

How to Use Vocabulary Maps to Deliver Explicit Vocabulary Instruction: A Guide for Teachers



Overview and Materials

Objective

Students will increase academic vocabulary knowledge through teacher-provided explicit instruction using vocabulary maps before reading.

Middle School Matters Field Guide Alignment

Reading and Reading Interventions, Principle 2, Practice 1 (Read more about it at <https://greatmiddleschools.org/resources/field-guide/>)

Materials

For teachers:

- One **vocabulary map** for each word or concept being taught (use the vocabulary map template provided)
- **Text or passage** students will read

For students:

- **Text or passage**

Lesson at-a-Glance

Step 1: Prepare vocabulary maps for two to three words.

Step 2: Use vocabulary maps to deliver explicit vocabulary instruction.

Step 3: Guide students to read text.

Step 4: Provide additional opportunities to practice target words.

Why Should Teachers Use Vocabulary Maps?

Activating students' background knowledge before reading a text greatly increases their reading comprehension. One way of activating background knowledge is to explicitly teach important vocabulary words before reading by using vocabulary maps, which support students' vocabulary development and reading comprehension.

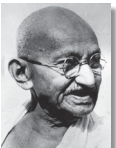
Word (cognate)	
student-friendly definition	
Synonyms:	
Example Sentences 1. Simple sentence containing the targeted word. 2. An excerpt from the text you're reading that contains the word.	Turn and Talk 1. A question to spark students' discussion that is something relatable to their prior knowledge or experience 2. A question to spark discussion that relates the word to your course content

<https://greatmiddleschools.org/toolkits/reading/vocabulary-maps/>

Download the PowerPoint template from the Vocabulary Maps Toolkit.
<https://greatmiddleschools.org/toolkits/reading/vocabulary-maps/>

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.

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Using Vocabulary Maps, Step-by-Step

STEP 1: Prepare.

A) Identify and read the text or passage that your students will read.

B) Identify the purpose for reading the text.

Ask yourself, "What should students learn from reading this passage? How does it relate to the learning objectives for this unit of study?"

C) Choose two to three words to teach explicitly before students read the text.

These words should support students' overall understanding of the text.

HOW TO: Select Words to Teach Explicitly

"Teachers should prioritize instruction to focus on **academic words**, or words that students will see often and use often in a variety of settings. (Examples include *coincidence*, *pollution*, *neutral*, and *fortunate*.) These words are particularly important for comprehending textbook material, literature, and academic lectures and conversations" (*Reading Teacher Sourcebook*, p. 138).

Select words that are

- frequently encountered,
- crucial to understanding the main idea of a text,
- not part of students' prior knowledge, and
- unlikely to be learned independently through the use of context or structural analysis.

D) Create a vocabulary map for each word or concept you choose.

Using the vocabulary map template, include the following:

1. Vocabulary word
2. Student-friendly definition of the word
3. **Cognate or translation** of the word, as appropriate
4. Visual representation of the word
5. Synonym(s) of the word
6. Example sentences using the word
7. **Turn-and-talk prompts** for students to practice using the word and for you to monitor student understanding

When should I include a cognate or translation?

If English language learners in your class share the same native language, include a cognate or translation of the target word.

HOW TO: Structure Turn-and-Talk Activities

Use turn-and-talk prompts to check students' understanding of the target word or concept. Turn-and-talk prompts allow all students to further process the word or concept.

1. Provide a prompt for students to discuss. It should be relatable for students so that they can draw on their prior knowledge or life experience.
2. Students turn to their shoulder partner to discuss the prompt for about a minute. Monitor students' conversations to check for understanding.
3. Select students to share thoughts and ideas from their discussion with the whole group.

Sample turn-and-talk prompts from the vocabulary map for the word *compassion*:

- Tell your partner about a time you showed **compassion** toward others.
- Why do you think that Gandhi is known for his **compassion**?

STEP 2: Use vocabulary maps to deliver instruction.

A) Establish the purpose of the lesson.

Tell students that they will learn important words or concepts found in the text they are about to read.

B) Provide explicit instruction using the vocabulary maps.

Teach the target words or concepts using vocabulary maps, displaying them one at a time. Explicitly teach each word with a quick pace. Students *do not* need a copy of the map and *should not* take notes while instruction is being delivered; they will demonstrate their understanding of the words during the turn-and-talk portion of the lesson.

STEP 3: Read the text.

Have students read the text. During or after reading, ask students to point out where they found the target words or concepts and how they were used in the text.

STEP 4: Provide additional opportunities to practice target words.

Determine ways in which students will use these new words through discussion, reading, and writing over the course of the unit (see examples at right). Space out practice opportunities over the course of the unit to promote retention of word meanings.

HOW TO: Create Additional Opportunities for Practice

The following activities provide interactive language opportunities focused on the target word or concept. The goal is to provide opportunities for students to use the word or concept so that they can attain a deeper level of understanding and increased retention.

Example or nonexample questions provide students with opportunities to listen to a sentence and determine whether it is an example or nonexample of the target word.

EXAMPLE APPLICATION:

bonded (definition: being held or tied to a promise or obligation)

- A child is forced to work for a master for years to pay his parents' debt. Is this child **bonded**? (Yes)
- I borrowed \$100 from my dad, and I agreed to wash his car and mow the lawn for 2 months. Am I **bonded**? (No)
- A child helps his mother clean houses during the summer months when he is not in school. Is he **bonded**? (No)

Sentence-creation prompts provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding by creating their own sentence using the target word.

EXAMPLE APPLICATION:

A teacher uses a vocabulary map to teach the word *honor*. She provides a turn-and-talk opportunity in which partners use the word in a sentence. Students then share their sentence with the class.

- We **honor** our presidents by putting them on a coin.
- We **honor** our mother by celebrating Mother's Day.
- We **honor** our principal by having a retirement party for her.

Vignette: Vocabulary Maps in Action



Ms. Simmons, a sixth-grade English language arts teacher, is teaching a unit on civil rights. During today's lesson, students will read a passage about Mahatma Gandhi. Before students read, she will preteach several important words from the passage so that students have a solid understanding of the passage and its central themes. She chooses the words *compassion* and *injustice*.

Vocabulary maps and example "teacher talk" for the two words can be found on the following pages.

After Ms. Simmons explicitly teaches these two words using vocabulary maps, students read the passage.

Throughout the remainder of the unit on civil rights, Ms. Simmons will periodically revisit these words so students retain their meanings. For example, she might ask students to write a sentence using each word as a warm-up activity or ask a series of example or nonexample questions at the end of class.

Example Lesson Using Vocabulary Maps

A. Establish the purpose of the lesson.

Tell students that they will learn important words and concepts found in the text they are about to read.

"Before we read our article about Gandhi, we will discuss the words *compassion* and *injustice*. These words are found in the text we are about to read. Having a solid understanding of what *compassion* and *injustice* mean will help you better understand the article. I will show you some vocabulary maps while we talk about these words."

B. Provide explicit instruction using the vocabulary map.

Display the **vocabulary map** and deliver instruction with a quick pace. Instruction should take about 5 minutes per word.

Word (cognate)	
student-friendly definition	
Synonyms:	
Example Sentences <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Simple sentence containing the targeted <u>word</u>.2. An excerpt from the text you're reading that contains the <u>word</u>.	Turn and Talk <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. A question to spark students' discussion that is something relatable to their prior knowledge or experience2. A question to spark discussion that relates the word to your course content

<https://greatmiddleschools.org/tools/reading/vocabulary-maps/>

Vocabulary map template

Word 1: *compassion*

Introduce the vocabulary word and student-friendly definition.

“Here is the vocabulary map for the word *compassion*. Everyone, say the word *compassion*. *Compassion* means ‘showing great care or concern.’ What does *compassion* mean?” (Point to the student-friendly definition as students read it aloud.)

Share the picture and provide an explanation.

“Here is a picture that represents the word *compassion*. The picture shows people providing food to the people of Haiti after an earthquake. They are showing compassion, or concern.”

Share synonyms for the word.

“Synonyms, or words that mean the same as *compassion*, are *tenderness* and *sympathy*.” (Point to the synonyms as you read.)

Provide example sentences.

“Here is a sentence that includes the word *compassion*: The Red Cross workers showed great *compassion* toward the people of Haiti after the earthquake struck by providing food and shelter to many homeless people.”


Structure the turn-and-talk prompts to ensure student understanding.

“People use *compassion* in their everyday lives. Think about a time you showed *compassion* toward others or someone showed *compassion* toward you. Tell your partner about this time. Use the word *compassion* in your discussion and make sure you respond in a complete sentence.” (Give students about 30 seconds to talk. Listen to students as they talk to each other. Answer questions as they arise.)

“Who would like to share their discussion with the class?” (Call on one to two student pairs.)

“Think about what we’ve learned about Gandhi so far and turn and talk with your partner. Why do you think that Gandhi is known for his *compassion*? Make sure you use the word *compassion* in your answer and respond in a complete sentence. For example, you could start your response with ‘Gandhi is known for his *compassion* because...’” (Give students about 30 seconds to talk. Listen to students as they talk to each other. Answer questions as they arise.)

“Who would like to share their discussion with the class?” (Call on one to two student pairs.)

compassion (compasión)	
Showing great care or concern	
Synonyms: tenderness, sympathy	
Example Sentences	Turn and Talk
1. The Red Cross workers showed great compassion toward the people of Haiti after the earthquake struck by providing food and shelter to many homeless people.	1. Tell your partner about a time you showed compassion toward others.
2. Mahatma Gandhi is known throughout the world for his compassion , dedication to peace, and commitment to nonviolence.	2. Why do you think that Gandhi is known for his compassion ?

<https://greatmiddleschools.org/toolkits/reading/vocabulary-maps/>

Word 2: *injustice*

Introduce the vocabulary word and student-friendly definition.

“Here is the vocabulary map for the word *injustice*. Everyone, say *injustice*. *Injustice* is an unjust or unfair action or treatment. What does *injustice* mean?” (Point to the student-friendly definition as students read it aloud.)

Share the picture and provide an explanation.

“Here is a picture that represents the word *injustice*. The picture shows a scale that is not balanced, showing that the sides are not equal.”

Share synonyms for the word.

“Synonyms, or words that mean the same as *injustice*, are *wrong* and *inequality*.” (Point to the synonyms as you read them.)

Provide example sentences.

“Here is a sentence that includes the word *injustice*: She suffered *injustice* when she was found guilty and went to jail for a crime she didn’t commit.”

“The following sentence is from the article we are about to read: Gandhi’s success inspired other leaders, such as Martin Luther King Jr., to adopt nonviolent resistance techniques in their own struggles against *injustice*.”


Structure the turn-and-talk prompts to ensure understanding.

“Think about a time you experienced or saw someone else experience *injustice*. Tell your partner about this time. Use the word *injustice* in your discussion.” (Give students about 30 seconds to talk. Listen to students as they talk to each other. Answer questions as they arise.)

“Who would like to share their discussion with the class?” (Call on one to two pairs.)

“Describe the *injustice* that Martin Luther King Jr. faced.” (Give students about 30 seconds to talk. Listen to students as they talk to each other. Answer questions as they arise.)

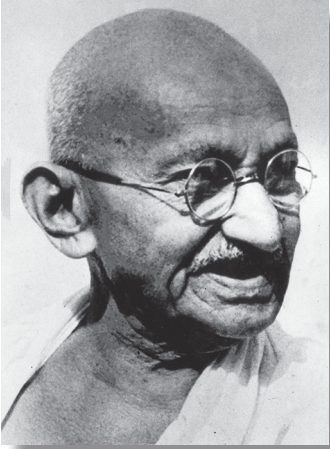
“Who would like to share their discussion with the class?” (Call on one to two student pairs.)

injustice (injusticia)	
Unjust or unfair action or treatment	
Synonyms: unfairness, inequality	
Example Sentences	Turn and Talk
1. She suffered injustice when she was found guilty and went to jail for a crime she didn’t commit.	1. Tell your partner about a time you experienced or saw someone else experience injustice .
2. Gandhi’s success inspired other leaders, such as Martin Luther King Jr., to adopt nonviolent resistance techniques in their own struggles against injustice .	2. Describe the injustice that Martin Luther King Jr. faced.

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