

# UNLOCKING SKILLED READING: BUILDING READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH TARGETED VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION

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*What are the **KEY ELEMENTS** to effective vocabulary instruction?*

- ☐ **Vocabulary instruction must be explicit.** Explicit vocabulary instruction includes an **easy-to-understand definition** presented directly to students along with **multiple examples and non-examples of the target word**, **brief discussion opportunities**, and **checks for understanding**.
- ☐ **Vocabulary instruction must include multiple practice opportunities for using words within and across subjects.** That is, instruction must be extended over time with opportunities for students to hear, speak, read, and write words in various contexts. This builds students' breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge.
- ☐ **Vocabulary should be taught schoolwide and across all subject areas.** Each subject has a unique set of vocabulary terms, and students need to know their meanings and how to use them in various contexts.

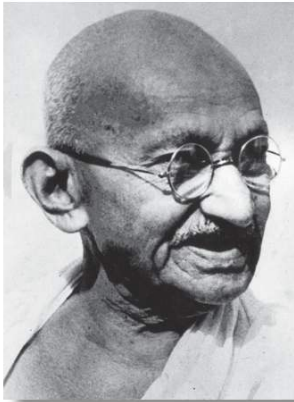
## Selecting Vocabulary Words Playbook\*

1. Before instruction, preview the text, even when using text that has pre-selected vocabulary words.
2. Read the passage and identify vocabulary words you think students will find unfamiliar. Ask yourself: "How difficult is this passage to understand?"
3. Select words that are important to understanding the text.
4. List words you predict will be challenging for your students. You may not be able to teach all of these words. **Research supports teaching only a few words before reading.**
5. Determine which words are adequately defined in the text. Some may be defined by direct definition and others through context. Expand on these words after reading, rather than directly teaching them before reading.
6. Identify words students may know based on their prefixes, suffixes, and base or root words. If structural elements help students determine words' meanings, don't teach them directly.
7. Consider students' prior knowledge. Words can be discussed as you activate and build prior knowledge. Words can also be extended.
8. Determine the importance of the word. Ask yourself: "Does the word appear again and again? Is the word important to comprehending the passage? Will knowledge of the word help in other content areas?"
9. Remember, words taught before students read include:
  - a. Words that will be frequently encountered in other texts and content areas.
  - b. Words that are important to understanding the main ideas.
  - c. Words that are not a part of your student's prior knowledge.
  - d. Words unlikely to be learned independently through the use of context and/or structural analysis.

\*Cooper, J.D. (1997). *Literacy: Helping children construct meaning* (3rd ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

## Sample Reading Passage

### Gandhi



Mahatma Gandhi is known throughout the world for his compassion, dedication to peace, and commitment to nonviolence. He enacted a great deal of change in his lifetime and made life better for many people of India. His success inspired other leaders, such as Martin Luther King Jr., to adopt nonviolent resistance techniques in their own struggles against injustice. But Gandhi was not born a leader. Specific events early in his life led him to that path.

Like India, South Africa was still under British rule when Gandhi moved there in 1893. In South Africa, Gandhi realized that the large numbers of Indians (people from India) who were settled there were looked down upon as racial outcasts. South African whites considered the Indians inferior just because they were Indian. One day, Gandhi boarded a train with a first-class ticket in his hand. But when he sat down in the compartment, a white passenger complained about the presence of a dark-skinned man in first class. The conductor ordered him to move back to third class. When Gandhi refused, because he had purchased a first-class ticket, the conductor threw him and his luggage off the train. He sat through a cold winter night in a waiting room, trying to decide whether he should stay and fulfill his obligations to his law client or return to India. He decided to stay.

## Double-click to edit

Double-click to edit

### Synonyms:

Click to add text



### Example Sentences

1. Simple sentence containing the targeted word.
2. An excerpt from the text you're reading that contains the word.

### Turn and Talk

1. A question to spark students' discussion that is something relatable to their prior knowledge or experience
2. A question to spark discussion that relates the word to your course content

<https://greatmiddleschools.org/words>