

# BUILDING BRIDGES



Bridges to Literature Newsletter • Volume 4

A Picture Is Worth a Thousand Words, but...

## Words Are Priceless

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*A picture is worth  
a thousand words.*

*Ancient Chinese proverb*

If this is true, consider how important it is to be immersed in, and to confidently use, words that can describe a single picture.

The limited vocabularies of many of my students often hinder their ability to comprehend what they read and to explain important concepts. How do we tackle this disparity between those who read with understanding and those who don't? The ideal solution is to give students an exciting background knowledge of *morphemes*, the meaningful units of words.

I once asked a class of eighth graders what was the last book they read. Many had tested in the lowest quartile on yearly assessments, and most recalled

reading only a third grade chapter book. These students were quite proud of the fact that they had not read a whole book since then—but at what cost to their literacy skills? Such reluctant readers are tackling material that is four to five years above their reading level. Is it any wonder they don't like to read?

Luckily, teachers can make a difference when they become enthusiastic wordsmiths! They can make word play fun by creating lessons that improve students' knowledge of words. Listed below are a few strategies and activities that support independent vocabulary development.

**WORD OF THE DAY:** Each day select a multi-syllable word for study. Its letters are scrambled, vowels separated from consonants, in alpha order. For example, *independent* is scrambled into *e, e, e, i* and *d, d, n, n, n, p, t*. Cunningham and Hall (*Making Bigger Words*) suggest you start by finding three- or four-letter words, such as *den, pen, ten, din, end, pin, tin, dent, pent, tend, teen, dine, pint*, and build to bigger words of three to four syllables.

One strategy is to have students search for prefixes, such as *in-*, *de-*, or *di-*, and suffixes, such as *-ed*, *-en*, *-ent*, or *-ite*. Small groups could then put syllables together: *pendent, dented, ended, penned, tended, indented, intended*. If necessary, provide a hint like, "The word is a synonym for *freedom*."

As a follow-up, students are to create five words using the same prefix (*in*), suffix (*ent*), and root (*pend*) and keep

them in a notebook of alphabetical pages. Then create crossword puzzles with a selection of 20–25 words studied to reinforce learning.

### VOCABULARY FLASHCARDS:

Using dictionaries, students create four-part flashcards that build on a word by including a synonym, an antonym, an example and a non-example. The words themselves come from required reading. On the backside they use each word to create a sentence, such as *Running is a salubrious habit of mine*. Creating their own sentences allows them to consider the part of speech and syntax.

After making a set of 20–25 flashcards, you can test their understanding of words with a game of "Jeopardy" or "Baseball." In "Jeopardy", students form teams of four or five and send a representative to the "Jeopardy" board. Each team takes a turn selecting the level of difficulty. As moderator, the teacher quizzes each player, using a flashcard from the board as a clue (synonym, antonym, example, non-example). The student representative who responds with the correct answer first is awarded points.

In "Baseball", the class is divided

*continued on page 2 (Thousand Words)*



into two teams. The team “in the field” asks the first opponent “at bat” a question from the flashcard (e.g. “What is an antonym for *salubrious*?”). If answered correctly, the player moves to first base. After three players have had a chance to score, their side is retired and they pitch the questions. Players resume their positions each time they come to bat, and “runs” are scored on the board. The game ends after nine innings of play.

**WRITING ROULETTE:** In this small-group writing activity, students set out to write a fairy tale, a descriptive paragraph, a futuristic or historical narrative—even a cartoon—while correctly using 6–12 new words from an assigned list of vocabulary.

Taking words from the list, each student writes the beginning of a story. After five or ten minutes, the papers are passed along to the next student, who continues the story. When each student in the group has made a contribution to each story, one is selected to share with the class. Using new words in meaningful ways adds depth of comprehension to reading and writing.

**VOCABULARY SELF-SELECTION:** By modeling the three cueing systems—grapho-phonics, semantics, and syntax—you can help students decode and understand unknown vocabulary. To accomplish this, students should have many opportunities to self-select words they feel they should know.

This can best be done in rich reading contexts like *Bridges to Literature*. When introducing a new selection, allow students to ponder the title and picture. Then invite them to begin reading the selection silently, writing down 3–5 words that might be good for word study.

When several students have selected the same word, or when the word is preselected by the authors, list it on the board. When 10 words have been decided on, divide the students into teams of three, making each team responsible for two words. Students reread the text together, noting the page numbers and sentences with the listed words. After the second reading, each team presents the words in the context of the sentences, providing an opportunity to underscore parts of speech. This is important when learning whether the word is critical to the understanding of the text. Usually nouns and verbs are more significant for study than adjectives and adverbs, whose role is to modify. Students then copy all 10 sentences in their Vocabulary Notebooks for further study.

**TEST:** Each week there’s a vocabulary test of 10 of the words selected. Teachers construct a ‘cloze’-type test using sentences that give context clues, leaving a space at the end of each sentence to identify the part of speech (noun, verb, adjective, or adverb). Always list the 10 words in a word bank at the top of the page, but for fun you can scramble the letters to make students identify the words.

Vocabulary development is the responsibility of both the teacher and the student. Many times when my students studied words for a test, they reported finding the word several times in many different places, such as the newspaper, TV, or in other books. I tell my students that learning just 10 prefixes, 10 roots, and 10 suffixes leads to knowing 10,000 words. And that is exciting!

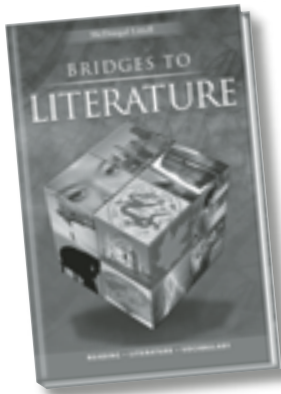
## Word Morphing

When students are learning new vocabulary, it helps to break words down into meaningful units, or *morphemes*.

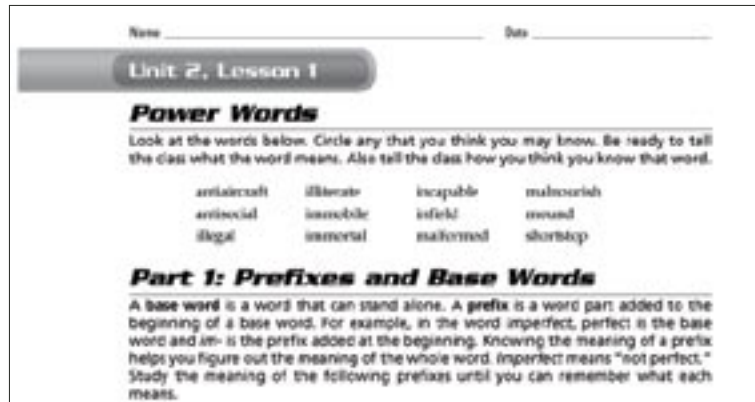
Synonyms	Roots	Antonyms
dis (apart, not)	pose (put, place)	able (capable or worthy)
trans (across, beyond)	script (write)	tion (an action or process)
epi (upon)	logue (say, study of)	
ex (out, beyond)	tended (stretch)	
inter (between, among)	mitt (send)	ent (having tendency to perform)



# Spotlight On Vocabulary

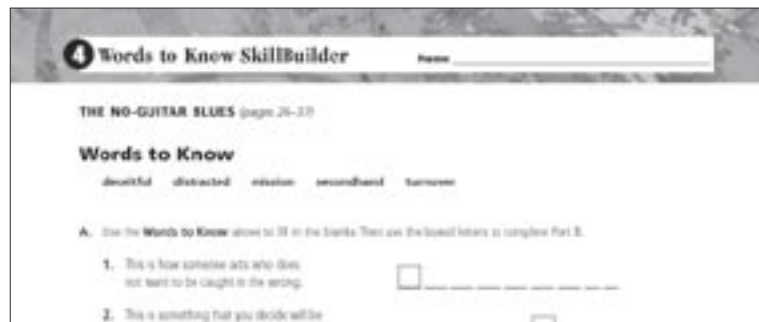


*Bridges to Literature* supports students in their development of a broad and rich vocabulary by providing student-appropriate selections accompanied by a rich array of exercises to reinforce learning. Many strategies and activities throughout the *Bridges to Literature* program help students gain independence in vocabulary development, as recommended by educational consultant Kathy Allen.



## Word of the Day

The Power Words Copymasters workbook is an ideal place to start when choosing a word of the day. This workbook contains supplemental vocabulary exercises that are connected to the lessons in the text. Each lesson provides a list of targeted vocabulary words and a concluding lesson to review and reteach these words.



## Vocabulary Flashcards

“Vocabulary Preview” lists key vocabulary words students will encounter in each selection from *Bridges to Literature*. Throughout the text, words are highlighted, defined in the margin, and accompanied by a pronunciation guide. Students can begin the first part of their flashcards by using the “Vocabulary Preview” list and the context sentence as an example of how to properly use the word. Additional practice is found in the student SkillBuilder Workbook, which includes all the reading, literature, and vocabulary from the Teacher’s Edition.

## Writing Roulette

The Power Words Copymasters workbook enables students to use a story in *Bridges to Literature* as their writing model and to select words that have been highlighted for further study. Once students write their own stories, they can complete the Power Words lessons for more practice.

## Vocabulary Self-Selection

Each reading selection in *Bridges to Literature* begins with a high-interest image and a brief introduction to engage students. This introductory page invites students to think independently about the image as well as the title. Once they begin reading the story they can select words for a word study, or use the highlighted key terms.



# Applauding *Bridges to Literature*



Wendy Welch

Wendy Welch teaches grades 6–12 at Oakview Middle School in Newberry, Florida. She finds that *Bridges to Literature* leads to greater reading achievement among both her on-level and special education students.

## What do you think of *Bridges to Literature*?

I love it! It's great. What I love about the Bridges program is that it lexiles the stories for me. Whenever I do differentiated groups, I can be in there with passages at the same lexile level as my kids.

## At what range of grade levels are your students reading?

I have students who do not recognize site words up to students who can actually read and comprehend at a high school level, though a lot of my students have low self-esteem in terms of academic success.

## What made you decide that *Bridges to Literature* was the answer for your students?

The textbook is easy for students to follow. It's substantial but at the same time not too busy. I really, really like the focused questions, and I enjoy the way the units are put in together. And the stories address real kid issues without talking down to them.



## How do your students feel using *Bridges to Literature*?

They like it for the simple fact that a lot of my kids came from a pull-out session where they were using little workbooks and stuff like that, and now they are issued hardback books. It gives them the feeling that they're equals, they're just like everybody else at school.

## Do you see that your students are more motivated using *Bridges to Literature*?

I have not always used Bridges, but I would say that I have greater success using the Bridges program when I switched over from using the standard issues book for our school.

## Have your students completed the level of *Bridges to Literature* that they were in? Have you completed an entire level with them?

Yes, I have. I have some students who have completed an entire level.

## Which level?

The red one, Level II.

## What is the most popular *Bridges to Literature* selection with your students?

Usually the ghost stories. My students go to them first.

## How do you use the program?

The class meets as a whole group, meaning all 18–20 students. Usually we go over a particular story or a particular skill highlighted in the Bridges book. Then the students break into three differentiated groups, either by student interest or ability level, depending on which unit we are working on. After the first 30 minutes of working as a whole group, my students are put into three smaller groups. I work independently with a group of about five kids for 20 minutes and during that time period we are completing one of the guided practice skills provided by the Bridges book.

## Are you satisfied with the results of using *Bridges to Literature*?

Absolutely. By Christmas time my kids are excited about getting out the books. And there isn't this dread of "oh gosh, I'm pulling out a book I don't know how to read." With Bridges they are getting out the book and going, "OK, what are we reading next?"

## How would you describe your experience with *Bridges to Literature* to another interested teacher?

Well worth it. It's a great program that's easy to follow. Especially if you're new to reading or new to teaching, this curriculum is really teacher-friendly.

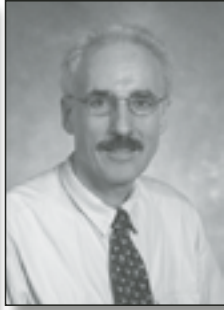
## Did you know?

- Reading comprehension is more strongly related to vocabulary than any other aspect of reading.
- Group work is an effective tool in the teaching of vocabulary.
- A teacher's enthusiasm for building a personal vocabulary is infectious.
- Vocabulary study is an effective preview for most of the lessons you teach.
- An incidental approach to vocabulary does not work as well for most students as does a program that includes direct teaching of vocabulary.

# Teaching Tips: **Wordskills**

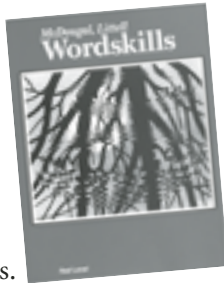


Howard D. Peet



James E. Coomber

Developed by **Howard D. Peet** and **James E. Coomber**, the Five-Step System for teaching vocabulary is the foundation for units in the popular *Wordskills* series of books for grades 6–12, published by McDougal Littell. Based on extensive research, this system not only introduces target words at grade level; it also teaches your students powerful strategies for unlocking meanings and discovering ways they can use these new words.



Research shows that the following points are characteristic of effective vocabulary teaching:

- Multiple encounters with target words.
- Working with target words in context.
- Teaching words students are likely to encounter and use.
- Using a variety of enjoyable approaches and activities for reinforcing word meanings.
- Using target words in writing and speaking.
- Helping students develop their own vocabulary strategies.
- Generating enthusiasm for words and building vocabulary.

Each of these points is basic to the *Wordskills* approach.

## **WORDSKILLS** Five-Step System

1. Introduce words in sentences and let students determine word meaning through context.
2. Refine understanding of the target words through other reading selections.
3. Reinforce understanding of the words through a variety of games, exercises and contextual materials.
4. Relate each target word to other words of the same family.
5. Encourage active use of the words through writing and speaking assignments.

*Teach a child  
a word to build  
a vocabulary.*

*Teach a child  
how to use a word  
to build a life.*

## **McDougal Littell**

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# BUILDING BRIDGES

## Teacher Network

Join our network! If you are using *Bridges to Literature* in your classroom, this is your chance to share your experience with other *Bridges to Literature* teachers.

Do you have a great idea for a lesson or a special reading success story? We'd love to hear about it. Please e-mail [Bridges@hmco.com](mailto:Bridges@hmco.com) for publication in the next edition of this newsletter.

## Let Us Know

We would like to know how you are using *Bridges to Literature* in your classroom or school. Fill out the form below and return it by fax (847-424-3402) or e-mail ([Bridges@hmco.com](mailto:Bridges@hmco.com)), and receive a free gift from our Language Arts catalog. Please be sure to include your name, school name, school address, and phone number.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

School Name \_\_\_\_\_

School Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

1. What grade level do you currently teach? \_\_\_\_\_

2. What level(s) of *Bridges to Literature* do you currently use? \_\_\_\_\_

What level(s) of *Bridges to Literature* would you consider buying? \_\_\_\_\_

3. What grade levels in your school presently use *Bridges to Literature*? \_\_\_\_\_

What grade levels could use *Bridges to Literature* in the future? \_\_\_\_\_

4. What is the title of the course in which *Bridges to Literature* is used?

English     Language Arts     Reading     Special Ed.     (Other-List) \_\_\_\_\_

5. How do you use *Bridges to Literature*? By itself or with an anthology? As a supplemental text? \_\_\_\_\_

6. How long do you use *Bridges to Literature*? One quarter, one semester, all year? \_\_\_\_\_

## Conference Update

We will be at the **International Reading Association Conference in Chicago, Illinois, April 30–May 4.**

If you will be attending the conference, visit **Booth #1526**, to see our products, speak to representatives from McDougal Littell, and share your experiences using *Bridges to Literature*. We would love to talk to you!

