

# Primary Teaching and Learning

## English Autumn Term newsletter



## Vocabulary, the National Curriculum and the sample tests for 2016



**'Language and Literacy'**, the section of the National Curriculum introducing the programme of study for English, has as its tenth word: 'vocabulary' (6.1). It appears again in the second paragraph, (6.2) which is headed as Spoken Language but has as one of its aims, 'to develop vocabulary and build knowledge' and the section concludes with an entire paragraph (6.4) devoted to 'Vocabulary development'. Words such as 'key' and 'vital' demonstrate the importance being placed on the area. Other words: 'actively', 'systematically', 'discuss' and 'induct' tell us how as teachers, we should support students in building this knowledge. And finally, we have to do this 'across the curriculum' and in 'all subjects'.

So, vocabulary building is important. Let's have a look at the ways in which the National Curriculum develops this aim and how achievement around vocabulary has been fed into the sample tests for 2016.

[Continued on page 5 >](#)



## Contents

---

Vocabulary Development through Morphemic Analysis	01
Vocabulary, the National Curriculum and the sample tests for 2016	05
Vocabulary and comprehension	08
Quick starts for a prolific vocabulary	11
How fantastic it must be to be able to speak an additional language!	15
So many words, so little time	18
Book reviews	21

# Vocabulary Development through Morphemic Analysis

---

**The National Curriculum** recognises that ‘Pupils’ acquisition and command of vocabulary are key to their learning and progress across the whole curriculum.’ Understanding is developed through language comprehension, and the exploration and explicit teaching of new vocabulary contributes to pupils’ developing comprehension.

‘Vocabulary is learnt both indirectly and directly. Children learn the meanings of most words indirectly, through everyday experiences with oral and written language.’ (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2011). Wider reading is an absolutely essential part of indirect vocabulary growth; however it is not sufficient for all students. For children to have a deep and long lasting understanding of the vocabulary they are learning, it is important to provide them with word learning strategies and knowledge that they can apply independently. In addition to this, it is vital that we inspire children to develop an interest and love of words, their meanings and how they are built.



**‘Simply put,**

**if we want our students to become independent word learners, then we must model how to think about new words that they encounter in their reading.’**

**(Templeton & Pikulski, 1999)**

---

Templeton and Pikulski (1999) talk about there being ‘four types of knowledge and strategies that enable students to become independent word learners:

- morphological knowledge
- effective use of contextual clues
- the application of morphological and contextual knowledge in a word-learning strategy
- the role of dictionaries and other word reference books.’

Research has shown that being able to draw upon specific morphemic elements and how these combine to make words, supports students in being able to determine the meaning of new words. (Scott & Nagy, 1994).

With that in mind, I’d like to fly the flag for using morphological knowledge to support the acquisition of new vocabulary, and to consider the important part it plays.

Continued >

---

## So what is morphology?

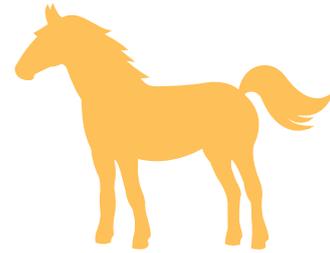
Morphological knowledge is the spelling of grammatical units within words (e.g. horse = 1 morpheme, horses = 2 morphemes).

It includes knowledge about: root words, compound words, suffixes, prefixes and the origins of words (etymology).

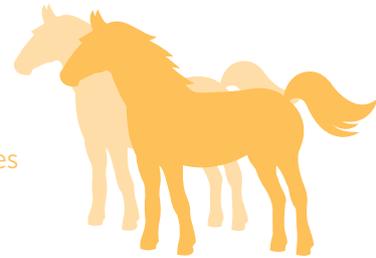
The National Curriculum sets out that students begin with the exploration of morphemic elements in KS1, with base words and suffixes such as adding -s/-es/-ing/-ed/-ful/-ly, and by the time they get to KS2, not only are they exploring a wider range of prefixes and suffixes, but they can begin to explore in detail the morphology of a variety of words, and use this to help their understanding of new vocabulary.

For example, knowing bicycle (Year 3/4 statutory word list NC) is cycle from the Greek for wheel, with bi- meaning 'two' before it, and in Year 5/6 knowing conscience and conscious (Y5/6 statutory word list NC) are related to science: conscience is simply science with the prefix con- added (these words come from the Latin word scio meaning I know), helps children to understand not only the meaning of the vocabulary being taught, but they can then later apply this knowledge to any new related vocabulary.

horse -  
1 morpheme



horses -  
2 morphemes



---

## So how can I use morphology to support word learning in the classroom?

Basically, this strategy focuses on analysing the meaningful parts (morphemes) within in a word to support the understanding of it.

Kieffer and Lesaux (2007) suggested the following steps for effective teaching of morphemic analysis:

- 1) teach morphology in the context of rich, explicit vocabulary instruction;
- 2) teach students to use morphology as a cognitive strategy with explicit steps;
- 3) teach underlying morphological knowledge in two ways—both explicitly and in context.

The following page shows an example of how you would analyse a word with pupils as part of the above model.

Continued >

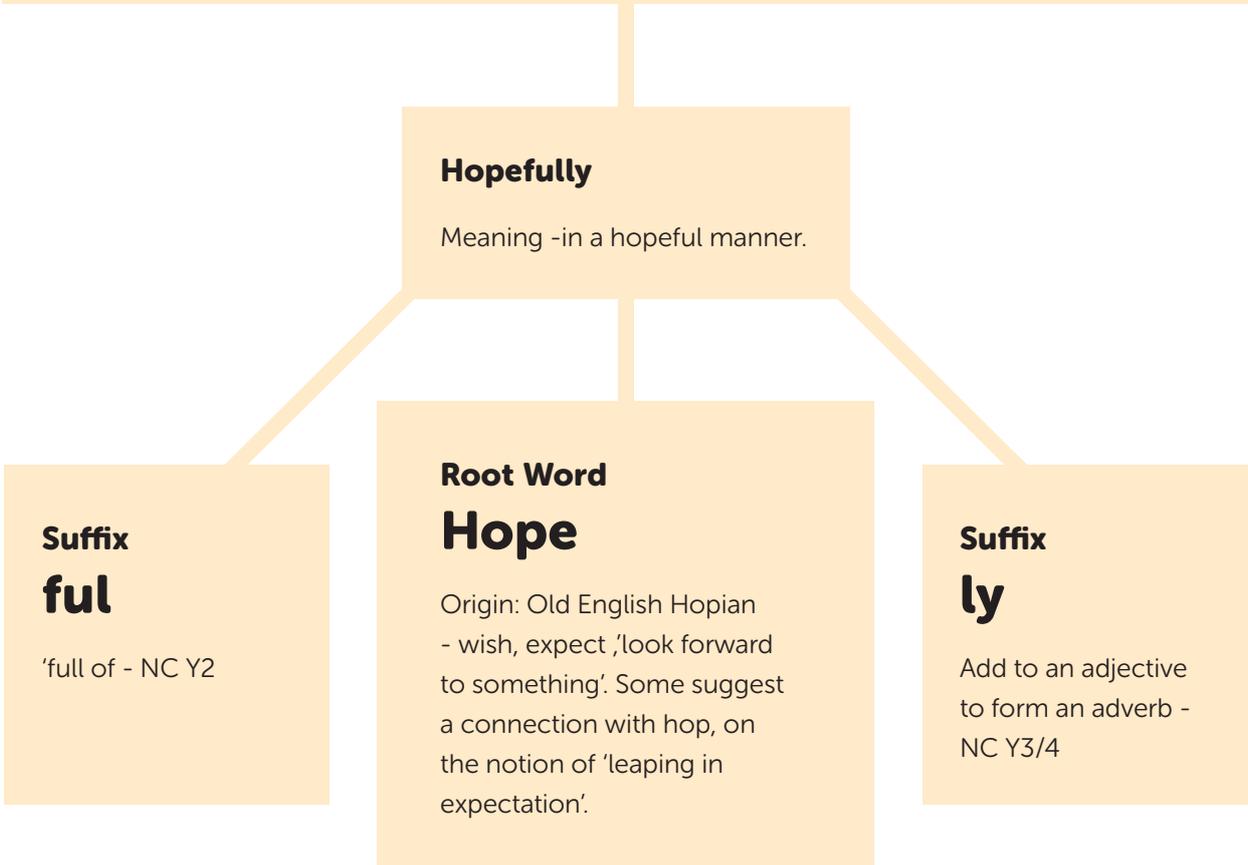
# Suggested use of morphemic analysis for the word 'Hopefully' with your pupils

---

**Sentence:**

As they approached the city they were much impressed by the richness of everything.  
"Surely they have more than they need," said the grocer **hopefully**.

War and Peas, Foreman, M. Pg 8.



**Related words – same root.  
Hopeless, hopeful, hopelessly.**

Being explicit with the children that words that are related in meaning are often related in spelling, and that clues to the structure of the words can be clues to the meaning is essential in supporting children in their vocabulary acquisition.

As touched on before, it is also important that teachers share with children their own interest in and enthusiasm for words, and model how they've thought about them. Sharing an interesting story about where a word originates from can help to develop an interest and curiosity in words. For example, I should probably tell you about the origin of the word vocabulary, but honestly I'd rather tell you about the origin of the word nincompoop. The day I got my etymology dictionary, 'Nincompoop' was the first word I was thumbing through the pages looking for. Curious? It turns out that there are a few stories about its origin; one is from the 17th century, where it is suggested it originates from a 'given name Nicholas or from Nicodemus...and his naive questioning of Christ', but the other (and my favourite) although denied by some etymologists, is from the 1670s where it was linked to the Latin legal phrase 'non compos mentis'. How does that help me you may ask yourself? Well, I don't use the word nincompoop often, but it certainly has stuck in my mind, and I can see how the definition is linked to its origin. What would be the first word you would look up?

There have been a number of studies that show the significant relationship between vocabulary and comprehension, and another factor to consider is that the 'teaching of morphological awareness and decoding in school may be the way to narrow the achievement gap for children whose families differ in education and income levels, and ethnic or racial backgrounds.' (Nagy 2007). Morphemic analysis is just one strategy of many, but it is a valuable strategy to aid word learning that will help readers unlock the meaning of new and challenging words.

---

by Sabrina Wright

---

## Bibliography

Armbruster, B., Lehr, F., & Osborn, J. (2001). Put reading first: The research building blocks for teaching children to read.

Kieffer, M. J., & Lesaux, N. K. (2007). Breaking down words to build meaning: Morphology, vocabulary, and reading comprehension in the urban classroom.

Nagy, W. (2007). Metalinguistic awareness and the vocabulary-comprehension connection.

In R. K. Wager, A. E. Muse, & K. R. Tannenbaum (Eds.), Vocabulary acquisition: Implications for reading comprehension

Scott, J. A., & Nagy, W. E. (1994). Vocabulary development.

In Purves, A. C., Papa, L., & Jordan, S. (Eds.), Encyclopedia of English studies and language arts, Vol. 2

Templeton, S. & Pikulski, J. (1999) Building the Foundations of Literacy: The Importance of Vocabulary and Spelling Development. Houghton Mifflin Company

## Recommendations

Oxford Dictionary of Word Origins (Oxford Quick Reference) Cresserrl, J. (2010)

## Course suggestions

### Year 1 phonics and spelling:

**what's new and what's not (15ENG/032P)**  
HDC, Stevenage | Thu 5th November 2015

### Spelling: the fine detail and application

**Years 3 and 4 (15ENG/057P, 15ENG/069P)**  
HDC, Stevenage | Mon 9th Nov / Tue 2nd Feb  
**Year 5 and 6 (15ENG/058P, 15ENG/070P)**  
HDC, Stevenage | Mon 9th Nov / Mon 8th Feb

### Phonics and Spelling at Key Stage 2 -

**Pulling it all together (15ENG/088A)**  
HDC, Stevenage | Mon 18th January 2016

# Vocabulary, the National Curriculum and the sample tests for 2016

Continued from the front page

There are recurring themes throughout the programme of study. Overarching all of them is the intention that pupils' vocabulary should be broadened and deepened. Words and phrases with these meanings occur in all year groups in the requirements for both reading and writing, and also in the spoken expectations that refer to learners of all ages. Beneath this, the themes of modelling and practice go hand in hand, again in all year groups. Teachers are expected to: 'explain meanings', 'provide vocabulary', 'show', 'teach' and 'enhance' while pupils will, 'hear', 'link', 'explore' and 'check'. Often, teachers' and pupils' roles are part of the same sentence, suggesting a balanced partnership as a way forward for progress.

Discussion, both with and between children, features strongly as a way to ensure good vocabulary development and maintains the emphasis that the learning needs to be active. A repeated expectation is that meanings of words should be explored in context so that children become familiar with the nuances that the same word may take on in different situations.

Enabling children to understand and use subject specific vocabulary, both relating to English lessons (grammatical terms) and in other areas of the curriculum, (Science for example) is another theme that threads through the text, occurring in all year groups.

## What then, of the new sample reading comprehension tests published in July 2015?

If you have seen these, you will know that the questions have been organised into 'domains' to assess different aspects of reading: five in KS1 and eight in KS2. In both, retrieval / recall questions carry the heaviest weighting, followed by questions requiring inference skills, and in both the next most tested domain relates to vocabulary. In KS1 this is: 'Draw on knowledge of vocabulary to understand text' and it carries 7/40 questions. In answering them, the children will need to know that, in the context it is being used, 'spotted' is an alternative word for 'saw', that 'donated' is an alternative word for the phrase 'given away' and be able to work out that 'sea-sick' is a way that you might feel unwell while in a boat at sea. I can imagine these sorts of discussions arising during English lessons and they certainly illustrate the expectation in the National Curriculum that children's vocabulary will need to be broadened and enriched. Other questions require knowledge that 'drained' refers to water being emptied out, and to interpret the differing meanings of 'reuse', 'recycle' and 'reduce'. Here I think, we are seeing reflected the intention that vocabulary development must be a focus across the curriculum. High quality talk in science, DT or while cooking with groups of children would be where this sort of knowledge could be embedded.

Continued >

---

“I believe that  
**talking,  
talking,  
talking**  
is going to be  
needed to embed  
these sorts of  
vocabulary skills.”

---

In KS2, the domain language changes to: ‘Give / explain the meaning of words in context’ and 8/50 marks fall under it. All of the questions involve understanding the shades of meaning so heavily emphasised in the National Curriculum, that different words may have in different contexts. The more obvious ones are to understand that, in the poem, ‘trembling’ and ‘dread’ imply fear and, assuming they can read the text, that in the story extract, ‘comrades’ suggests Malone is friendly with his fellow explorers. Others involve relating the word to its specific usage in a particular text and really thinking about meaning. Thus, in the circumstances in which they are used, ‘arrange’ means ‘plan’, ‘brittle’ means ‘delicate’, ‘cautiously’ means ‘move carefully’ and ‘unwieldy’ means ‘clumsy’. Key aims, identified earlier, are being tested, and once again, I believe that talking, talking, talking is going to be needed to embed these sorts of vocabulary skills. And there are opportunities across the curriculum – think of PE and science as well as English lessons for these particular examples.

There is a second domain in the KS2 aspects of reading that has a vocabulary focus. This is: ‘Identify / explain how meaning is enhanced through choice of words and phrases.’ Three further marks are allocated against this expectation and children who are not able to interpret ‘in a flash’ as suggesting brightness and/or speed, or identify words (in the context in which they are used) that signal danger, will not be able to get them. Indeed, four other questions, (two retrieval, two inference) are reliant on understanding vocabulary choices. You would need to know for example, that ‘snatches’ implies quick movement and that ‘lurches’ is another kind of moving. You would also need to know the difference between ‘randomly’ and ‘regularly’ and relate them to ‘scattered’. Talk in maths comes to mind with that last example but what is certainly clear is that a well-developed vocabulary is going to be essential to answer more than just the ‘vocabulary’ questions.

**And where does this leave us?**

[Continued >](#)

Teachers have always known that pupils with a good vocabulary are likely to achieve more highly than those whose vocabulary is poor. If the National Curriculum expects us to do something about this, it does also recognise that it will take time and effort: 'Deliberate steps should be taken to increase pupil's vocabulary.' And those steps, I think, when they are part and parcel of our daily lives in school, could turn out to be more fun than we might at first have thought.

## **Two things stand out.**

**The first** is held in the overall descriptions in English, before the programmes of study commence. How can pupils' vocabulary be increased? By: 'Reading widely and often'. This is then unpicked. All of the following statements are extracts from the National Curriculum that, in the entire sentences, relate to developing pupils' vocabulary.

### **Year 1:**

'hear share and discuss a wide range of high quality books'

'listen to books read aloud'

### **Year 2:**

'Reading and listening to whole books'

### **Year 3 & 4:**

'opportunities to listen frequently to stories, poems, non-fiction and other writing'

'Reading, re-reading'

### **Year 5 & 6:**

'When teachers are reading with or to pupils'

I used to struggle to find time to read aloud to my classes. Even though I knew how valuable it was, there always seemed to be bits of curriculum content I needed to squeeze in if I was to cover everything. But content is no longer prescribed in the same way that it was and we can and now should (and the curriculum encourages us towards this) make time, probably every day, to read to, and with, the children in our classes.

But this is not enough on its own. **The second** essential is talk. We need to talk to the children about what we and they are reading. We need to focus in on the vocabulary, discussing, clarifying and exploring on a daily and active basis. We need to ourselves use a rich and varied vocabulary in our activities across the curriculum and to unpick this with the children.

Reading and talk. The new sample tests reflect the expectations and directions of the National Curriculum and that curriculum leads us towards the ways in which we can and should develop with children the wide vocabulary needed to reach expected attainment standards.

---

by Alison Dawkins

---

## **Course suggestion**

### **Developing a robust whole-school approach to assessment in English (15ENG/084P)**

HDC, Stevenage | Thu 11th February 2016

### **Developing Vocabulary (15ENG/081P)**

HDC, Stevenage | Wed 9th March 2016

# Vocabulary and Comprehension

---

## And this year's Phonics Check threshold will be...32!

It has not gone unnoticed that the mystery threshold has remained the same for a 4th year running. Why? Well, some investigation into the scope of the test framework (design) has unearthed some interesting areas that we felt you should be aware of; these mean that, even if the numerical threshold remains the same, the difficulty level can easily be ramped up without breaching their own design. This gives STA the ability to gradually increase the complexity via how much a child is being asked to do at once and has implications for pace and progression of phonics teaching, reading, careful use of reading assessment, subject knowledge etc. So, what does this actually have to do with this newsletter's theme of vocabulary and comprehension? Well, quite a lot.

A couple of words from the phonics screening check that schools have asked us about are used to illustrate some points. Many thanks to those schools who, through asking searching questions, have helped us to further support you.



---

rice:

"It should be noted that **where items contain a number** of the different features listed above, decoding **will become more difficult**. It will become **less likely** that a child working at the **minimum expected** standard will be able to decode such items appropriately. For example, a child will be less likely to decode an item containing both a consonant string and a less frequent vowel digraph, than an item with a consonant string but a frequent, consistent vowel digraph."

(p6, para 5 Assessment Framework)

They acknowledge that words containing two characteristics (e.g. split digraph 'i\_e' and soft 'c') at the same time are more challenging and that children are less likely to accurately decode these words. They don't rule out including two target concepts at once though, in the guidance. Teaching children about analogy can be a useful strategy to build into the diet, as can ensuring they try out different pronunciations when decoding real words to ensure it makes sense (e.g. short and long 'i'). Schools are also noticing children coming through with insecure knowledge of letter names (see Development Matters, 40-60months) which also helps equip them with more alternative pronunciations – linking these things can be a helpful prompt ("Does it look right and sound right?").

Continued >

---

## The main point

here is about focusing more on lifting above the minimum expected standard, and moving towards securing, which does have other implications for diet, progression, pedagogy etc.

---

diving:

"It is necessary to start with easier words in section 1 to make the phonics screening check accessible and to provide some information to teachers if their children are unable to decode relatively simple words. However, the words at the **end** of the phonics screening check are **around the level of difficulty** we expect children to reach by the end of Year 1. These items will provide more information on whether children are **working above** or below the expected standard."

(p8, section 3.1 para 4, Assessment Framework)

The perception that use of the suffix '-ing' is a phase 6 item is slightly erroneous – phase 6 was always more about the shift into orthographic spelling strategies (for accuracy), than reading. Adding '-ing' is something that typically occurs in age-related books from early Y1 onwards (at least – and often before). The new NC has as a statement for Y1: 'read words containing taught GPCs and –s, –es, –ing, –ed, –er and –est endings'. As the Y1 spelling specifies 'where no change is needed to the root word', one must infer that the reading expectation should include words where change both **is** and **is not** needed to the root, which indicates a progression of reading being slightly easier than spelling. We must remember that this is the more challenging end of the check though, and by this point we are usually finding that only those children beyond the **minimum expected standard for the age** will accurately decode these words.

Some words that came up towards the end of the check also were felt to be unrealistic for childrens' reading books at this stage. The link between the two parts of the Simple View of Reading (SVoR) becomes apparent as even if they have not read these words before, they can use their decoding together with previously-encountered oral vocabulary to make sensible adjustments. This seems to be a subtle way of encouraging schools to broaden children's vocabulary, make links between the SVoR dimensions and – ultimately – have children reading more widely and often than currently. Scheme books lend a good platform but leave the wider reading diet a bit undernourished:

"All real words will be checked for frequency in the Children's Printed Word Database maintained by the Department of Psychology, University of Essex. All real words in the check will be found in the database and the check will contain between **40 per cent and 60 per cent of real words that are low frequency**, defined as fewer than 20 occurrences per million words in the database."

(p17, section 4.1 para 3, Assessment Framework)

Bearing in mind that 20 of the 40 words will be real words, this means that 8-12 of the 20 real words could be low-frequency... a real test of sheer reading mileage, re-reading for fluency and NOFAN best-practice assessment principles (e.g. ensuring guided and independent reading books really are closely-matched to their current decoding ability, 90%+ accuracy/ no more than one word in ten left as an error, and any new words can be scooped up with support). New National Curriculum end-of-Key-Stage tests show a real emphasis on the need for increasing children's vocabulary, e.g. through the use of rich shared texts and the read-aloud programme.

It will become more essential than ever to ensure that the 'end of the day story' doesn't get squeezed out of the day at KS1, and continues at least 3 times per week at KS2. (I absolutely love the phrase "3 o'clock stop"!)

Without this, and whole-class shared reading texts exposing children to higher-level vocabulary, they are limited to the vocabulary they can largely decode already. In turn, this can a) stunt their oral

vocabulary and b) let children think that words just have to be decoded and not then checked for understanding/making sense (passive reading behaviour). Throughout the new NC there are references to understanding what has been read to/by them. The draft performance descriptors made reference to this and the ability to self-correct, and our new set of Guided Reading objectives for KS1 will also lace this theme and the new heightened expectations throughout.

In short, we have to stuff them full of words and expand their oral vocabulary, so that when they encounter new words they use their initial decoding (phonics first) but then also use the other half of the SVoR (language comprehension) to check and change pronunciations if the word doesn't make sense. 'Diving' is a perfect example of this. Picture the child who initially reads it as 'divving', quickly realises that it doesn't make sense, sees there is no alien next to it and so it should make sense, and then starts to try alternative pronunciations (letter names = Development Matters 40-60 months). That is the very sort of active reading behaviour we need to see happening in tandem with decoding, as a fleshed-out view of Y1 end-of-year expectations, if Year 2 are to appropriately handle the c.45% direct retrieval and c.30% inference weightings in the 2016 key stage assessments.

---

by Kristen Snook

---

## Bibliography

For the Children's Printed Word Database, see: <http://bit.ly/1Oyt3WF>

For banks of example words that feature alternative pronunciations and graphemes, see p134 onwards of 'Letters and Sounds': <http://bit.ly/1JRCiK7>

Phonics Assessment Framework, the STA's published check design booklet (note: all emboldened phrases in the quotes above taken from here are the author's own emphasis): <http://bit.ly/1jGEnmk>

## Course suggestions

### **Guided Reading at Key Stage 1: developing fluent readers (15ENG/044P)**

HDC, Stevenage | Mon 23rd November 2015

### **Guided reading at Key Stage 2: developing thinking readers (15ENG/045P)**

HDC, Stevenage | Mon 23rd November 2015

### **Phonics and Spelling: what's new and what's not!**

#### **Year 1 (15ENG/032P, 15ENG/086P)**

HDC, Stevenage | Thu 5th Nov / Thu 21st Jan

#### **Year 2 (15ENG/033P, ENG/087P)**

HDC, Stevenage | Tue 17th Nov / Thu 25th Jan



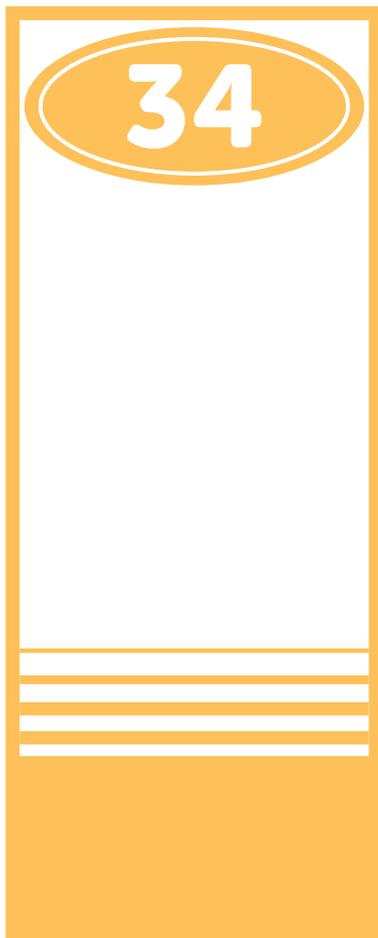
# Quick starts for a proflic vocabulary

---

## Not much time in the day? Finding it hard to fit it all in?

Don't worry, here are a few simple ideas that you can slip in to any lesson to boost vocabulary every day, all day.

The following activities support children to broaden their vocabulary and select the exact word rather than a 'wow' word. Furthermore, peer support by working in pairs and small groups, ensures that children are learning from one another rather than displaying knowledge.



---

## Pointless

Unless you work part-time, you've probably only had a chance to see daytime TV in the holidays. Pointless is a show where members of the public are asked to provide answers within a category e.g. countries with the letter 'a' in them. The contestants then need to guess which answers were not given, or the fewest respondents gave.

Example:

- i) In pairs or small groups, the children write down as many modes of transport as they can think of in two minutes. You may then ask the groups to snowball with another group adding items to their list.
- ii) You read a list of modes of transport prepared earlier. If they have items on your list they can have one point (i.e. limousine, horse and cart, cruise liner). If they have any of the last 5 items on your list (more obscure answers like rickshaw, penny farthing, junk, steamer), they can have 2 points. If they have an item on their list that you hadn't thought of, they can have 5 points.

Continued >

Whilst the lists take a little time to prepare, you will be able to keep them for future classes. One way that I develop my lists is to type them into word and right click on each word to find the synonyms. These are then added to the list.

You might consider lists of 'places you might live in' e.g. cottage, semi-detached, bungalow, end terrace, shack, castle, tent. One delegate on a training day offered 'a hedge' as a place a 'gentleman of the road' may live! By broadening this language, children are able to select the exact word to enhance description e.g. 'He darted across Water Works Street, into the small terraced house' vs. 'He darted down Willow Lane and into the snug cottage'.



---

## Word Bingo

In pairs, the children are provided with 12 cards, each with a word on it. They then choose 9 of these to place face-up in a 3 x 3 grid. You have the definitions for these words on your sheet of paper. You might use this activity to boost vocabulary in a certain genre or curriculum area. For example, you might be writing reports about the formation of rivers in the following half term. The cards would have useful language e.g. tributary, converge, catchment, meander. You then read out the definitions and if they think they have this word they turn it over. Once they have three in a row, either horizontally, diagonally or vertically, they call out 'bingo'. After you have verified they have the correct words, ask them to put one that either you or they choose, into a sentence.

Repeat the activity using the same words a few times – perhaps even for half a term. These words might then become part of the children's dictations for spelling assessments. I would probably have two or three sets of cards in use at any one time to sustain the interest by adding variety.

Continued >

---

## Zone of Relevance

An oldie but a goodie. You can provide children with either a picture, film still or paragraph from a text. They have words on cards (probably between 10–20), many of which are synonyms or could equally be relevant to the stimulus. Finally, you provide each group with an archery style target board which you can find on royalty free picture websites.

Some of the words on the cards are relevant to the stimulus and others less so. Some words may not be relevant at all. The groups need to place the most relevant vocabulary into the centre and as they become less relevant they are placed further out into the circle. Words not relevant at all are placed outside of the target. In order to gain the maximum learning opportunities, children need to justify why one word is placed further to the centre than another. It is the justification where the learning really takes place. They are faced with synonyms which encourage debate as they could all be relevant, but some more than others.



---

## What's the same, what's different?

Provide the children with synonyms and in groups they need to decide, what's the same and what's different. For example you might use words like 'delighted and happy', 'excited and enthusiastic'. The discussion arising from this will be invaluable. Encourage the children to put the words into sentences when justifying their opinion. Like all of these activities, they need good models from you to begin with.

Continued >

---

## Balloon debate

Place some useful words for the unit of English into a balloon. Which ones would they hold on to until the bitter end and which words could be thrown out of the balloon first as the writing would not suffer by eliminating them? This could be used in particular aspects of writing i.e. character description. You might even use phrases and clauses as well as individual words.



---

## Assessing the Spoken Language Programme of Study

The above activities are an ideal time to teach, model and assess the Spoken Language Programme of Study. For example the learning maybe focusing on the following statements:

- articulate and justify answers, arguments and opinions
- consider and evaluate different viewpoints, attending to and building on the contributions of others

If you are lucky enough to have recording devices in the classroom, ask the children to record their discussions. These could be used for self-assessment by the children and their peers as well as teacher assessment. The recordings could also be given to other children to see if they can add to the previous discussion.

Finally, if you have some vocabulary building activities that have been particularly effective in your classroom, please forward them on to me and we might be able to share some in future newsletters or as starters on training courses. Of course, you will be referenced as the source so please remember to add your name and the name of your school.

[jane.andrews@hertsforlearning.co.uk](mailto:jane.andrews@hertsforlearning.co.uk)

---

## Course suggestion

**Developing Vocabulary (15ENG/081P)**  
HDC, Stevenage | Wed 9th March 2015

# How fantastic it must be to be able to speak an additional language!

---

**'O' level French...** didn't take it as an option back in the day, but I wish I had. I have taught many pupils over the years that have additional languages and, common to some schools in Hertfordshire, we had at any one point almost fifty different languages spoken in our school. I currently work with schools that have more than this and with some schools who have a few pupils speaking an additional language, or with pupils with little or no English. Recently, as part of an Ofsted/Governor interview at my daughter's school the lead inspector put this question to us:



**'You have a very multi-cultural school with a variety of languages spoken: how do you use this to your advantage?'**

---

What an excellent question, I thought! Straight away governors were able to discuss how the school ethos, culture, practices and teaching and learning reflect the diverse population of the school.

It is an area of practice close to my heart and, as part of my work in this field, I have come across some excellent support materials and a number of theories upon which strong principles and good practice lie.

[Continued >](#)

The development of EAL pedagogy has been influenced by social constructivist theories which highlight the importance of scaffolding learning, as well as the importance of socio-cultural and emotional factors. Children learning EAL will be affected by attitudes towards them, their culture, language, religion and ethnicity. A distinction needs to be made between interpersonal communicative skills and cognitive and academic language proficiency (Excellence and Enjoyment 2007).

With this in mind then, it is vital that we understand that bilingual learners face two distinct challenges in school: they need to learn English alongside the content of the curriculum. Learning the pronunciation, vocabulary and grammatical devices involves knowing when and how to use them for a variety of purposes and this leads us back to the earlier point of the importance of scaffolding.

Good teaching will naturally ensure that language is **modelled and scaffolded** and when we are teaching pupils learning English this particular strategy needs to be heightened. One of the most effective strategies that I have come across involves being very explicit and 'up-front' with the children about the **vocabulary needed** within a lesson and structures that support how we are going to **communicate** them. We often ask pupils to 'think of another word...think of a better word...think of more words' etc. Quite simply we can give the children a range of words to read out loud together, paying attention to **enunciation and pronunciation** (which aids correct spelling later) and then test them within context together using **speaking frames** (Sue Palmer's are a good start point). Children can then rank the words as to most effective and then discuss why they have ranked the words as such. EAL learners can listen to and participate in rich discussion as to their favourite word choice and then be able to frame it within the correct context using a speaking frame. All children benefit and the range of vocabulary and speaking frames provided can vary in complexity according to the needs of the pupils.

---

**'It is important to recognise that children learning EAL are as able as any other children, and the learning experiences planned for them should be no less cognitively challenging.**

**High challenge can be maintained through the provision of contextual and linguistic support'.**

**(Excellence and Enjoyment 2007)**

---

Continued >

---

## What do we mean by language demands?

What specific words/vocabulary is needed within this lesson?

i.e. rough, smooth, prickly, sharp

What is the main purpose of the language needed in this lesson? Is it to:

- Describe?
- Re-tell/re-call?
- Compare?
- Classify?
- Explain?
- Report?
- Agree/disagree?
- Identify?
- Plan?
- Predict?
- Sequence?
- Instruct?

Then we can think about what the children need to say (phrases, sentences, grammatical structures etc.)

Recounting:

We went, I saw – use of first person/past tense imperative verbs

Describing:

There was a huge brown cow – use of third person, past tense, noun phrases

With the demands of the new curriculum, grammar in particular is high profile within our planning as we naturally think about this for all pupils. A little extra attention and structure can ensure that scaffolding at the point of speaking and listening and reading gets some extra mileage before we race ahead into the writing experience. Spoken language, vocabulary development and rich discussion ought to be a priority for all children and will really benefit those who are lucky enough to have an additional language too.

---

by Theresa Clements



---

## Course suggestions

**Leading change in English: raising standards through the new curriculum (15ENG/082P)**

HDC, Stevenage | Wed 6th March 2015

**Write away together (15ENG/040P)**

HDC, Stevenage | Thu 19th November 2015

# So many words, so little time



Extending Vocabulary /  
Enhancing Reading Comprehension

---

**Vocabulary and reading** comprehension are inextricably linked. An extensive body of research points to this [see Hirsch, 2003, for a summary of some of the key studies], but it is fair to say that we hardly need research to tell us so. You need to know what the words in a text mean, or at least the overwhelming majority of them, in order to understand, right? Here lies the problem. Early language deficits, word gaps/poor vocabulary hugely disadvantage children from the outset in terms of general academic performance, and this disadvantage fuels what is commonly referred to as the Matthew Effect (to paraphrase the Gospel of Matthew: the (language) rich get richer, the (language) poor get poorer ). The logic is easily followed: the more word knowledge you have, the more you comprehend; the more you comprehend, the greater the volume and complexity of words you are likely to encounter; the more words you encounter, the more you continue to acquire vocabulary –and so, a critical gap widens. Alongside the crucial focus on decoding to ensure that children are able to lift the words from the page, it's important that we are providing carefully designed opportunities for children to meet, engage with, and maintain a healthy relationship with an increasingly complex body of words.

E.B: White felt children to be far from shy when it comes to facing up to a challenging word:

"Anyone who writes down to children is simply wasting his time.

## **You have to write **up**, not down.**

Children are demanding. They are the most attentive, curious, eager, observant, sensitive, quick, and generally congenial readers on earth... Children are game for anything. I throw them hard words and they backhand them across the net."

Some might take issue with the above, perhaps argue that it speaks of another time – a time reflected in those tricky, older texts such as Call of the Wild that have come to be a feature of the KS2 statutory reading tests. Nevertheless, there is a real case to be made for the use of challenging texts, texts that have been written "up", with an appropriate range of unfamiliar words, to help shape and drive vocabulary instruction across the primary phase. There's a galaxy of words out there and knowing which words to choose to teach (and why) can seem to be a mind-bogglingly huge question for the time-pressed teacher. Why choose when your shared text can lead the way in enhancing your pupils' lexicon?

Continued >

In the excellent, and recently updated, guide to vocabulary instruction, *Bringing Words to Life* [Beck, McKeown & Kucan, 2013] E.B. White's most famous work is used to exemplify the potential difficulties that children may face in trying to establish the meaning of an unfamiliar word from contextual clues alone. Here is a quoted exchange between Wilbur the pig and Charlotte the spider:

"It's time I made an egg sac and filled it with eggs."

"I didn't know you could lay eggs," said Wilbur in amazement.

"Oh sure," said the spider, "I'm versatile."

"What does versatile mean? Full of eggs?" asked Wilbur.

"Certainly not," said Charlotte.'

It was a fair assumption on Wilbur's part, based on what he'd just heard - but it was wrong. Wilbur is saved from this misconception by Charlotte, who thankfully goes on to offer a clear, exemplified explanation of the word. In fact, Charlotte is quite a gifted vocabulary instructor. Later in the book she offers some etymological pearls to Wilbur, helping him to understand the meaning of the Latin 'magnum opus'. In the quote above, Wilbur's oral comprehension fell short thanks to a fairly reasonable deduction on his part. Pitfalls like this can arise in certain reading contexts where there is insufficient supporting detail to help fully establish meaning. This in turn points to the need to plan for explicit vocabulary instruction in support of developing language (oral and reading) comprehension. This is easier said than done and that is one of the central concerns of *Bringing Words to Life*: how to plan and deliver robust vocabulary instruction. The book sets out how to go about identifying words to teach for the greatest effect and a range of approaches to increase the likelihood that these words gain traction and anchorage in students' working vocabulary.

## Which Words and Why?

The trickiest aspect of vocabulary instruction is choosing which words to teach and why. What a task and where to start. Seemingly random word and spelling lists abound and each probably adds a dash of anxiety to the teacher seeking to do all that they can to boost their children's word power. To help, Beck and her colleagues offer up a system. Words are divided into three tiers:

---

**Tier 1:** words typically found in oral language (likely to be known, used, or encountered without design)

---

**Tier 2:** words that tend to be used in written language and that are versatile/have high utility (e.g. occurrence, tended, haunting, fortune)

---

**Tier 3:** words either limited to specific domains (think science and maths vocabulary for example) or extremely rare.

---

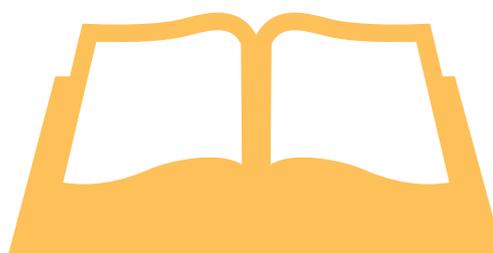
Not too surprisingly, tier 2 words are seen as the most profitable for vocabulary instruction. This is still a vast body of words, so the advice is to select words in advance from texts that will be shared with students. Further narrow these down by considering how useful the words are and whether they can be explained in terms that the children will understand based on their existing knowledge and conceptual understanding. Around 6 to 10 words taught over a week to two week period is seen as ideal. These words are explained in everyday language and then used in a range of contexts (oral work, sentence stems, and word association activities are used to secure understanding).

The book offers a wealth of activities to support children in gaining a flexible understanding of new words. Dictionary definitions, simple word lists, and dry "use the word in a sentence" exercises are seen as potentially unhelpful; clear, child-friendly explanations, repeated encounters in different contexts, varied usage and a general enthusiasm for the power of language are key ingredients. A stress is also placed on developing

classrooms that make 'mature language a visible part of everyday practice.' We all know that children generally relish the chance to flex their linguistic muscles – whether it be their increasingly confident use of the meta-language of grammar or, less happily, a sustained onslaught of synonymous adjectives – so don't duck the hard stuff. So long as we ground our more advanced word choices in meaningful explanations, E.B. White may just be proven right, once again.

---

by Martin Galway



---

### **Further reading**

Daisy Christodolou on Vocabulary Instruction:  
<http://bit.ly/1ZFETle>

Wonderful site devoted to reading, but here  
blogging on vocabulary: <http://bit.ly/1LmfGmm>

Beck, I., McKeown, M.G., &Kucan,L. (2013)  
Bringing Words to Life 2nd Ed. The Guildford  
Press, New York

Hirsch, E.D. (2013): <http://bit.ly/1Pj4mgJ>

### **Course suggestions**

**Teaching reading comprehension:  
practical and engaging strategies (15ENG/092P)**  
HDC, Stevenage | Thu 10th March 2015

**Key stage 1 grammar: the fine detail and  
application (15ENG/046P)**  
HDC, Stevenage | Wed 18th November 2015

# | Book Reviews |

## Wild

by Emily Hughes  
(Flying Eye Books, 2013)

---

Wild is the debut picture book of Hawaiian born author-illustrator Emily Hughes. The story is reminiscent of Kipling's 'The Jungle Book' and Sendak's 'Where the Wild Things Are'. The front cover introduces us to a wonderful, wide eyed and happy looking creature who we find out is a carefree small girl that has been raised in the woods by all the creatures. Nature is all she knows until she is trapped by some strange new creatures who take her home to tame her. She is taken off to the city to live with an elderly couple and their two pets. The elderly man is a famed psychologist who tries very hard to tame her. However, in her eyes they speak wrong, eat wrong and play wrong which makes her very unhappy.

As the story unfolds we discover whether she stays or manages to escape to her beloved woods. Although the text is minimal the illustrations are beautiful and draw you in through fantastic details that enhance the story.

This book with its delightful illustrations can be used to encourage KS1 pupils to empathise with the characters through making connections with their own lives. It would also support teachers in developing reading skills such as inference by identifying the motives of the characters and predicting events. This book also provides lovely opportunities for cross curricula links with science.

---

Review by Ruth Goodman, Literacy TLA

# Grandad's Island

by Benji Davies  
(Simon and Schuster, 2015)

---

On the surface, *Grandad's Island* is an adventure story concerned with Syd and Grandad's voyage to the titular tropical island. Travel is by way of a ship, magically boarded via a door in Grandad's attic. Before long Syd and Grandad are enjoying the wonders of this "most perfect place." Young readers will delight in taking in the details of this island paradise – the shelter serviced by an orang-utan; the shade of the forest; the thrill of the waterfall. On re-reading the book, they will enjoy spotting traces of the island in the early pictures of Grandad's house. For many children, this might be as deep as it goes, and that's deep enough for most young readers. Still, there are subtle depths to the book that touch upon love and loss and the difficult feelings that go along with them.

As such, *Grandad's Island* joins a distinguished group of picture books (the likes of Michael Rosen's *The Sad Book*, Susan Varley's *Badger's Parting Gifts* and more recently Britta Teckentrup's *The Memory Tree*) that offer comfort and support around this difficult topic and stress the importance of memories. It's a book that can catch you off guard – who am I kidding, it's a book that did catch me off guard. Having eagerly awaited its publication, I wasn't disappointed, but choosing to read it on the tube home from Foyles was possibly unwise. Deep breaths, a stiff upper lip and the practised dead-ahead stare of tube etiquette came in handy on that particular journey.

*Grandad's Island* maintains the very high quality of Davies' earlier work (*The Storm Whale*, *On Sudden Hill*) both in terms of its artwork and the emotional depths of its content. Quite simply, it's a beautiful book. I'm now back in the position of eagerly anticipating his next work; I just might need to think more carefully about where I first choose to read it.

---

Review by Martin Galway

# Opening Doors to Famous Poetry and Prose – Ideas and resources for accessing literary heritage works

by Bob Cox

(Crown House Publishing Limited, 2014)

---

**Opening** Doors... **Accessing** literary heritage. It shouldn't prove too difficult to ascertain the intention of this highly practical, richly-resourced book: how to enable our pupils to explore and learn from classic texts that provide a high level of challenge. In simpler terms, how we might design literature-based lessons with high challenge/low threat and a great deal of interest and intrigue. Featured poets include Charlotte Mew, Edward Thomas, and Emily Dickinson. Authors include Dickens, H.G.Wells, Bram Stoker and Charlotte Bronte.

Bob Cox acknowledges in his introduction that primary schools "have never lacked enthusiasm for projects featuring Shakespeare or whole days with a Dicken's focus"[pg.1] but also takes on board that it can be challenging to move beyond the well-established favourites (I'm thinking here of Dickens, Shakespeare and The Highwayman in particular) in order to extend the range of prose and poetry that our pupils are exposed to and how to deepen their knowledge in the process. It is these challenges that inform the 20 units of learning contained within. Twenty carefully selected poems and prose extracts drive the units. Each unit follows the same essential structure that serves to engage and excite, provide opportunities for a deep exploration of the text that then lead into a range of writing opportunities. Extensions (genuine extensions) are also offered together with further suggested reading. This further reading in turn seeks to help pupils make links with other titles/writers, so that their knowledge base deepens, and their frames of reference widens. Only connect - to borrow from another figure of our literary heritage.

What I really hope to get across more than anything else is just how safe a set of hands you are in when reading this book. From the book's dedication onwards, it is clear that Cox is a teacher's teacher. His guidance is clear, practical and, free from jargon. No use of "robust" and "rigorous" here – yet the book speaks more clearly of those over-used terms than any of the other resources I have seen prepared for this area of the new curriculum. Aiming high but with a flight path for all, his opening quote from Dickens' *Hunted Down* gets right to the heart of the approaches of this invaluable text:

"A very little key will open a very heavy door."

Note: all texts and resources shared in the book are supplied on an accompanying CD Rom.

---

Review by Martin Galway



**English Teaching and Learning Advisory Team, Herts for Learning Ltd**

Postal Point SROB217, Robertson House, Six Hills Way, Stevenage, SG1 2FQ

Herts for Learning - Educational excellence together

Office: 01438 84462

Website: [www.hertsforlearning.co.uk](http://www.hertsforlearning.co.uk)

Twitter: @HertsLearning

Facebook: [facebook.com/HertsforLearning](https://www.facebook.com/HertsforLearning)

Details of our Literacy Consultancy, Training and CPD Courses  
can be found at: <http://bit.ly/1OvSkRd>

© Herts for Learning Ltd 2015