

Words Matter: How a Deep Understanding of Core Vocabulary Accelerates Reading Proficiency

Elfrieda H. Hiebert
TextProject



The Vocabulary Gap

elderly
frequent
locate
considerable
delighted
identify favorable
damaged
enjoyable

know
broken old
big find
good fun
often
happy



Oxford English Dictionary

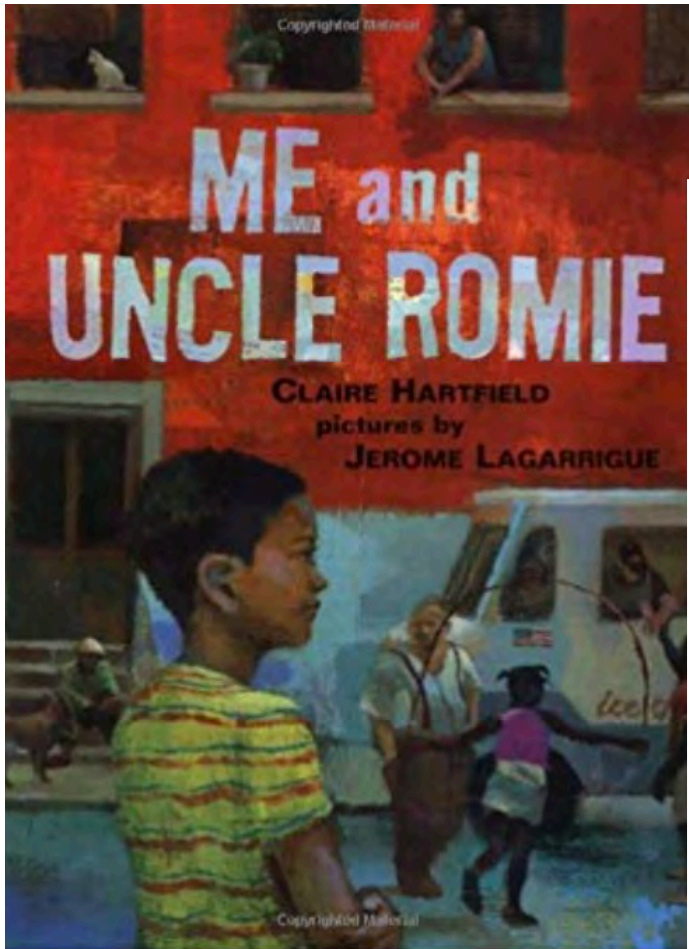
- 282,500 root or head words
- 326,000 derivatives & phrases
- 47,150 obsolete words



**A small group of words does
the heavy lifting in English.**



Typical Choices



Houghton Mifflin Harcourt
(Baumann et al. (2014))

ruined
feast
model
concerned
schedule
yanked
streak
smeared
glorious
studio

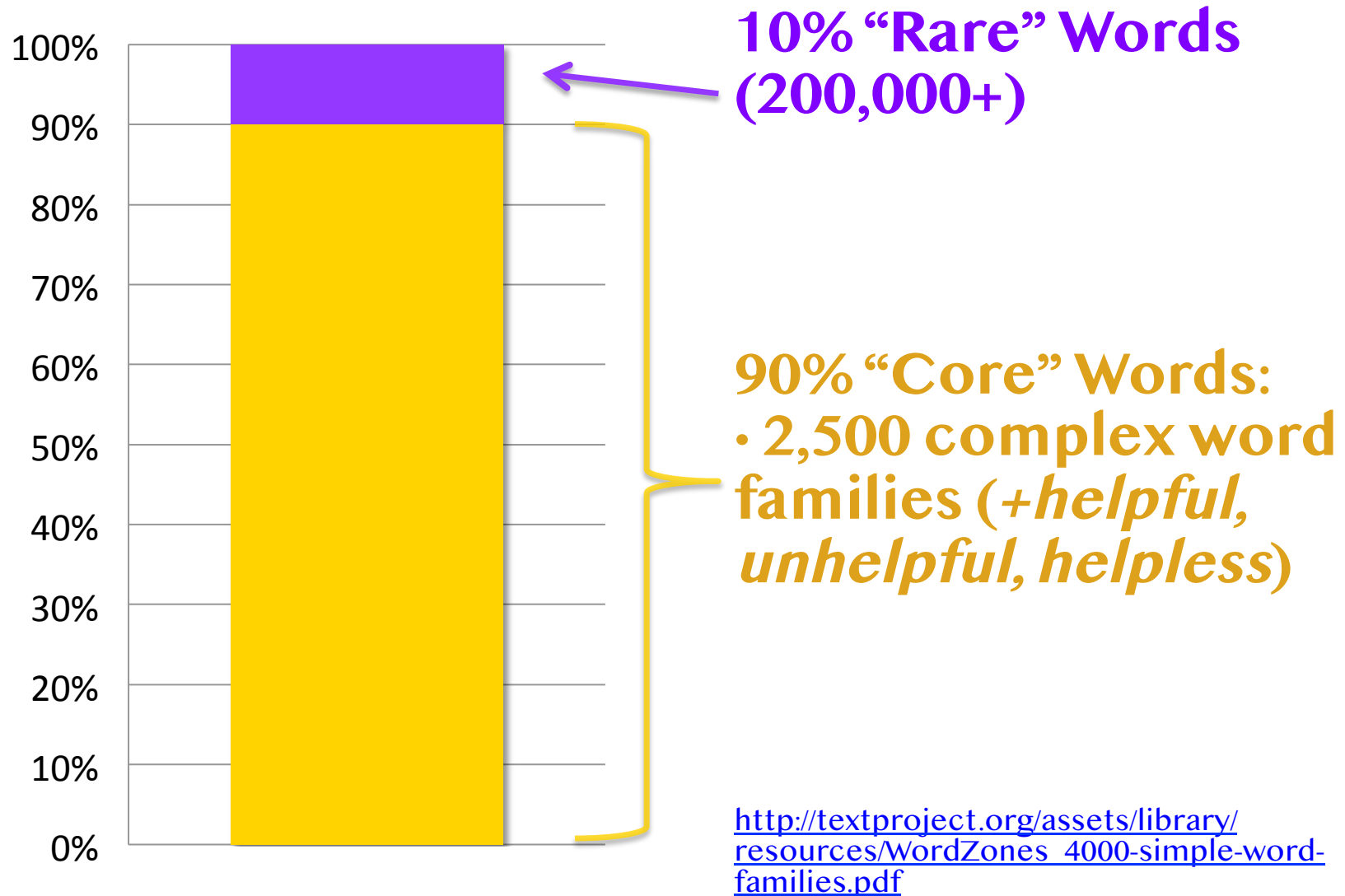
Scott Foresman
(Afflerbach et al., 2013)

ruined
feast
cardboard
fierce
flights
pitcher
treasure
stoops



10,000
texts

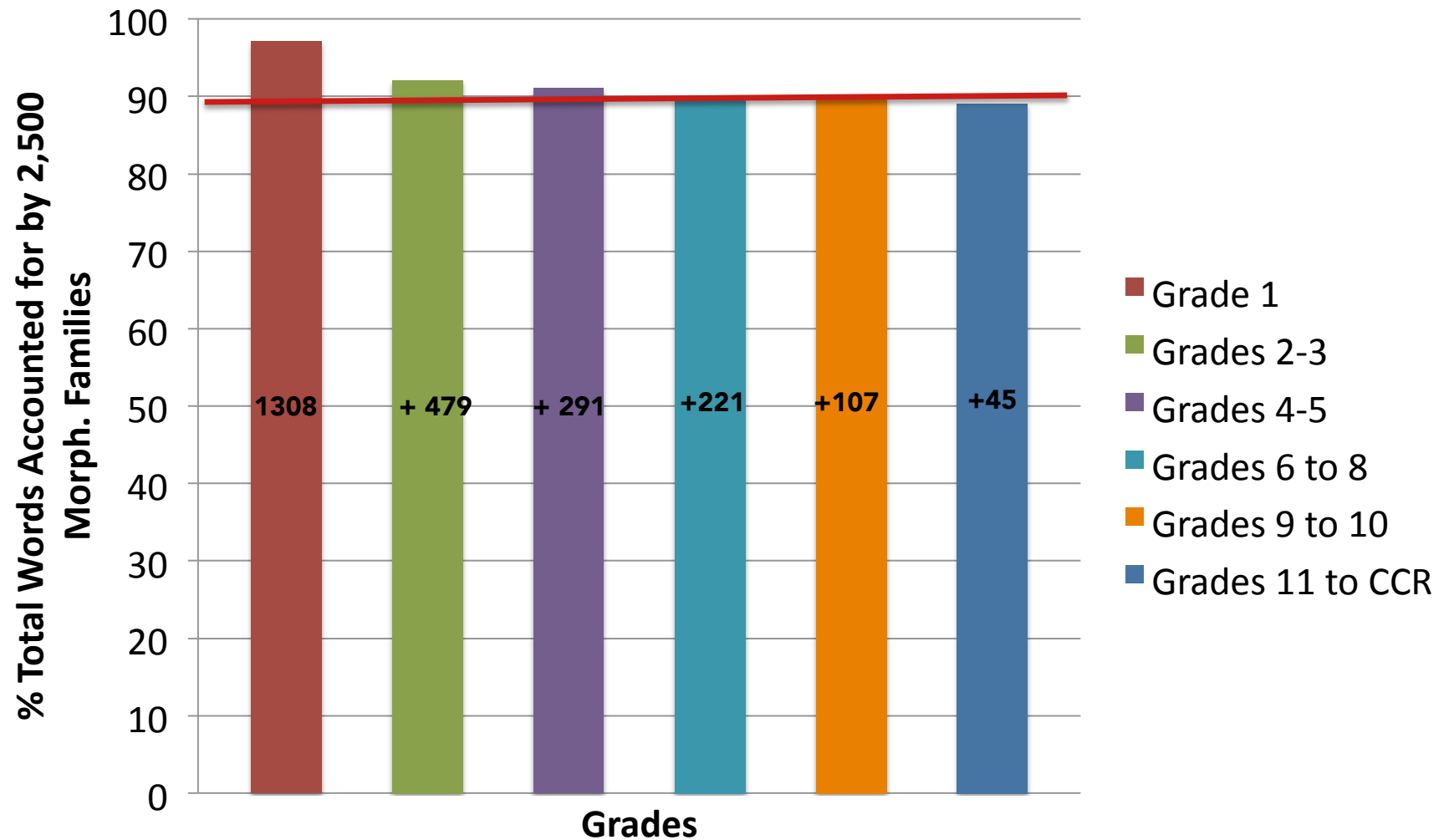
Distribution of words in written English



Common Core Exemplars

Analysis of a Million Word Corpus

(Exemplars from Common Core State Standards)



Examples of the Words in the Core Vocabulary

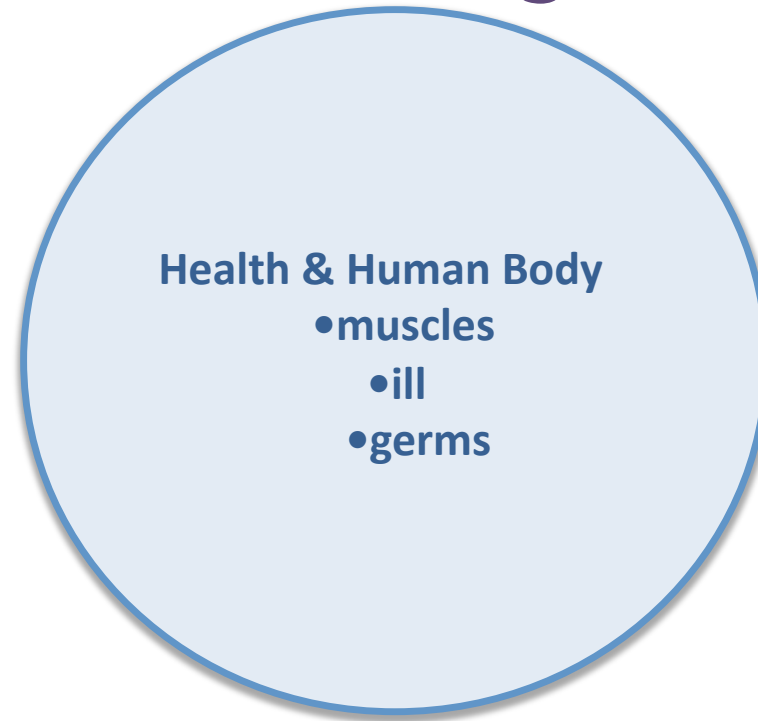
	words
1st 100	the, by, no, through, must
101-300	long, great, put, last, family
301-1,000	power, north, story, strong, answer
1,001-1,500	valley, imagine, motion, nearby, importance
1,501-2,000	character, responsible, design, presence, trail
2001-2,500	mixture, discovery, civilization, attitude, assume

What the 2,500 Word Families Mean for Students' Proficiency as Readers

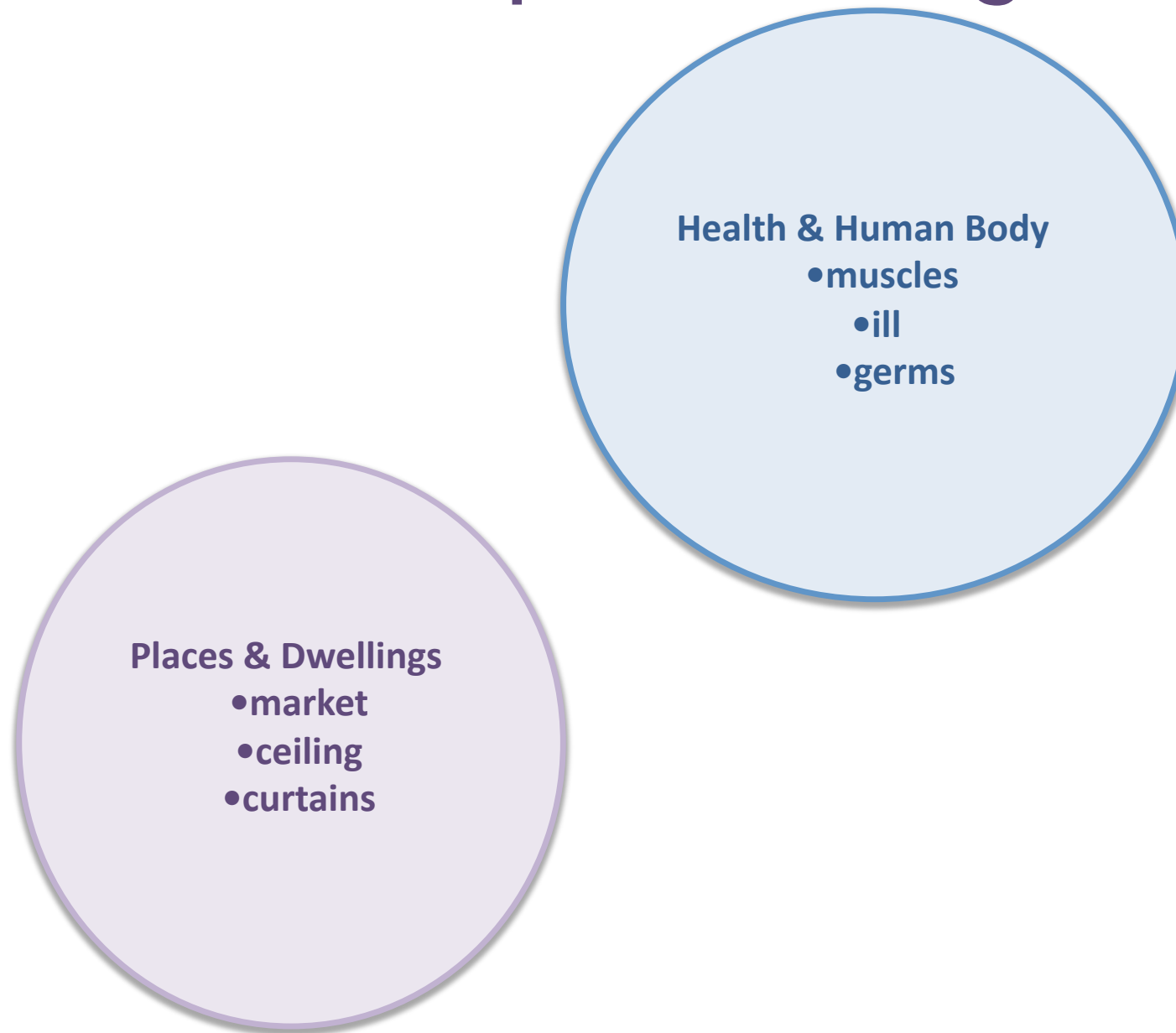


1. Topic Knowledge

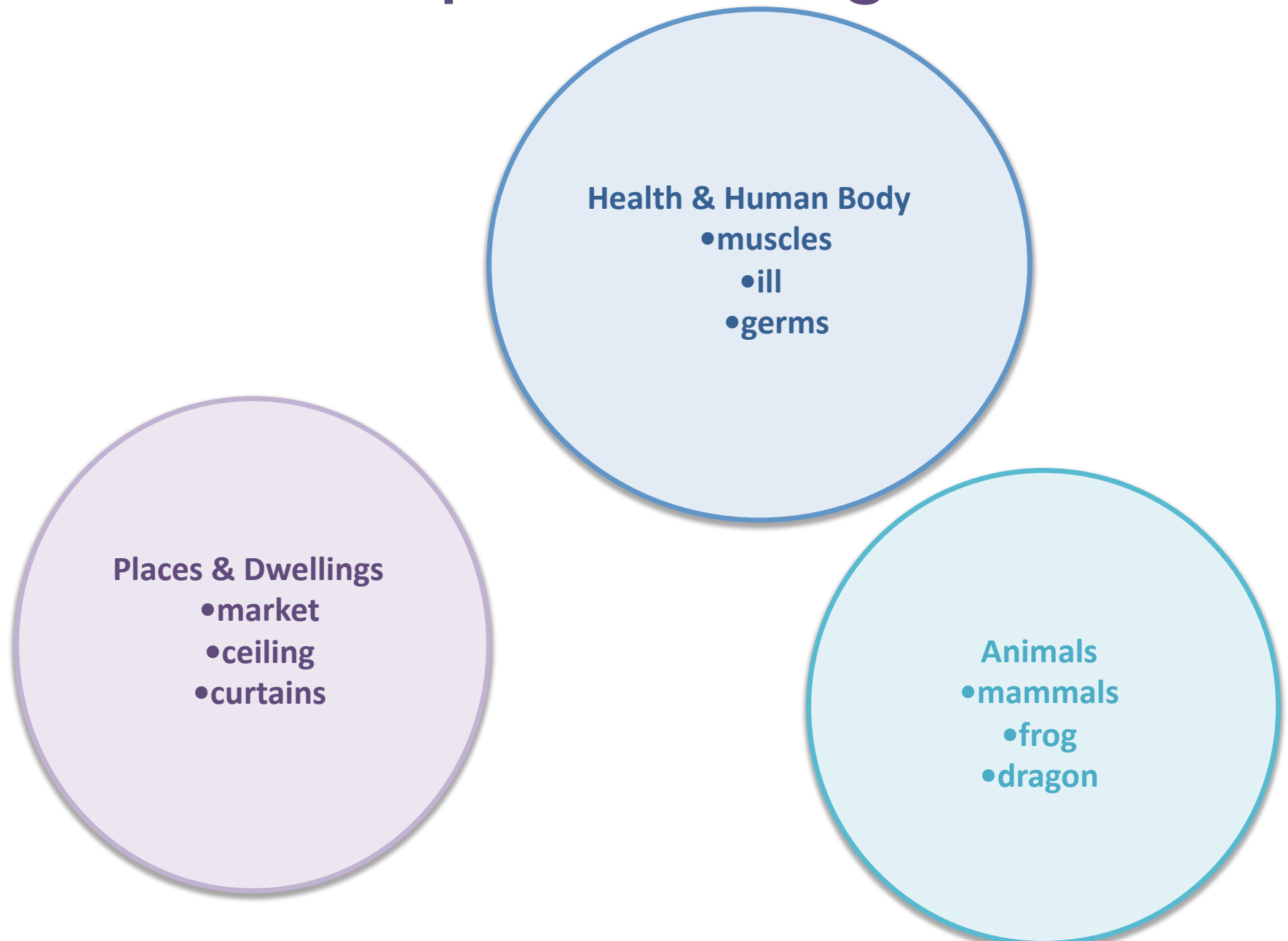
1. Topic Knowledge



1. Topic Knowledge



1. Topic Knowledge



1. Topic Knowledge

Jobs

- mayor
- boss
- principal

Health & Human Body

- muscles
- ill
- germs

Places & Dwellings

- market
- ceiling
- curtains

Animals

- mammals
- frog
- dragon

1. Topic Knowledge

Jobs

- mayor
- boss
- principal

Health & Human Body

- muscles
- ill
- germs

Places & Dwellings

- market
- ceiling
- curtains

Machines

- tools
- motor
- technology

Animals

- mammals
- frog
- dragon

1. Topic Knowledge

Jobs

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Machines

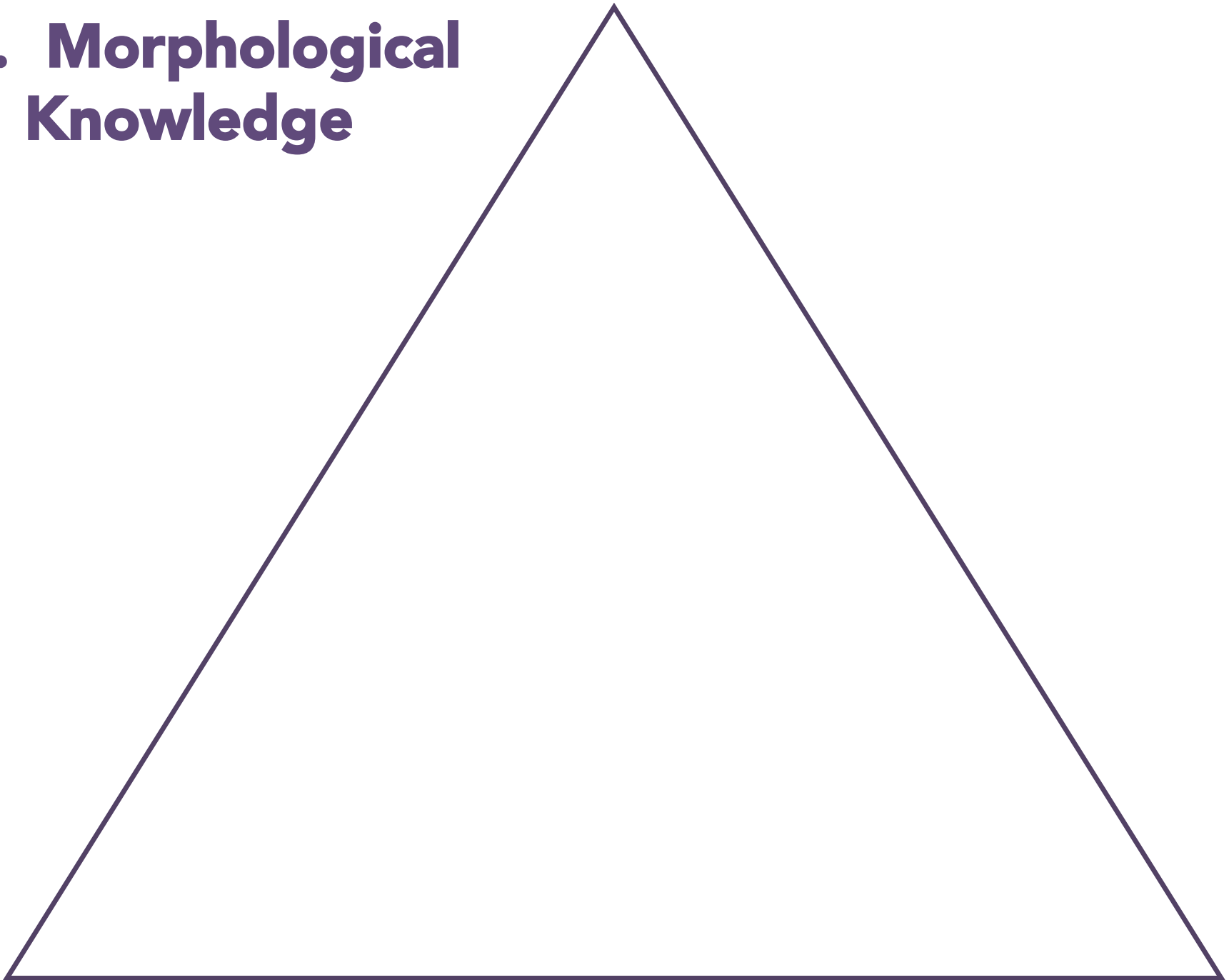
- tools
- motor
- technology

Animals

- mammals
- frog
- dragon

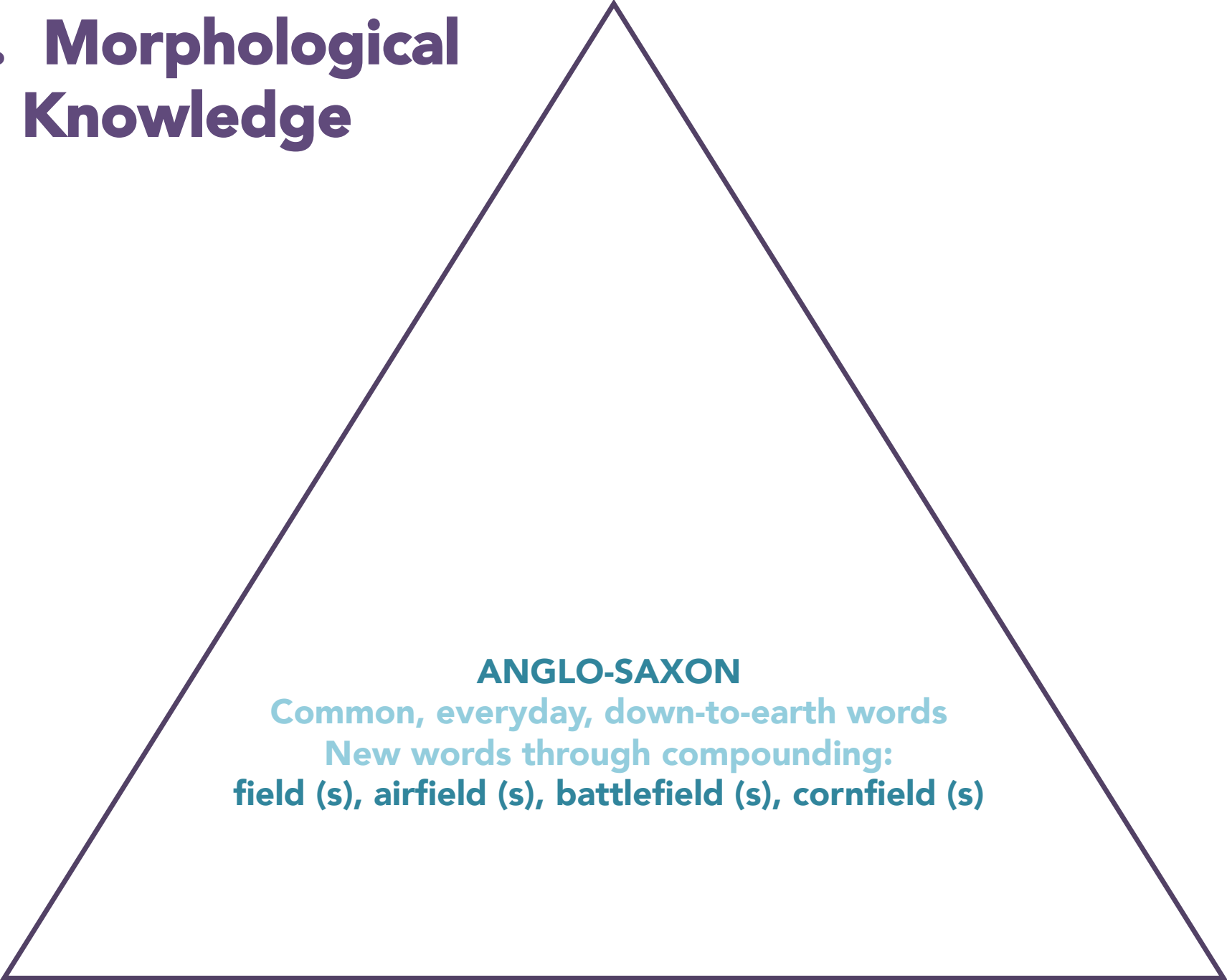
2. Morphological Knowledge

2. Morphological Knowledge



(from Calfee & Drum, 1981)

2. Morphological Knowledge



ANGLO-SAXON

Common, everyday, down-to-earth words

New words through compounding:

field (s), airfield (s), battlefield (s), cornfield (s)

2. Morphological Knowledge

ROMANCE

Most literacy and academic words

New Words through derivations:

separate, separates, separating, separated, separation, separately, separable

ANGLO-SAXON

Common, everyday, down-to-earth words

New words through compounding:

field (s), airfield (s), battlefield (s), cornfield (s)

2. Morphological Knowledge

GREEK/ LATIN

Technical words
New words by compounding: graph, paragraph (s), photograph (s), telegraph

ROMANCE

Most literacy and academic words
New Words through derivations:
separate, separates, separating, separated, separation, separately, separable

ANGLO-SAXON

Common, everyday, down-to-earth words
New words through compounding:
field (s), airfield (s), battlefield (s), cornfield (s)

3. Multiple Meanings

3. Multiple Meanings

A triangle is a **shape**. A circle and a square are **shapes**, too.

Regular exercise helps people get in better **shape**.

In fact, an idea took **shape** in the jackal's mind right away.

Multiple Meanings in English's Three Language Sources

field

noun	He planted a field of wheat.
	We talked to professionals in various fields.
	He destroyed the rest of the field with his jumping ability.
	The Moon has a gravitational field around it, which pulls objects to its surface.
verb	He fielded the ball cleanly.
	My high school traditionally fielded mediocre teams.
	She fielded five calls from irate clients.
adjective	The students were required to have a field experience for biology credit.

separate

verb ¹	•The police separated the two groups.
	•The milk had separated into curds and whey.
adjective ²	Melt the white and dark chocolate in separate bowls.
noun ²	•The fall fashion was separates in plaids and stripes.

¹sepə rāt

²sep(ə)rət

graph

noun	The students made graphs to present their observations.
verb	The students graphed their differences in height.

Summary: What 2,500 Word Families Mean for Proficient Reading

- Topic Knowledge
- Morphological Knowledge
- Awareness of Multiple Meanings

What the 2,500 Word Families Mean for Instruction



A young girl with brown hair, wearing a red jacket and a purple headband, is looking down at a stack of books on a shelf. The background is filled with many colorful books on shelves, creating a library or bookstore setting. The text "Extensive reading of texts" is overlaid in a white box with orange text.

Extensive reading of texts

Texts of a *Typical* Literacy Program*

[Grade 2]



*Texts from Leveled Literacy Intervention, Heinemann

Texts of a *Knowledge* Literacy Program*

[Grade 2]



*Texts from W.O.R.D., Scholastic



Typical

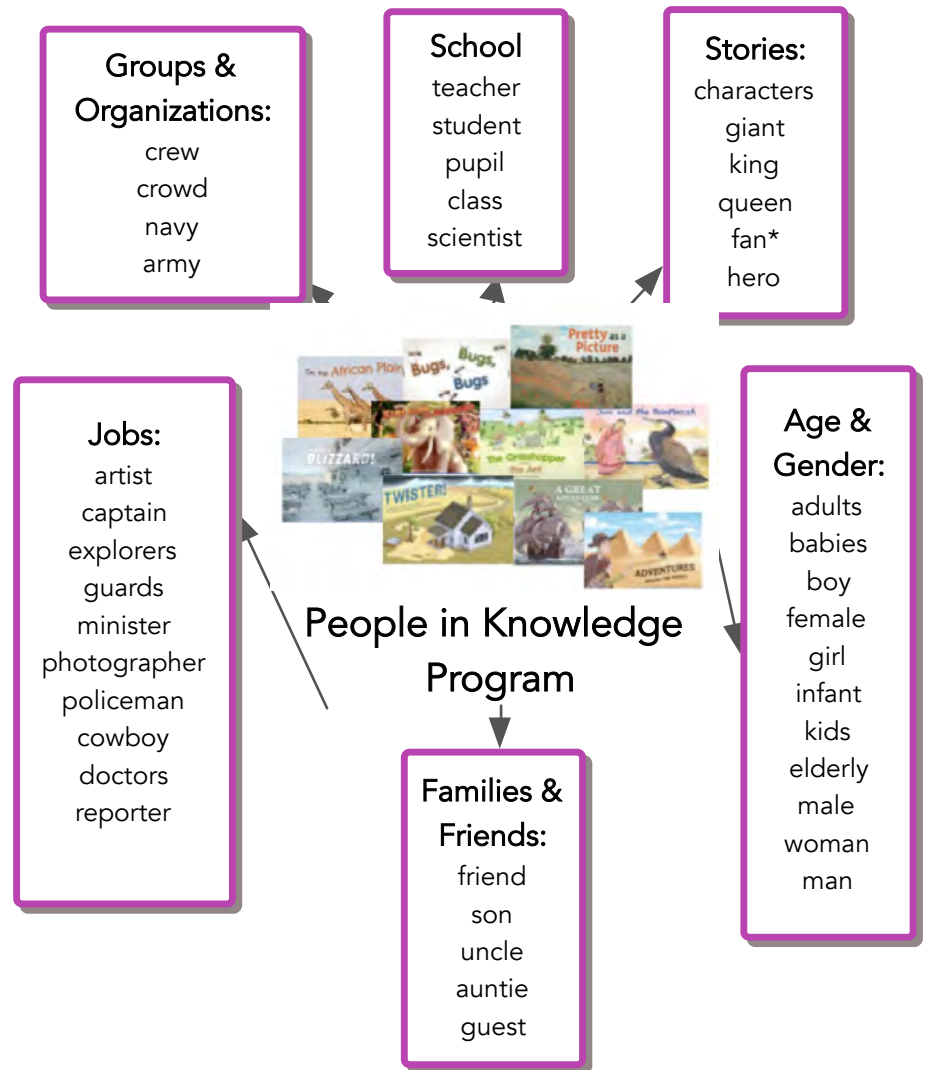
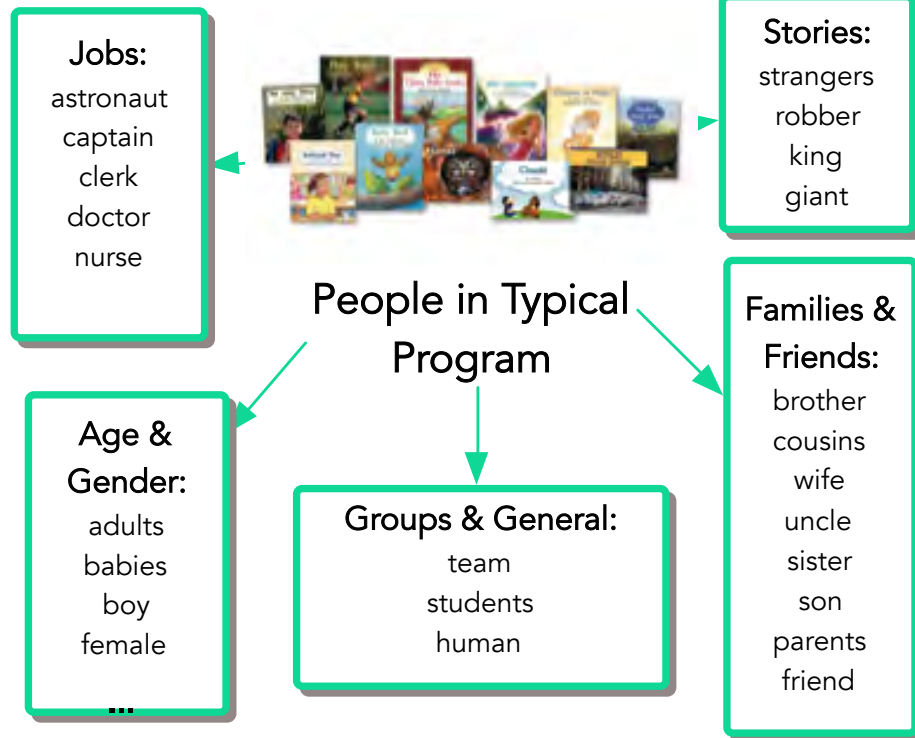
- 704 Word Families¹, 225 of which include more than one family member in texts
- 6% words outside 2,500 Word Families

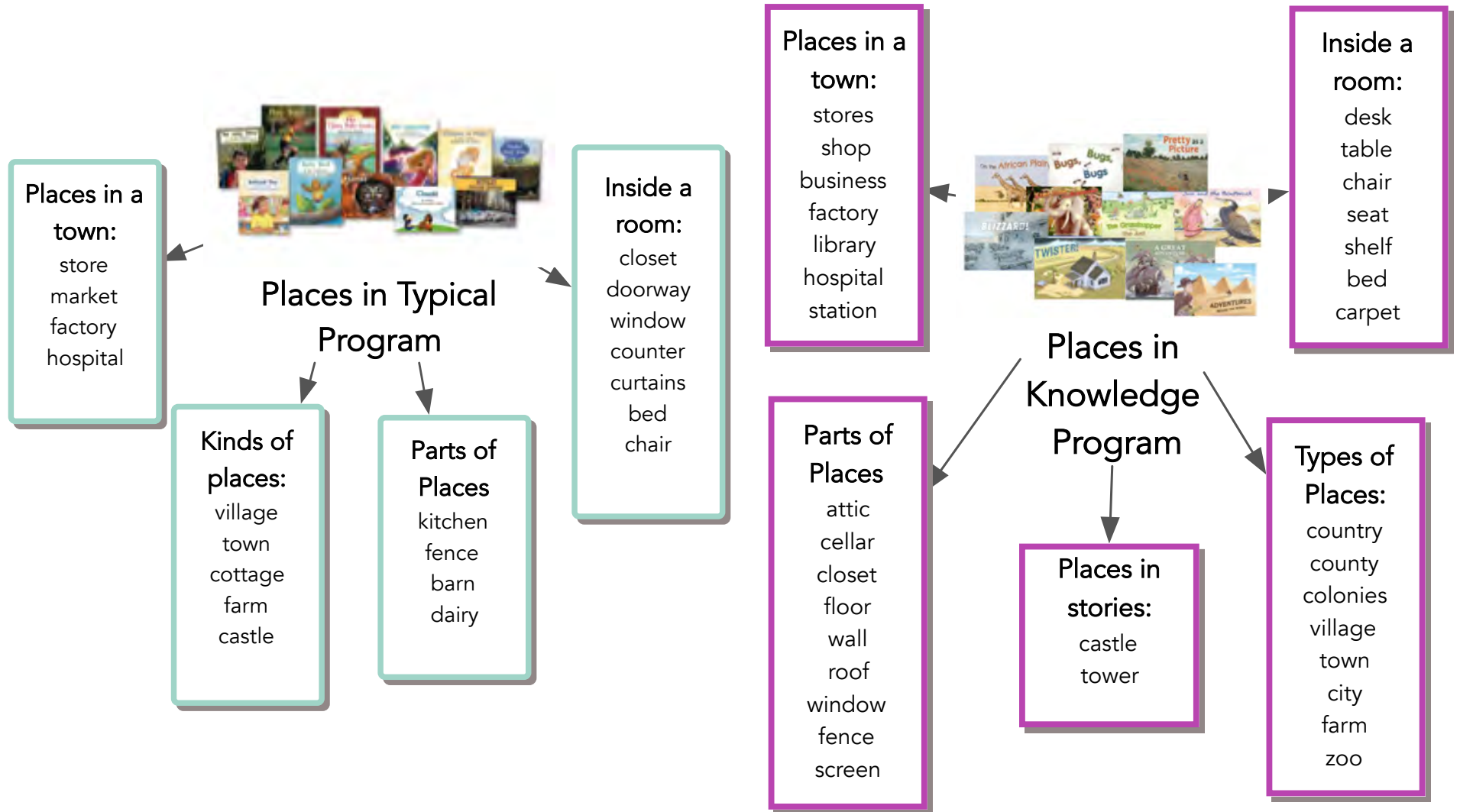


Knowledge

- 800 Word Families¹, 501 of which include more than one family member in texts
- 4% words outside 2,500 Word Families

¹analysis of word families in Word Zones 3-5



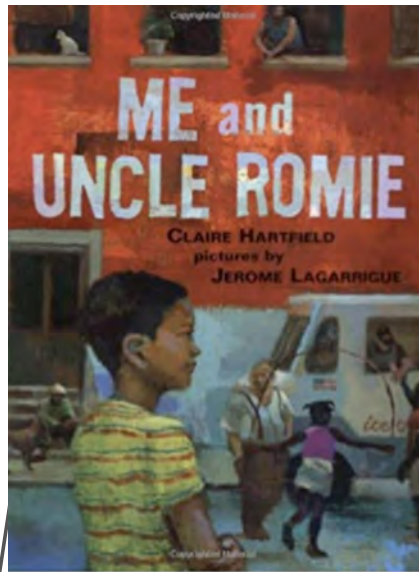


A classroom scene with a female teacher in a pink cardigan and white shirt standing at the front, pointing at a chalkboard. The chalkboard has two columns of math problems: multiplication on the left and addition on the right. Students are seated at wooden desks, seen from behind. The text 'Lessons on How Words Work' is overlaid in orange on a white background in the upper right.

Lessons on How Words Work

$$\begin{array}{l} 1 \times 1 = 1 \\ 2 \times 2 = 4 \\ 3 \times 3 = 9 \\ 4 \times 4 = 16 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{l} 1 + 1 = 2 \\ 2 + 2 = 4 \\ 3 + 3 = 6 \\ 4 + 4 = 8 \end{array}$$

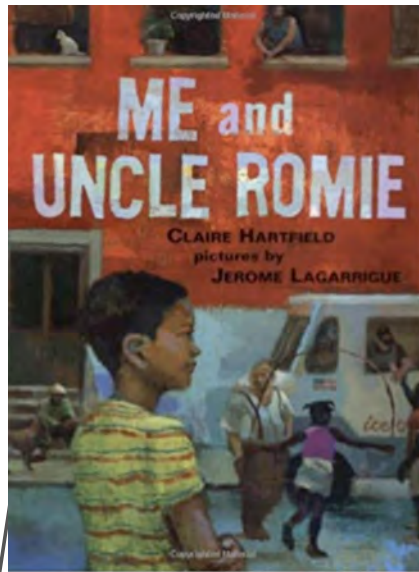


*Me and Uncle
Romie:*
compound words

- skyscrapers
- workroom
- cardboard
- underground
 - doorway
 - stickball
- bald-headed
- home run

- photographers
- subway

- train schedule
- fire escapes
- pepper jelly
- fierce-eyed
- postcards

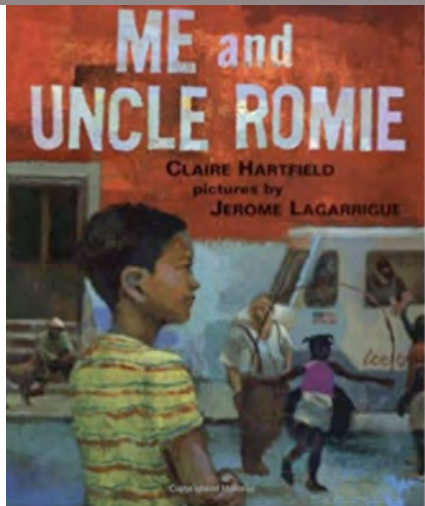


Me and Uncle Romie:
compound words

- skyscrapers
- workroom
- cardboard
- underground
- doorway
- stickball
- bald-headed
- home run

- train schedule
- fire escapes
- pepper jelly
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- postcards

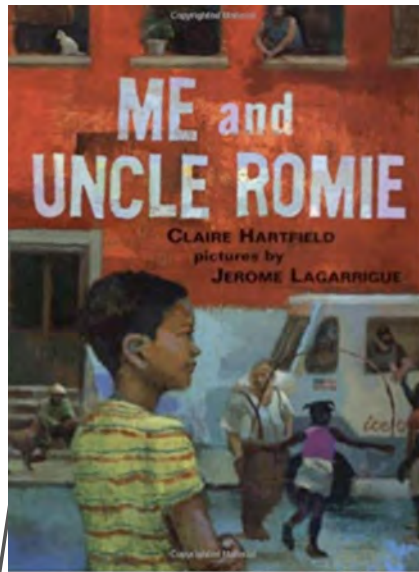
- photographers
- subway



Me and Uncle Romie:
Places

avenue ferry
hydrant stoops
bleachers platform
skyscrapers studio
neighborhood
underground

Penn Station
Harlem
Statue of Liberty
Carolina
Caribbean
Chicago



Me and Uncle Romie:
compound words

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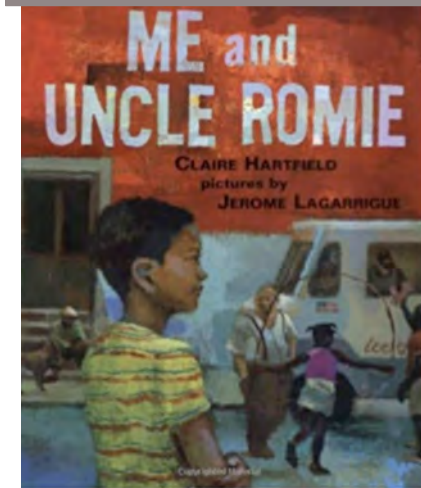
- train schedule
- fire escapes
- pepper jelly
- fierce-eyed
- postcards

ruined
feast
model
concerned
schedule
yanked
streak
smeared
glorious
studio

- photographers
- subway

ruined
feast
cardboard
fierce
flights
pitcher
treasure
stoops

Penn Station
Harlem
Statue of Liberty
Carolina
Caribbean
Chicago



Me and Uncle Romie:
Places

avenue ferry
hydrant stoops
bleachers platform
skyscrapers studio
neighborhood
underground

Conversations About the Core Vocabulary



Grade 1*

This is Main Street. There are a lot of stores. But who works on Main Street? Here's an idea! Let's meet some of them.

Meet Don. He works on Main Street. He has a job at the grocery store. Every day he puts fresh apples in the bins. Don is very good at his job.

Meet Meg. Meg works on Main Street. She has a job at the movies. Meg is very good at her job. She makes fresh popcorn.

Sal works on Main Street. He makes cookies and pies in an oven. His cookies and pies are for sale daily. There are a lot of things to buy!

Grade 3

What does your morning breakfast bowl contain? What do you eat for lunch and supper? How does all this food get to your dining table? Most of what you eat begins on a farm. The people with the job of growing most of that food are the world's farmers.

Farming, also called agriculture, is both art and science. Farmers use technology to improve what they do. They use technology to improve what and how much they produce. Farmers want to get the most from their land. They want crops to be abundant, of course. But they also want to be sure that the quality is good. Whatever they sell should be the cream of the crop!

Grade 5

For those who fear that a regular job at a big corporation would be too boring, joining the circus is not the only option. Looking at jobs in different economies reveals some surprising choices.

Milking a snake is not the sort of thing that many people would consider a career. This job requires squeezing venom from the glands of poisonous snakes. Why would anyone accept a job handling these deadly reptiles?

Snake milkers help produce antivenin, which can save the life of someone who has suffered a snakebite. Each type of snake poison requires a distinct type of antivenin. Milking snakes allows the handler to help others while living just a bit dangerously!

Summary: What 2,500 Word Families Mean for Instruction

- Extensive Reading of Appropriate Texts
- Lessons on How Words Work
- Conversations about Words in Texts



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Word Pictures

Student Texts

TextProject's innovative model of text complexity, called Text Elements by Task (abbreviated as TExT), considers the various tasks involved in reading to determine the complexity or difficulty of specific texts. In addition to rating existing texts, the TExT model is used to create texts designed to help beginning and struggling readers master the tasks necessary for reading success.

Beginning Reads



24 May 2012

[BeginningReads Home](#)
[BeginningReads™](#)

TextProject's BeginningReads program supports teachers, parents, and tutors in bringing children into reading. The goal of BeginningReads is to connect student's oral language knowledge with written language. Ten levels (of 12 books each) are available.



2 April 2013

[Product Home](#)
[FYI for Kids](#)

A collection of engaging and high-quality magazine articles designed to enhance the Common Core classroom's reading repertoire.



4 January 2011

[Product Home](#)

Students who don't read much over the summer show a decline in reading performance from the end of one grade to the start of the next. Research shows that even reading 4 or 5 books over the summer helps to prevent the summer slump.

SummerReads are accessible, engaging texts for at-risk readers... for FREE! And there are enough texts for an entire summer of reading.



11 January 2015

[Article](#)
[Stories of Words](#)

Stories of Words aims to develop students' interest in interesting words (e.g., *snickerdoodles*, *terrapin*, *scuba*).



4 January 2011

[Product](#)
[Talking Points For Kids](#)

Talking Points For Kids aims to increase discussion amongst students on topics that relate to them. To read about the importance of talking about ideas that matter, take a look at the Frankly Freddy entry: [High-Leverage Action #1](#).



29 December 2010

[Article](#)
[TExT Model](#)

Learn more about the Text Elements by Task (TExT) model of text complexity and how it was used to design the texts in the popular QuickReads program.

17 May 2013

[Item Group](#)
[Commercially-Available Products Powered by TExT](#)

The TExT model of reading has also been used to write texts in supplemental curriculum. Freddy has worked with major publishing companies, such as Pearson and Scholastic, to create appropriate texts for beginning and struggling readers. Click on a title below to find more information about these reading programs.

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Word Pictures



4 February 2013

WordPictures Title
[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.

6 January 2015

WordPictures Title
[Places and Dwellings](#)

Every day we go to places and enter buildings. There is an abundance of words that describe the different places we go and the different types of dwellings we enter.

[CVWP-Places-and-Dwellings-Bundle.pdf](#) (28 MB)

28 January 2015

WordPictures Title
[Machines and Tools](#)

Everyday machines and tools make completing different tasks a little easier. There are lots of different kinds of tools and machines, from simple to complex tools.

[CVWP-Machines-and-Tools-Bundle.pdf](#) (20 MB)

25 February 2015

WordPictures Title
[Plants and Where Plants Grow](#)

Plants grow all around the world. There are lots of words that describe the types of plants, parts of plants, where plants grow, and the types of land plants grow on.

[CVWP-Plants-and-Where-Plants-Grow-Bundle.pdf](#) (19 MB)

9 March 2015

WordPictures Title
[Fashion and Design](#)

The various types of clothing and accessories to choose from allow people to create their own sense of style that reflects their unique personality.

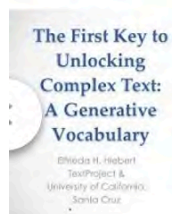
[CVWP-Fashion-and-Design-Bundle.pdf](#) (17 MB)

30 March 2015

WordPictures Title
[Health and the Human Body](#)

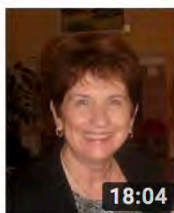
There are lots of words used to describe humans as organisms, the parts of the body, the brain and the body's senses, health and nutrition, and the injuries and illnesses the body may experience.

[CVWP-Health-and-the-Human-Body-Bundle.pdf](#) (20 MB)



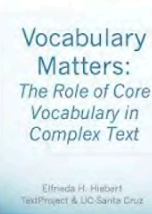
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A Generative Vocabulary
TextProject



38:57

Vocabulary Matters
TextProject



44:24

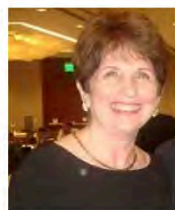
Vocabulary Matters: 5 Facts & Actions



43:01

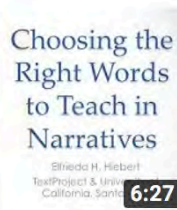
Dr. Elfrieda H. Hiebert: The First Key to Unlocking...

Vocabulary Assets [PLAY ALL](#)



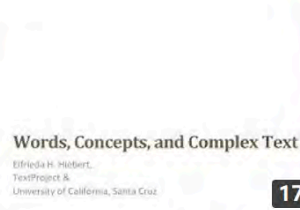
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Close Reading and Vocabulary: Charlotte's Web



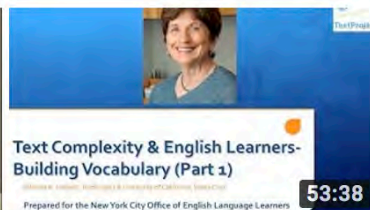
17:55

Words, Concepts & Complex Text



53:38

Teaching English Learners: Vocabulary Part I



53:40

Teaching English Learners: Vocabulary Part II



18:04

A Generative Vocabulary
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