

Vocabulary Matters:

The Role of Core Vocabulary in Complex Text

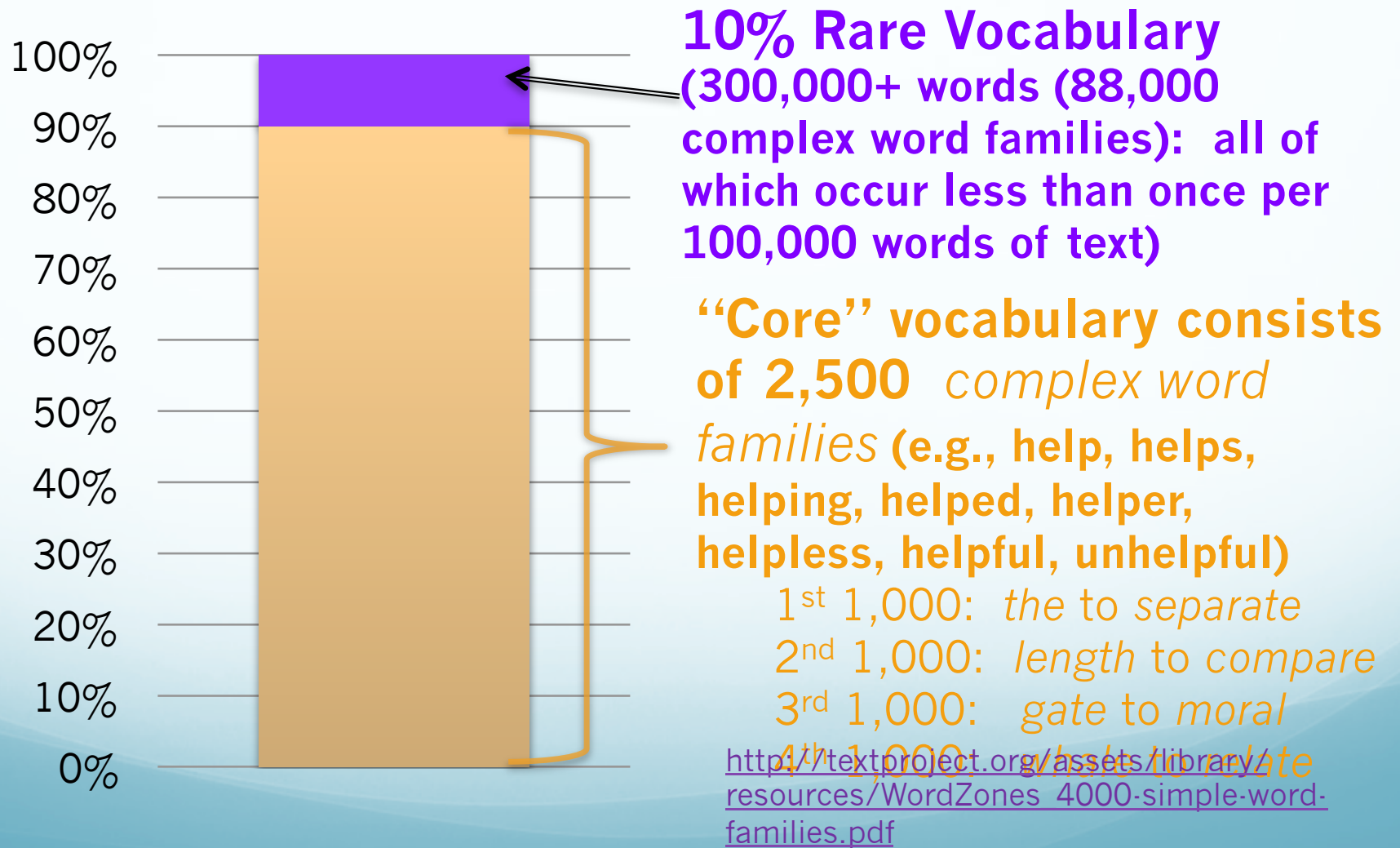
Elfrieda H. Hiebert
TextProject & UC-Santa Cruz



- Why is the core vocabulary important?
- What are the features of words in the core vocabulary?
- How do teachers and programs support students' facility with the core vocabulary?

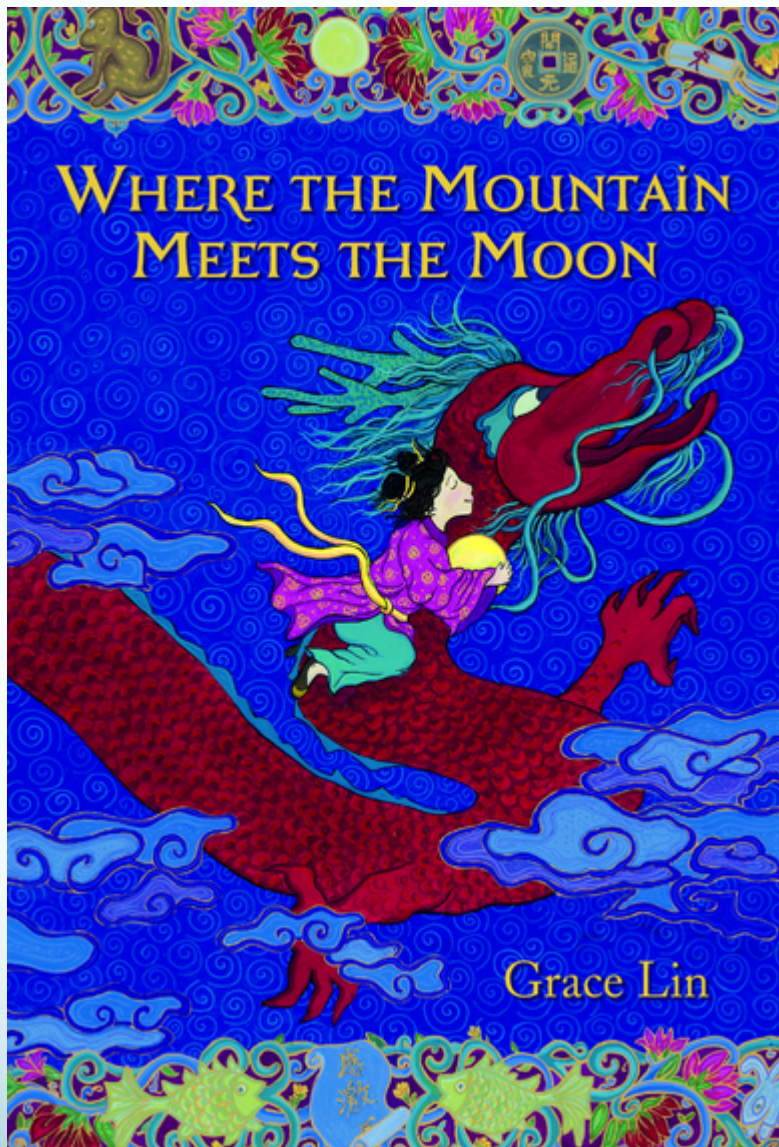
**Why is the core vocabulary
important?**

The Core and The Rare Vocabularies

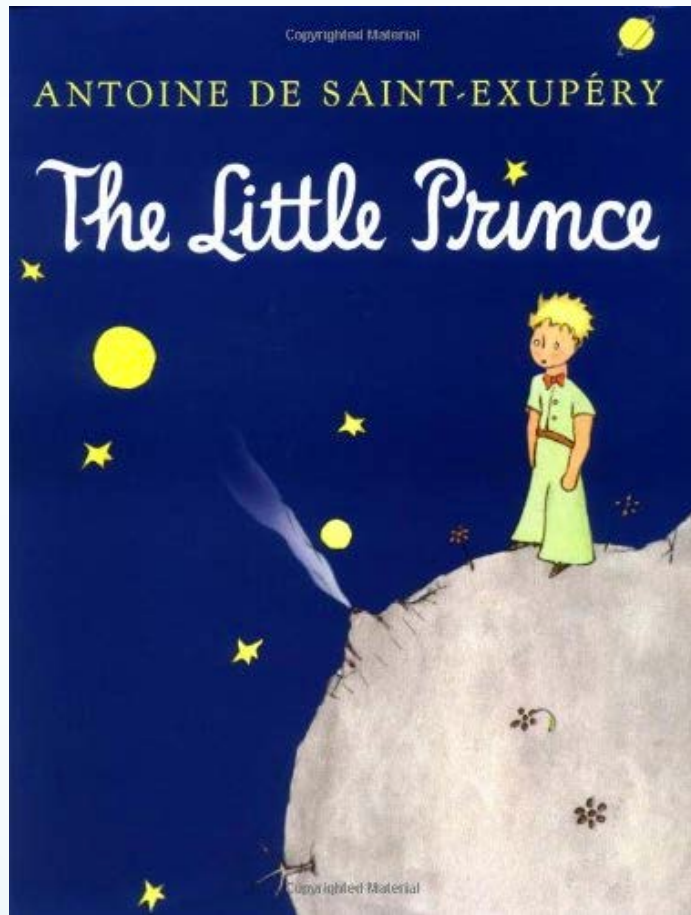


Core Vocabulary in Common Core Exemplars

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

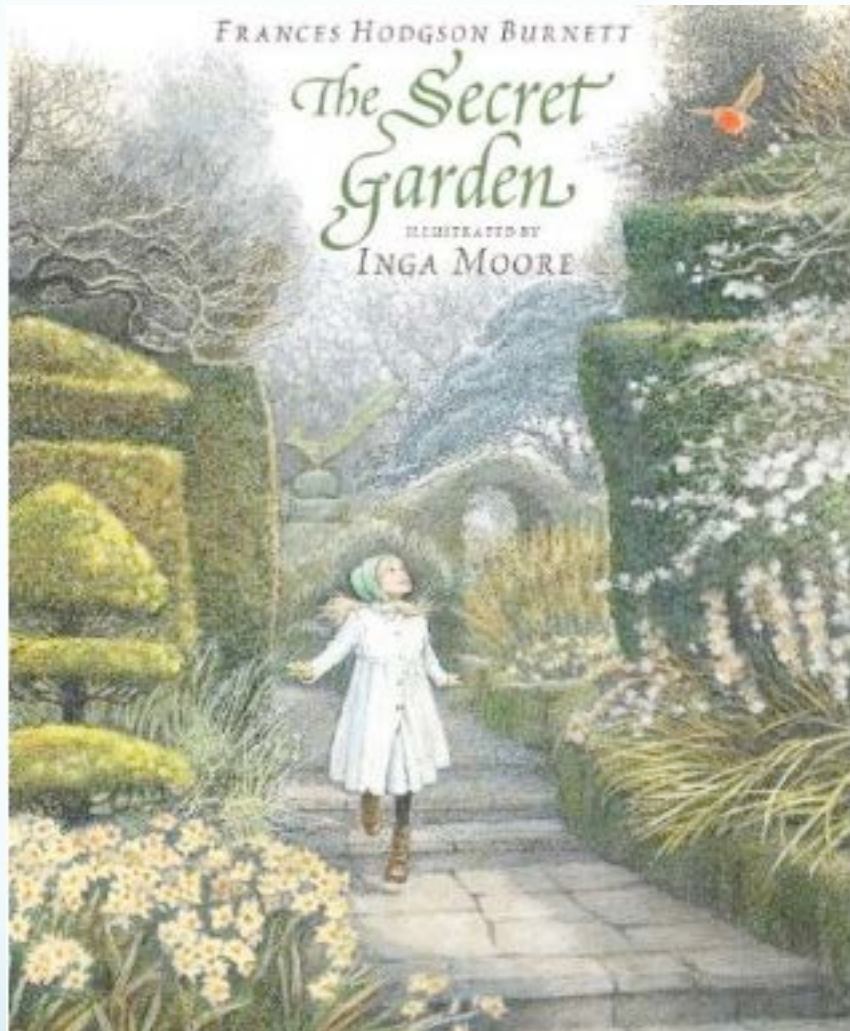


One of the houses in this village was so small that its wood boards, held together by the roof, made one think of a bunch of matches tied with a piece of **twine**. Inside, there was barely enough room for three people to sit around the table which was lucky.



Once when I was six years old I saw a magnificent picture in a book, called True Stories From Nature, about the primeval forest. It was a picture of a boa constrictor in the act of swallowing an animal. Here is a copy of the drawing.

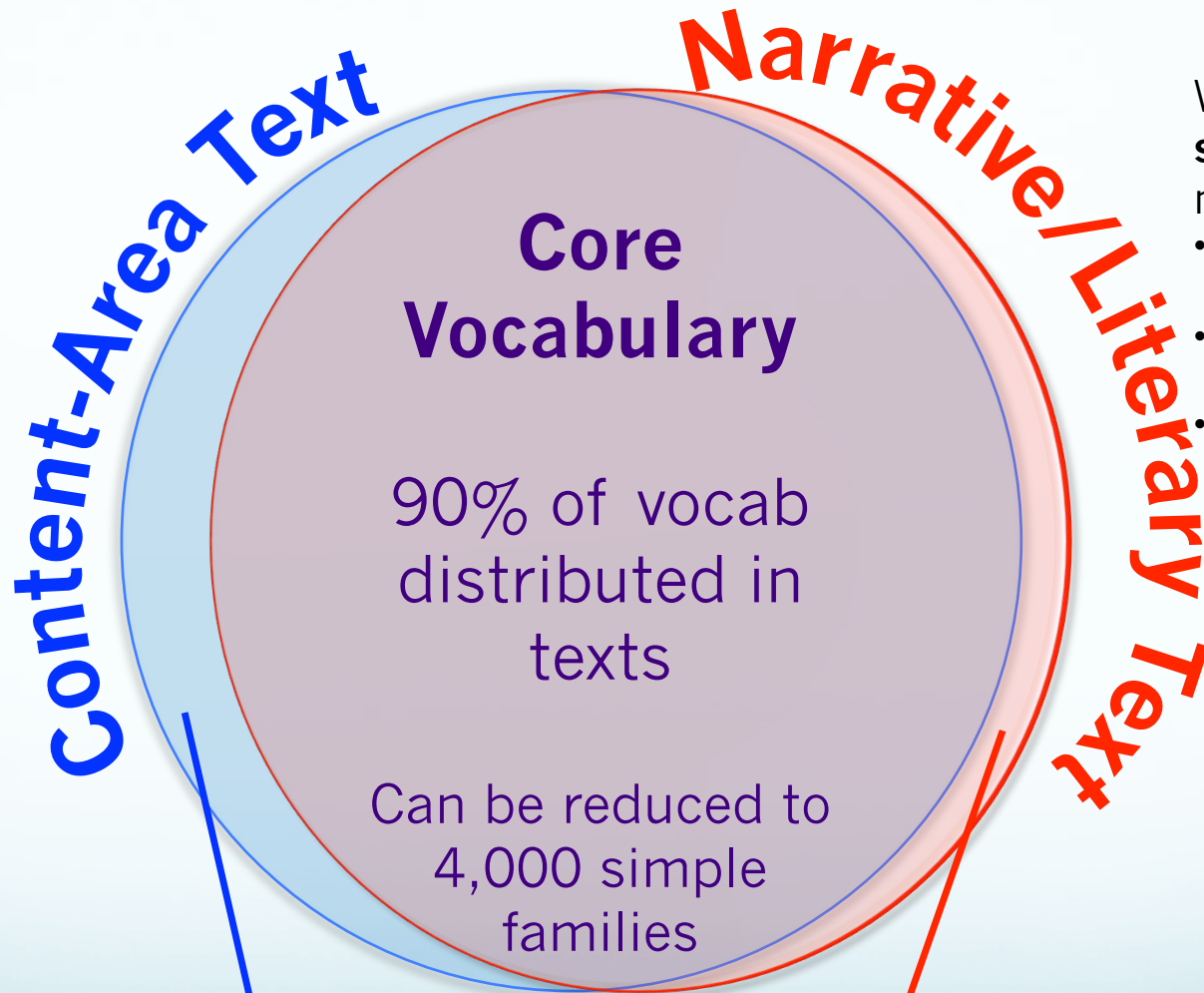
In the book, it said, Boa constrictors swallow their prey whole



“Well enow. Th’ carriage is waitin’ outside for thee.” A brougham stood on the road before the little outside platform. Mary saw that it was a smart carriage and that it was a smart footman who helped her in. His long waterproof coat and the waterproof covering of his hat were shining and dripping with rain

90-10 Vocabulary Distribution in Texts

Words belong to **conceptual** networks such as habitat of a spider, body parts of a spider.



Words belong to **semantic** networks

- communicating (*shriek, yell*)
- emotions (*relieved, angry*)
- motion/action (*tagged along*).

Extended Vocabulary
10% of vocab distributed in texts.
Approximately 300,000 words

To Learn More:

- **A Generative Vocabulary (webinar):** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k7CH1zI9xyo&list=PLwlychIT3IChEwaT8FSrXQA-_kwU0q8X3
- **Generative Vocabulary (article):** <http://textproject.org/library/research-digest/generative-vocabulary-instruction/>

What are the features of words
in the core vocabulary?

Level A

Two men had been hiking all day long in the Alps, mountains in Europe. They were tired and decided to take a shortcut home. Then they saw something brown in the snow. "What could that be?" they asked. They stopped to look. They saw it was a body.

The hikers did not know what to do. Had another hiker had an accident? The body looked very old. Maybe the accident had happened a long time ago. The hikers had a camera. They took a picture. When they got home, they took the picture to the police.

Three days later the hikers were famous. They had found the oldest man in the world!

Level C

Baseball was the most popular sport on the island of Puerto Rico and it still is today. Young Roberto played the game whenever he was not working. He played very, very well. He could throw and catch the ball better than the other boys in the village.

When he was a young teenager, Roberto would go to baseball games. He liked to watch the local teams play. He especially liked to watch his favorite player who played in the outfield. This player was a black man. Roberto was a black teenager. Seeing the outfielder gave Roberto hope that he might become a real baseball player one day.

Level E

The Flying Dutchman is a legend about a ghost ship that is doomed to be on the sea forever. According to the legend, if you gaze into the eye of a storm, you will notice the presence of the ghost ship and its crew, hopelessly trying to reach port, but never actually getting there. Some sailors believe seeing the doomed ship means a terrible death at sea awaits them.

There are many versions of this legend. As you read the version that follows, keep in mind this information, which will help you understand more about the plot and characters. A Dutch person is someone who is from Holland, a country in Europe. Long ago, at the time this legend takes place, Holland had a colony called the Dutch East Indies, which was located in Southeast Asia.

Feature 1: Concrete Words

- 21% are concrete:
 - refrigerator, camera, microscope
 - blanket, basket
 - turtle, elephant
 - cookie, apple

Feature 2: General Academic Words

- 18% are on Core Academic Vocabulary list (Davies & Gardner, 2013): These words are typically abstract.
- Examples: apply, independent, function

Feature 3: Morphological Families

- *Prefixes and Suffixes (and inflected endings):*
Especially high with General Academic Vocabulary
- **Examples:**
 - apply: applied, applies, applying applicable, applicant, applicant's, applicants, applicants', application, applications
 - Independent: independence, independently, independents
 - function: functional, functionally, functioned, functioning, functions, malfunction

Feature 3: Morphological Families (continued)

- *Compound Words:* Many short, abstract words and many concrete words are part of compound words
- *Examples:*
 - any: anyone, anyway, anymore, anything, anybody, anywhere, anyhow, anytime
 - ball: ball-point, ball-shaped, ballpoint, ballroom, baseball, basketball, cannonball, eyeball, fireball, football, handball, meatball, snowball, softball, volleyball

Feature 4: Many Meanings (Polysemous)

	verb	noun	adjective
apply	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•apply for a job•rules apply to everyone•apply your skills•apply the lotion		
independent			<ul style="list-style-type: none">•more independent as she grew older•India became an independent nation.•an independent report
function	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•no longer able to function	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•function of the heart•official functions•mathematical quantity that changes according to	

How do teachers and programs support students' facility with the core vocabulary?

Word Lists & Flash Cards

D

data
debate
decade
decline
deduce
define
definite
demonstrate
denote
deny
depress
derive
design
despite
detect
deviate
device
devote
differentiate
dimension
diminish
discrete

E

economy
edit
element
eliminate
emerge
emphasis
empirical
enable
encounter
energy
enforce
enhance
enormous
ensure
entity
environment
equate
equip
equivalent
erode
error
establish

abandon

give up with the intent of never claim-
ing, doing or caring for again

Click to flip

Click to flip

Differences in Words =
Differences in Instruction

1. Concrete Words: Images

valley (val ley)



canyon (can yon)

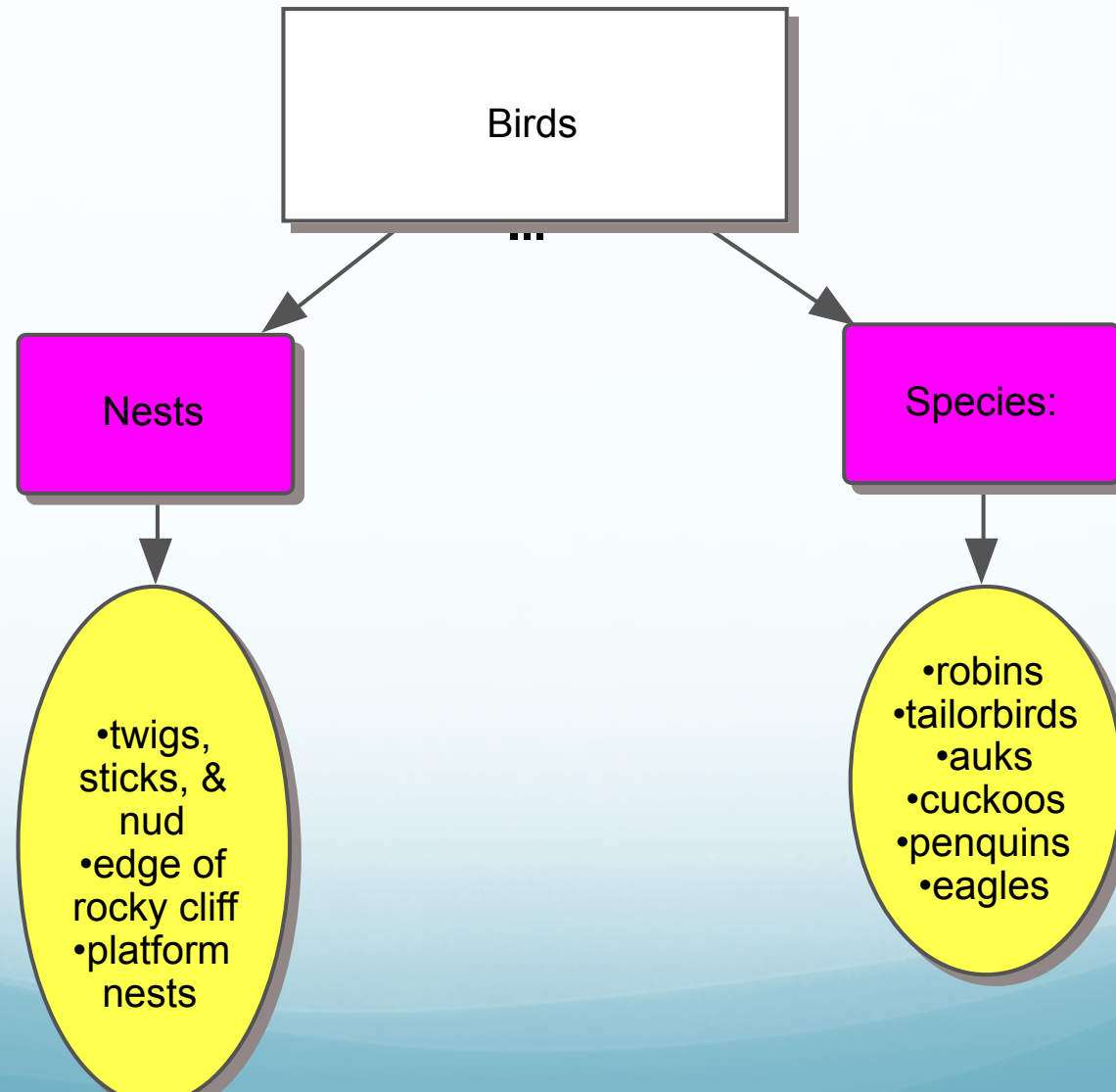


http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/f/f9/USA_09847_Grand_Canyon_Luca_Galuzzi_2007.jpg/1280px-USA_09847_

cave (cave)



2. Word Maps for Content Words



3. Morphological Families: Writing & Reading

Example: Put the right word from the “apply” family into the space.

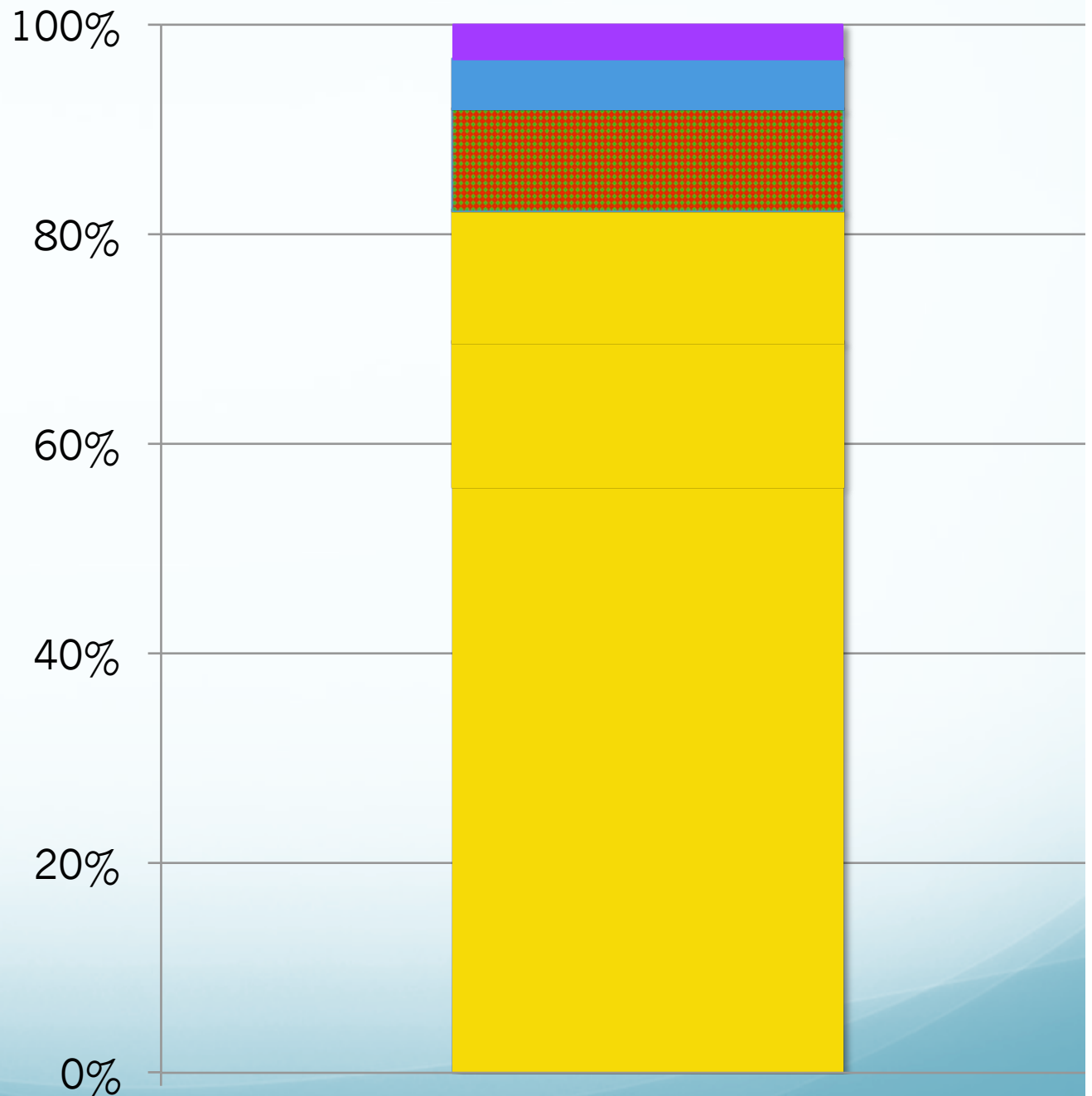
- Ellen Ocha’s friends said she should try to become an astronaut. So in 1985, she decided to _____ for a job in the space program. (from *Ellen Ocha*)
- Often, adults with difficulty reading try to hide their problem from others. For example, Mr. Ellison explains, it’s not uncommon for someone _____ for a job to ask if he or she can take home an _____. There, the _____ can ask a friend or even a daughter or son to help fill out the form. (from *Never too Late*)
- When Marian was eighteen, that she finally went to a music school and patiently waited in line for an _____. But the girl behind the counter helped everyone except Marian. Was she invisible? Finally, the girl said, We don't take colored. (from *When Marian Sang*)

4. Read, Read, Read

- Including texts that support students in gaining automaticity with core groups of words

Distribution of Words

Appearances per
1,000,000 words:
Yellow: 100+
Green: 99-30
Red: 29-10
Blue: 9 to 1
Purple: Fewer than 1



Texts that Support Students Up The Staircase of Core Vocabulary



1180 Word Families (29-10 appearances per million)

750 Word Families (99-30 appearances per million)

570 Word Families (100+ appearances per million)

Putting Two Words Together

volume 3
issue 2



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.

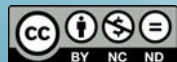
Eyeballs help in playing sports. But there isn’t a sport called eyeball where teams throw and catch eyeballs. You wouldn’t want to be in a game that uses fireballs. If you would ever see a fireball, you should get as far away as fast as you can. Then call 911 right away. You should also watch out if 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.



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A Birthday Wish: Rachel Beckwith

volume 5
issue 1



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.

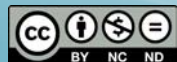
By the time her birthday came, Rachel had raised \$220. That meant that 11 people could get clean water.

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.



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Physical Exercise



Written by Elfrieda H. Hiebert

What *Some People* Say About: Physical Education

Pacifica Examiner: Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I am in the 4th grade at North Shore Elementary. Every week on Friday we have a PE class. I used to hate PE classes. We used to just play games like football and basketball. I am not very good at them. Now we do exercises and play other sports. We run relays and play tennis. Our PE teacher, Mr. Kroger, says these skills will last us a lifetime.

Now our principal, Ms. Blair, says that our school is going to get rid of PE class because our test scores are so low. She also said that we are getting enough exercise after school and at recess, and that we don't need PE class. I am not very good at soccer and basketball, and so I am not signed up for after-school sports. PE class is one of the only times that I

Talking Points

For Kids

get to run around and have fun. I think it is important to have a time during school where we learn about exercise, just like we learn about math and science. Please don't get rid of our PE class!

Sincerely,
Gregory Diller



Level A

Two men had been **hiking** all day long in the Alps, mountains in Europe. They were tired and decided to take a **shortcut** home. Then they saw something brown in the snow. "What could that be?" they asked. They stopped to look. They saw it was a body.

The hikers did not know what to do. Had another hiker had an accident? The body looked very old. Maybe the accident had happened a long time ago. The hikers had a **camera**. They took a picture. When they got home, they took the picture to the police.

Three days later the hikers were famous. They had found the oldest man in the world!

Level C

Baseball was the most popular sport on the island of **Puerto Rico** and it still is today. Young **Roberto** played the game whenever he was not working. He played very, very well. He could throw and catch the ball better than the other boys in the village.

When he was a young **teenager**, Roberto would go to baseball games. He liked to watch the local teams play. He especially liked to watch his favorite player who played in the **outfield**. This player was a black man. Roberto was a black teenager. Seeing the outfielder gave Roberto hope that he might become a real baseball player one day.

Level E

The Flying Dutchman is a legend about a ghost ship that is doomed to be on the sea forever. According to the legend, if you gaze into the eye of a storm, you will notice the presence of the ghost ship and its crew, hopelessly trying to reach port, but never actually getting there. Some sailors believe seeing the doomed ship means a terrible death at sea awaits them.

There are many versions of this legend. As you read the version that follows, keep in mind this information, which will help you understand more about the plot and characters. A Dutch person is someone who is from Holland, a country in Europe. Long ago, at the time this legend takes place, Holland had a colony called the Dutch East Indies, which was located in Southeast Asia.

Level C: *cause*

One of the first people to have the idea that ice may have **caused** this was a man named Bernard Kuhn.

The amounts of gases in our air can also make the earth colder. Some scientists believe that the tall mountains helped **cause** the ice ages. When rain falls, it washes away the dirt on big mountains. The gases that were trapped under the dirt go into the air. The gases can block the light and heat from the sun. And that could make it colder.

Oddly enough, even a blast of heat can **cause** the earth to get cold. When a volcano explodes, it blows ash and smoke into the sky. The ash and smoke block the sunlight. The earth gets darker. It also gets colder. Smoke that lasts for months could spread a long way. This can **cause** an ice age to begin.



This should help you learn this word.
Press Go On to continue.

cause



En Español
causa 

A cause is the reason something happens. A cause brings about an effect or result. The cause of the fire was a candle that tipped over. There are many causes of pollution.

Word Family

causes

caused

causing

Word In Use

Getting up late was the cause for my missing the bus.

The snowstorm caused the road to be closed for three days.



Level G: *estimate*

What are the advantages of purchasing a hybrid car? For one thing a hybrid is economical. The hybrid's smaller and lighter engine and its electric power supply make for a much better use of fuel. It is **estimated** that a hybrid can get up to 55-60 miles per gallon in city driving. It is also **estimated** that it provides a whopping 20-30 more miles per gallon than a standard car! In fact, one hybrid on the road today can go about 700 miles on a single tank of gasoline and, given the upward direction of gasoline prices, a hybrid car could take a big bite out of a driver's gasoline bills.



This should help you learn this word.
Press Go On to continue.

estimate En Español
estimar 

To estimate is to guess carefully or calculate. We estimate when we have some information but not definite facts. We are estimating a person's age or height by just looking at them. A flight's estimated arrival time is when it is expected to land if there are no delays.

Word Family**estimates** **estimating** **estimated****Word In Use**

The coach estimates the team will need three buses to travel to the game.

We are estimating we will arrive about 20 minutes late because of the traffic.





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Vocabulary Matters

Join Freddy on 5/7/14 at 12noon Pacific for a FREE webinar. Freddy will discuss why gaining proficiency with core vocabulary is important for students in their journey toward college and career reading readiness. She will also explore effective strategies educators can use to scaffold students' vocabulary development.

To register for this FREE webinar, please visit Reading Plus's [registration website](#)!

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