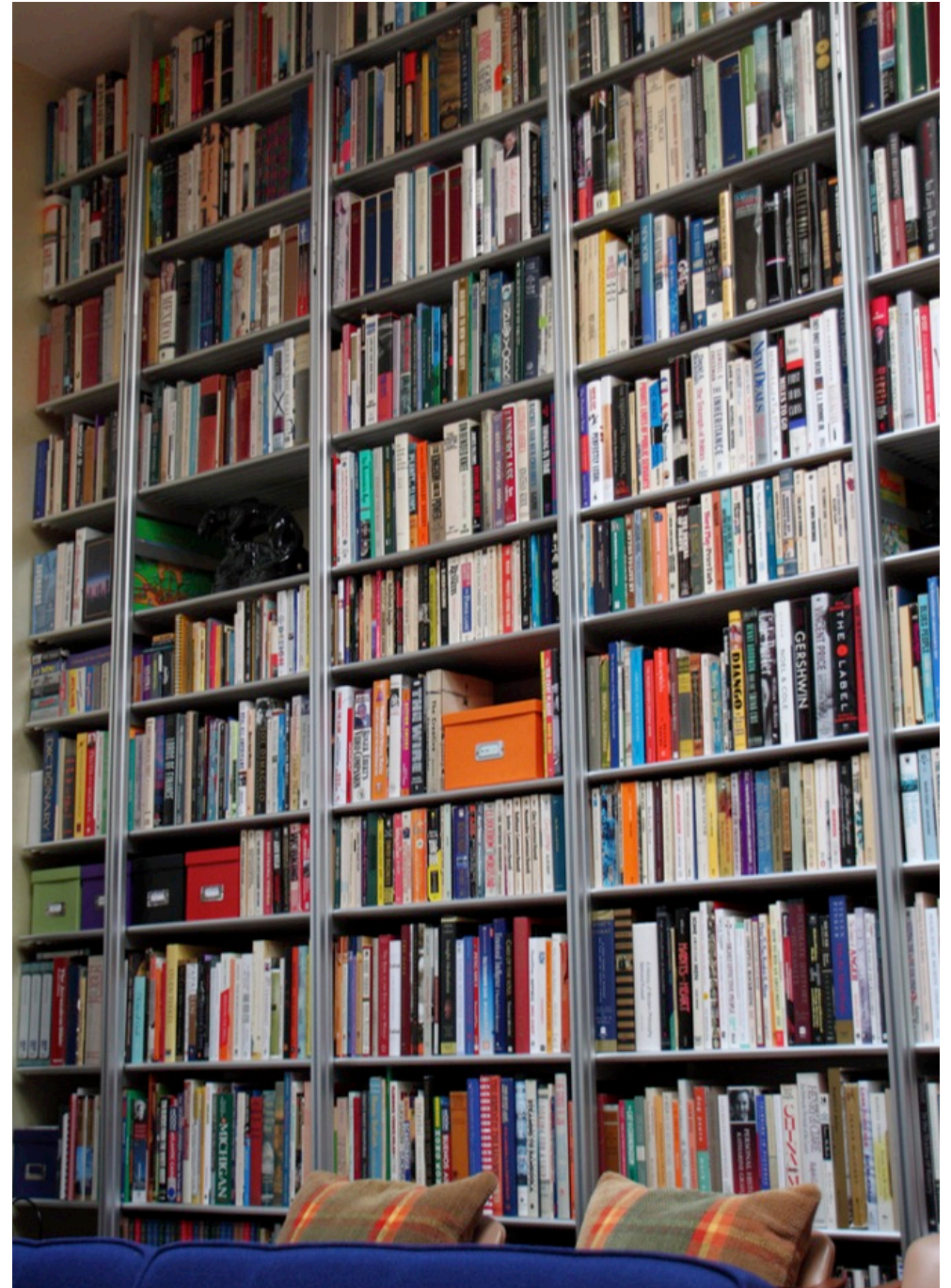
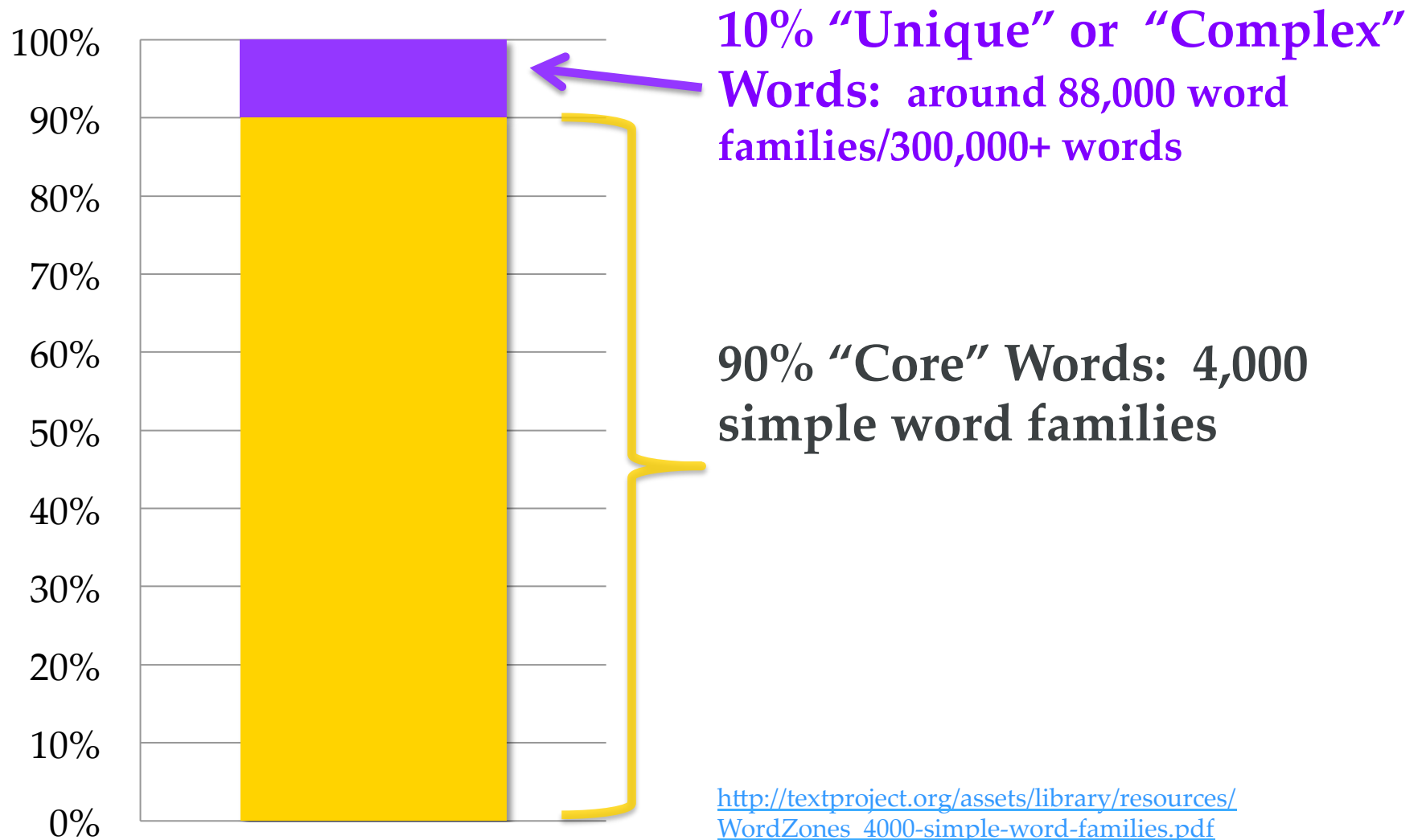**and texts typically have more rare words than conversations/ oral language.**

Word Fact#2: English has a vast repository of words, making it impossible to teach all words.

Word Fact 3: A small group of words does the heavy lifting in text.

10% "Unique" or "Complex" Words: around 88,000 word families/300,000+ words

90% "Core" Words: 4,000 simple word families

http://textproject.org/assets/library/resources/WordZones_4000-simple-word-families.pdf

Core Vocabulary in Common Core Exemplars

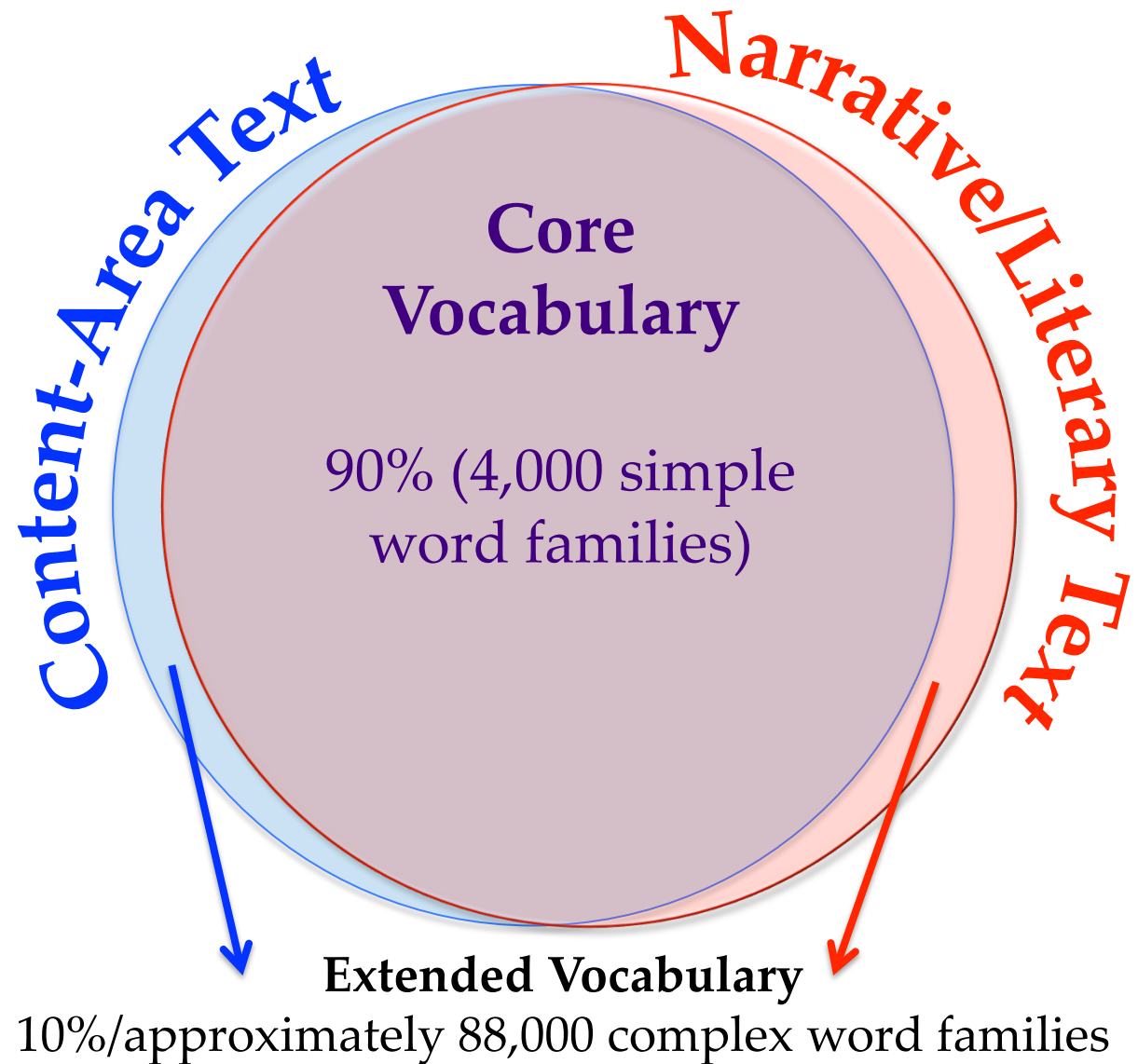| Grade	Narrative	Informational
2-3	.93	.92
4-5	.92	.91
6-8	.93	.87
9-10	.89	.91
11-CCR	.89	.87

Word Fact 4:
Words are part of families.

- relate
- related
- relates
- relating
- relation
- relations
- relatedness

- interrelated
- interrelation
- correlate
- correlation

- relationship
- interrelationship
- age-related

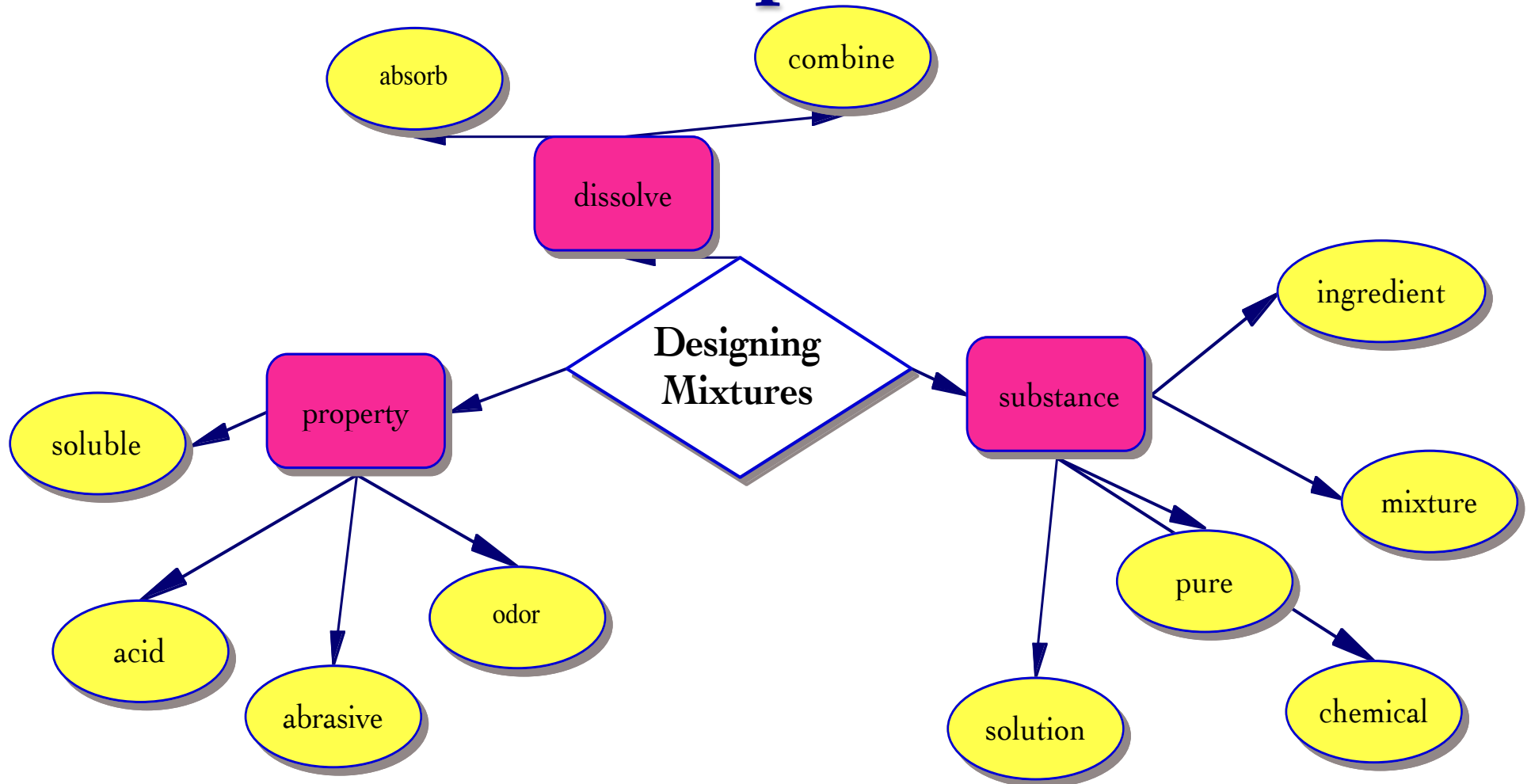**Word Fact 5: Words are parts of networks.**

Content-Area Text

Narrative/Literary Text

Core Vocabulary

90% (4,000 simple word families)

Extended Vocabulary
10%/approximately 88,000 complex word families

The networks in narrative texts are synonyms related to story elements (e.g., traits, actions, and emotions of characters).

Story Word	Beyond Story
amazed	enchanted enthralled spellbound captivated transfixed
fascinated	
marveled	
baffled	confused mystified perplexed confounded
bewildered	
stumped	

Word Fact #6: The networks in informational texts are topical with interrelated concept clusters.

absorb

combine

dissolve

Designing Mixtures

property

soluble

acid

abrasive

odor

substance

ingredient

mixture

pure

chemical

solution

Word Fact #7: Concrete words are learned and retained more readily than abstract words.

Mineral
(min·er·al)

GENERATIVE WORD INSTRUCTION

"Zlateh the Goat" Vocabulary Words	
Blanketed	Thickly covered
Blizzard	Heavy snowstorm
Cuddled	Hold someone closely in your arms
Dense	Crowded or thick
Experienced	Lived through something
Flakes	Thin, small pieces of something
Mighty	Having great strength or force
Mild	Not too harsh
Accustomed	Used to something
Bleating	Crying by a goat or a sheep
Consisted	Made up of
Frequently	often
Hesitation	To pause before doing something
Regained	Got back; recovered
Resist	Refused to accept; go against
Satisfaction	Feeling of being content
Confirm	Support or show to be correct
Involve	To include
Influence	Sway or affect in some other way
Investigate	To examine thoroughly

Generative Word Strategy #1:

- Teach students to anticipate that complex texts will have many new words *and* that their generative word knowledge will assist them in figuring out new words.

Making Challenge Explicit

When 10-year old **Amelia** Mary **Earhart** saw her first plane at a state fair, she was not impressed. "It was a thing of **rusty** wire and wood and looked not at all interesting," she said. It wasn't until **Earhart** attended a **stunt** flying **exhibition,** almost a decade later, that she became seriously interested in **aviation.**

Generative Word Strategy #2

- Expose students to many new topics and the vocabulary associated with those topics, including "stories" about how words work and their histories.

Bird Nests

Most birds build nests, but all nests are not alike. The most common bird nest is the kind made by robins. Robins build nests that look like cups. They make a frame of twigs and sticks and cover it with mud. When this is done, robins line their nest with fine moss, feathers, and hair they find on the ground.

Barn swallows build nests of mud. They make them in barns, close to the roof where it is safe. Sometimes several swallows build nests near one another.

Some birds build their nests in unusual ways. All birds use their beaks to help make their nests, but Tailorbirds use their beak as a needle to sew leaves together. Tailorbirds use threads they gather from the cotton in cotton plants.

Some birds don't build nests at all. Some lay their eggs right on the ground or on a rocky cliff. Auks are birds that lay their eggs on rocky cliffs near the sea.

Auks' eggs are pointed at one end. This shape lets the eggs roll in a circle if another animal tries to move them or if the wind blows hard. Because the eggs can roll in a circle, they do not roll off the cliff.

King penguins also do not build nests. Instead, they tuck their eggs into the folds of skin on their lower belly. The eggs rest on their feet and stay warm in the cold arctic winds.

Some bird species also lay their eggs in the nests of other birds. Cuckoos get other birds to keep their eggs safe and to feed their babies.

Most birds build a new nest each year. Some use the same nest for several years but clean the nest a little each year. Eagles build huge platform nests that they use for several years. However different they are, though, birds build nests that are just right for their families.

Putting Two Words Together

FYI for Kids!

A lot of sports that people play use balls. In basketball, players try to get a ball through a hoop. In baseball, players use a bat to hit a ball. In football, players throw a ball to get it close to the goal.

There are other words with "ball" that describe things that are round. But they are not balls with which you play a game. Meatballs are not used in any sport. But they are great with spaghetti.

Eyeballs help in playing sports. But there isn't a sport called eyeball where teams throw and catch eyeballs. You wouldn't want to be in a game that uses fireballs. If you would ever see a fireball, you should get as far away as fast as you can. Then call 911 right away. You should also watch out if a cannonball is going to be fired. It is round but you don't want to play with a cannonball. You especially do not want to catch a cannonball!

There are some words, though, that have ball in them but it has nothing to do with round. Ballpoint pens make writing a lot easier. It's easy to see how the "point" got into ballpoint pen. But why the ball? That part is in the name because of the tip of a pen is round. There are also rooms that are called ballrooms. People hold balls in ballrooms but they aren't the round kind.

Other words with ball have nothing to do with round. In these words, the "ball" part of the word is not even said the same as ball in baseball or meatball. Ballerina is not ball with "erina." Ballerinas are dancers and the word has nothing to do with ball. A ballot is used by people to vote but it is not round. You don't even say "ball" when you say the word ballot.

Whenever you see ball as part of a word, look carefully. Usually, the word has something to do with games and sports. But remember eyeballs, fireballs, and cannonballs. These balls may be round but they aren't used in sports! Ballerina and ballot show that some words with "ball" have nothing to do with being round.

A Birthday Wish: Rachel Beckwith

In the summer of 2011, Rachel Beckwith had just finished third grade. She was looking forward to riding her bike and playing games like jump rope with her friends. Rachel also liked dancing.

Then she heard someone say that there were children in Africa who did not have clean water to drink. The person was from an organization called charitywater.org, a charity that builds wells for towns in Africa. The wells provide people with clean water. Without wells, people often have to walk many miles to find water, then carry it home in buckets. Often, the water is not clean.

Instead of presents for her ninth birthday, Rachel asked her family and friends to donate $9 for clean water in Africa to charitywater.org. If she could raise $300, 15 people could get clean drinking water.

By the time her birthday came, Rachel had raised $220. That meant that 11 people could get clean water. She told her mom that she would try harder the next year to raise more money for the charity.

A month later, Rachel was critically injured in a car accident. On July 23, 2011, she was taken off life support. She died soon after.

When the news about Rachel's story and her birthday wish spread, people all around the world began to donate money in her name. Some gave $9, some $19, some more. A month later, 30,000 people had given more than $1.2 million. Because of Rachel Beckwith, 60,000 people in more than 100 villages now have clean water to drink.

In her honor, one village put up a sign that reads, "Rachel's great dream, kindness, and vision of a better world will live with and among us forever." Clearly, one person, even a child, can make a difference.

Generative Word Strategy #3:

- Teach students about the multiple uses of many words.
    - Multiple meanings
    - Multiple parts of speech
    - Multiple uses in phrases and idioms

Talk

Tuesday 17

Exceptional **Expressions** *for* **Everyday Events**

Talk as in to speak casually (verb)
- chat/chatter
- scuttlebutt
- gossip
- comment
- smooze
- mention
- say
- utter
- remark

Talk as in to speak (verb)
- speak
- verbalize
- converse
- vocalize
- articulate
- communicate
- confer
- dialogue

Talk as in to speak in a specific way (verb)
- whisper
- flirt
- snap
- shout
- yell
- orate
- lecture
- pontificate
- address
- drone
- stammer
- bark
- slur
- bay
- jabber
- chant
- preach
- boast
- debate
- enunciate
- pronounce
- question
- ask
- declare

Talk as in a conversation (noun)
- conversation
- chat
- discussion
- slang
- dialogue
- chatter
- lecture
- address
- speech
- meeting
- conference
- summit
- utterance
- gossip
- comment
- debate

Talk

COMMON PHRASES
- Talk to me
- Talk back
- Talk over
- We need to talk

IDIOMS
- Talk a mile a minute
- Spit it out
- Talk big
- Talk sense
- Dance around the topic
- Speak up
- Talk it up
- Talk down
- Talk is cheap
- Talk it over
- Talking to a brick wall
- Talk of the town
- Small talk
- Speak of the devil
- Sweet talk
- Talk your ear off
- Talk in circles/riddles
- Talk shop
- Walk the talk
- Talk your way out of a paper bag
- Talk until your blue in the face
- You're a fine one to talk
- Shooting the breeze

THE SPANISH CONNECTION
- conversation / conversación
- discussion / discusión
- to discuss / discutir
- dialogue / diálogo
- to have a dialogue / dialogar
- comment / comentario
- to comment / comentar
- to mention / mencionar
- to verbalize / verbalizar
- to converse / conversar
- to communicate / comunicar
- communication / comunicación
- pronounce / pronunciar
- to debate / debatir
- debate / debate
- enunciate / enunciar
- pronounce / pronunciar
- declare / declarar

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Talk

Tuesday 17

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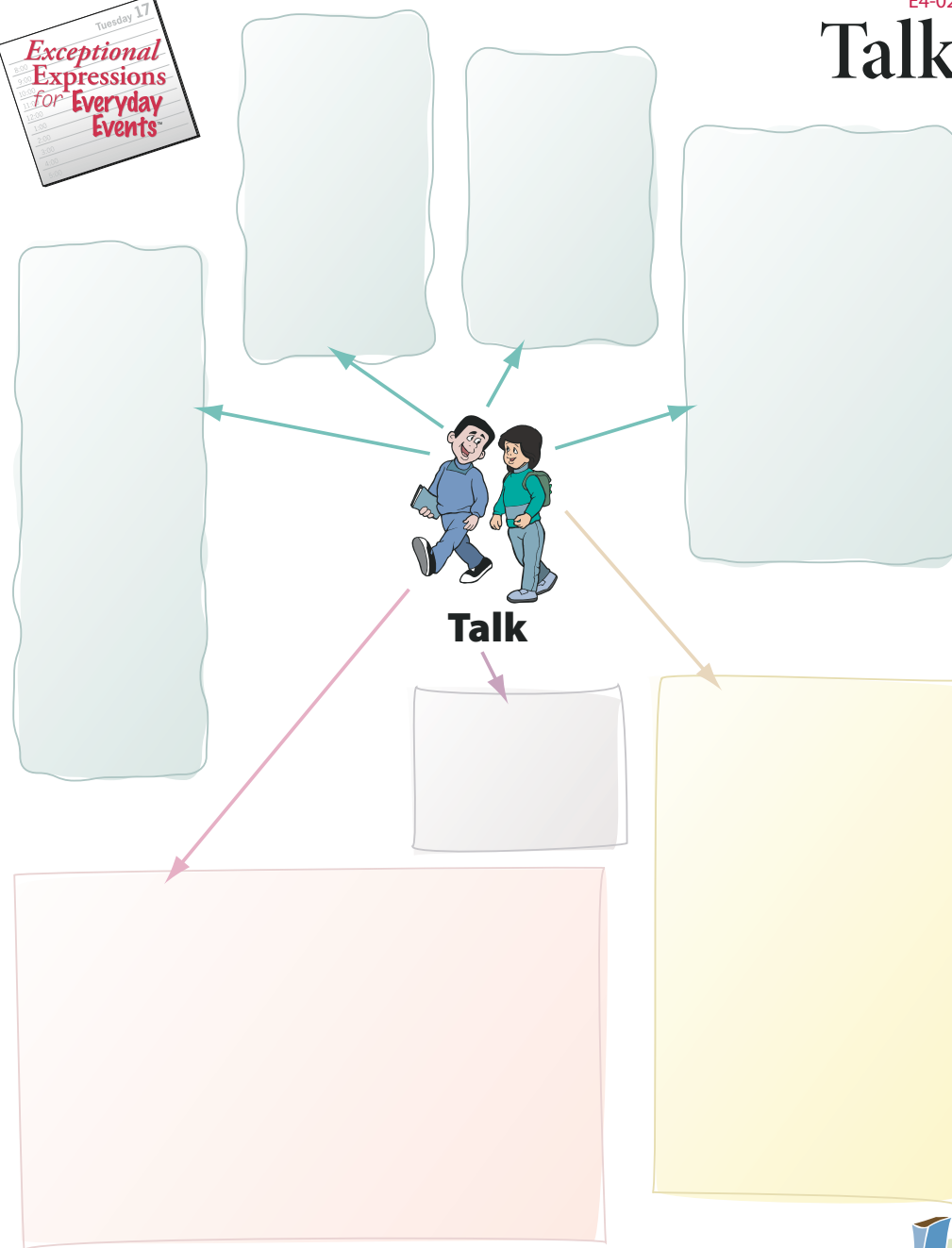
Talk

Generative Word Strategy #4:

- Teach students words in families, not just single words.
  - Attend to compounding as well as inflected endings (i.e., ed, ing, s, 's', er, est) and derivatives (i.e., prefixes and suffixes)

Talk

Exceptional Expressions for Everyday Events
Tuesday 17

Derivational Suffixes
- talker^v
- talkative^v

Inflected Endings
- talks^{n,v}
- talked^v
- talking^v

Compound Words

Talk used as a noun
- pep talk
- sweet talk

Talk used as a verb
- fast talker
- talk show
- walkie-talkie
- talking point
- small talk
- crosstalk
- talking head
- baby talk

Morphological Family for Talk

^{n} Talk used as a noun
^{v} Talk used as a verb

Talk

Exceptional **Expressions** *for* **Everyday Events**

Tuesday 17

Morphological Family for Talk

32 lessons available for *free* download

Listen

Exceptional Expressions for Everyday Events

An everyday event in classrooms revolves around listening—listening to peers, teachers, CDs, DVDs, announcements on the school sound system, and so on. Listening is an integral part of learning.
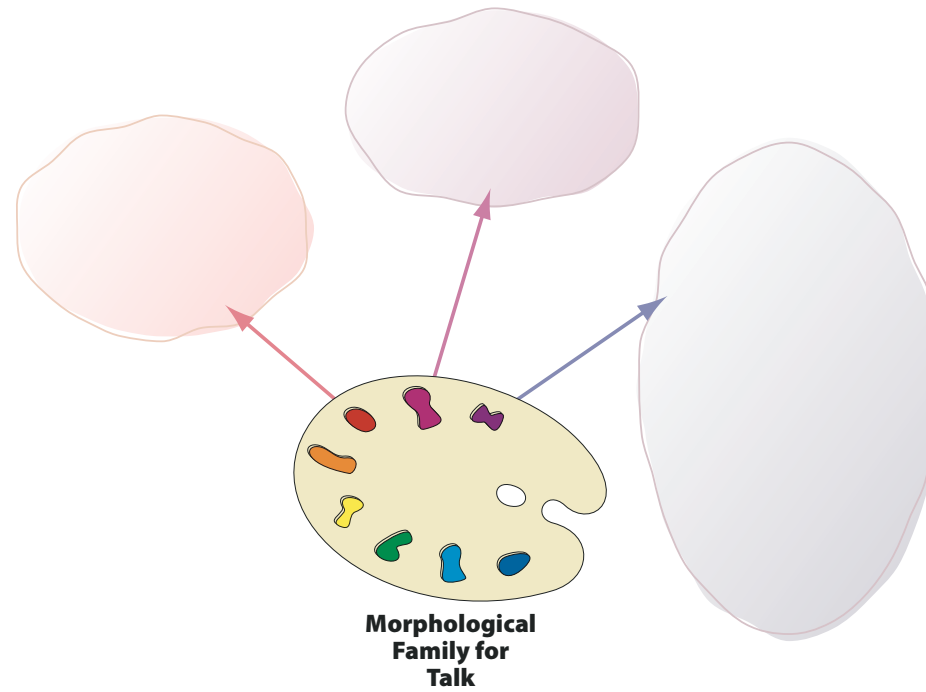
Listen is typically used as a verb. For example, teachers may ask students to listen carefully to a guest speaker. In this instance, *listen* is used as "to hear attentively." Another use of the word *listen* can be exemplified by a student complaining to a friend or teacher that someone isn't listening to what is being said. In this instance, *listen* is used to describe the act of paying attention. This second use of *listen* is as a command as when someone says, "Listen! It's important to hear the announcement."

Although *listen* is commonly used as a verb, *listen* can also be used as a noun. A person can ask that someone give an idea or a song a listen. In this case, *listen* is used to describe trying something out by listening to it.

Follow-Ups

- How is listening different from hearing?

- How might vigilant listening differ from observant listening? Listening circumspectly and listening respectfully?

- What are some things we can do to help others listen to our ideas?

The Spanish Connection

Listen comes from an Old English word that was spoken in the northern region of the British Isles—*lysna*. The Spanish word that means *to listen* is *escuchar*. *Lysna* and *escuchar* are not cognates. None of the synonyms for *listen* have Spanish cognates.

Word Changes

- The idiom "lend me your ears" comes from Shakespeare's JULIUS CAESAR. The meaning of the idiom is to ask people to listen to what is about to be said. The idea is that the speaker wants the listener's undivided attention and is asking for the listener's metaphorical ears.

Generative Word Strategy #5

- Teach students about the rich networks of similar-meaning words from which authors of narratives choose words for traits/attributes, emotions, motion, and communication.

Word Map for Chapters 1-2 of *Charlotte's Web*

specialized vocabulary:
- specimen
- appetite
- litter

MOVEMENT
- approached
- **vanished** (disappeared)

- runt (runty; weakling; infant)

Charlotte's Web Chapters Chs1-2

PROLIFIC NARRATIVE CLUSTERS

Enduring Concept:
- injustice

- saved from an **untimely death**

COMMUNICATION
- **shrieked** (yelled, cried, sobbed)
- **commanded** (demanded)
- **hollered** (replied, suggested)

EMOTIONS/TRAITS
- **enchanted** (blissful, dreamily, delightful, adoring)
- **relieved**
- **absolutely** perfect

Generative Word Strategy #6

- With the vocabulary of informational texts, teach students about relationships among concepts of critical topics

Word Map for Chapters 1-2 of *The Tarantula Scientist*

The Tarantula Scientist

Enduring Understandings:

(Species)
• **tarantula**

• **defense** (barbed hairs, venom, fangs)

• **paralyzes**

(Body parts)
• **exoskeleton/exoskeletal**

• **cuticle**

• tarsi

• spinnerets

• pedipalps

• **burrow** (tunnel)

• **arachnologist** (specialty, laboratory)

• predator (prey)
• vibrations
• periodically

General Science/ Academic

Essential Linguistic Content

superspider, understudied

• Goliath birdeater (pinktoe, spearhead, spiderman, cockroach, rose hair)

Generative Word Strategy #7

- When appropriate, introduce new concepts with pictures and illustrations.

Tarsi

Pedipalps

Spinneret

Cuticle (external "skin")
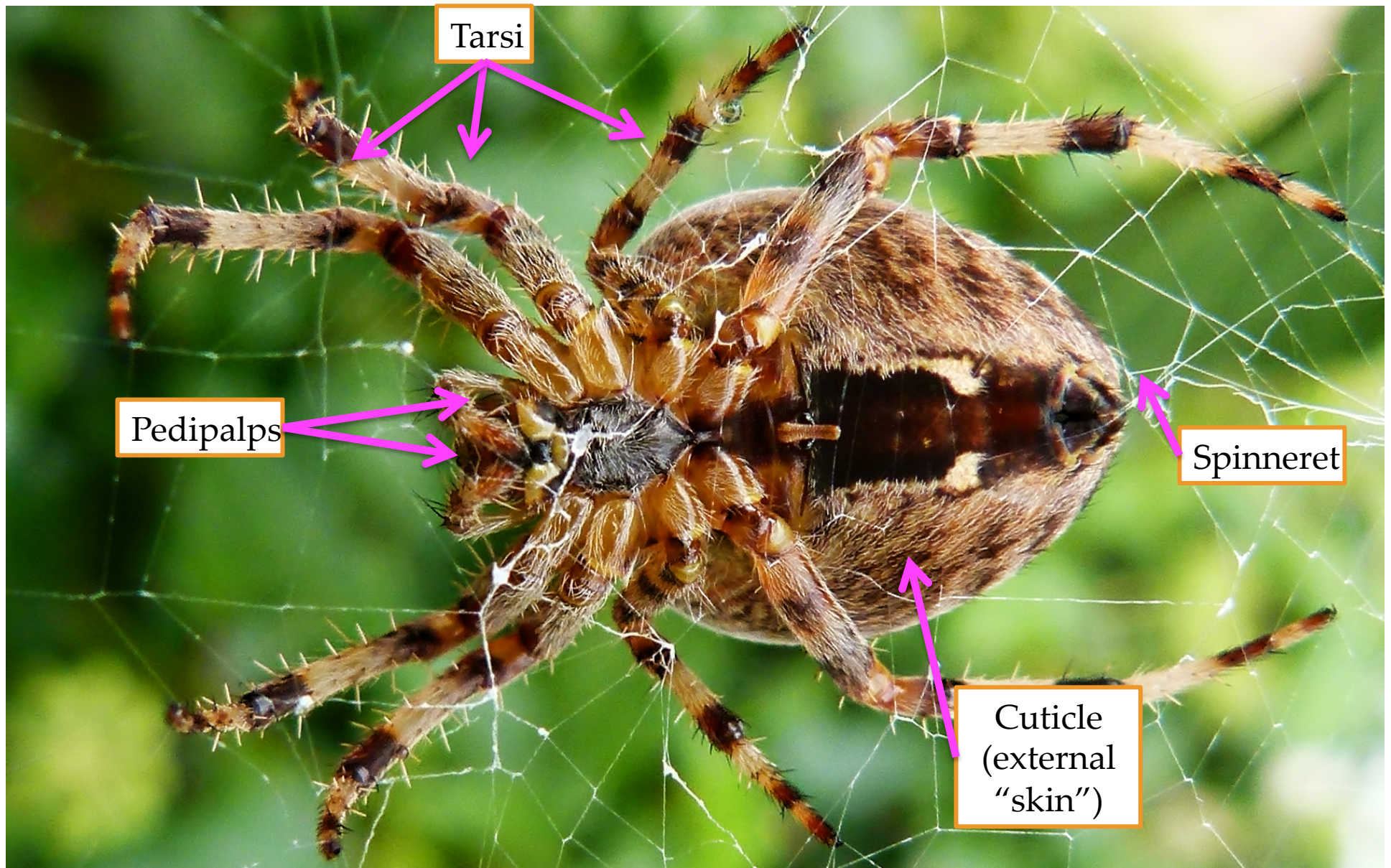
Children, like adults, learn concrete words more readily than abstract words. A way to close the vocabulary gap for students (especially English Learners and students of poverty) is to support them in connecting written words and the concrete objects these words represent. TextProject Word Pictures provides a vault of carefully chosen pictures to assist educators in making such connections.

Here are the TextProject Word Pictures titles, organized by usage.

Core Vocabulary

The core vocabulary consists of the 4,000 simple word families which account for 90% of the words in written English. Function words (e.g., the, of) and general academic words (e.g., compare, relate) are prominent in the core vocabulary but there are also many concept words which can be pictured.

Topics

Core Vocabulary

Literature Words

Many of important concepts in literature can be easily explained using pictures. This set of *TextProject Word Pictures* provides pictures of concepts that are critical to particular literary texts.

QuickReads

Originally designed to supplement QuickReads print edition, TextProject: Word Pictures helps English Language Learners connect key words to concepts they may already know.

Content Area

Vocabulary in content area can represent key ideas. For example, vocabulary from a study of plant may include *photosynthesis*, *roots*, and *leaves*. Without the understanding of these key vocabulary, a student's understanding of a topic may be deficient. This set of *TextProject Word Pictures* provides pictures of imagable concepts that are critical to particular content areas.

SUMMARY

Word Facts	Generative Word Strategies
1. More rare words in texts than talk.	1. Teach students to expect new words in texts.
2. Many more English words than school time.	2. Expose students to many topics & use of context
3. Small group of words does heavy lifting in text.	3. Teach multiple uses of words.
4. Words are part of families.	4. Teach words in families.
5. Networks in narratives are sets of synonyms.	5. Teach networks of similar-meaning words in stories.
6. Networks in informational texts are topical.	6. Teach networks of concepts in topics.
7. Concrete words are learned faster than abstract ones.	7. When possible, teach new concepts with pictures.

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TextProject Topics

CCSS
Common Core State Standards

Text Complexity

Topic of the Month
Vocabulary

Vocabulary Playlist

We've gathered our videos on vocabulary and created a new playlist on our YouTube channel! Take a look at past presentations and webinars Freddy has recorded on the topic of vocabulary!

Student Resources

Free sets of texts

Summer Reads
Stop the summer slump

Beginning Reads
"Read to learn" while learning to read

Talking Points for Kids
Increase text-based discussions

FYI for Kids!
A magazine-based reading program

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Use everyday words to teach new words

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Use pictures to teach complex words

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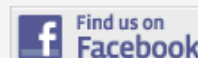
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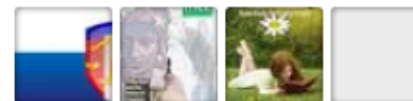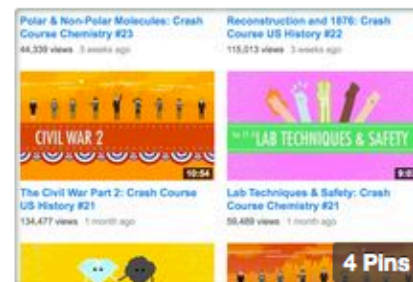
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