WORD LEARNING **SAMPLE LESSON**

The Vocabulary Strategy

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Baumann, J. F., Font, G., Edwards, E. C., & Boland, E. (2005). Strategies for teaching middle-grade students to use word-part and context clues. In E. H. Hiebert & M. L. Kamil (Eds.), *Teaching and learning vocabulary: Bringing research to practice*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates; and Diamond, L., & Gutlohn, L. (2006). *Vocabulary handbook*. Berkeley, CA: Consortium on Reading Excellence.

INTRODUCTION

Once you have taught students about word parts and context clues, you can teach them how to combine these two strategies into a system, or routine, for figuring out the meaning of unknown words. The Vocabulary Strategy is a systematic way of thinking through the process of discovering the meaning of an unknown word during reading. The goal, of course, is for your students to use this strategy independently and in a variety of settings.

OBJECTIVE

Students will use the Vocabulary Strategy worksheet to guide them through the process of using word parts and context clues to figure out the meaning of unknown words.

MATERIALS

- Vocabulary Strategy Chart (see Appendix).
- Vocabulary Strategy Worksheet transparency and student copies (see Appendix).
- Sample text with vocabulary words.
- Dictionaries.
- Science or social studies text.

DAILY REVIEW

Teacher:
When you are reading on your own and you come to a word for which you do not know the meaning, what is one way you can figure out the meaning of the word?

Accept responses.

Yes, Candace, you can try to break the word into parts. What are some of the parts that may give you a clue to the word's meaning?

Accept responses.

Correct, you can look at prefixes, suffixes, and root words. Can anyone remember another way to find out what a word means?

Accept responses.

Yes, we can look at context clues. Where do we find context clues?

Accept responses.

Exactly, in the words and phrases around the unknown word. Raise your hand if you can remember one type of context clue that we have learned.

Quickly review the five types of context clues you have already taught: definition, synonym, antonym, example, and general.

STATE OBJECTIVE/PURPOSE

Genre: Expository or narrative

Teacher:
You have already learned several different ways to figure out unknown words by yourself as you are reading. Today I am going to show you how to think through using both word parts and context clues to figure out the meaning of unknown words as you read. Raise your hand if you can tell me what might happen if you just skip over words that you don't know.

Accept responses.

That's right, you probably won't understand what you are reading. What does the prefix *mis-* mean, Sylvia? Yes, *mis-* means "wrong". So, Sylvia, if you misunderstand what you are reading, you do what? Yes, you understand it wrong. Would that be confusing? Good, so today I am going to teach you the Vocabulary Strategy. This strategy will help you use your knowledge of word parts and context clues to figure out the meaning of unfamiliar words.

MODEL AND TEACH

Grouping: Whole class

1. Present the following chart to the class and read through each step.

FIGURE 96. THE VOCABULARY STRATEGY CHART.

The Vocabulary Strategy
If you read a word that you do not understand: 1. Look for CONTEXT CLUES. Reread the sentence and the surrounding sentences. 2. Can you break the WORD into PARTS? (If not, go to Step 3.) a. Is there a PREFIX? What does it mean? b. Is there a SUFFIX? What does it mean? c. Is there a ROOT WORD? What does it mean? d. Put the meaning of the word parts together. What is the meaning of the whole word? 3. GUESS what the word means. 4. INSERT your meaning into the original sentence to see whether it makes sense. 5. If needed, use the DICTIONARY to confirm your meaning.

Based on Baumann, J. F., Font, G., Edwards, E. C., & Boland, E. (2005). Strategies for teaching middle-grade students to use word-part and context clues. In E. H. Hiebert & M. L. Kamil (Eds.), Teaching and learning vocabulary: Bringing research to practice. *Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Adapted with permission from Diamond, L., & Gutlohn, L. (2006).* Vocabulary handbook. *Berkeley, CA: Consortium on Reading Excellence. Reproduction of this material is prohibited without permission.*

Teacher:
This chart is going to guide your thinking as you work through trying to find out what an unknown word means. Eventually, I would like for you to be able to go through this thinking process on your own. But for now, this chart is going to be our guide.

2. Choose a passage from your text and display it on the overhead. For example:

> Sam Houston was the first president of the Texas **republic**. He sent an **ambassador**, an official who represents a country, to the United States. This ambassador's job was to ask that Texas be **annexed**, or added to the country. President Jackson **disapproved**. So, Texas remained an **independent** nation for 10 years.

Teacher:
As I read this passage aloud, follow along and read the last word of every sentence.

Follow along with your finger as you read.

Teacher:
Sam Houston was the first president of the Texas ...

Students:
Republic.

Teacher:
He sent an ambassador, an official who represents a country, to the United …

Students:
States.

Continue in this way until you have read the entire passage.

3. Model word one.

Teacher:
OK, the first word with which I am unfamiliar is *republic*. The first step of the Vocabulary Strategy tells us to look for context clues. I'm going to reread the sentence. "Sam Houston was the first president of the Texas republic." OK, so a republic has a president. What else do I know that has a president? A country has a president, so maybe a republic is a country. I don't see an example or a definition of a republic; this clue is kind of general.

The second step asks whether I can break the word into parts. Well, I see the prefix *re-*. *Re-* means "again". And the root word looks like *public*. So if this were a prefix and a root word, the whole word would mean "to be public again". I don't think that makes much sense. Maybe this isn't really a prefix and a root word. I'm going to keep that in mind and move on to Step 3.

Step 3 says to guess what the word means. I think the best definition I have so far is that a republic is a country.

So I'm going to insert my meaning into the original sentence and see whether it makes sense. "Sam Houston was the first president of the Texas country … or country of Texas." Well, that would make sense if Texas were a country at the time.

I'm going to double-check by looking in the dictionary. Caleb, will you turn to page 300 of the dictionary and read the definition of *republic* for us?

HELPFUL HABIT | You can look up the definition before the lesson so that you don't waste any class time waiting on students to locate the word. You can either direct the students to the page or tab the page for them. The most important thing is that students learn to use the dictionary to double-check their own thinking.

Student:
The dictionary says that a republic is "a state or country in which people elect representatives to exercise power for them."

Teacher:
OK, so that makes sense. Texas was a republic, or state or country, and they elected Sam Houston as their president.

4. Model word two.

Teacher:
The next word I am going to try to figure out is *ambassador*. Look at the chart and

raise your hand if you can tell me the first thing I need to do.

Accept responses.

Teacher:
That's right, I'm going to look for context clues by rereading the sentence and the surrounding sentences.

Reread the sentence.

Teacher:
"He sent an ambassador, an official who represents a country, to the United States." There are no signal words, but there is signal punctuation: two commas surrounding the phrase, "an official who represents a country." So I think that is the definition.

I will still look at the next step and see whether I can break the word into smaller parts. I don't see any way to break *ambassador* into parts, so I will move on to Step 3.

Step 3 asks me to guess the meaning of *ambassador*. Well, I think it is an official person who represents a country. The definition context clue told me that.

So now I am going to insert it and see whether it makes sense. "He sent an official person who represents a country to the United States." Yes, that makes sense. Sam Houston sent someone to represent the country of Texas to the United States.

I can check the dictionary to make sure on this one, but usually if the context clue is a definition clue like this, I can be pretty confident that I have the right definition. Let's look, though. Maria, will you look on page 20 of the dictionary and tell me what *ambassador* means.

Student:
An ambassador is "an official of the highest ranking sent by one country as its representative to another country".

Teacher:
So was my definition correct, everyone?

Students:
Yes.

5. Model word three.

Teacher:
Now I want to figure out the meaning of the word *independent*. What is the first thing I need to do, Juanita?

Accept response.

Yes, I need to look for context clues. Step 1 tells me to reread the sentence and surrounding sentences, looking for clues.

Reread the sentence.

Teacher:
"So, Texas remained an independent nation for 10 years." OK, I don't see any clues

or signal words in that sentence. So I will reread the sentence before.

Reread the sentence.

Teacher:
"President Jackson disapproved." That doesn't really give me any clues, but, logically, I wonder what President Jackson disapproved of? If I look at the sentence before, it says that he disapproved of Texas being added to the country. So Texas is not part of the United States; it is by itself. So maybe *independent* means "by yourself".

What should I do next, Tamika?

Accept response.

Teacher:
Yes, now I need to try to break the word into parts. I see the prefix *in-*, which means "not". And the root word is *dependent* or *depend*. I know that a child might depend on his Mom or be dependent on his Mom. What might that word mean, Julie?

Accept response.

Teacher:
Yes, Julie, *depend* might mean "to need someone or something". So if I put those two meanings together, *independent* might mean "to not need someone or something".

Step 3 asks me to guess the meaning of the word. If I put both clues together—the context clues and the word part clues—I think *independent* means "to be alright alone and not need anyone else".

To follow Step 4, I will insert my meaning into the sentence. "So, Texas remained a nation by itself, not needing anyone else, for 10 years." That sort of makes sense.

I'm going to follow Step 5 and check the dictionary to make sure. Joel, will you turn to page 100 of the dictionary and tell us the definition for *independent*?

Student:
The dictionary says that *independent* means "free from any authority or control of something else and able to operate and stand on its own".

Teacher:
So my definition was close, but the dictionary definition makes complete sense. Texas was free from authority from any other nation and able to operate on its own for 10 years. Sometimes the Vocabulary Strategy will give you an idea of the word's meaning, but word parts and context clues may not help you understand *exactly* what a word means.

GUIDED PRACTICE

Grouping: Whole class/sitting with partners

1. Introduce the guided practice activity.

Teacher:
Today I am going to show you how to use the Vocabulary Strategy worksheet to guide you through the process of using the Vocabulary Strategy (see Figure 96).

FIGURE 97. THE VOCABULARY STRATEGY WORKSHEET.

The Vocabulary Strategy Worksheet

Word _____

Context Sentence _____

_____

1. Look for context clues.
   a. Reread the sentence, looking for signal words and punctuation.

Signal Words and Punctuation:

   b. Reread the sentences before and after the sentence with the word in it.

Context Clues:

2. Look for word parts you know. Tell what each word part means.

Prefix:

Suffix:

Root:

Put the parts together. What does this mean?

3. What do you think the word means? _____

_____

4. Try your meaning in the context sentence. Does it make sense? _____
5. Check the word with a dictionary if you need to. Remember that many words have more than one meaning, so look for the one that goes with the sentence in the book. Were you right? _____

Based on Baumann, J. F., Font, G., Edwards, E. C., & Boland, E. (2005). Strategies for teaching middle-grade students to use word-part and context clues. In E. H. Hiebert & M. L. Kamil (Eds.), Teaching and learning vocabulary: Bringing research to practice. *Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates; and Diamond, L., & Gutlohn, L. (2006).* Vocabulary handbook. *Berkeley, CA: Consortium on Reading Excellence.*

Give each student two copies of a blank Vocabulary Strategy worksheet and project a blank worksheet on the overhead. (For blank worksheets, see Appendix.)

Teacher:
Using the same social studies passage we worked with yesterday, we are going to look for clues to find the meaning of the words *annexed* and *disapproved*. Let's start with the word *annexed*. The first space asks for me to write the unknown word. Our unknown word is *annexed*, so I am going to write *annexed* here. Fill in the first blank on the worksheet.

Teacher:
Below that we need to write our context sentence. The context sentence is the sentence that contains the unknown word. What sentence will I need to write here, Steven?

Student:
"This ambassador's job was to ask that Texas be annexed, or added to the country."

Teacher:
That is correct. I am going to write the context sentence here.

Fill in the second blank.

Now when I look at the rest of the worksheet, I can see that there are five main boxes and that each one leads me through the steps on the Vocabulary Strategy Chart.

2. Continue to guide students as they complete the chart in partners. Focus first on context clues.

Teacher:
The first step tells us to reread the context sentence and surrounding sentences. With your partner, I want you to reread the sentence, looking for context clues. If you find any signal words or punctuation, write them here (*point to the Signal Words box*), and if you see any clues, write them here (*point to the Context Clue box*).

Review signal words and punctuation if necessary.

Allow partners 3–5 minutes to reread and document any context clues or signal words/punctuation. Circulate around the room and be available to help.

Return to the overhead and ask for volunteers to share context clues and signal words/punctuation. Record answers on the overhead.

Students should have found the signal word "or," preceded by a comma. Also, they should have been able to locate the definition clue "added to the country".

3. Proceed in the same way as you focus on word part clues.

Teacher:
Step 2 asks whether we can break the word into parts. Do I see a prefix? No, so I will draw a slash here and here. Do I see a suffix? Yes, *-ed* is a suffix, and I know that means "past tense," but that doesn't really tell me anything.

Record on worksheet.

Raise your hand if you can tell me the root word. Accept responses. Yes, the root word is *annex*. I will write that here, but the word part clues haven't given us very much information about the meaning of the word. If I put the meanings together, all I know is that *annexed* is the past tense of *annex*.

4. Guide students through Step 3 of the strategy.

Teacher:
Step 3 asks us what we think the word means. With your partner, use the context clues and word part clues to come up with a definition. Write your answers under Step 3.

Allow students a few minutes to discuss and write. They should be able to locate and write the definition clue "added to a country".

Raise your hand if you can give me a definition.

Accept responses.

That's right, we found a definition context clue that gives us the definition! So let's try it in our sentence.

5. Guide students as they complete Step 4, trying the word in a sentence to see whether it makes sense.

Teacher:
Please read the sentence with our definition inserted, Marcus.

Student:
"This ambassador's job was to ask that Texas be added to the country."

Teacher:
Does that make sense?

Students:
Yes.

6. Have students verify their answer using a dictionary.

Teacher:
OK, we feel pretty confident because our context clue was a definition clue, but let's look it up in the dictionary, just to make sure. Gina, would you look on page 22 and read us the definition of *annex*?

Student:
Annex means "to take over a territory and incorporate it with another country or state".

Teacher:
We can assume that *incorporate* means "add," so does our definition still make sense?

Students:
Yes.

Teacher:
Yes, it does. Nice work.

7. Following the same procedure as above, lead the students through each step of the worksheet, one section at a time. This time students will find the meaning of a second word (*disapproved*). Make sure that students understand that each worksheet is used to find the definition for one word.

INDEPENDENT PRACTICE

Grouping: Partners

- Choose a selection from the students' science or social studies text.
- Highlight or write 2–4 words that may be unknown to your students.
- Working with a partner, have the students read the text and determine the meaning of the unknown words. Ask pairs to follow the Vocabulary Strategy worksheet and complete one worksheet for each word.
- Circulate around the room and be available for guidance.

GENERALIZATION

Teacher:
Raise your hand if you can tell me a way that the Vocabulary Strategy can help you in your other classes.

Student:
Well, when we come to a word we don't understand, we can remember to look for context clues and also for word parts. Then we can use what clues we've found to guess what the word means.

Teacher:
Right! You don't have to have a form like the one we used as we learned the strategy. You just need to remember to look for *both* word part clues and context clues. Now if any of you use this strategy to figure out the meaning of a word in another class, let me know. I'd love for you to share your experience with the rest of the class.

MONITOR STUDENT LEARNING

Check worksheets for appropriate responses.

PERIODIC REVIEW/MULTIPLE OPPORTUNITIES TO PRACTICE

Periodically have students complete a Vocabulary Strategy worksheet with a word or words in an instructional-level passage (guided practice) or an independent-level passage (independent practice).

Choose a section from the students' science or social studies text and highlight a few words that the students might not know. Have the students figure out the meaning of the unknown word or words by following the Vocabulary Strategy—with the Vocabulary Strategy worksheet at first.

Keep the steps of the Vocabulary Strategy posted in your room so that students can refer to it when they come to a word they do not know.

Always remind students that they can use this strategy in their other classes and any time they read. It is most important that students are able to generalize the strategies you teach them.