



What's Your Process?

How to Write Lesson Plans the JOYcabulary Way: Seven Easy-ish Steps

When we present, Amanda and I often get the same questions:

- How do you pick your books?*
- How do you know what words to teach?*
- Where can I find your vocabulary games?*
- Are you research-based? (YES!)*
- Do you have a lesson for _____?*

At JOYcabulary, we use a 7-step process to create our lesson plans. You can use this same process to plan ANY book! Know you can always contact us if you have a book you'd like us to add to our lesson collection.

Step #1: Book Choice

We use several lenses when we are selecting books:

- Standards
- Student interests
- Copyright date
- Diversity & equity
- SEL
- Award winners
- author/ illustrator
- Word learning opportunities
- Book pairings: fiction & nonfiction
- Extension into content areas

Step #2: Word Choice

We have a blog post on choosing words, but - briefly - we look for words with these lenses:

- Tier 2 words
- Repeated words
- Words critical to comprehension of the text
- Useful words - words that students will be apt to see again in reading, and can use when speaking or writing
- Words that have many synonyms to do some semantic clustering
- The grade-level or age of the child
- Words that I can provide a whispered-in, on-the-spot definition*
- Words that can be acted out or communicated with a gesture*

These lenses usually generate a long list of possible words. Now it is time for selecting and choosing 4-6 words for explicit instruction. (*Words that fall under the starred lenses are not included.*)

TIP: Don't stress over choosing the RIGHT words. Using the lenses outlined above will lead you to 'right' words. Your readers will still hear the words not chosen. If you are raising *word consciousness* children, they may even demand to know the meaning of these other words!



Step #3: Gather Student-Friendly Definitions

Look up the student-friendly definition for each of your selected words. (*See our blog post for resources*) Write them on a small sticky note and place in your book where the word first appears. (*If your book is not paginated, you might choose to do that. It makes planning the think aloud section easier.*) Think about any pictures or gestures that might help with understanding word meaning. Maybe you might find a concrete object (*realia*) that helps. These moves are an especially important scaffold for MLL students.

Step #4: Search for a Warm Up Poem

If you want to warm up with a poem, make sure your search says '*for kids.*' Poetry isn't just for April! Poetry has many benefits - especially fluency. See timrasinski.com

Step #5: Book Pairing

Like pairing a fine wine with dinner, JOYcabulary usually pairs an informational text with a narrative. (*Again - see our blog post*) In informational texts, you may lean into some Tier 3 words for that topic. It also may be a spot where you create a mini text set on the topic that students can read during independent reading. You also have to decide if you will read the informational book first to build background knowledge to support the comprehension of the narrative.

Step #6: Create your Interactive Read Aloud Plan

Think about the three big parts of read aloud: *before reading, during reading, after reading.* (*See Fountas and Pinnell's The Wheel*) Now think of stopping places for discussion. What thinking prompts will you provide? What kind of partner work will you ask students to do to foster comprehension and oral language: Turn & Talk, Stop & Jot, Stop & Act Out etc. I find it helpful to actually write out these questions on a small sticky note and place them in the book where I intend to pose the question. For after reading, I prompt students to think of the author's message or theme(s) that lives in the book. With informational texts, we usually do some summarizing as part of reciprocal reading.

Step #7: Extensions

According to research, students need multiple exposures to words distributed over time to truly own these new words. You need to think about tools and activities that support this learning. You may wish to make semantic clusters, study the morphology of any new words, create a word bank to support discussion, connect to phonics lessons... even play word games. (*See blog for a list of vocabulary games*) You can also mine these read alouds to multi-task: serve as a mentor text for writing or support content area studies.

Phew! It sounds like a lot... and it is. I can promise you, planning will go faster the more you do it. Do not stress that the little sticky notes will distract your readers. Believe me - after a while, they won't even notice them.

TIP: If you have a grade level partner, split up the books and share the plans.

Saving you time is one of the missions of JOYcabulary. If you have a title you are eager to see in our collection of plans, contact us. We'd be happy to write one for you.