

Supporting Learning with Generative Vocabulary

A row of ten books with colorful spines (yellow, orange, red, green, blue) and decorative patterns, set against a blurred background of warm colors.

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TextProject &
University of California,
Santa Cruz



Idea 1: The number of words in English far outnumbers opportunities to teach each individually.

**ENGLISH HAS THREE DISTINCT
MORPHOLOGICAL SYSTEMS.**





ACTION 1: Have explicit conversations about rare vocabulary in ALL texts



Conversations about New Words in New Texts

Why?

- Develop the understanding that every complex text has new, challenging vocabulary. Vocabulary instruction gives students the means for figuring out new words in text, not instruction in every single word that might appear in new texts.

When?

- Talks about the vocabulary of new texts need to occur across a school year (with extra doses prior to assessment periods).

How?

- Take a portion of the text (25 or 50 words is enough). Use a highlighter to mark the words in the 1,000-2,000 most-frequent words (list on textproject.org)
- Mark the words that are potentially challenging with a different colored highlighter. (List of 4,000 simple word families at:
<http://textproject.org/classroom-materials/lists-and-forms/lists/word-zones-for-5-586-most-frequent-words/>)

--An example of a snippet of text for a board/projection is the following, which comes from a sample assessment for Grade 7
[http://www.parcconline.org/samples/english-language-arts-literacy/grade-7-reading-informational-text-\(Amelia-Earhart-2\)](http://www.parcconline.org/samples/english-language-arts-literacy/grade-7-reading-informational-text-(Amelia-Earhart-2))

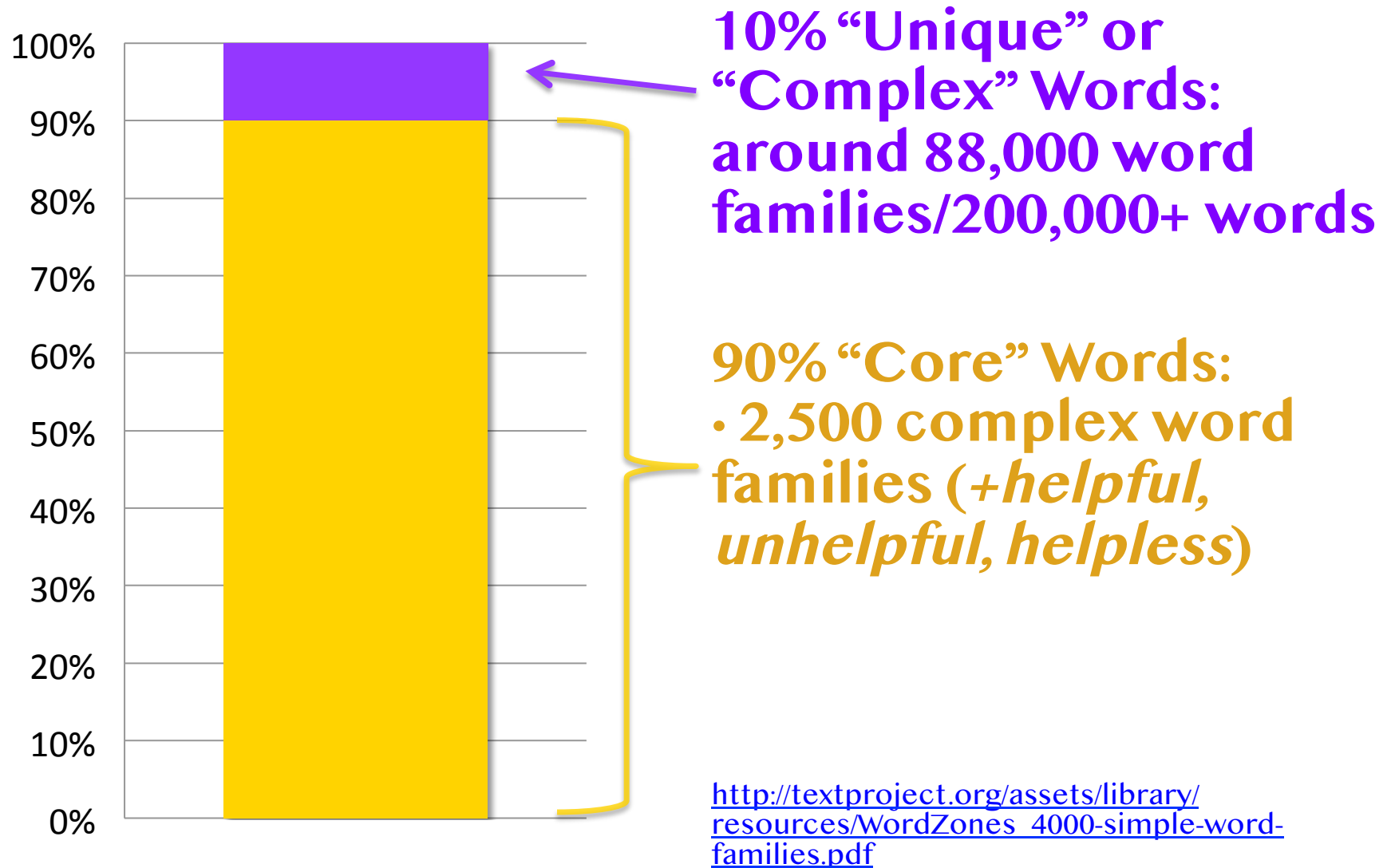
When 10-year old Amelia Mary Earhart saw her first plane at a state fair, she was not impressed. “It was a thing of rusty wire and wood and looked not at all interesting,” she said. It wasn’t until Earhart attended a stunt flying exhibition, almost a decade later, that she became seriously interested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

Idea	Action	Open-Access Resource
1. English has more words than can be taught.	1. Teach students to expect new words in texts.	1. Talking Points for Teachers: New Words in New Texts
2. A small group of words does the heavy lifting in English.	2. Increase volume of reading	2. •FYI for Kids •ReadWorks.org
3. Rare words in narrative texts belong to synonym networks; those in informational texts in topic networks.	3. Teach students prolific synonym networks & organize topics into networks.	3. •Super Synonym Sets for Stories (S4) •Exceptional Expressions in Everyday Events (E4)
4. Teach vocabulary in the service of developing bodies of knowledge.	4. Develop bodies of knowledge in ELA instruction.	4. •Intentional Read-Aloud Curriculum •ReadWorks Lessons •Word Pictures



Idea 2: A small group of words does the heavy lifting in English.

The distribution of words in written English



Texas Released Passages

How did the animal shelter know that Scrub belonged to Noble? How did the workers there know how to contact her? All this information was available because of the microchip that had been placed under Scrub's skin many years earlier. A microchip is a computer chip about the size of a grain of rice that is used to keep track of pets. The chip is placed under an animal's skin with a needle, usually between the pet's shoulder blades. Once the chip is in place, the pet does not feel it anymore. Microchips have helped thousands of owners get their lost pets back.

Mrs. Snavin looked at the screen, and then she looked at this book, and then back at the screen again. Then she shook her head and let out this big sigh. I could tell she was almost ready to call Mrs. Reed.

I've always liked computers, and I know how to do some stuff with them. Like turn them on and open programs, play games and type, make drawings, and build Web pages, things like that. So I got up from my desk, pointed at the screen, and said, "Mrs. Snavin, if you double-click on that little thing right there, then the program will start running. And then you click on this, and that opens up the part about number lines."

In 1917, Mrs. Baird bought a car. The family removed the seats from the back and filled the space with baked goods. They painted a sign on the side of the car that read Eat More Mrs. Baird's Bread. Delivering by car meant that even more people could enjoy Mrs. Baird's bread.

Today the people who work at Mrs. Baird's Bakeries are just as proud of their bread as Mrs. Baird was. Mrs. Baird's Bakeries operates four factories across the state of Texas. These large bakeries are located in Fort Worth, Houston, San Antonio, and Lubbock. Hundreds of schoolchildren visit the Fort Worth and Houston bakeries on field trips each year. At the end of the tour, everyone receives a warm slice of fresh bread. Yum!

At many hospitals around the country, kids can attend a teddy bear clinic. Children pretend their bear has gotten sick and take it to see a doctor. The doctors and nurses use the bears to help teach the children about their body, how to stay physically fit and healthy, and what to expect when they visit a doctor.

Teddy bears have even helped animals. In a national park in England, a young horse named Breeze got lost from his mother. Workers at a horse farm found Breeze and gave him food, but they thought he still needed his mother. So the workers gave Breeze a four-foot-tall teddy bear named Buttons. The young horse cuddled next to the teddy bear and slept.

Examples of the Words in the Core Vocabulary

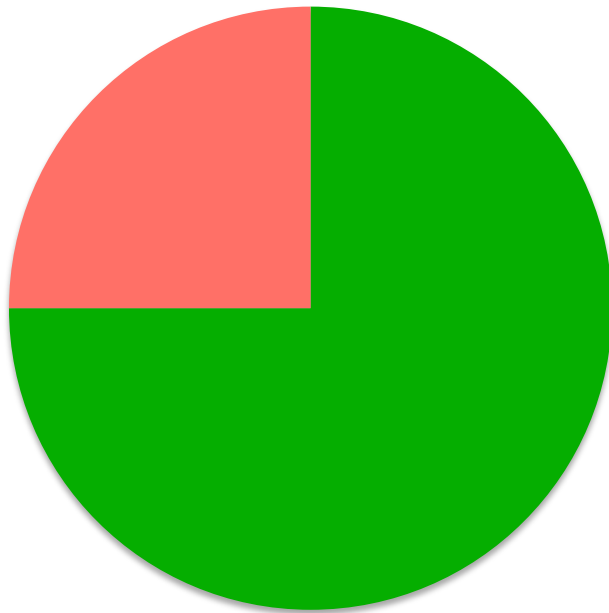
	words
1st 100	the, by, no, through, must
101-300	long, great, put, last, family
301-1,000	power, north, story, strong, answer
1,001-1,500	valley, imagine, motion, nearby, importance
1,501-2,000	character, responsible, design, presence, trail
2001-2,500	mixture, discovery, civilization, attitude, assume



Action 2: INCREASE VOLUME OF READING

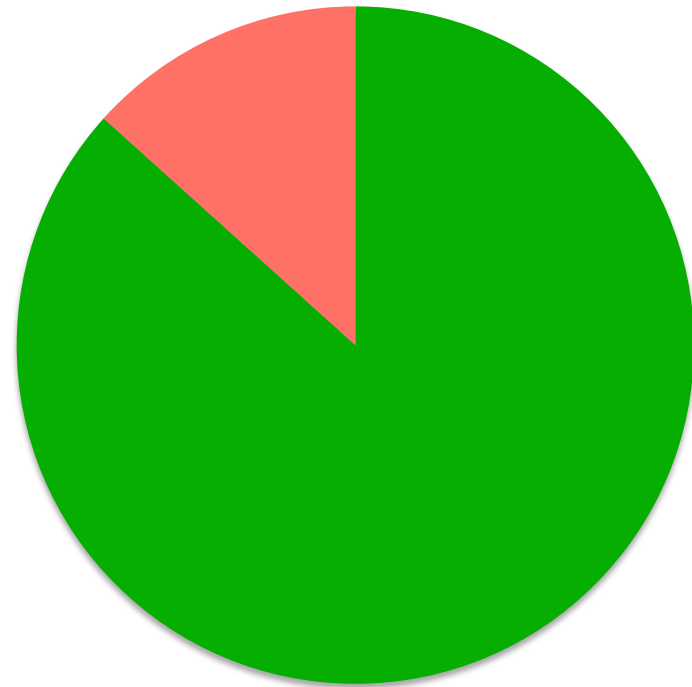
Time Spent in Reading Instruction & “Eyes on Text”

**Reading Instruction (1970s
to late 1980s)**



■ Instruction ■ Time Spent reading

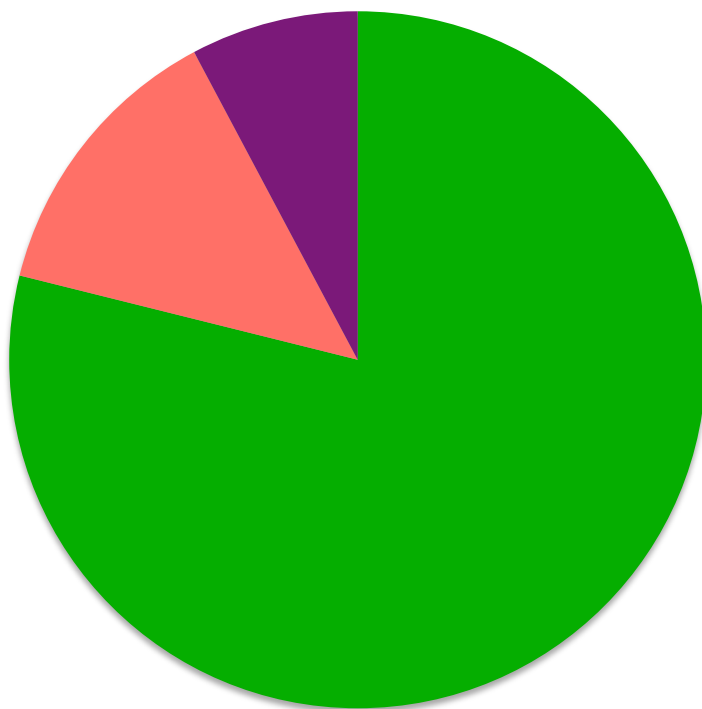
Reading Instruction (late 1990s -)



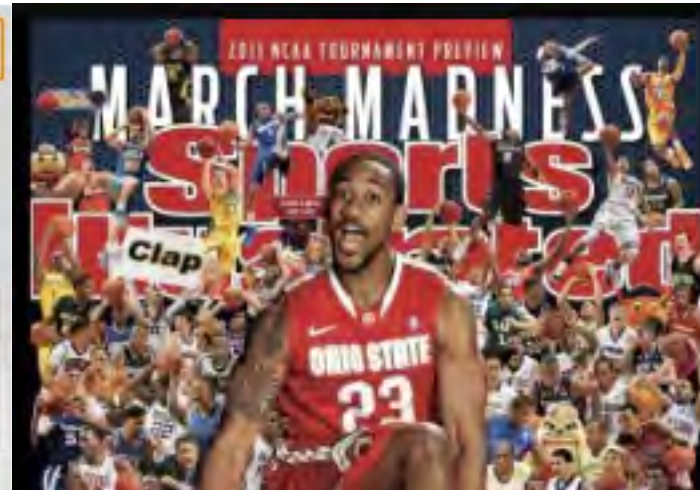
■ Instruction ■ Time Spent reading

2.1 7 Minutes of Additional Reading

**Reading Instruction
(w/ 7 additional minutes)**



■ Instruction ■ Time Spent reading ■ Additional 7 minutes

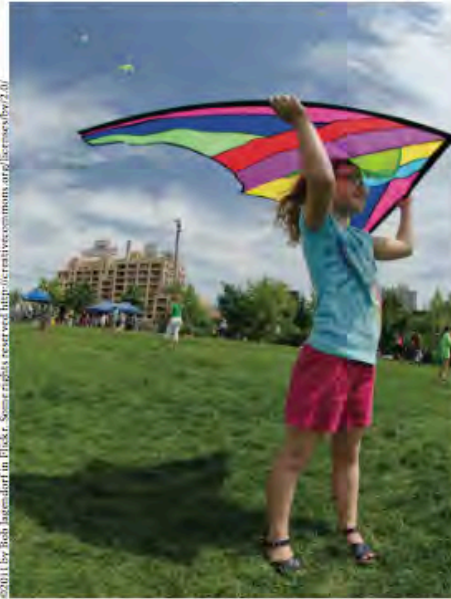


Additional reading through articles



Kites: Dancers in the Wind

volume 3
issue 15



You're on a beach, and the wind is blowing off the ocean. Your kite floats and swirls, dancing in the wind.

Kites were invented in China more than 2,000 years ago. They were first used by the Chinese military, but about 1,000 years ago, people started flying kites for fun. Since then, kites have been used for celebrations, in competitions, and

for science. In addition, kite festivals show off the many shapes and colors of kites. These festivals are held in Japan, Pakistan, and many other countries.

The first kites were made of silk. After paper was invented, around the year 100 AD, people used it to make kites. Today, most kites are made of paper or cloth, with sticks to hold them in shape and string to hold onto them. However, there are also kites for skiing or for moving a buggy on a beach.

In ancient times, kites carried lines across rivers. These lines helped build bridges. In the 1880s, kites

were first used to take photographs. In the early 1900s, the United States Weather Bureau used kites to help with weather prediction. The kites measured winds and temperatures.

The word kite is from an Old English word that means "a kind of hawk." Kites were probably given this name because of the way they look when they fly.

To fly a kite, find a large open area, such as a park or a beach. Make sure there are no trees or power lines the kite can get caught on. Then hold the kite's string up and run. The kite will lift when it catches the wind. Guide your kite by pulling the string. Make sure you look around when you're running so you don't run into anything.

As you watch the kite, notice how it moves. If the wind is just right, your kite will dance, too, swirling as the wind takes it high up into the sky.



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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



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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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**Readworks.org has
approximately 3,500 free
passages for Grades 1-High
School—including curated
sets of articles in the Read-
an-Article-a-Day initiative**

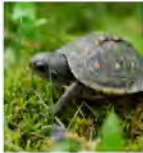


Clouds and Rain

ARTICLE-A-DAY SET

Earth & Space Science

1st Articles range from 220L to 790L **Informational**

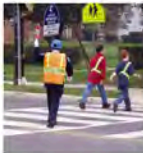


Animals from Different Places

ARTICLE-A-DAY SET

Sports, Health & Safety, Life Science, Earth & Space Science

1st Articles range from 300L to 540L **Informational**



Jobs and Careers

ARTICLE-A-DAY SET

Geography & Societies, Sports, Health & Safety, School & Family Life, Arts & Culture, Technology & Engineering

2nd Articles range from 270L to 650L **Informational**

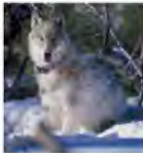


Health and Body

ARTICLE-A-DAY SET

Sports, Health & Safety, School & Family Life, Life Science

2nd Articles range from 480L to 710L **Informational**

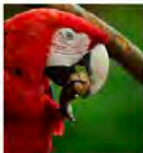


Animal Senses, Safety, and Homes

ARTICLE-A-DAY SET

Geography & Societies, Life Science

2nd Articles range from 500L to 630L **Informational**



Exploring Continents

ARTICLE-A-DAY SET

World History, Geography & Societies, Life Science, Earth & Space Science

2nd Articles range from 530L to 710L **Informational**

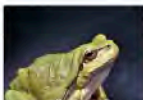


Inventions

ARTICLE-A-DAY SET

Winter Season, Technology & Engineering

1st Articles range from 250L to 570L **Informational**



Amphibians and Reptiles

ARTICLE-A-DAY SET

U.S. History, Geography & Societies, Life Science, Earth & Space Science

Animals from Different Places

Animals from Different Places

ARTICLE A-DAY SET

[Articles](#) [Book of Knowledge](#)

[Frogs Have Special Skin](#)

[Keeping Beers Out](#)

[A Shell is Great for Protection](#)

[Meet a Baby Panda](#)

[A Baby Polar Bear Grows Up](#)

[What Lives in the Desert?](#)

A Shell is Great for Protection

By ReadWorks (87 words)



All turtles have shells. Most turtles have hard shells.

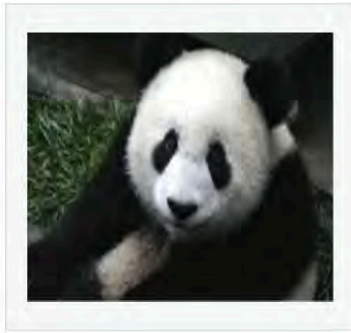
Hard shells protect turtles. A predator cannot bite the hard shell. Some turtles can pull their legs inside their shells. They can pull in their heads and tails too.

Shells come in many different shapes. Some shells are tall and round. Other shells are flat.

Sometimes cartoons show turtles leaving their shells. But... that cannot really happen! A turtle cannot leave its shell. The shell is attached to the turtle. It is a permanent part of its body.

Meet a Baby Panda

By ReadWorks (103 words)



In the United States, pandas live in zoos. Some baby pandas are born in the zoo.

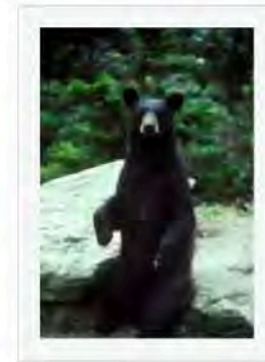
At first, a baby panda does not look like its mother. It does not have much hair at all. Its eyes are closed. The baby drinks its mother's milk. The mother holds the baby in her paws.

The baby grows quickly. Now it looks like its mother. Soon the little panda starts to eat bamboo. Bamboo is a kind of plant.

Then the panda spends less time with its mother. It likes to be on its own. It will climb trees. It will sit on their branches.

Keeping Bears Out

By ReadWorks (98 words)



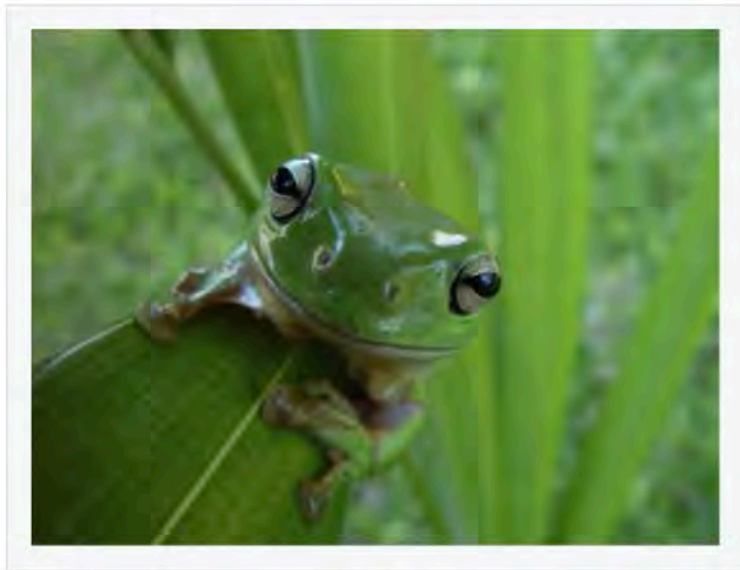
Wild bears live in many U.S. national parks. People visit the parks. People bring food when they camp out.

Hungry bears smell the food. They want to eat the food. Bears look for leftover food in trash cans. Bears look for food at people's campsites. That is a problem for people.

Park workers are trying to solve this problem. Workers have put out special garbage cans. The bears cannot break into the cans. Workers tell park visitors to use special boxes for their food. The boxes are metal. People must lock them. Bears cannot get into the boxes.

Frogs Have Special Skin

By ReadWorks (84 words)



Leon Brooks

Have you ever seen a frog in a pond? You can often spot one there. Most frogs live near water. They need to keep their skin wet.

A frog's skin is special. It makes a slimy coating that helps the frog stay wet. A frog drinks through its skin. It also breathes through its skin. A frog can do that only when its skin is wet.

Frogs also breathe using lungs. What else do frogs use lungs for? Frogs make noise. Ribbit!

What Lives in the Desert?

By Rachelle Kreisman (152 words)



A desert is a dry place with little rain. How little? A desert gets less than ten inches of rain each year. Some deserts are hot. A few can be cold. A desert is a habitat. A habitat is a place where animals and plants live.

Hot deserts are home to many kinds of living things. Animals living there include owls, snakes, lizards, and coyotes. Another hot desert animal is the kangaroo rat. It sleeps underground during the day, when the weather is hot. The kangaroo rat comes out at night, when it is cooler. Kangaroo rats get the water they need from food. They eat mostly seeds.

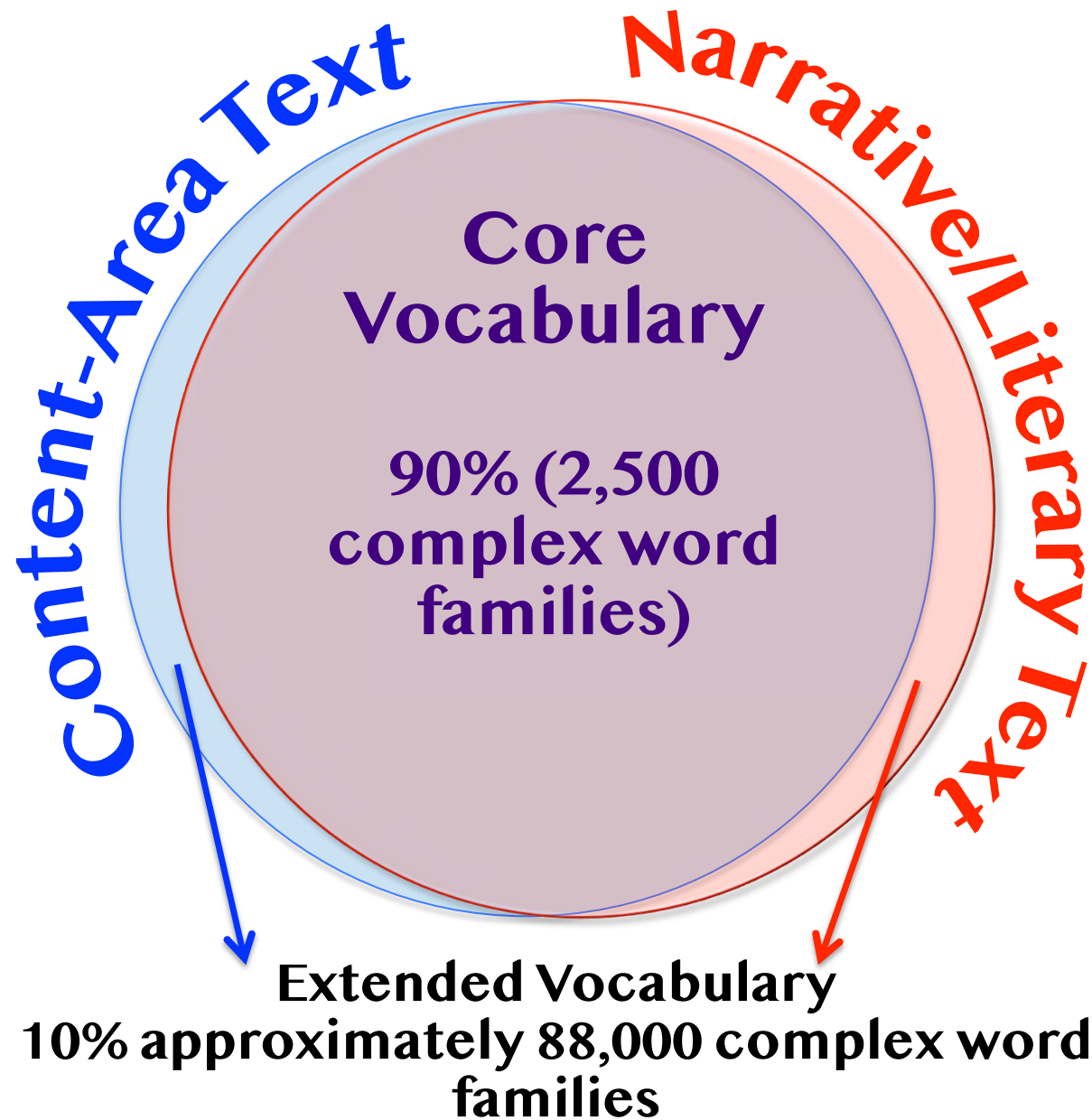
Some plants live in the hot desert. Only a few kinds of trees and bushes can survive there. One of the most common desert plants is the cactus. The cactus collects and stores water in its stem. Sharp spines protect most cacti from animals.

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**Idea 3: Rare words are part
of networks**

The Other 10%: Rare Words in Writing



Narrative Text

Even with eyes protected by the green spectacles, Dorothy and her friends were at first dazzled by the brilliancy of the wonderful City. The streets were lined with beautiful houses all built of green marble and studded everywhere with sparkling emeralds. They walked over a pavement of the same green marble, and where the blocks were joined together were rows of emeralds, set closely, and glittering in the brightness of the sun. The window panes were of green glass; even the sky above the City had a green tint, and the rays of the sun were green.

From *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* Frank Baum)

(a)
**Networks in
narratives
are
synonyms
related to
story
elements.**

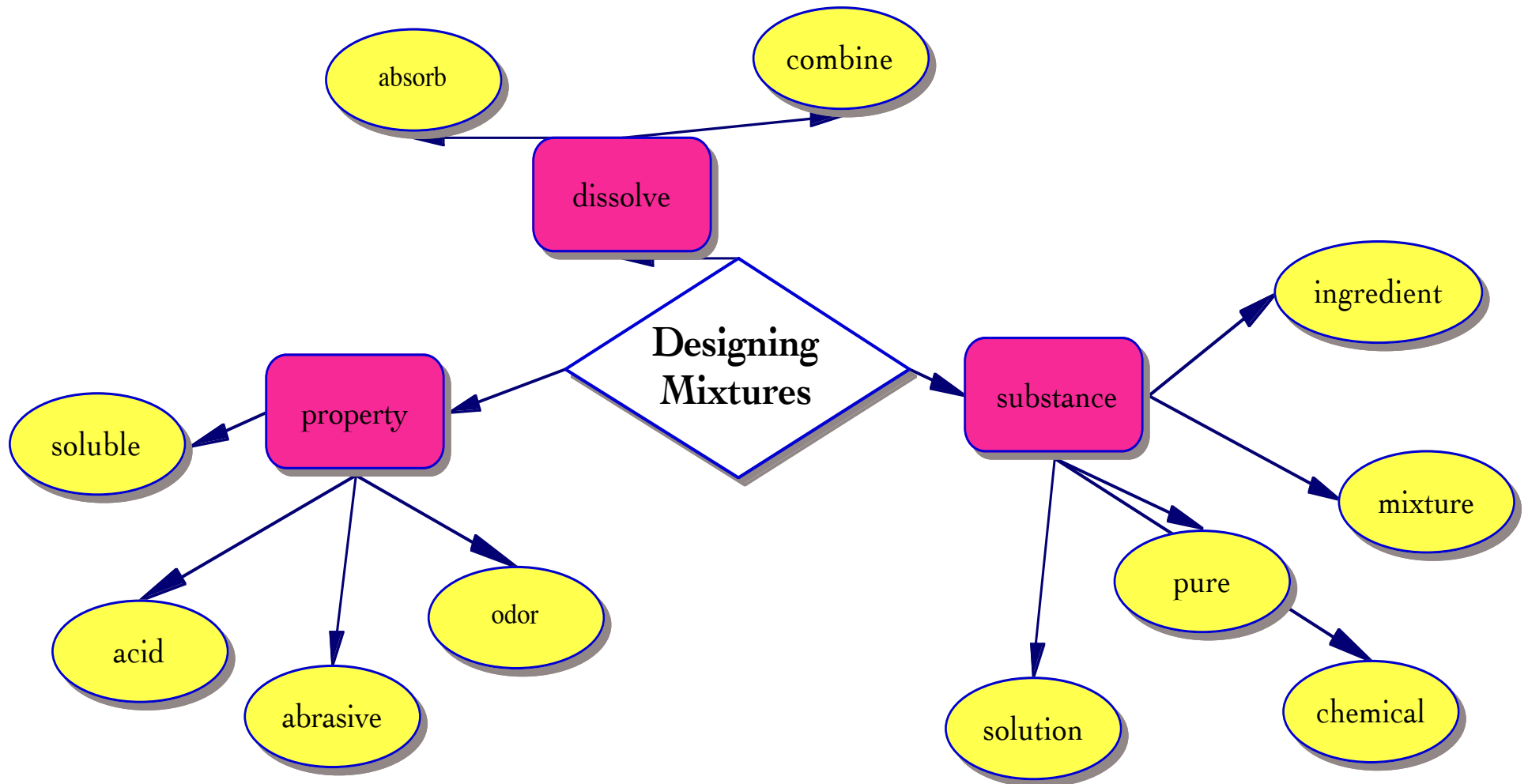
Story Word	Other Possibilities
dazzled	hypnotized awed
brilliancy	effulgence luminosity
glittering	shimmering radiance

(b) The rare words in
informational texts
belong to topical
networks.

Informational Text

A simple solution is basically two substances that are evenly mixed together. One of them is called the **solute** and the other is the **solvent**. A solute is the substance to be dissolved (sugar). The **solvent** is the one doing the dissolving (water). As a rule of thumb, there is usually more **solvent** than **solute**. The amount of **solute** that can be dissolved by the **solvent** is defined as **solubility**.

An Example of a Topical Network



A close-up photograph of a young child's face, focusing on the eyes and nose. The child has blonde hair and blue eyes. The background is blurred, showing some green and yellow tones. A semi-transparent yellow box is overlaid on the upper part of the image, containing the text.

**Action 3a: TEACH
STUDENTS PROLIFIC
SYNONYM NETWORKS**



Synonym Networks in Narrative Texts

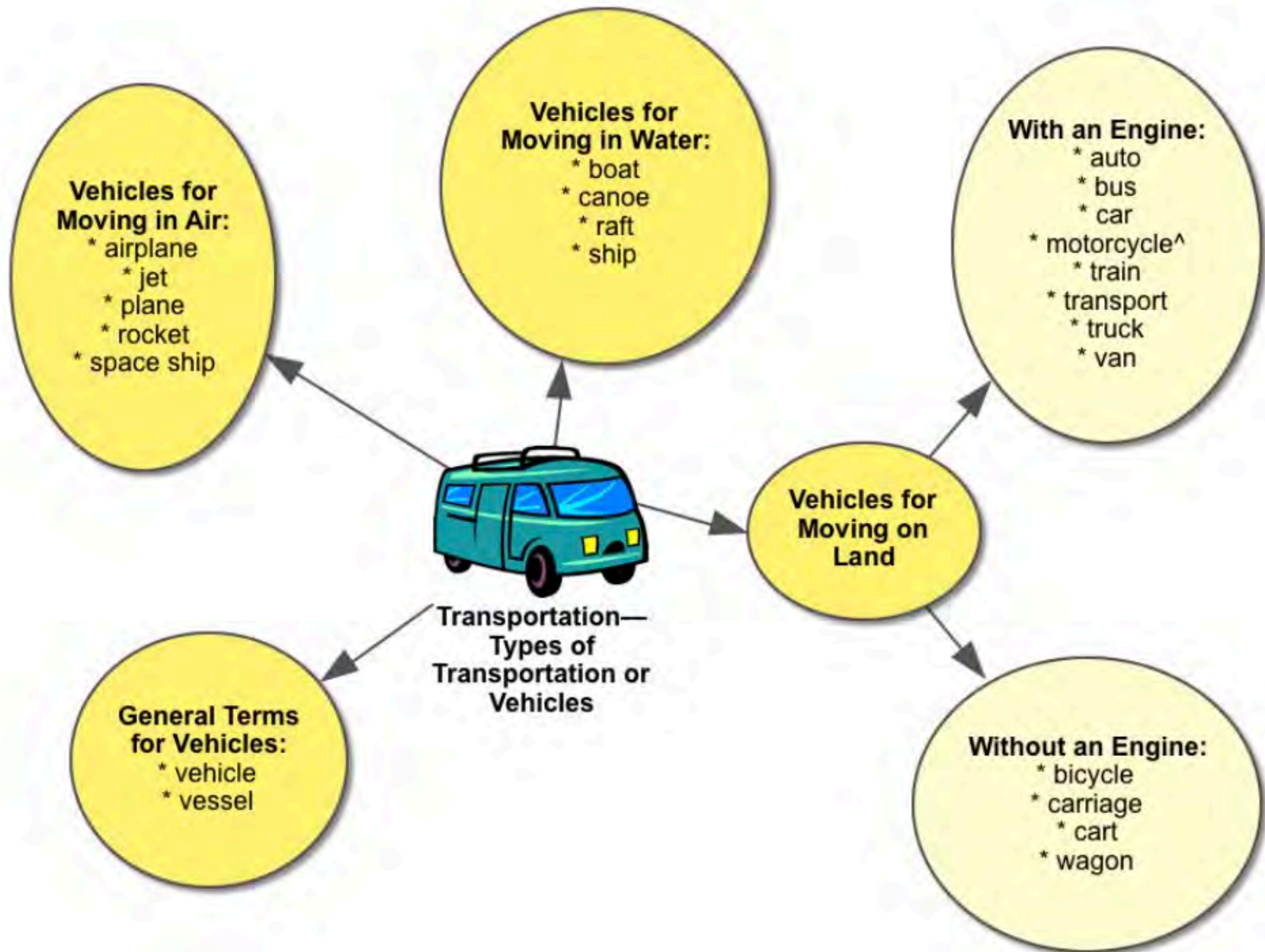
Prolific Groups of Synonyms

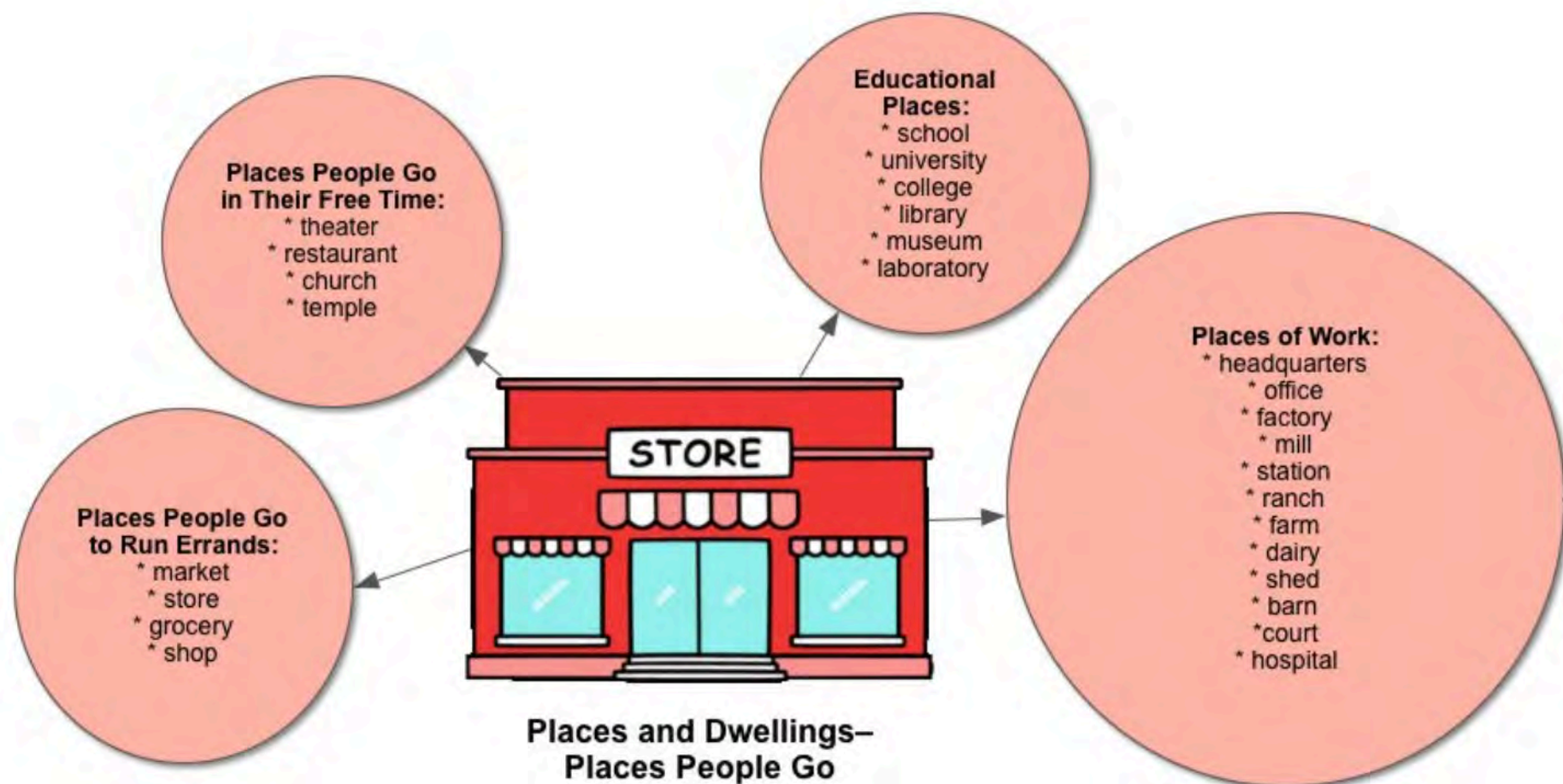
Communication /Internal Processes (verbs)	Emotions (adjectives)	Movement (verbs)	Traits (adjectives)
think	happy	go	funny
argue	sad	send	smart
look	mad	start	brave
guess	hope	stop	selfish
said	fear	stay	shy

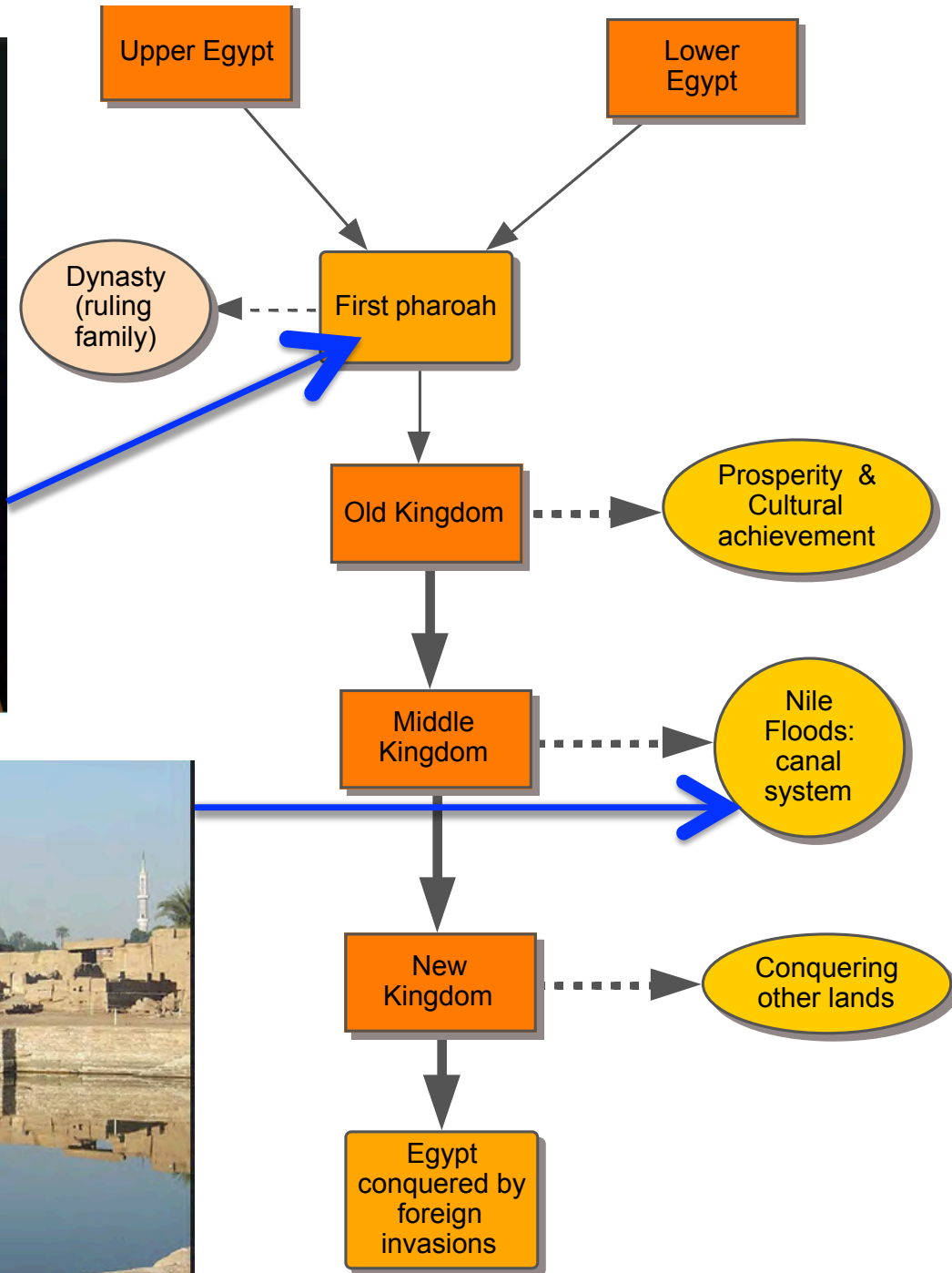




ACTION 3b. Teach students to organize rare words in informational texts into topical networks.







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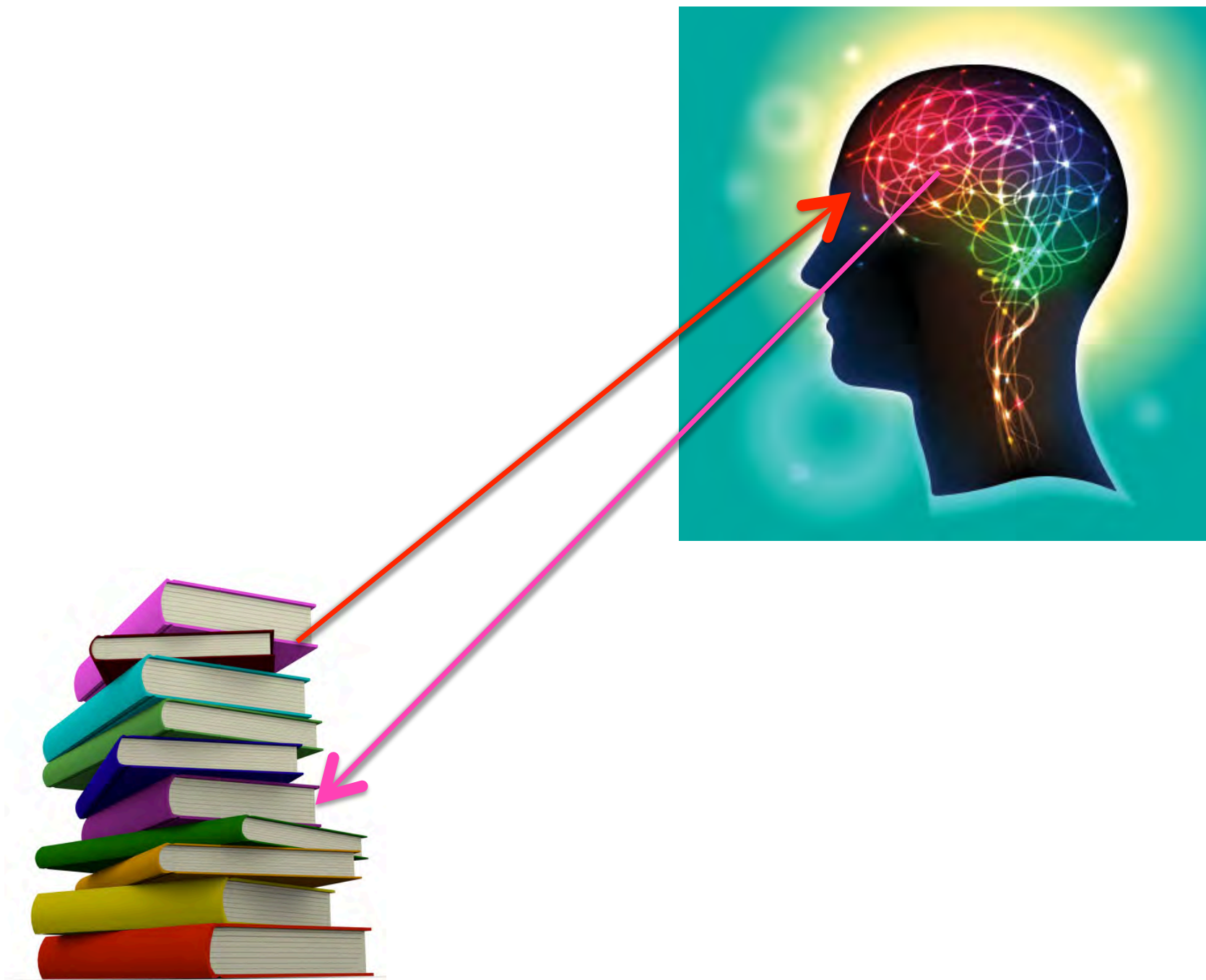


**Idea 4: Teach
vocabulary in
the service of
developing
bodies of
knowledge.**

Correlation between Background Knowledge & Comprehension = .94

Reading for Understanding Network Study of Comprehension in Grades
7-12

Slide is from the presentation of David Francis (April 19, 2013). CCSS Assessments and Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners. Plenary session at Institute on Assessment in the Era of the Common Core State Standards, International Reading Association.



Deep
knowledge
of some
topics



Broad knowledge of many topics



How did the animal shelter know that Scrub belonged to Noble? How did the workers there know how to contact her? All this information was available because of the microchip that had been placed under Scrub's skin many years earlier. A microchip is a computer chip about the size of a grain of rice that is used to keep track of pets. The chip is placed under an animal's skin with a needle, usually between the pet's shoulder blades. Once the chip is in place, the pet does not feel it anymore. Microchips have helped thousands of owners get their lost pets back.

Mrs. Snavin looked at the screen, and then she looked at this book, and then back at the screen again. Then she shook her head and let out this big sigh. I could tell she was almost ready to call Mrs. Reed.

I've always liked computers, and I know how to do some stuff with them. Like turn them on and open programs, play games and type, make drawings, and build Web pages, things like that. So I got up from my desk, pointed at the screen, and said, "Mrs. Snavin, if you double-click on that little thing right there, then the program will start running. And then you click on this, and that opens up the part about number lines."

In 1917, Mrs. Baird bought a car. The family removed the seats from the back and filled the space with baked goods. They painted a sign on the side of the car that read Eat More Mrs. Baird's Bread. Delivering by car meant that even more people could enjoy Mrs. Baird's bread.

Today the people who work at Mrs. Baird's Bakeries are just as proud of their bread as Mrs. Baird was. Mrs. Baird's Bakeries operates four factories across the state of Texas. These large bakeries are located in Fort Worth, Houston, San Antonio, and Lubbock. Hundreds of schoolchildren visit the Fort Worth and Houston bakeries on field trips each year. At the end of the tour, everyone receives a warm slice of fresh bread. Yum!

At many hospitals around the country, kids can attend a teddy bear clinic. Children pretend their bear has gotten sick and take it to see a doctor. The doctors and nurses use the bears to help teach the children about their body, how to stay physically fit and healthy, and what to expect when they visit a doctor.

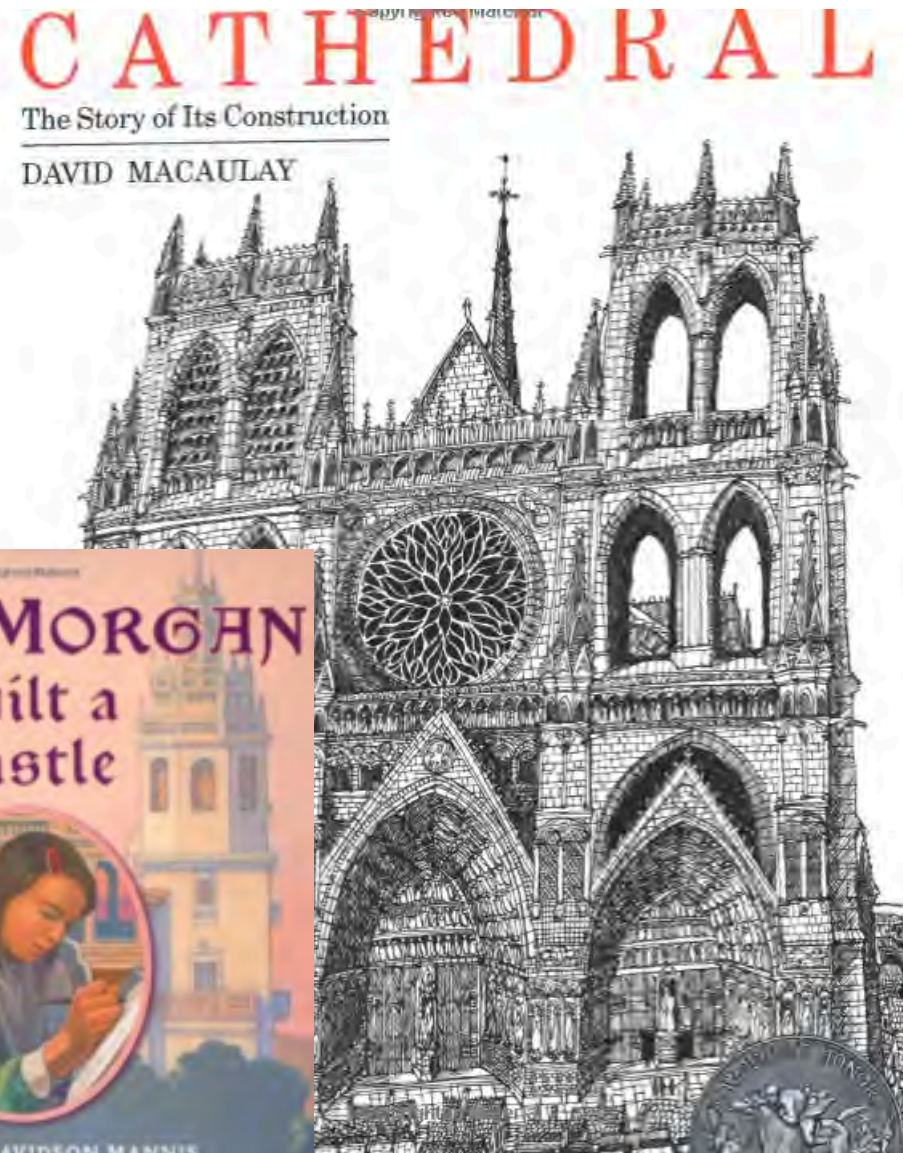
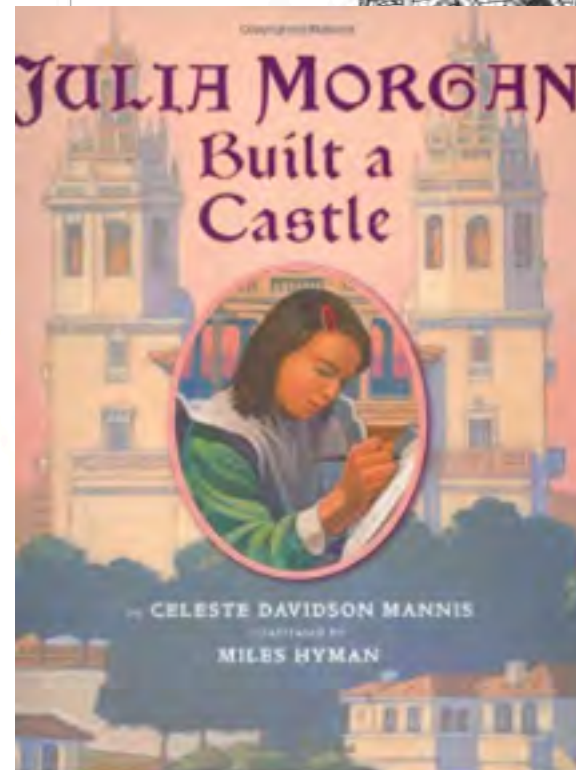
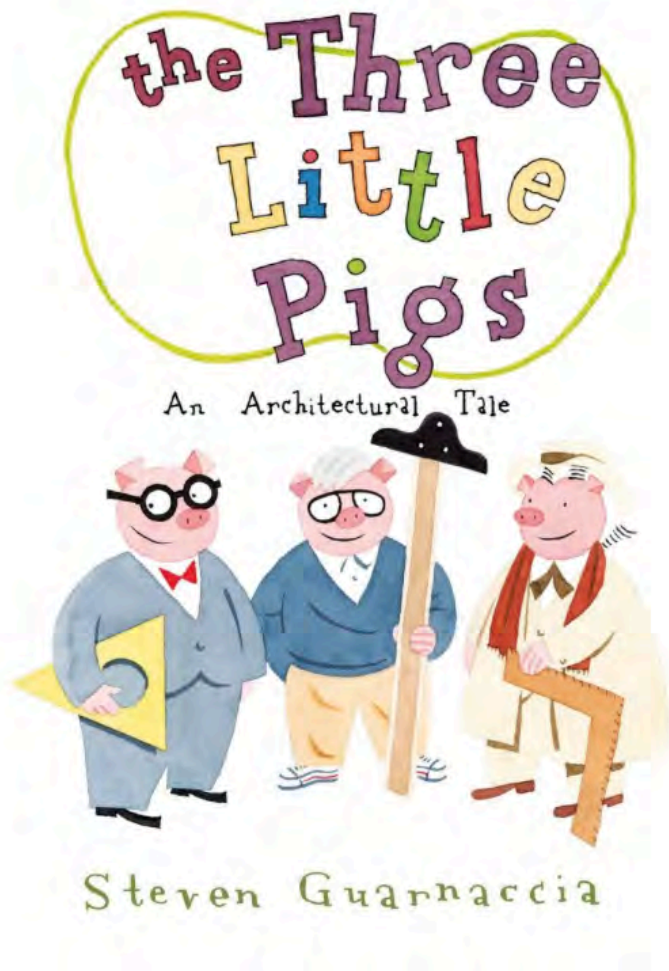
Teddy bears have even helped animals. In a national park in England, a young horse named Breeze got lost from his mother. Workers at a horse farm found Breeze and gave him food, but they thought he still needed his mother. So the workers gave Breeze a four-foot-tall teddy bear named Buttons. The young horse cuddled next to the teddy bear and slept.

A stylized illustration of a neural network. It features a central neuron with a purple nucleus and a blue cytoplasm, surrounded by a dense web of blue dendrites and axons. Several bright red-orange points are scattered throughout the network, representing synaptic activity or signal transmission. The background is dark, making the glowing elements stand out.

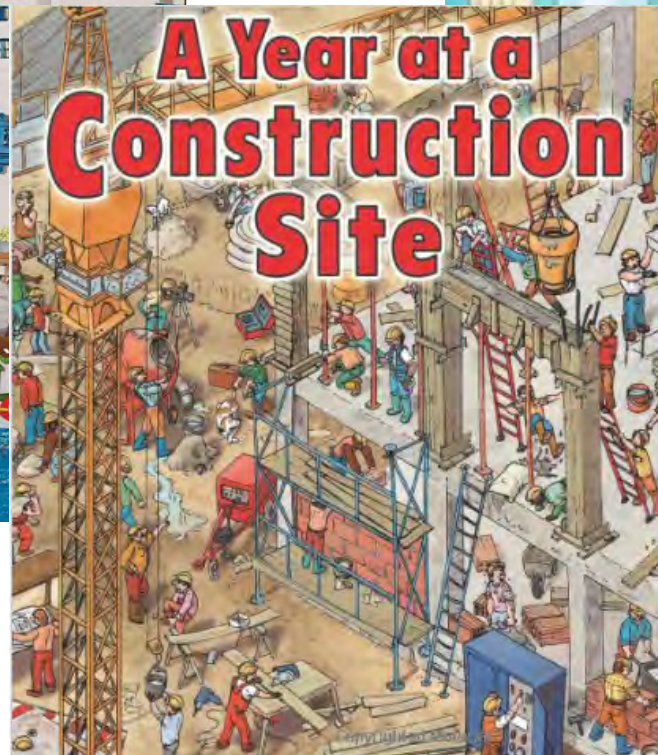
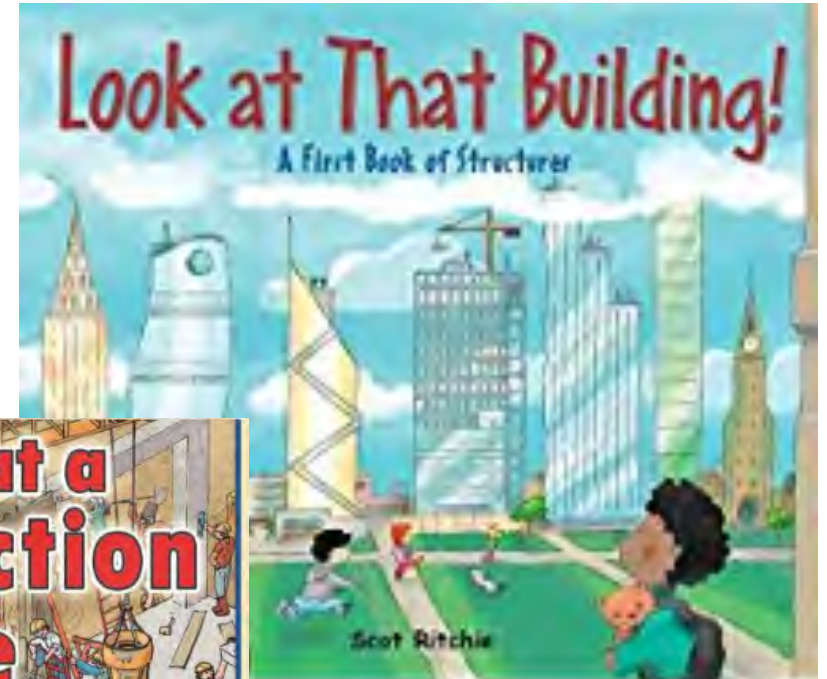
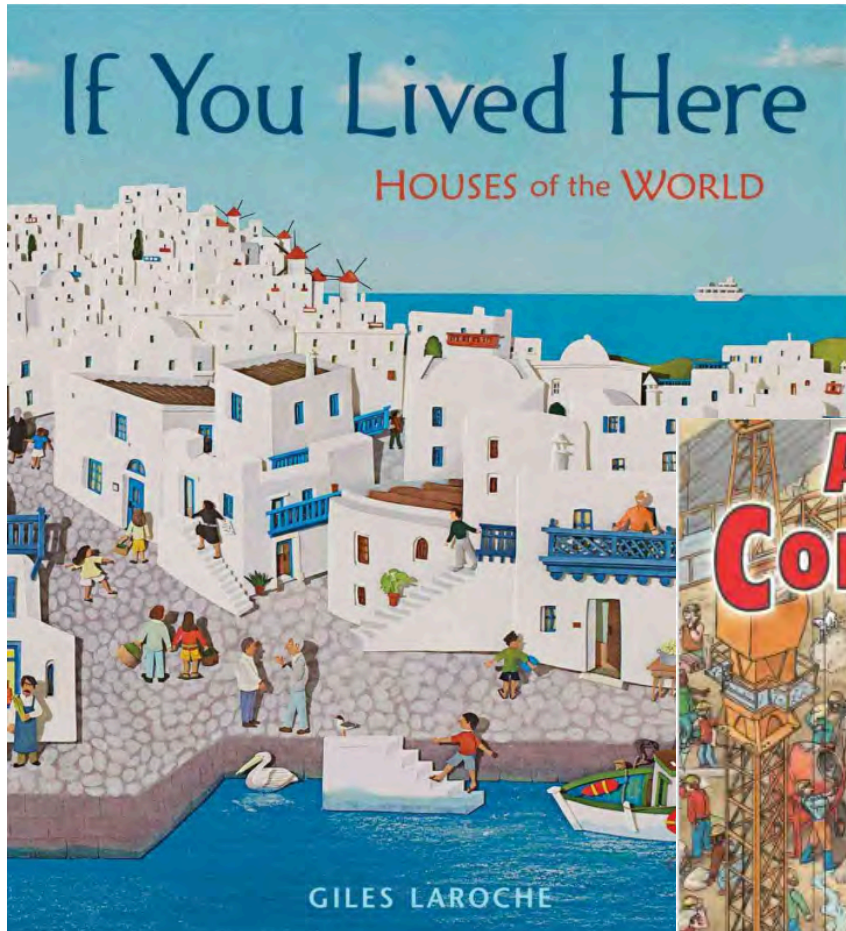
Action 4: Develop bodies of
knowledge in English/Language
Arts instruction

4.1. Connect read-alouds, reading selections, independent reading, & vocabulary

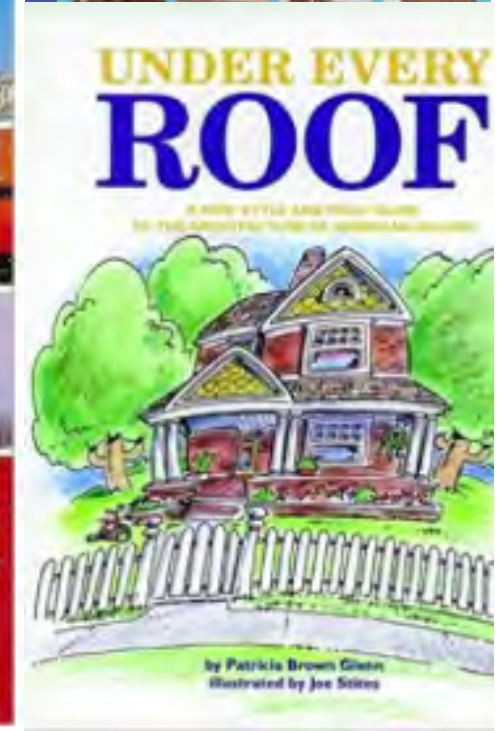
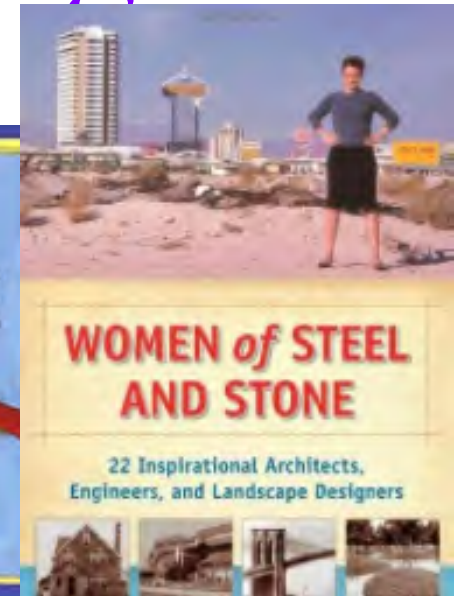
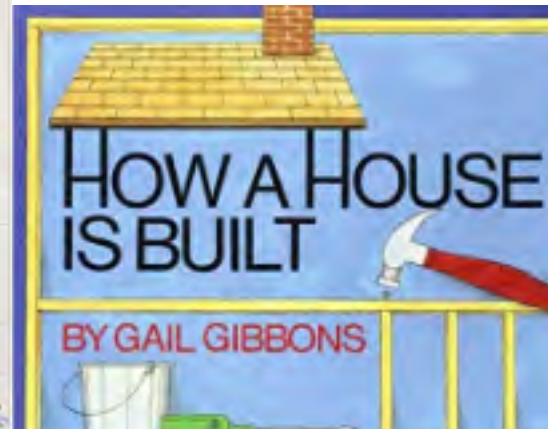
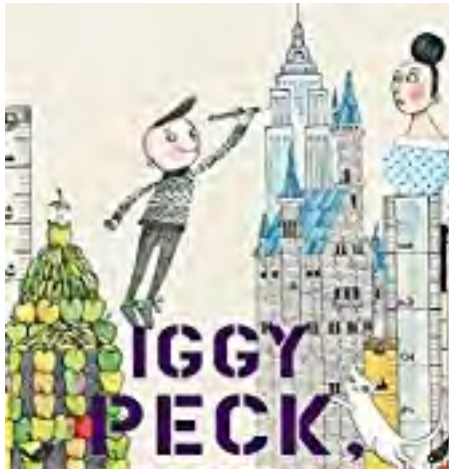
Read-Alouds



Instructional Texts



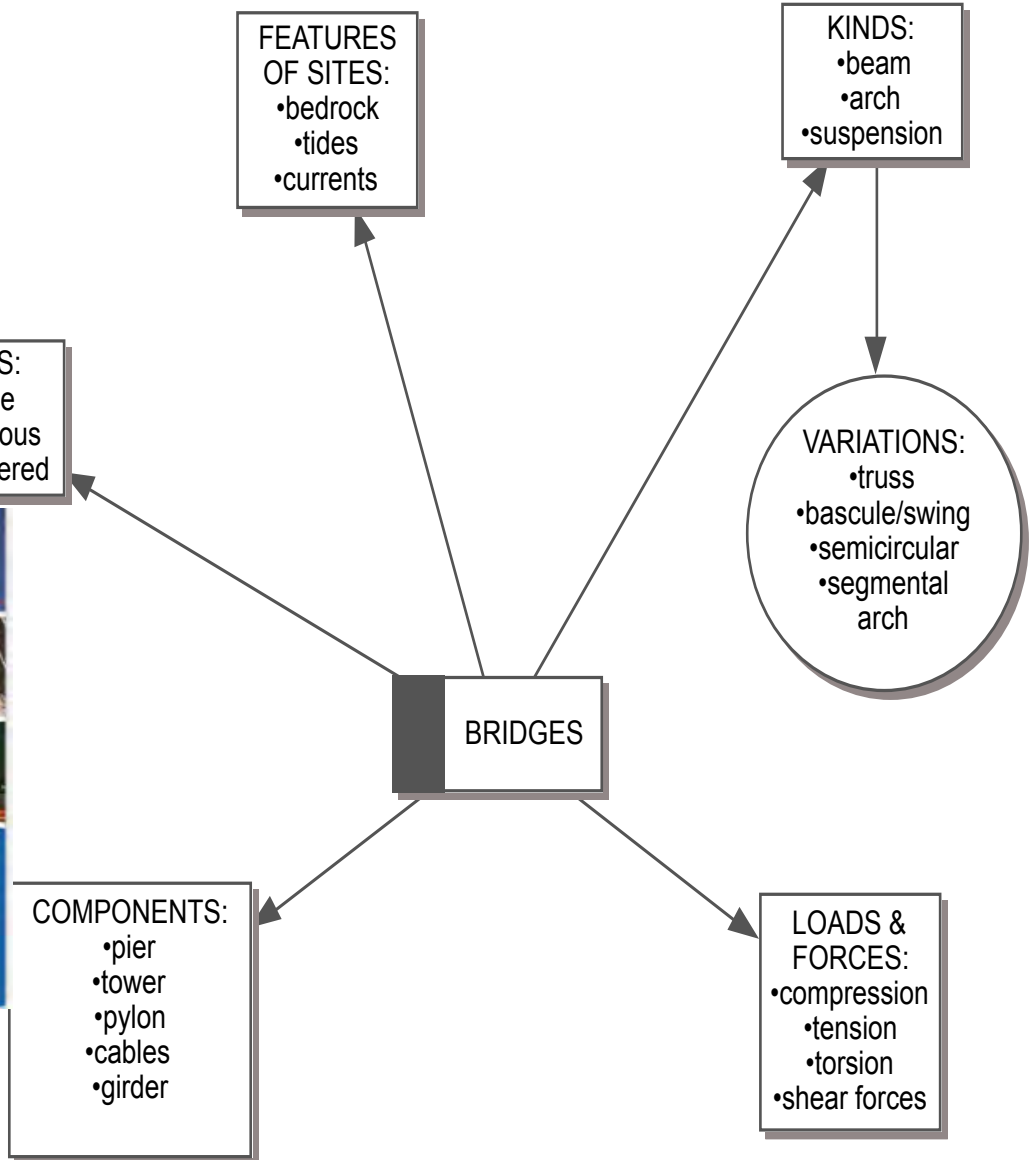
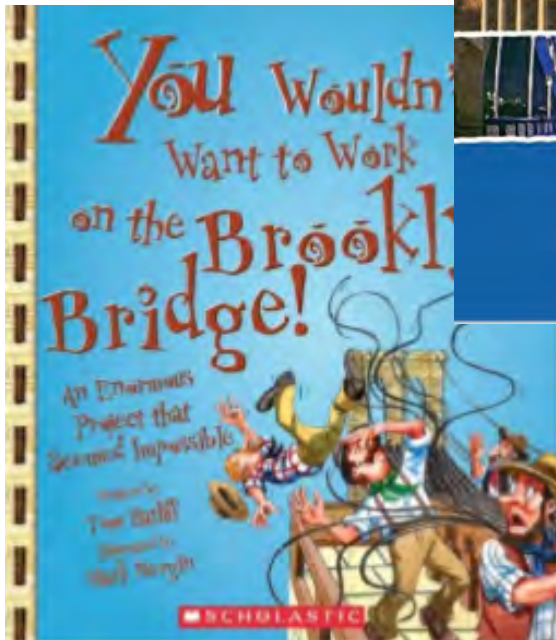
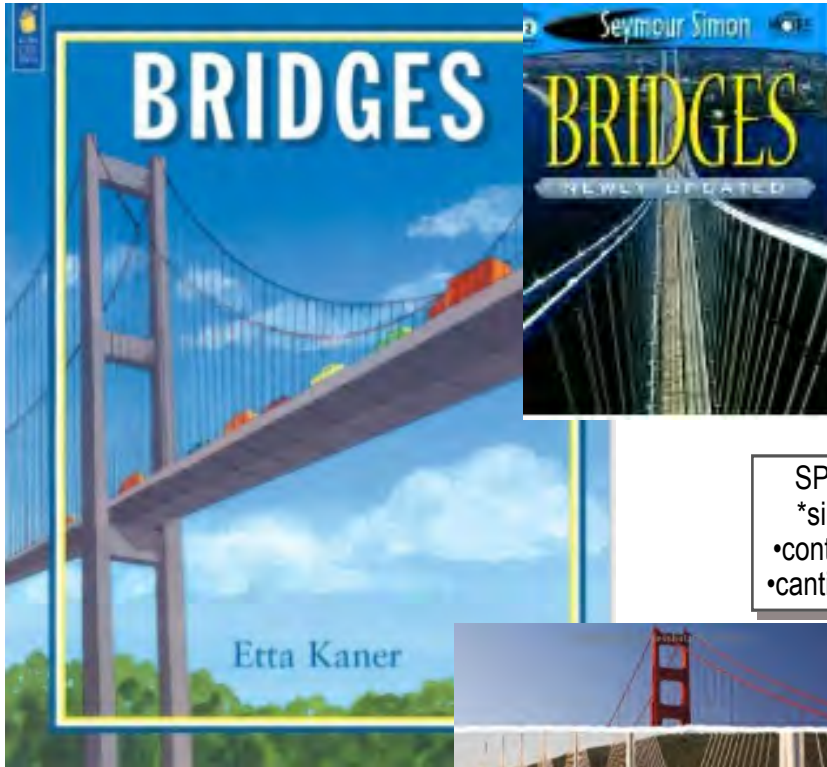
Independent Reading

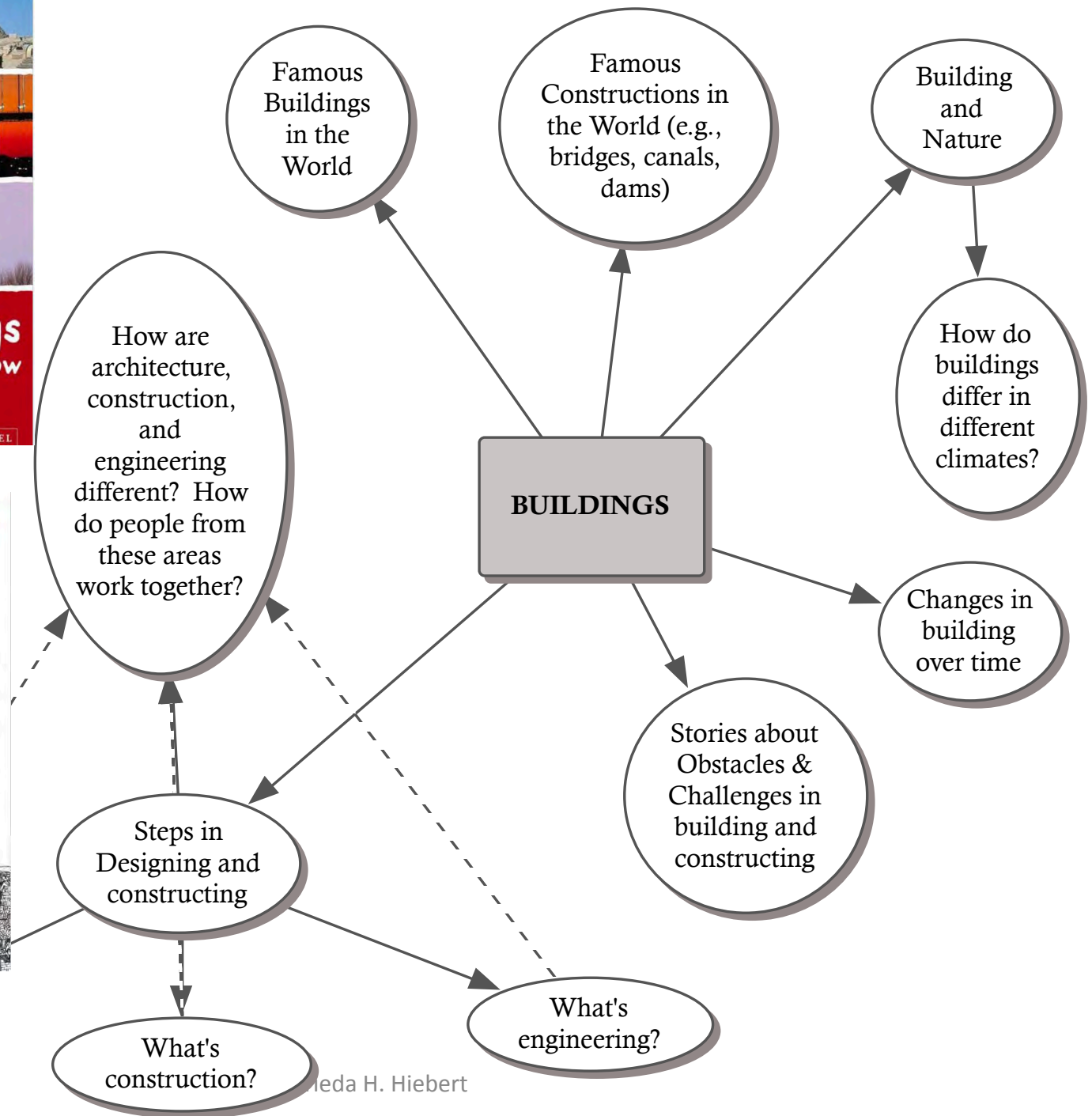
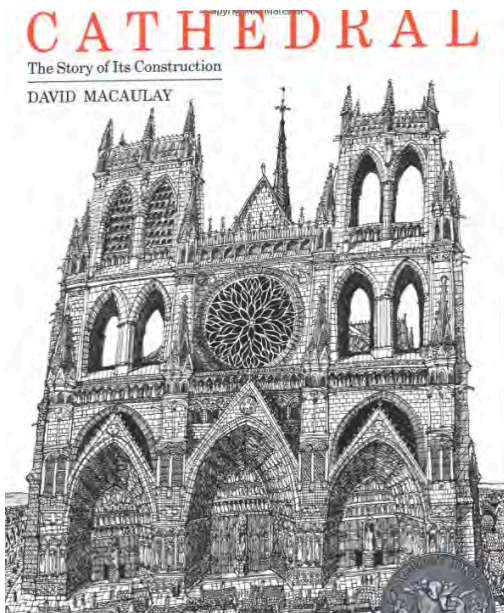
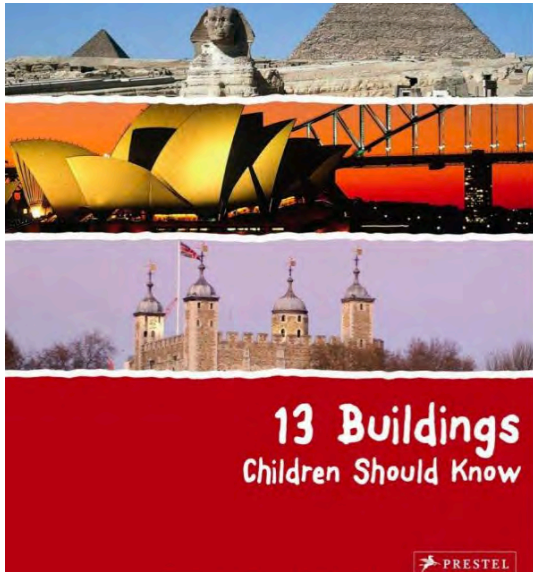




4.2. Support agency: Knowledge logs







Idea	Action	Open-Access Resource
1. English has more words than can be taught.	1. Teach students to expect new words in texts.	1. Talking Points for Teachers: New Words in New Texts
2. A small group of words does the heavy lifting in English.	2. Increase volume of reading	2. 7 minutes of additional reading with student goal setting
3. Rare words in narrative texts belong to synonym networks; those in informational texts in topic networks.	3. Teach students prolific synonym networks & organize topics into networks.	3. •Super Synonym Sets for Stories (S4) •Exceptional Expressions in Everyday Events (E4)
4. Teach vocabulary in the service of developing bodies of knowledge.	4. Develop bodies of knowledge in ELA instruction.	4. •Intentional Read-Aloud Curriculum •ReadWorks & FYI for Kids •Word Pictures



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