Building on Their Strengths: The Vocabulary Edge for English Learners

Elfrieda H. Hiebert

TextProject

Overview

- Humankind's knowledge is stored in text. We read to learn—both stories and information.

- Words are the labels for concepts that underlie knowledge. 2,500 word families account for the majority of words in texts.

- These families represent major bodies of knowledge & English's linguistic systems.

- English Learners need ELA instruction that focuses on world and word knowledge.

GPS

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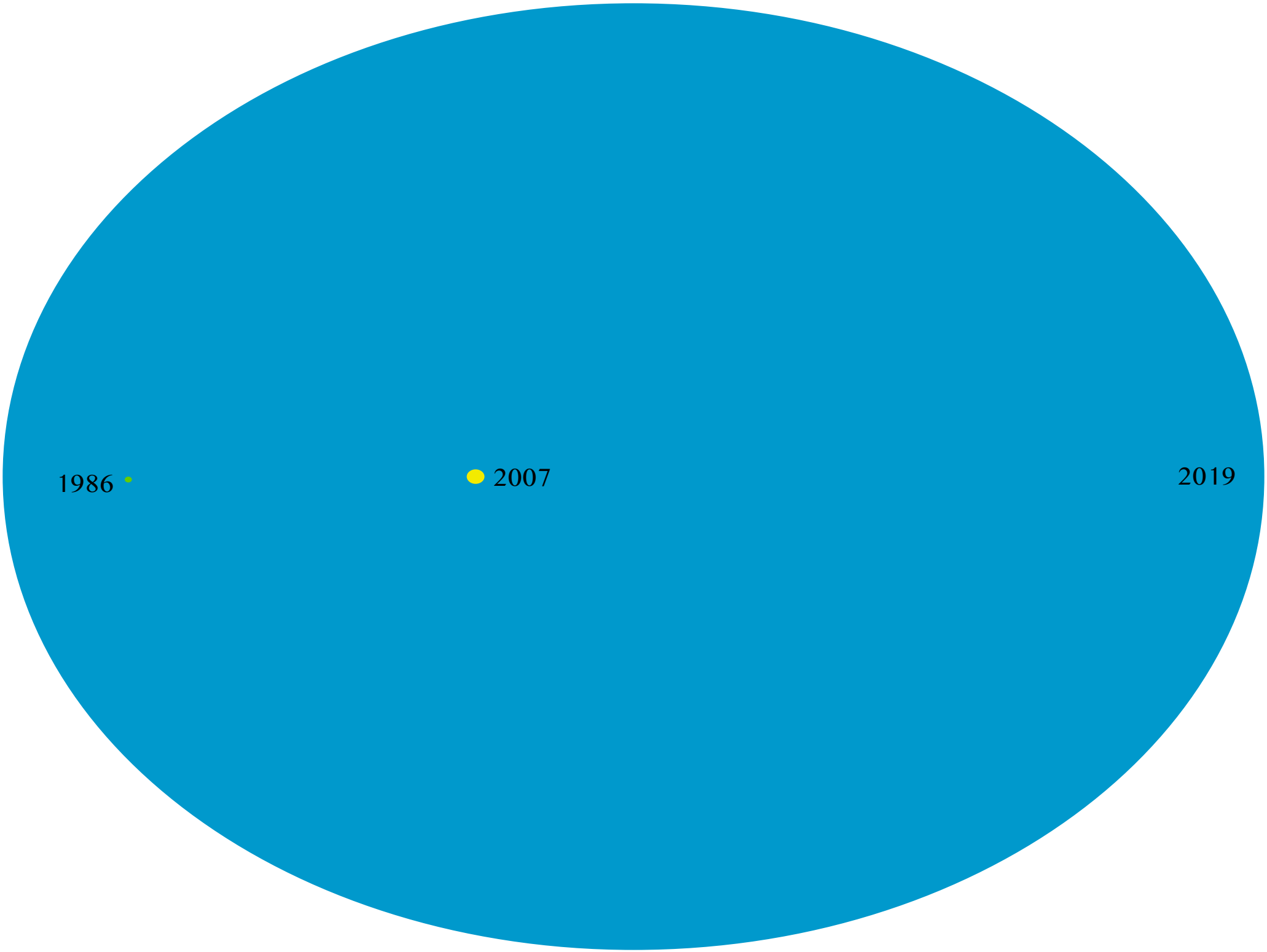
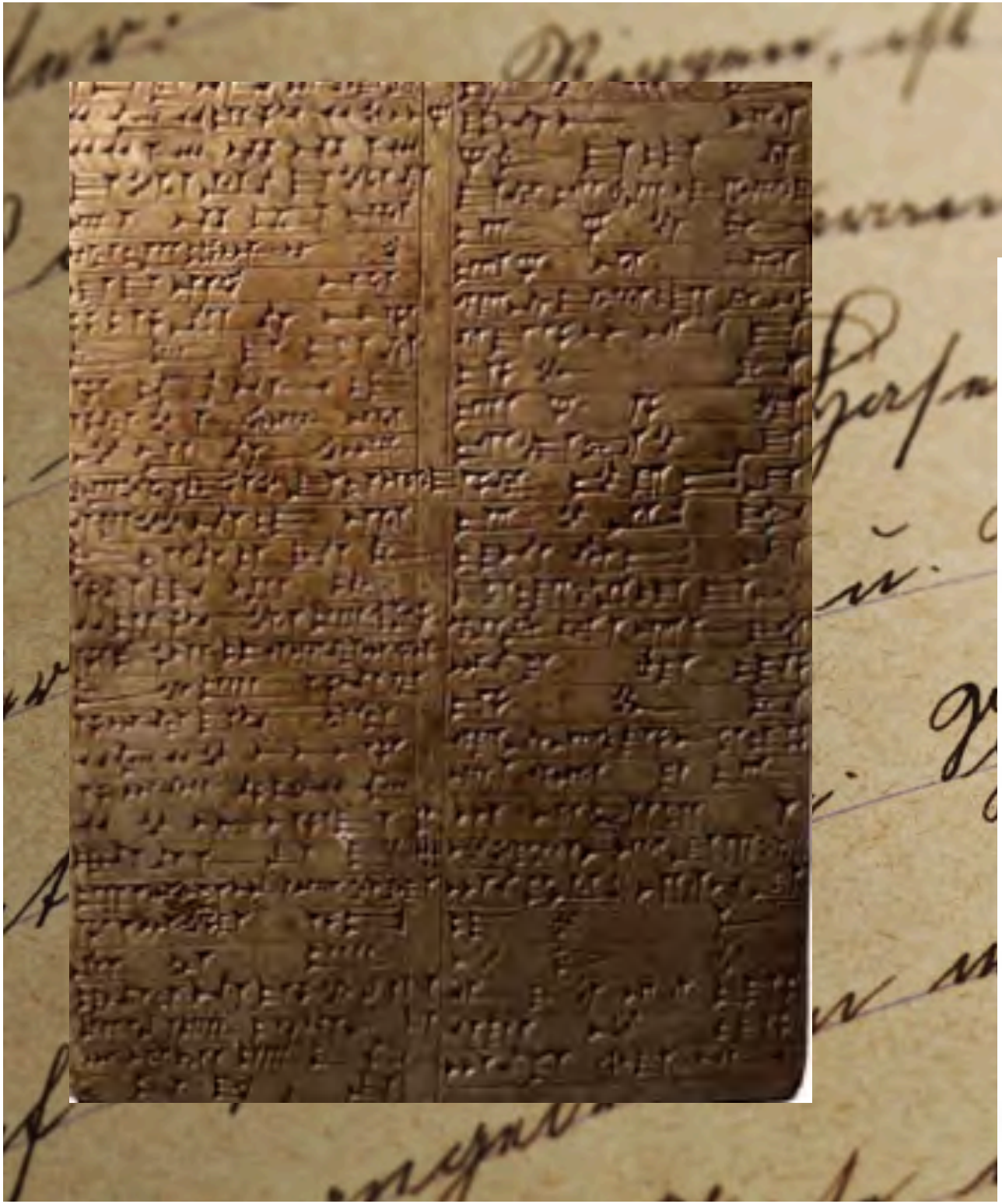

1986
2007
2019



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Different Labels But the Same Concepts

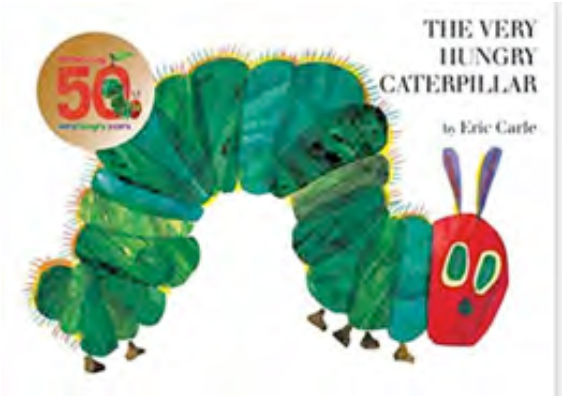
English Learners

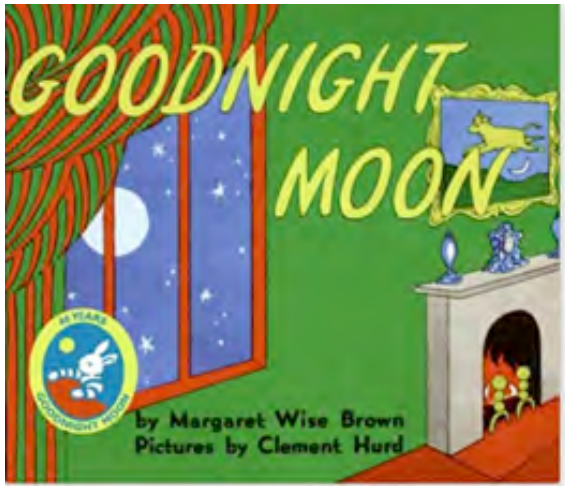
> Example 1: "I'm going to catch a crab today," yelled Sailor Paul. Soon his nets were full and taut, and Paul hauled them up on the deck. "Get away, silly squid," scolded Sailor Paul. "Don't sprawl on my yawl." (*Sailor Paul and the Crabs*, Paulson, 2000)

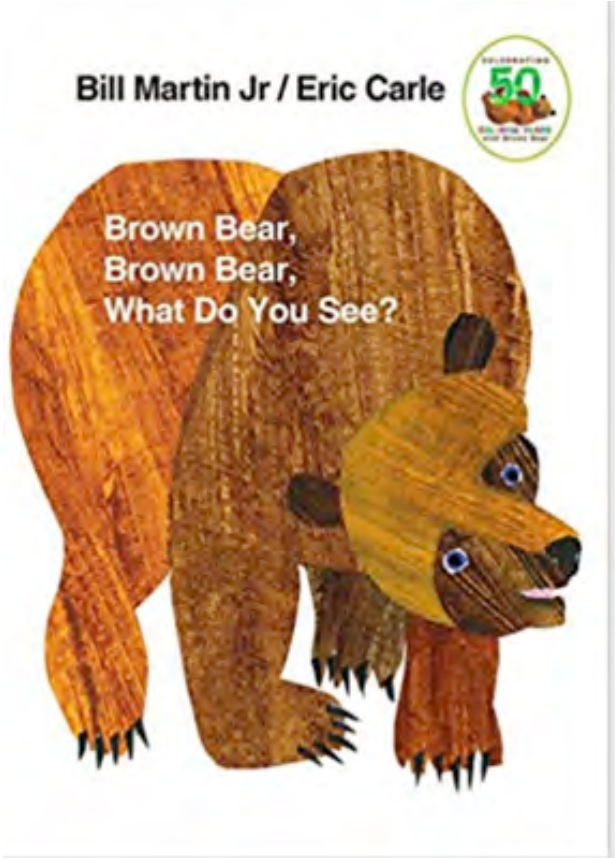
> Example 2: The children are drawing pictures. Ann draws a green lawn. What's on the lawn? A little deer or a fawn is on the lawn. Ben draws a pile of yellow straw. What is in the straw? A fawn lies in the straw. (*Drawing Pictures*, Hiebert, 2019)

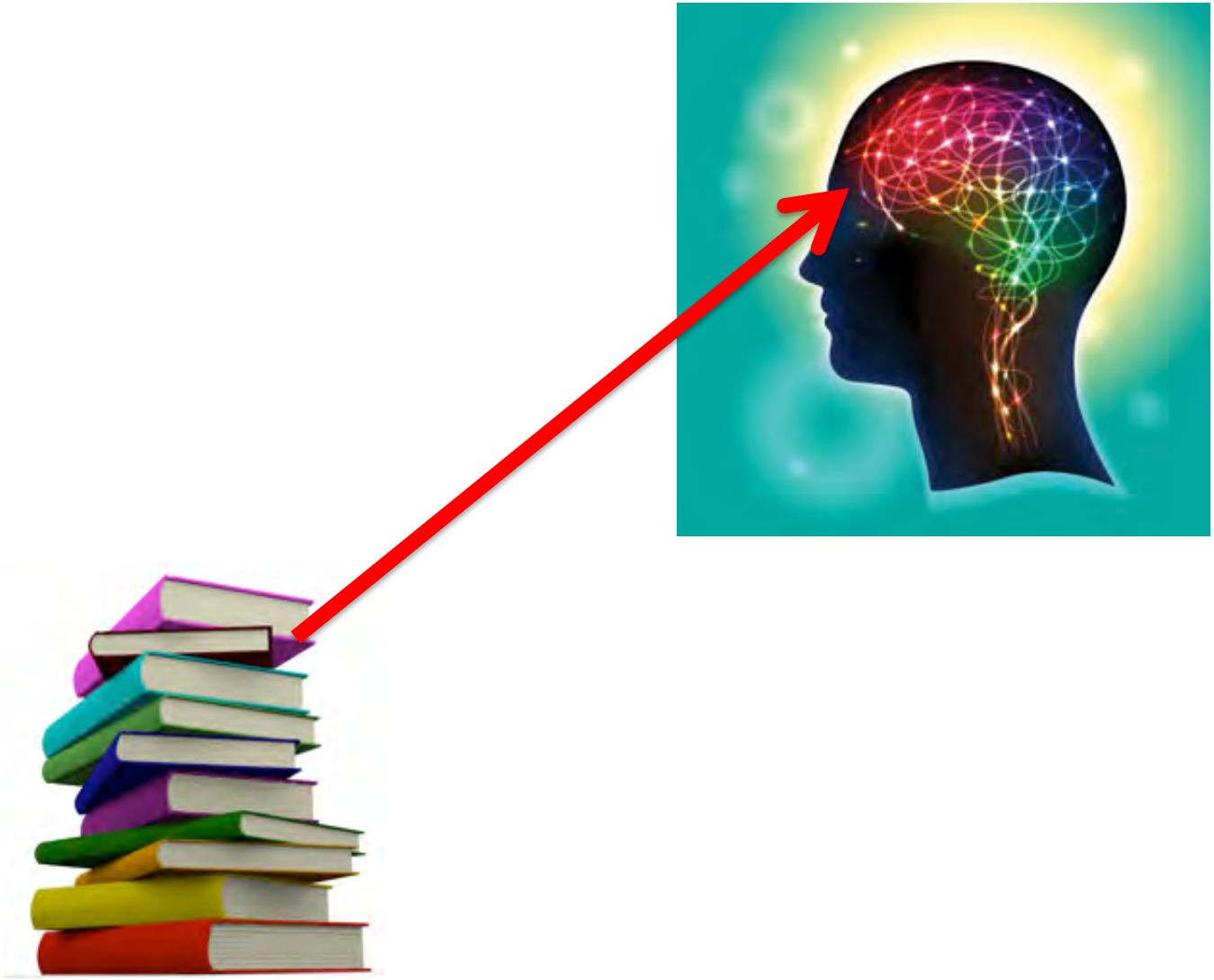
In the United States as we approach a new decade—2020—about 10% of our students enter school speaking native languages other than English (McFarland et al., 2018). English learners (ELs) may not have English labels for concepts, but they do have labels for concepts in their native languages. In the usual materials and approaches of English/Language Arts, ELs are asked to learn to read words for which most young children do not have associated meanings in their native language, such as *taut* and *yawl* in Example 1. Instructional demands such as those represented by the first excerpted text can intensify the challenge for ELs. Example 2 illustrates a text where students' knowledge of activities (e.g., drawing) and aspects of nature (e.g., animals, growing things) are the foundation for learning new concepts such as *fawn* and *lawn*.

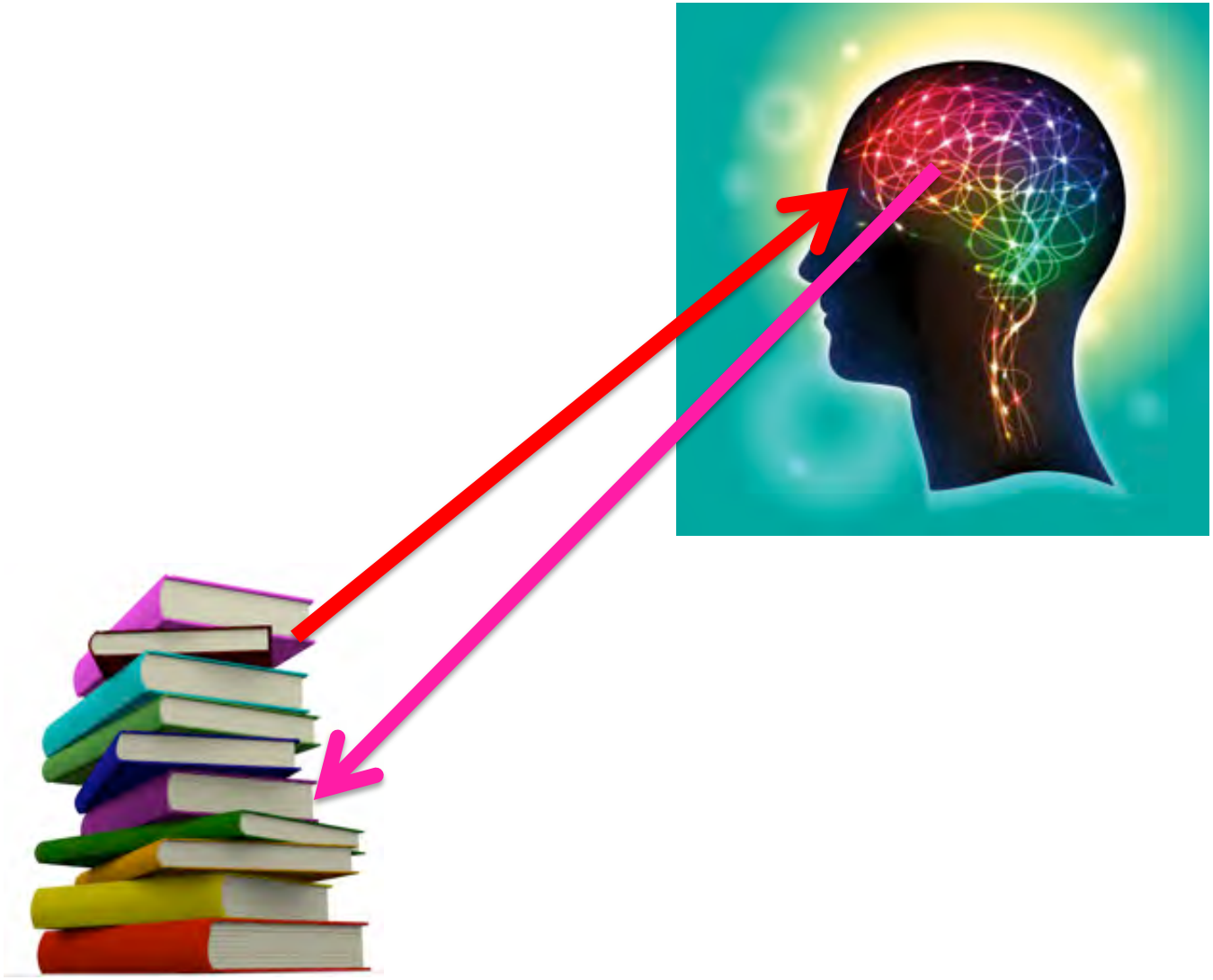
Additionally, evidence points to strengths of ELs, such as their acuity in attending to the sounds of language, which often are not recognized in schools. This chapter develops a perspective in which strengths that ELs bring to language learning are the foundation for the design of learning experiences for those students and in which


THE VERY
HUNGRY
CATERPILLAR
by Eric Carle


GOODNIGHT
MOON
by Margaret Wise Brown
Pictures by Clement Hurd


Bill Martin Jr / Eric Carle
Brown Bear,
Brown Bear,
What Do You See?





GPS

- Humankind's knowledge is stored in text. We read to learn—both stories and information.

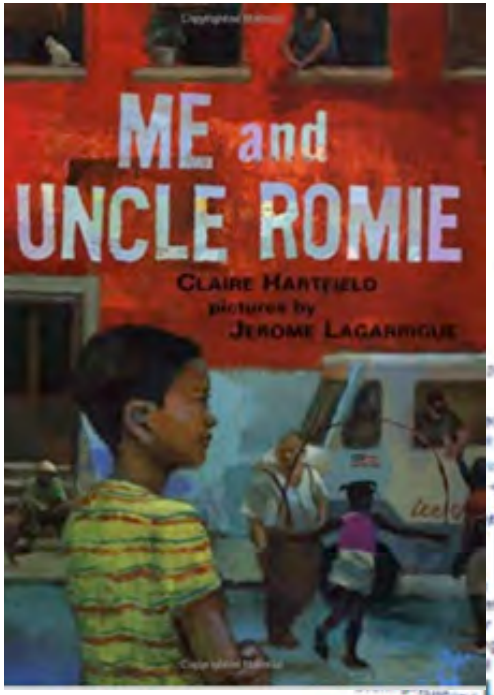
- Words are the labels for concepts that underlie knowledge. 2,500 word families account for the majority of words in texts.

- These families represent major bodies of knowledge & English's linguistic systems.

- English Learners need ELA instruction that focuses on world and word knowledge.

Oxford English Dictionary

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


ME and
UNCLE ROMIE
CLAIRE HARTFIELD
pictures by
JEROME LAGARRIGUE

Uncle
Romie
Nanette
said
Aunt
birthday
James
Romie's
people
like
told
Mama
home
Daddy
paintings
train
Harlem
Carolina
New
York
baseball
pepper
jelly
big
first
see
know
sure
around
going
got
things
good
summer
special
together
trains
songs
paints
called
came
asked
watched
apartment
funny
doorway
buildings
Caribbean
escapes
heard
another
rooftop
birds
turned
night
laughed
case
lights
shared
families
playing
saw
stores
wrote
flowers
whole
different
hard
sorts
game
walked
working
two
fire
uncle
thought
lot
make
took
day
man
liked
picture
studio
kids
bald
hot
mitts
will
one
art
hall
huge
visit
away
talking
biscuits
games
painting
almost
set
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ride
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call
giant
corner
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North
front
just
way
get
cake
Back
favorite
explained
reminded
right
feel
anymore
stickball
houses
stoops
missed
listening
walking
morning
Later
back
Another
Happy
lady
seen
much
fine
next
door
sky
old
city
top
put
around
window
artist
watching
People
shared
families
stores
wrote
playing
saw
different
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flowers
hard
sorts
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working
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Nanette
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birthday
James
people
like
told
Mama
paintings
train
Carolina
New
York
baseball
pepper
jelly
big
first
see
know
sure
around
going
got
things
good
summer
called
came
asked
watched
apartment
funny
doorway
buildings
Caribbean
escapes
heard
another
rooftop
birds
turned
night
laughed
case
lights
shared
families
playing
saw
stores
wrote
flowers
whole
different
hard
sorts
game
walked
working
two
fire
uncle
thought
lot
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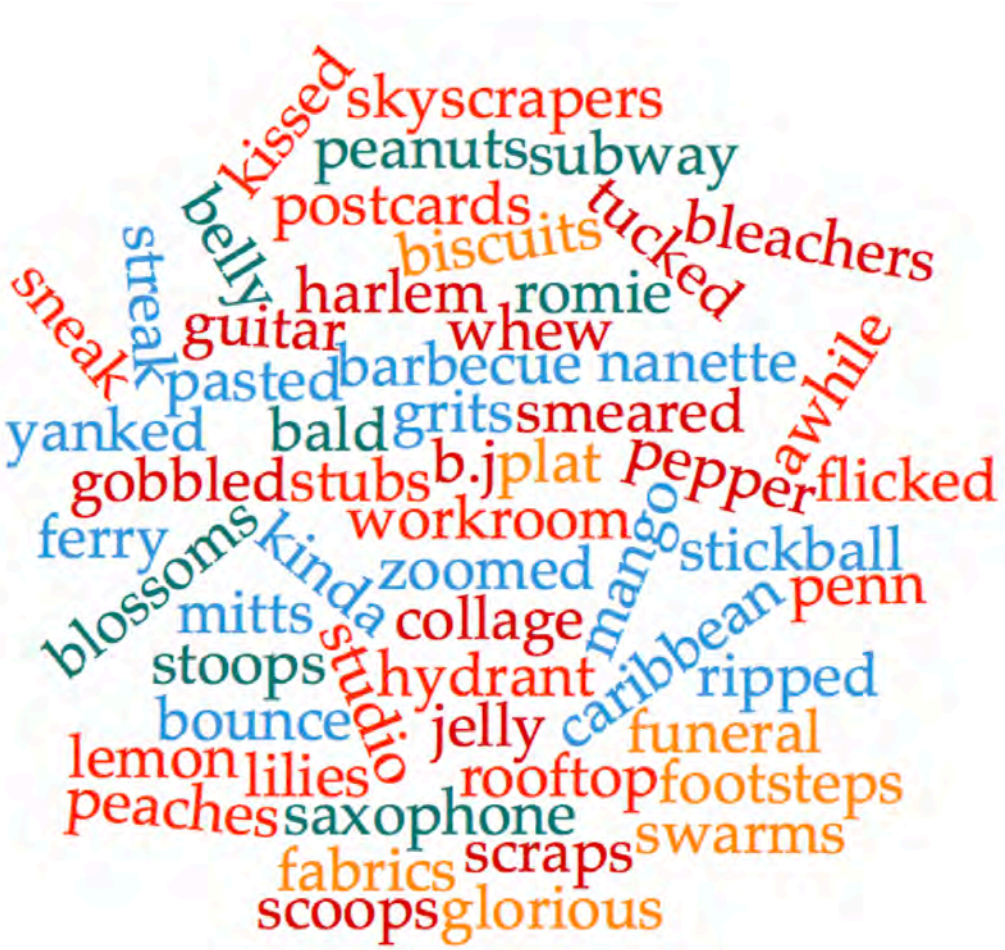
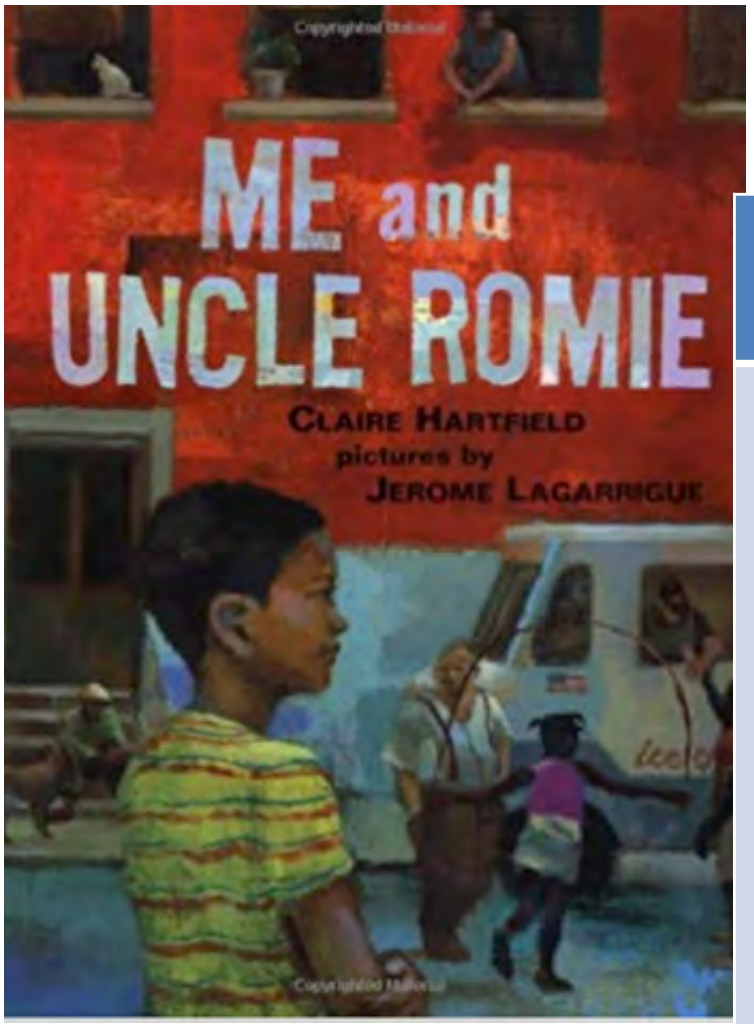
- Of 601 unique words, 11% are rare in written English
- In every 100 words, there are 8 rare words.





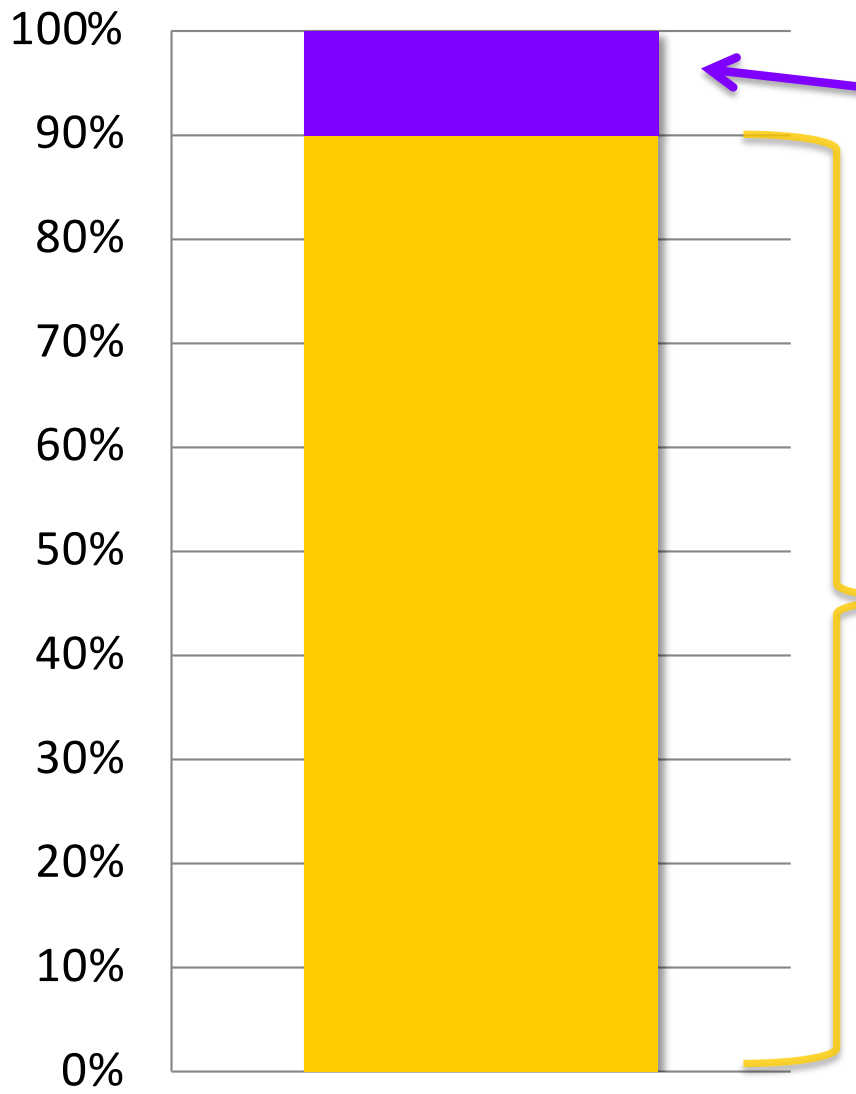
Typical Choices

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (Baumann et al. (2014)	Scott Foresman (Afflerbach et al., 2013)
ruined	ruined
feast	feast
model	cardboard
concerned	fierce
schedule	flights
yanked	pitcher
streak	treasure
smeared	stoops
glorious	
studio	

10,000 texts

Word	How many times word appears in text	Word Length	Ufunction (Predicted appearances for a million words of text)	Supercluster	Age of Acquisition	Complex Morphological Family U	Mean Concreteness Rating
ruined	1	6	13	33a.3	7.16	34.6445	2.96
feast	1	5	13	6a.2	7.81	15.8756	4.3

Numbers of English Words that Account for All Words in Texts



10% "Rare" Words (200,000+)

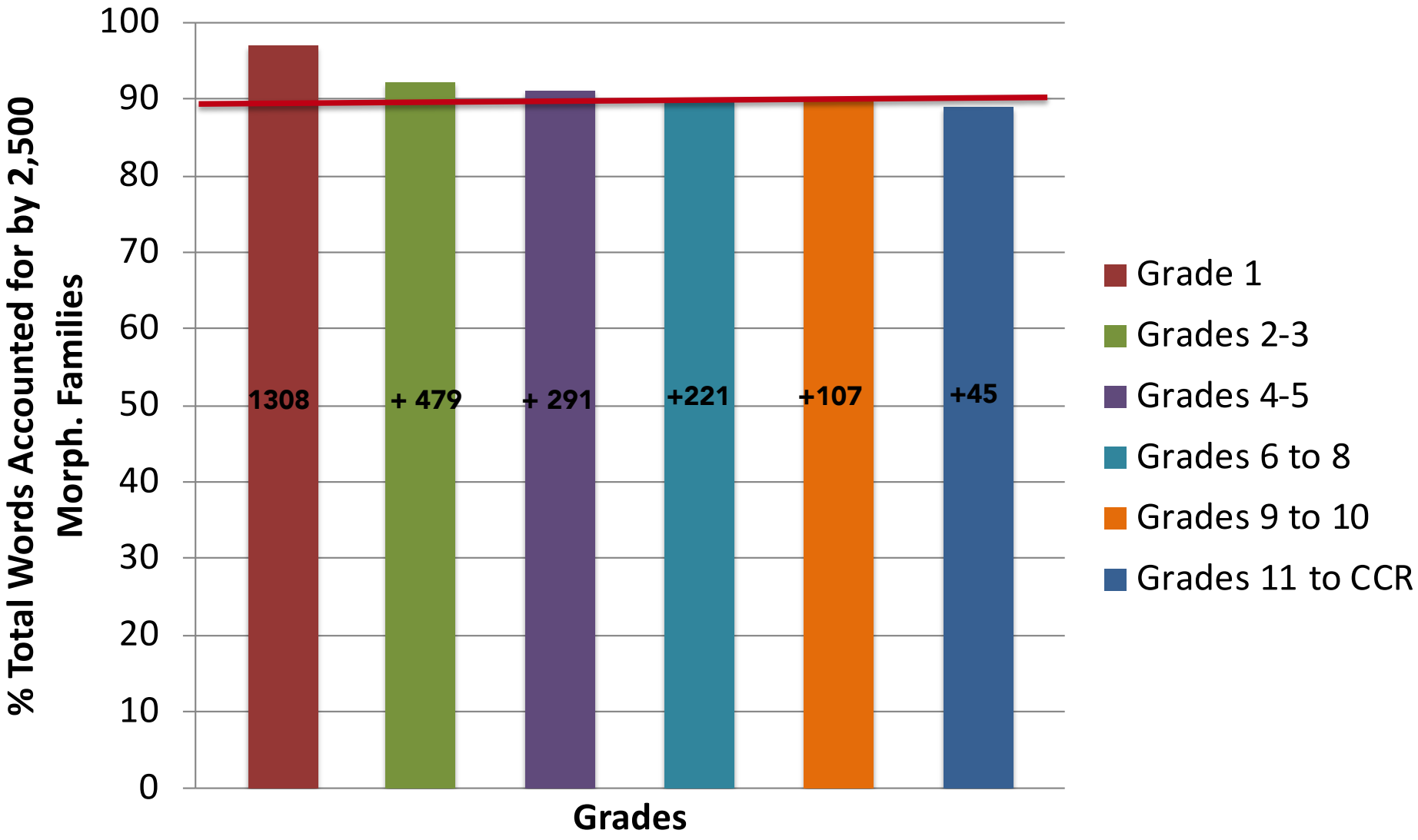
90% "Core" Words:
- **2,500 complex word families (*+helpful, unhelpful, helpless*)**

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

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

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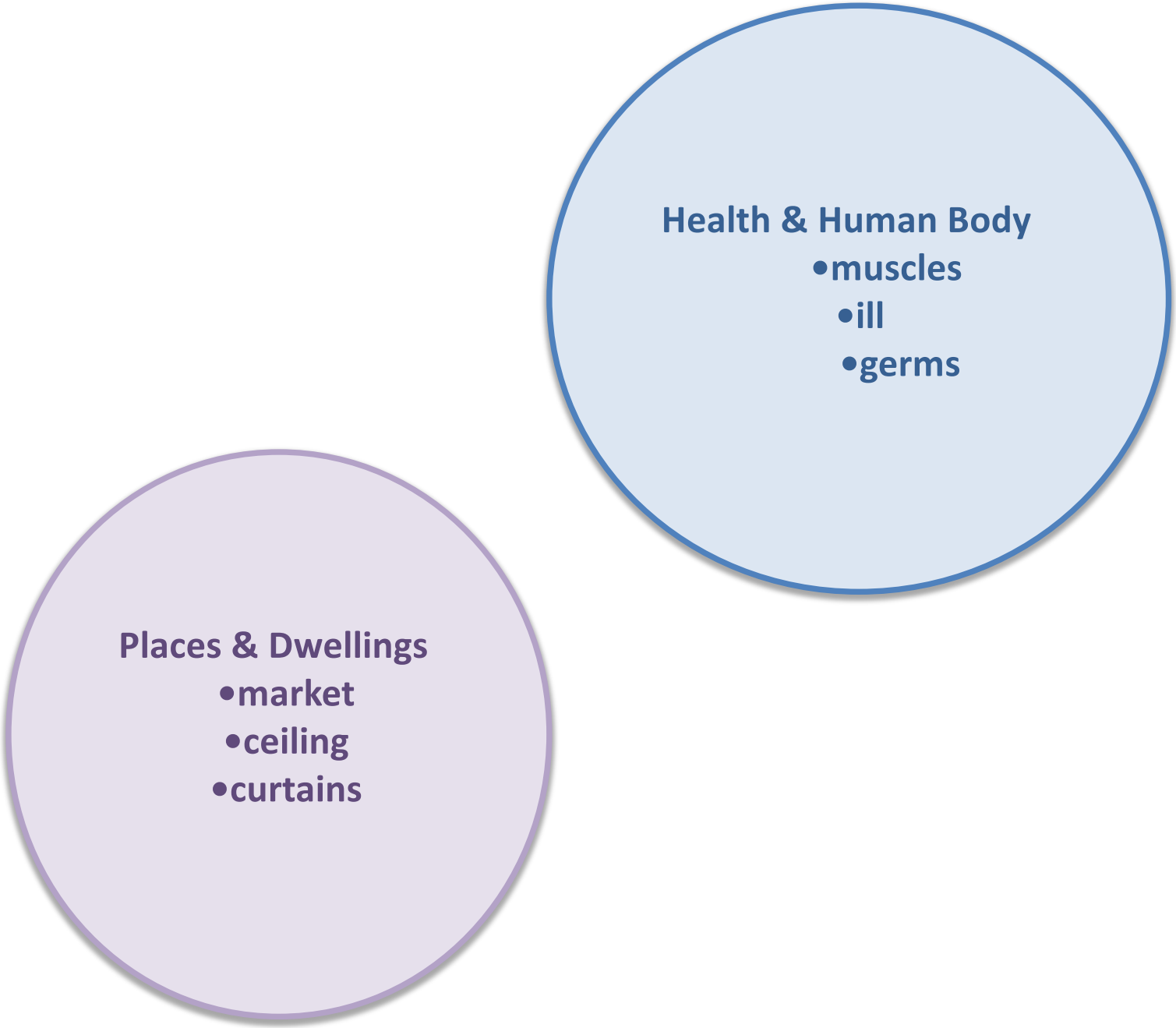

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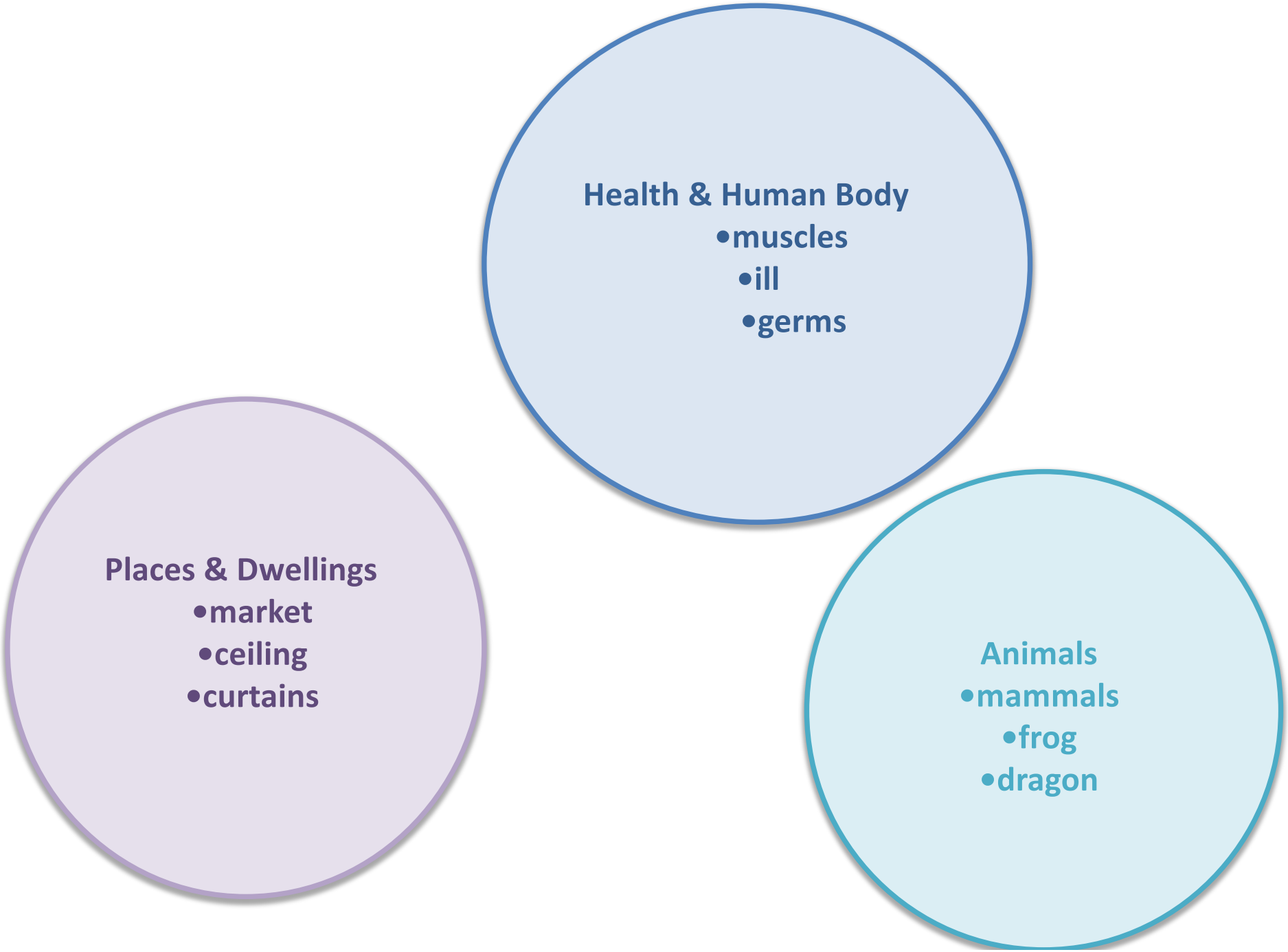

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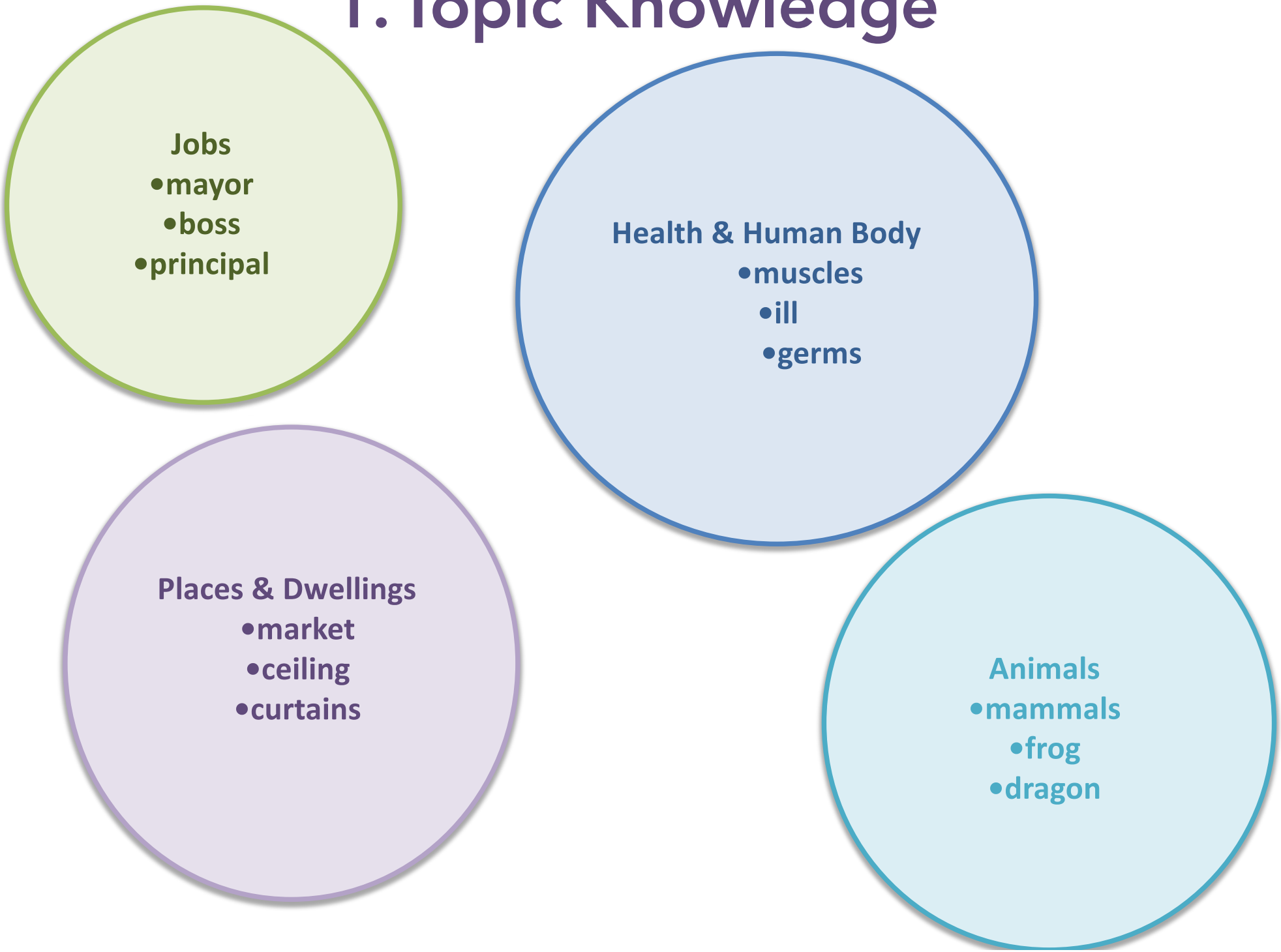

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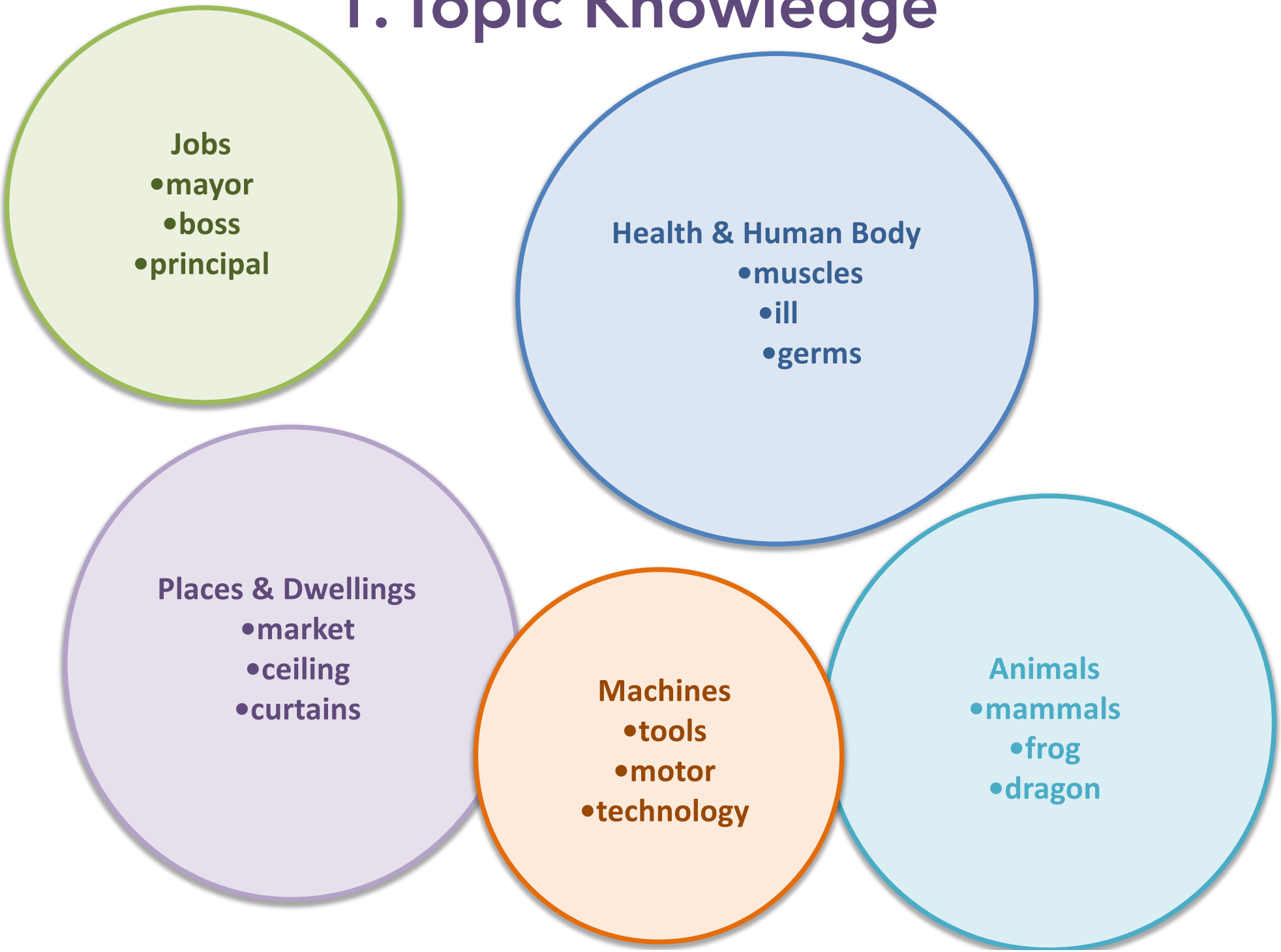

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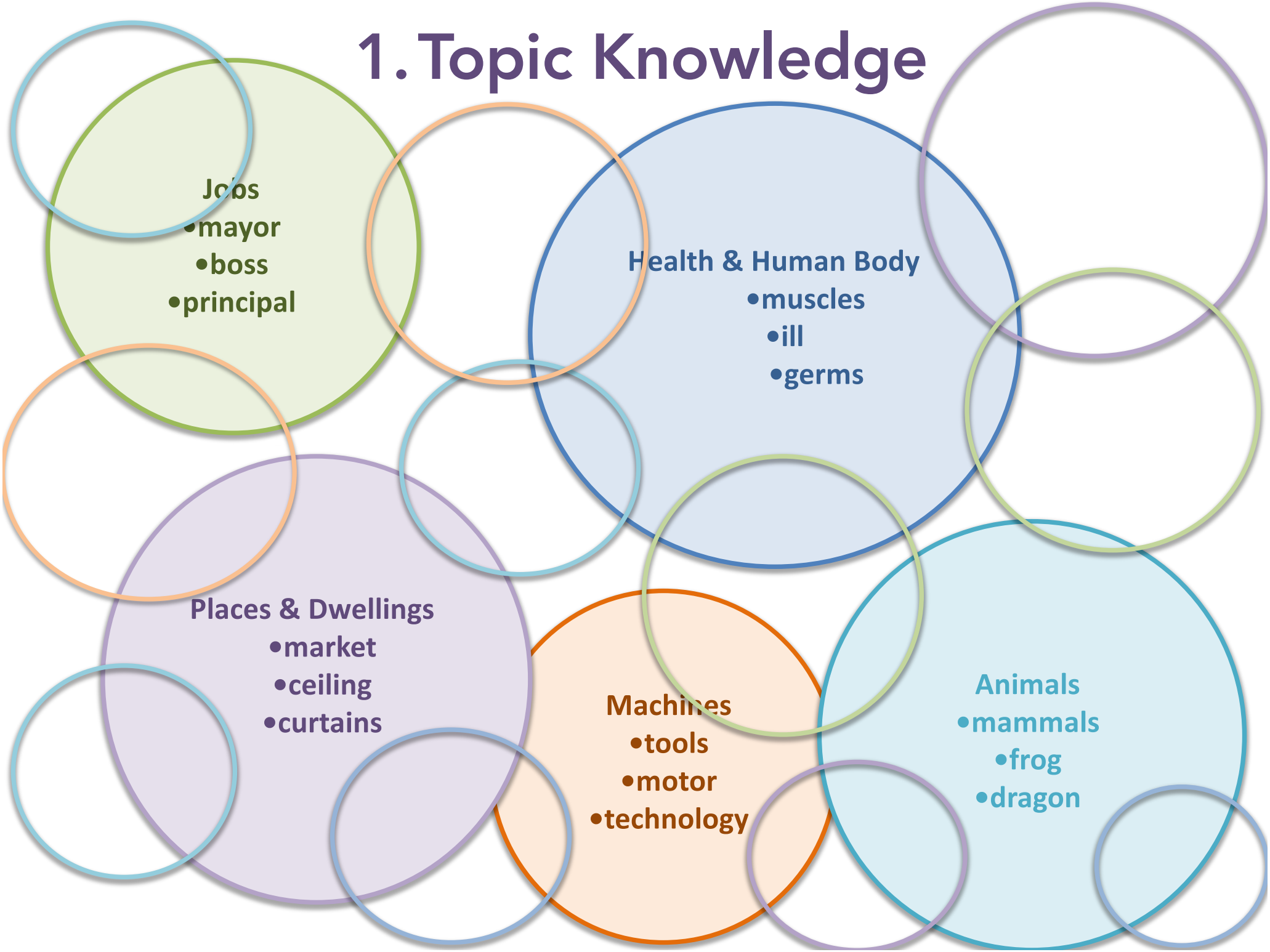
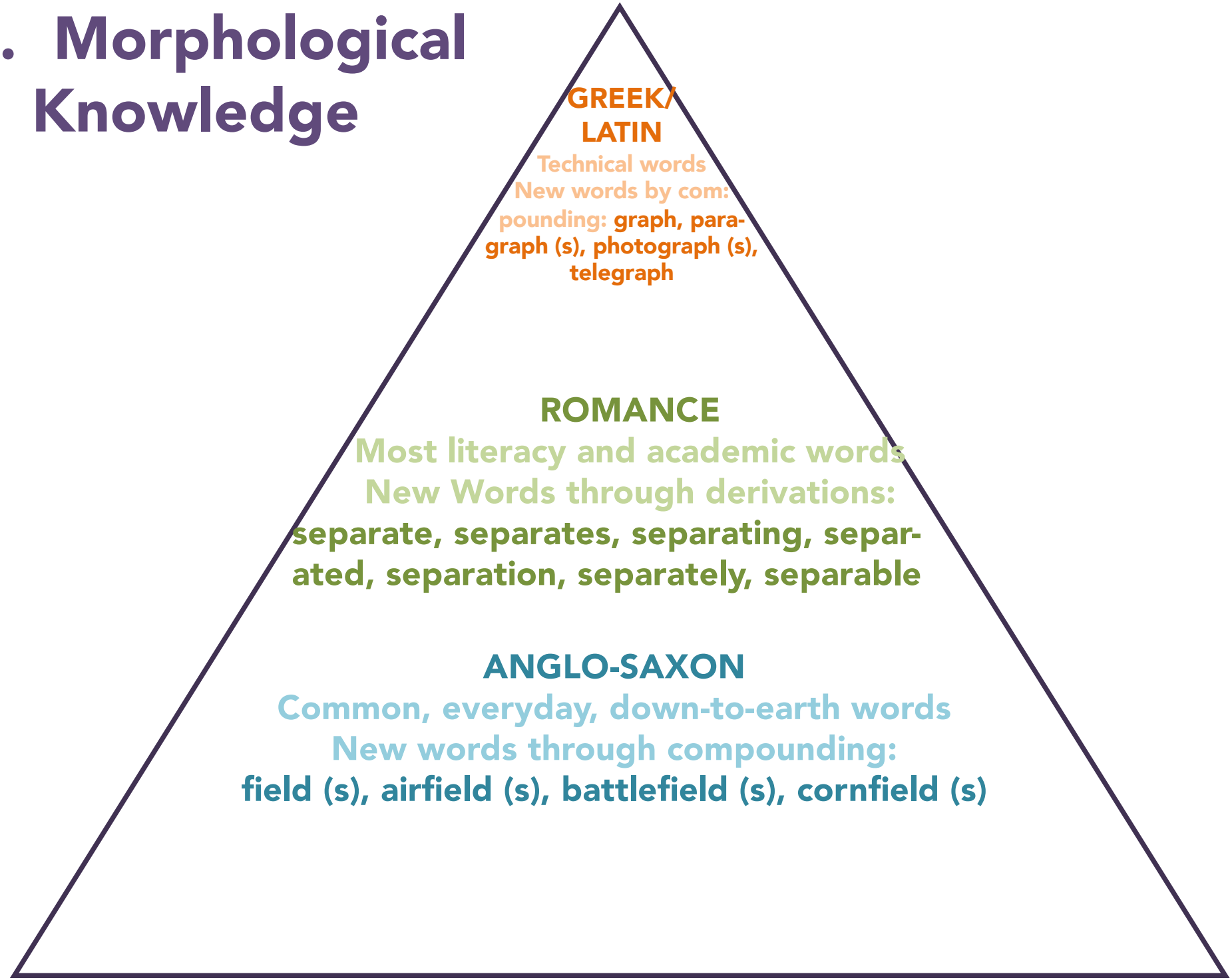


2. MORPHOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE

2. Morphological Knowledge



(from Calfee & Drum, 1981)

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.

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I. Recognizing students' knowledge in their native languages and using this knowledge to build new understandings

Scholastic W.O.R.D. Theme Map

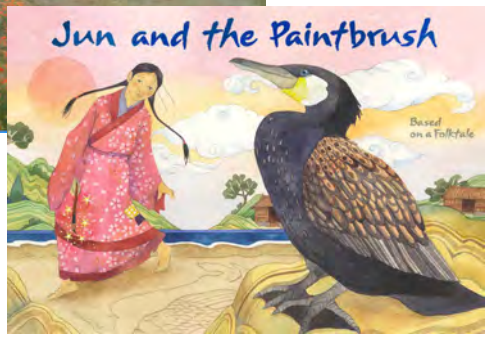
Texts of a *Typical* Literacy Program*

[Grade 2]

*Texts from Leveled Literacy Intervention, Heinemann

Texts of a *Knowledge* Literacy Program*

[Grade 2]



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

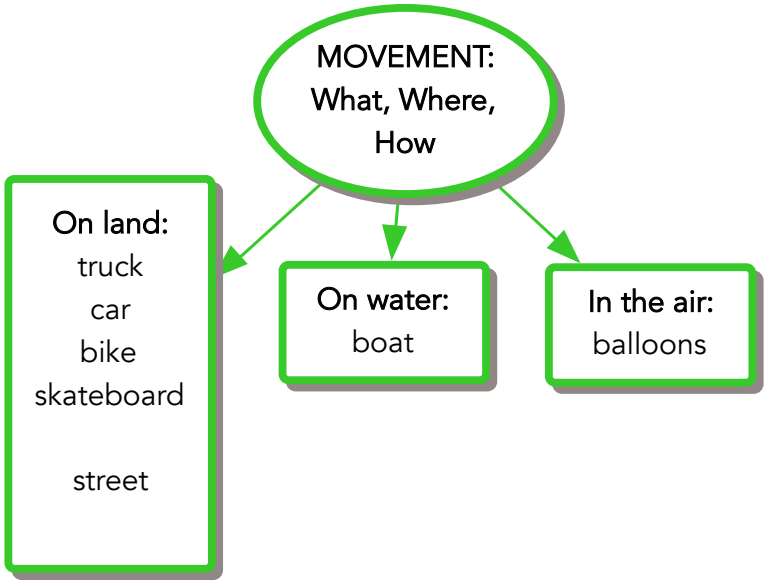
Comparison of Two Text Types (# of words in each: 11,400)

	Typical	Knowledge-Based
# unique words	1,718	1,332
# word families with more than one family member	225	501
% words outside 2,500 Word Families	6%	4%

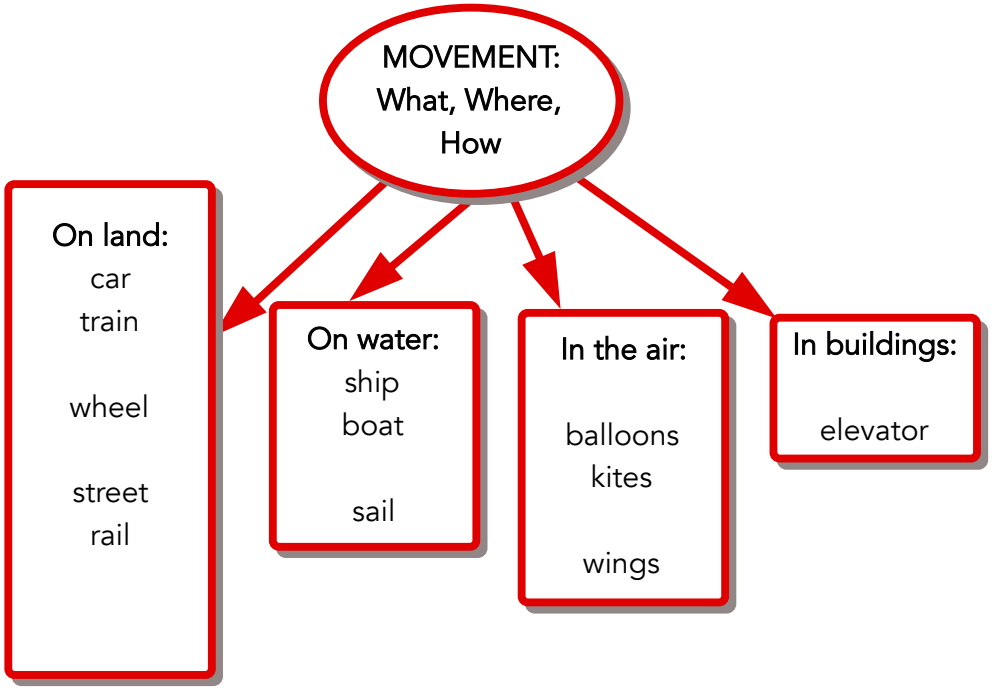
Size of Critical Semantic Clusters

(words with 3+ repetitions)

Typical Program



Knowledge-Based Program



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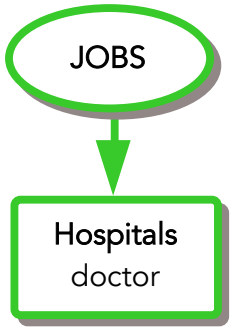

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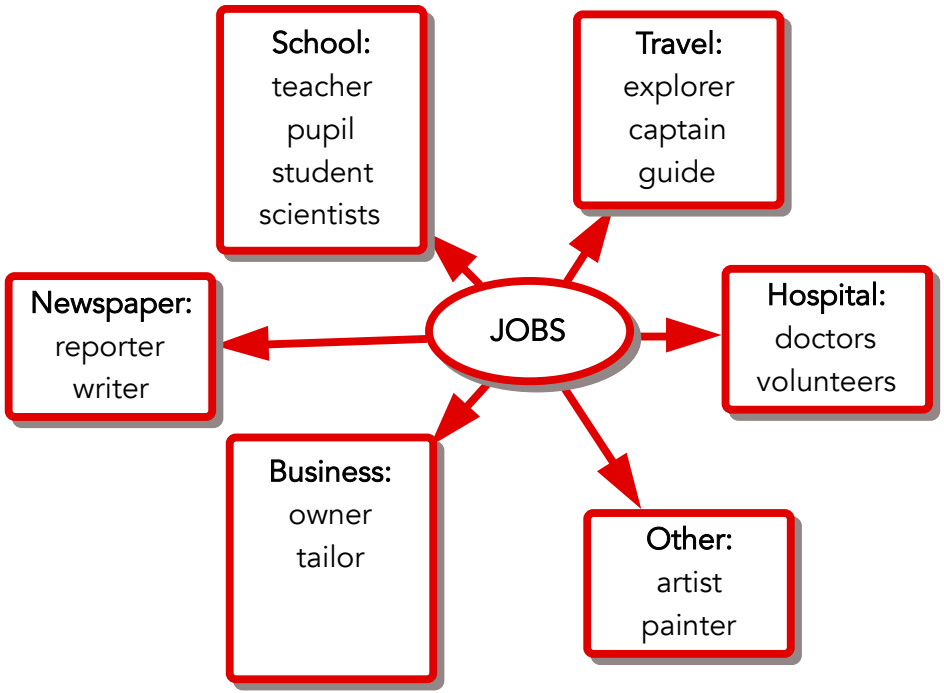

W.O.R.D. Theme 6: On the Move

	Kindergarten	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Fiction	Up in the Air!	Let's Get Moving!	Pecos Bill Rides a Twister	The Race to Win	A Fish Tale	The Four Dragons
Nonfiction	Go! Go! Go!	Move It!	New Rides!	Fast, Faster, Fastest	Clear Waters	Journey to Mars

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

W.O.R.D. Theme 4: It's My Job

	Kindergarten	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Fiction	Mabel, Mabel, Set the Table!	Ruby and Fred	Look Out Below!	Stone Soup	Fit to Print	Work, Hercules, Work!
Nonfiction	Lend a Hand	Good Job!	Do You Want to Be a Teacher?	Down on the Farm	Not the Real News	Snake Milking

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

TextProject provides sets of pictures for core vocabulary

TextProject Word Pictures™

Transportation—

Types of Transportation or Vehicles

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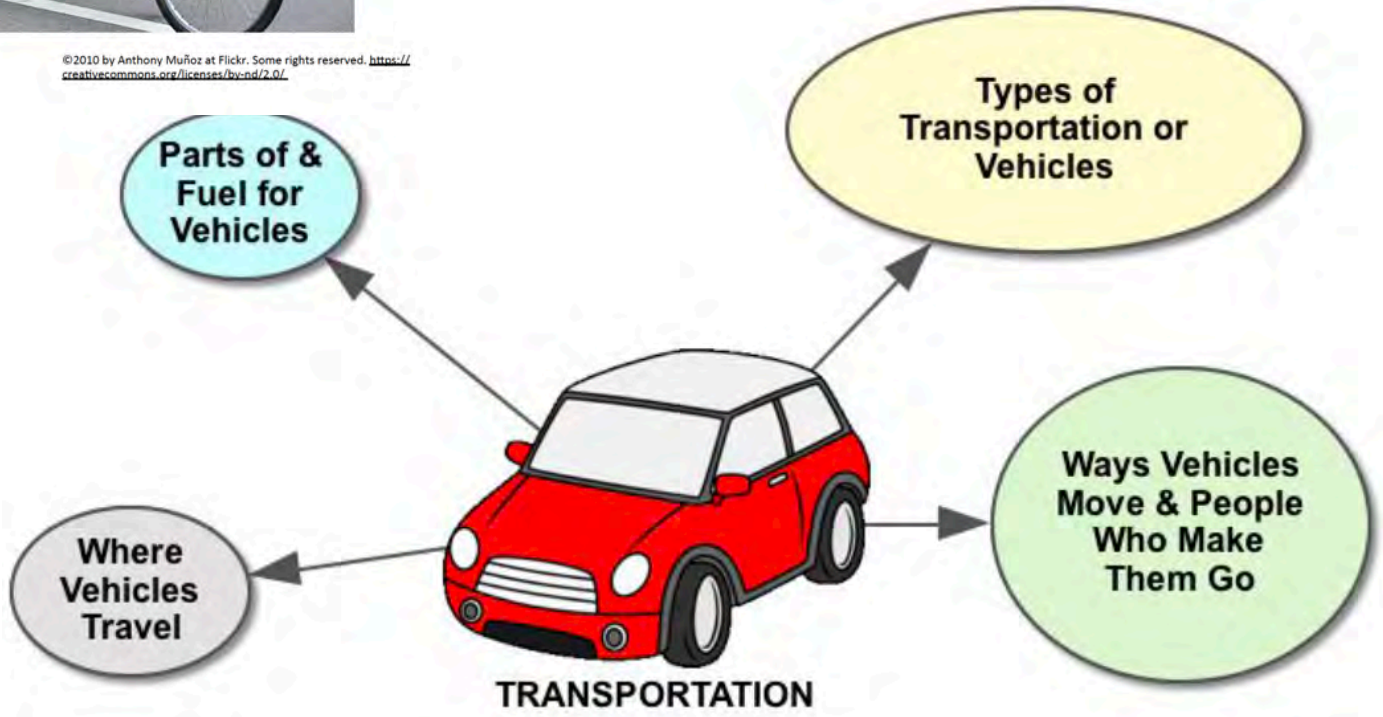

bus

(bus)

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jet

(jet)

Photo: Fat Albert, the support aircraft for the US Navy Blue Angels flight demonstration team. August, 2005. Released into public domain by the United States Navy (Blue Angels).

truck

(truck)

Photo: Finnish Truck Sisu in Vantaa, Finland. May, 2008.©2008 by Anneli Salo. Some rights reserved. http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en

van

(van)

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van

fan

ran

man

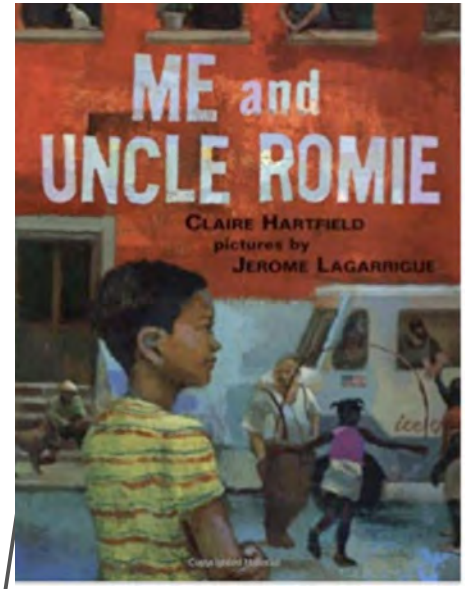
man

weatherman

salesman

mailman

2. Lessons on How Words Work



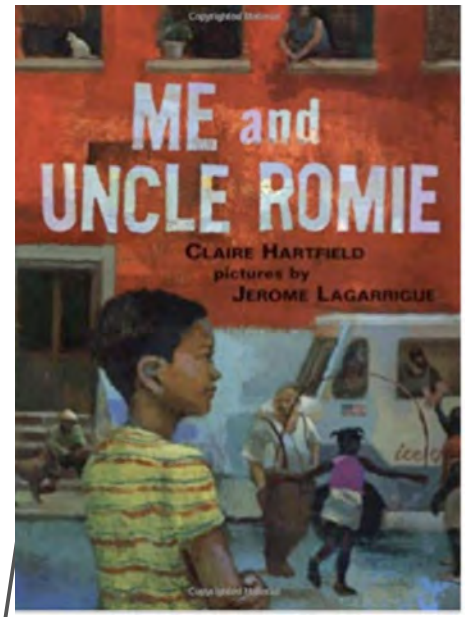
Me and Uncle Romie:

compound words

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

- photographers
- subway

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



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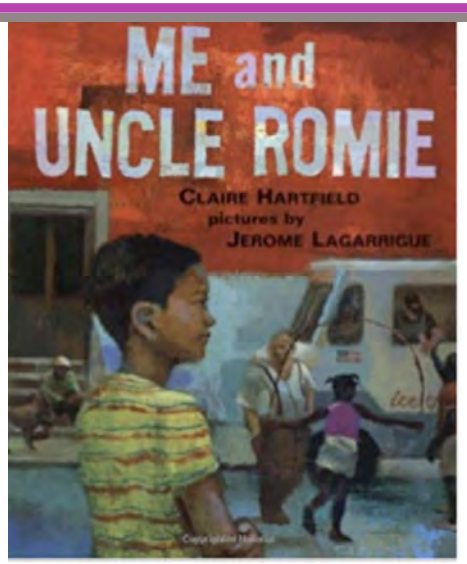
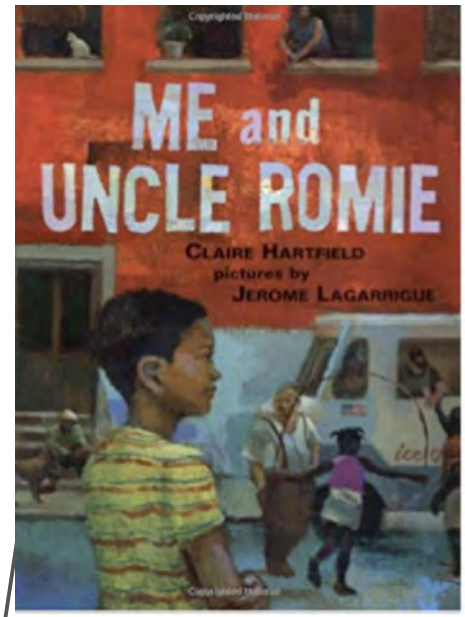
Penn Station
Harlem
Statue of Liberty
Carolina
Caribbean
Chicago



Me and Uncle Romie:
Places

avenue ferry
hydrant stoops
bleachers platform
skyscapers studio
neighborhood
underground



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ruined
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ruined
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pitcher
treasure
stoops

Penn Station
Harlem
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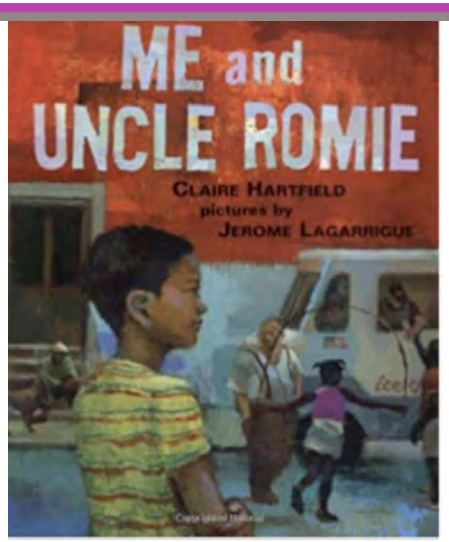
Caribbean
Chicago



Me and Uncle Romie:
Places

avenue ferry
hydrant stoops
bleachers platform
skyscapers studio
neighborhood
underground

3. Conversations About the Core Vocabulary and Students' Capacity with it

Grade 1*

It was a cold, snowy day. Abby had *invited* two friends over to play the card game, Go Fish. Abby's little brother, Tim, had never played and wanted to learn.

"I'll *explain* during this game," said Abby.

Abby showed Tim the cards in her hand, which had *different numbers* on them. Abby explained that she needed to get all four cards with the same numbers.

Abby's friend Jen asked Abby if she had any tens. None of Abby's cards had tens on them. She *replied* "Go fish," which meant Jen had to draw a card from the *deck*. Now it was Abby's turn

*Texts from DIBELS, End-of-year

Grade 3

I have a new friend at school. She can't walk so she uses a wheelchair to get around. She comes to school in a special van that can transport four people who use wheelchairs. The van brings my friend and another boy to school. My friend is in third grade with me and the boy is a fourth grader.

I like to watch my friend get in and out of the van. The driver pushes a button and part of the van floor lowers to the driveway to form a ramp. My friend just wheels up the ramp and goes inside. After she is inside, the driver pushes the button and the ramp puts itself away.

Grade 5

Every day, tourists flock to see special places around the world. One place that is special because it is so old is the site of the ruins of an ancient city in Mexico.

The Mayan people built this ancient city more than one thousand years ago. The site covers four square miles. The structures that were left behind show that this community was once thriving. Many scientists have come to this location and tried to solve the mysteries of the city. They have excavated the ruins and carefully restored as much as they could.

One question that is still unanswered is why there are two styles of architecture in the city.

Summary

- Humankind's knowledge is stored in text. We read to learn—both stories and information.

- Words are the labels for concepts that underlie knowledge. 2,500 word families account for the majority of words in texts.

- These families represent major bodies of knowledge & English's linguistic systems.

- English Learners need ELA instruction that focuses on world and word knowledge.