



Empowering Students' Knowledge of Vocabulary

Learning How Language Works,
Grades 3–5



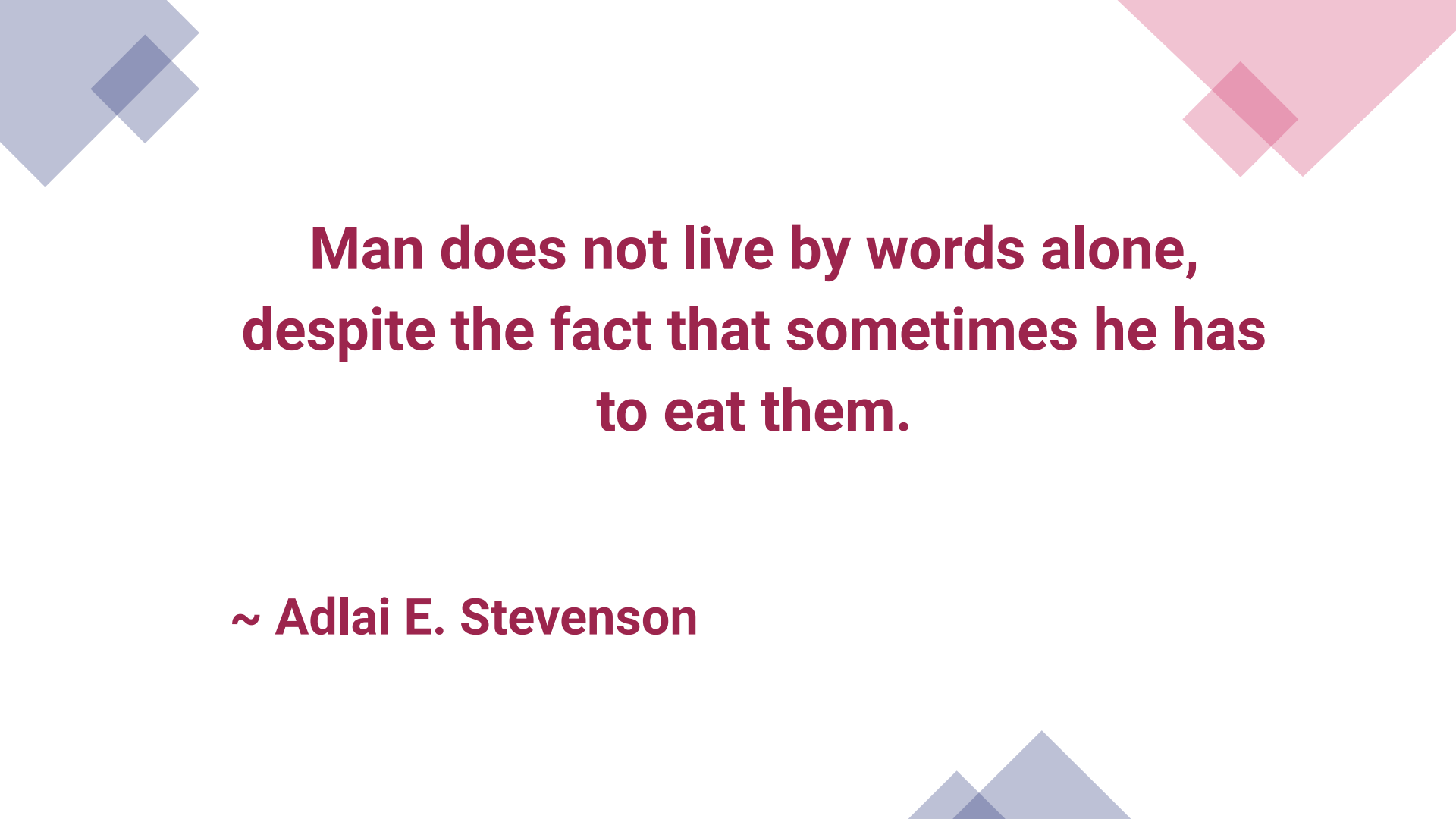
Mary Jo Fresch and David L. Harrison



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**55 research-based lessons
that cross the curriculum and
have extended days of use:**

- 39 teacher led lessons
- 16 independent lessons



**Man does not live by words alone,
despite the fact that sometimes he has
to eat them.**


~ Adlai E. Stevenson



David L. Harrison

A storyteller who paints with a palette of splendid words

Words are . . .
the shyness of a fawn's breath,
the sobbing at a pet's death,
the last cracker in the box,
the gloriously tailed fox,
the sweet fullness of cantaloupe,
the faith it takes to have hope,
the bridge that crosses every sea,
the stepping stones to you from me.



Mary Jo Fresch

Help students (and teachers) dig into the language. How can we spark love and curiosity of English words?

Acronyms:

EPCOT = **E**xperimental **P**rototype **C**ommunity **o**f **T**omorrow

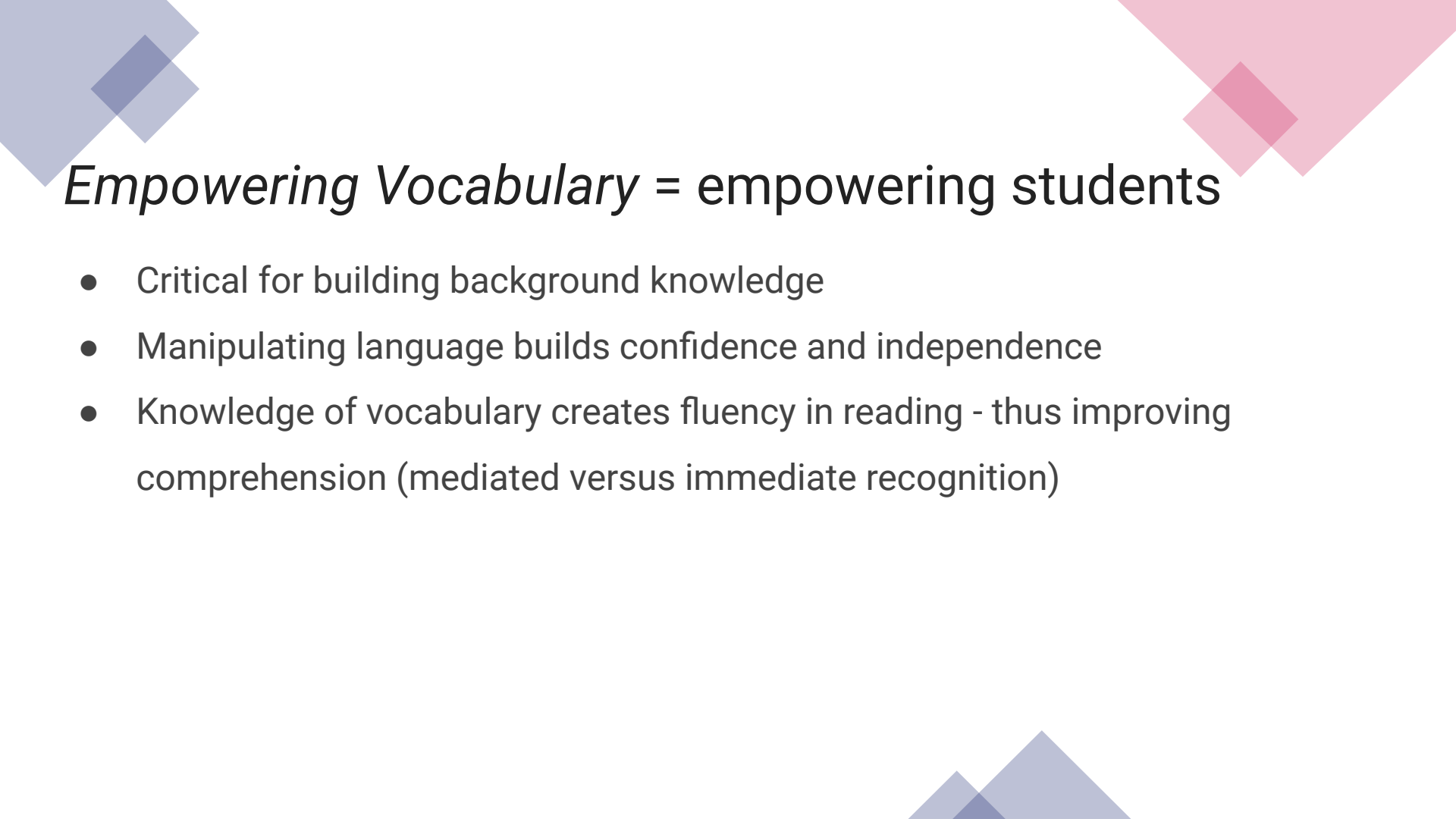
Idiom Origins:

Be in the limelight - early 1800s, Thomas Drummond discovered when calcium oxide (lime) is heated it gives off a glaring white light. So, this was used in lighthouses and later in theaters.

Word Origins:

zero - Arabic *sifr* - “empty” and Middle Latin *zephirum* - “empty place”

school - Greek *skhole* - “leisure”



Empowering Vocabulary = empowering students

- Critical for building background knowledge
- Manipulating language builds confidence and independence
- Knowledge of vocabulary creates fluency in reading - thus improving comprehension (mediated versus immediate recognition)

The “nyms” - match them!

1. Acronym (high)
 2. Antonym (opposite)
 3. Eponym (upon)
 4. Homonym (same)
 - a. Homophone (same sound)
 - b. Homograph (same writing)
 5. Retronym (back)
 6. Synonym (same)
- A. Entrance - exit
 - B. ZIP code
 - C. Ask - inquire
 - D. Sandwich
 - E. Dove
 - F. Landline
 - G. Which - witch

The “nyms” - match them!

-
1. Acronym (high) → B. ZIP code (Zone Improvement Plan)
2. Antonym (opposite) → A. Entrance - exit
3. Eponym (upon) → D. Sandwich
4. Homonym (same)
- a. Homophone (same sound) → G. Which - witch
 - b. Homograph (same writing) → E. Dove
5. Retronym (back) → F. Landline
6. Synonym (same) → C. Ask - inquire
- A. Entrance - exit
- B. ZIP code (Zone Improvement Plan)
- C. Ask - inquire
- D. Sandwich
- E. Dove
- F. Landline
- G. Which - witch

Antonym fun

Jack and Jill went up the hill
To fetch a pail of water
Jack fell down and broke his crown
And Jill came tumbling after.

Jack and Jill went down the valley
To take a pail of dirt.
Jack jumped up and fixed his crown
And Jill went tumbling first.



You try it!
Substitute words using antonyms

Mary had a little lamb

Its fleece was white as snow

And everywhere that Mary went

The lamb was sure to go!



Homonym fun

In a Jam

By David L. Harrison

He spilled the jam
all down his pants,
and now he pants,
“I’m in a jam!”

He scraped with sticks
and fingernails
as hard as nails,
but jam sticks.

His dog licked
away the jam
and solved his jam
so he’s not licked.

Table 2.3. “In a Jam” Chart: Answers

Sentence	Homograph	Definition
He spilled the jam	jam	a fruity spread
“I’m in a jam!”	jam	a tough situation
all down his pants	pants	clothing
and now he pants,	pants	breathes heavy
He scraped with sticks	sticks	pieces of branches
but jam sticks	sticks	glues together
His dog licked	licked	used his tongue
so he’s not licked.	licked	to lose or be beaten

Similes and metaphors

Content books often use these to “clarify” new ideas:

Simile: *Spiral galaxies have arms that spiral outward, like pinwheels*

(compares two unlike things using “like” or “as”...galaxies and pinwheels)

Metaphor: *Cells are cities buzzing with activity*

(compares two unlike things with connectors...A is B...cells are cities)

Similes and metaphors

TABLE B.11. Similes with New Comparisons

The first thing	The usual worn-out comparison	A new comparison	Because
As cold as _____	ice	snow	
As blind as a _____	bat	stick	
As hard as a _____	rock	fist	
As white as a _____	ghost	chalk	
As smooth as _____	silk		
As sweet as _____	sugar		
As clean as a _____	whistle		
As strong as an _____	ox		
As nutty as a _____	fruitcake		

The first thing	The usual worn out comparison	A new comparison	Because
As cold as _____	ice	snow	Snow is cold
As blind as a _____	bat	stick	A stick can't see
As hard as _____	a rock	A fist	A fist is hard
As white as a _____	ghost	chalk	Oringani chalk is white
As smooth as _____	silk	sanded wood	Sanded wood is smooth
As sweet as _____	sugar	maple sryap	Scyup is sweet
As clean as a _____	whistle	soap	Soap is clean
As strong as an _____	ox	rock wall	Rock walls are strong
As nutty as a _____	fruitcake	peanut	Peanuts are nutty
As cool as a _____	cucumber	air unit	A.C units are cool

Fourth grader Braydon's "new comparisons."

Similes and metaphors

A New Comparison

TABLE B.16. Metaphors with New Comparisons

The first thing	The usual worn-out comparison	A new comparison	Because
You're a	chicken	cowardly lion	
Mom says my room is a	disaster	compost heap	
Daddy calls me his	angel	sweet thang	
Today, the clouds are	balls of cotton	cream puffs	
You are my	sunshine		
Life is a	roller coaster		
Her brain is a	computer		
My big brother is a	couch potato		
He is a walking	dictionary		

Idioms

Greek *idioma* meaning “peculiarity, peculiar phraseology.”

Two categories:

Decomposable are easier to figure out - *steal the show, play with fire, button your lip, miss the boat*


Nondecomposable are more difficult to discern - *elephant in the room, shoot the breeze, chew the fat*

The top left corner features overlapping light blue and dark blue diamond shapes. The top right corner features overlapping light pink and dark pink diamond shapes.

Idioms

Researchers found that children as young as five could easily understand decomposable idioms (e.g., *play with fire*), whereas students needed to be “6 or 7 years old to start to understand nondecomposable idioms” (e.g., *kick the bucket*) (Caillies & Le Sourn-Bissaoui, 2008, p. 709).

Drawing attention to idioms in context allows students to more accurately predict and understand their meanings, thus improving comprehension.

The bottom right corner features overlapping light blue and dark blue diamond shapes.



Aesop's Fables provide context to many idioms

Don't cry wolf – *From “The Boy Who Cried Wolf”*

Sour grapes – *From “The Fox and the Grapes”*

Don't count your chickens before they are hatched – *From “The Milkmaid and Her Pail”*

A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush – *From “The Hawk and the Nightingale”*

Slow and steady wins the race – *From “The Hare and the Tortoise”*



The top-left corner features overlapping blue and purple geometric shapes. The top-right corner features overlapping pink and purple geometric shapes.

Idioms

Writers are sensitized to the use of idioms.

Not only confusing, but they change over time.

E.B. White: use clear language, don't confuse readers.

In particular, idioms are difficult for ELL students. Many are culturally bound (*in the ballpark*).

The bottom-right corner features overlapping blue and purple geometric shapes.

Idioms

Student research of idioms


Name: _____

Idiom: Close but no cigar

Meaning: almost but not quite successful

Example of idiom in a sentence: She made a good attempt close but no cigar.

Story of the origin of this idiom: The phrase, and it's variant 'nice try, but no cigar' are of US origin and date from the mid-20th century. Fairground stalls gave out cigars as prizes, and this is the most likely source, although there's no definitive evidence to prove that.




Name: _____

Idiom: Sell like hot cakes

Meaning: A item is being sold quickly

Example of idiom in a sentence: The tickets for disney world sell like hot cakes.

Story of the origin of this idiom: The idiom 'sell like hot cakes' was made because when hot cakes were first sold they were sold very fast.




Name: _____

Idiom: Turn a Blind Eye

Meaning: Consciously ignore wrongdoing. Ignore something.

Example of idiom in a sentence: She turned a blind eye to the pain in her arm.

Story of the origin of this idiom: The phrase gained popularity after Vice Admiral Nelson used it in the Battle of Copenhagen. The Admiral had been blinded in his right eye. In the Battle of Copenhagen he was ordered to stop an attack, but ignored it, put the telescope to his blind eye. The Admiral continued to attack, thus turning a blind eye.





Shades of meaning

Taps into vocabulary knowledge when students are asked to consider shades of meaning:

Which do you feel: mad...angry...irate...furious?

Not all work...you can be *funny* or *hilarious*, but milk can only smell *funny*.

And...the thesaurus is not always our friend....





Shades of meaning

Joey on *Friends* wrote a letter of support shows the folly of “over-thesaurusizing”:

They're humid prepossessing homo sapiens with full-sized aortic pumps.

(They're warm, nice people with big hearts.)



Shades of meaning

A truck loaded with thousands of copies of Roget's Thesaurus spilled its load leaving New York. Witnesses were stunned, startled, aghast, stupefied, confused, shocked, rattled, paralyzed, dazed, bewildered, surprised, dumbfounded, flabbergasted, confounded, astonished, and numbed.





Shades of meaning

A witch was flying through a terrible storms. It was nighttime.
She wasn't afraid. She was laughing.



Shades of meaning

Not very exciting is it? What does it need? More description. More action. Better vocabulary! What kind of clouds? Is there any lightning? What does it look like when a witch flies through a nighttime storm? Is it noisy up there? What about thunder? How do we know the witch is having fun? Can we hear her laughing? Does the witch have a name?


With those questions in mind, let's try it again.





David's example of Shades of Meaning

Huge storm clouds filled the sky. When lightning flashed, you could see a witch flying among the clouds. You could hear her laughing above the sound of thunder. Far below, everything was quiet. But, up high, the storm was howling. It was a good night for Sally the witch to go flying. She felt reckless. She yelled happily as she flew.



David's Shades of Meaning

- replace “Huge storm clouds” with a *metaphor*: “Clouds were volcanoes”
- replace “filled” with a stronger *synonym*: “erupting”
- replace “flashed” with a stronger *synonym*: “crackled”
- give lightning a *metaphor*: “blue-white tongue”
- replace “witch flying” with more action words and a *simile*: “darting form swooped and glided like a bony black bird”
- replace “laughing” with stronger *synonym*: “cackling”
- provide details of how Sally is having fun: “Double loop. Slow roll. Graceful dive”
- replace “storm” with a surprising *metaphor*: “delicious brew”
- replace “howling” with a more related *synonym*: “brewing”
- use a *metaphor* for clouds: “mountains”
- give Sally a more appropriate witch name: “Xxxxlnitz”
- show how “reckless” Sally was with an *idiom*: “throwing caution to the wind”
- replace “yelled happily” with *synonyms*: “shrieked with joy”
- conclude with a witchy idiom: “happier than a toad in a mud puddle.”

David's Shades of Meaning

Clouds were volcanoes erupting in the night. A blue-white tongue of lightning crackled across the sky. Cackling merrily, a darting form swooped and glided like a bony, black bird. A double loop. A slow roll. A graceful dive. Shrill laughter rang out above rumbling thunder. Thirty thousand feet below, the world was sleeping. Up here, a delicious brew was boiling. A perfect night for a witch to play tag with lightning and slide down cloud mountains. XxxxIntz, or "Sally" as she was sometimes called, loved every thump and crash of it. Throwing caution to the wind, she shrieked with joy, happier than a toad in a mud puddle. (Adapted from Graham, 1976, p. 48.)



Shades of meaning


We challenged students to jazz up these sentences:

I rode the bus to school. It was Tuesday. We will have gym today. It might rain.



Shades of meaning

I rode the bus to school. It was Tuesday. We will have gym *Autumn*
today. It might rain. *and Cheyanne*

I rode the dreadful bus to school. It 
looks and feels like a prison. The bus is
as yellow as a lemon. It's Tuesday and
I don't want to go to school because we
have gym. My gym teacher is the Wicked Witch
of the West. Also, the school play is today. I have
the lead role and everyone says "break a leg!" I bet
they can see the future. My teacher said we can
have added recess but it might rain today. Either way,
I can go home and relax.

Fourth graders Autumn and Cheyanne revise a story.



Word origins

- ❖ often provide explanations of why words are spelled as they are
- ❖ stirs curiosity in students and makes words memorable (rather than uselessly memorized)
- ❖ is a word study technique that can cross the curriculum



Word origins

What is the relationship?

Album, albatross, albumin, albino

Word origins

What is the relationship - *albus* (*white*)

album (white pages)

albatross (white bird)

albumen (egg whites)

albino (white hair, feathers, scales)

Albus Dumbledore

(white beard...dumbledore archaic word of bumblebee)

[www.etymonline.com]

Word origins

Authors sometime think about the word (and name) origins:

E.B. White: *Charlotte's Web*

Arable (farmable) family

Charlotte (little woman)

Wilbur (wild boar)

[see <https://www.behindthename.com/>]

Word origin lessons

Materials

- word origin tree—our tree artwork was downloaded from Pixabay (<https://pixabay.com>), a website offering royalty- and permission-free photos and images

Project this example:

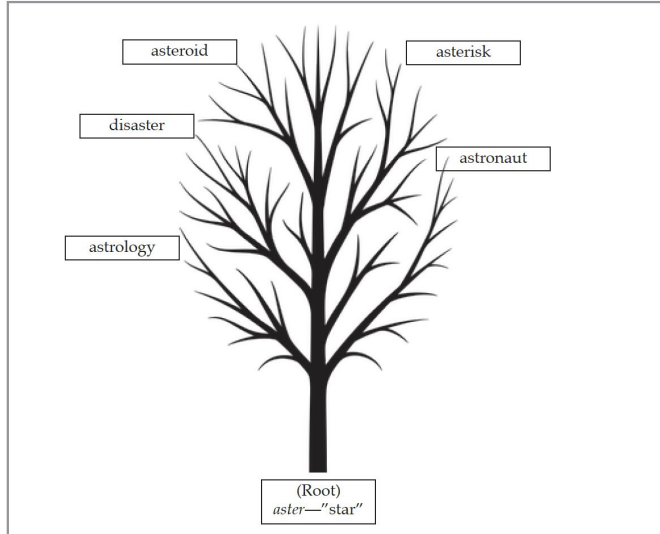


FIGURE B.2. Sample word origin tree (image source: <https://pixabay.com>).

- asteroid—*aster* (star) + *oid* (shape) = star shape
- disaster—*dis* (bad) + *aster* (star) = bad star (people thought they were under a “bad star” if they had a disaster)
- astrology—*aster* (star) + *ology* (study of) = study of the stars
- asterisk—*aster* (star; from Greek *asteriskos*) = little star
- astronaut—*aster* (star) + *naut* (sailor) = star sailor





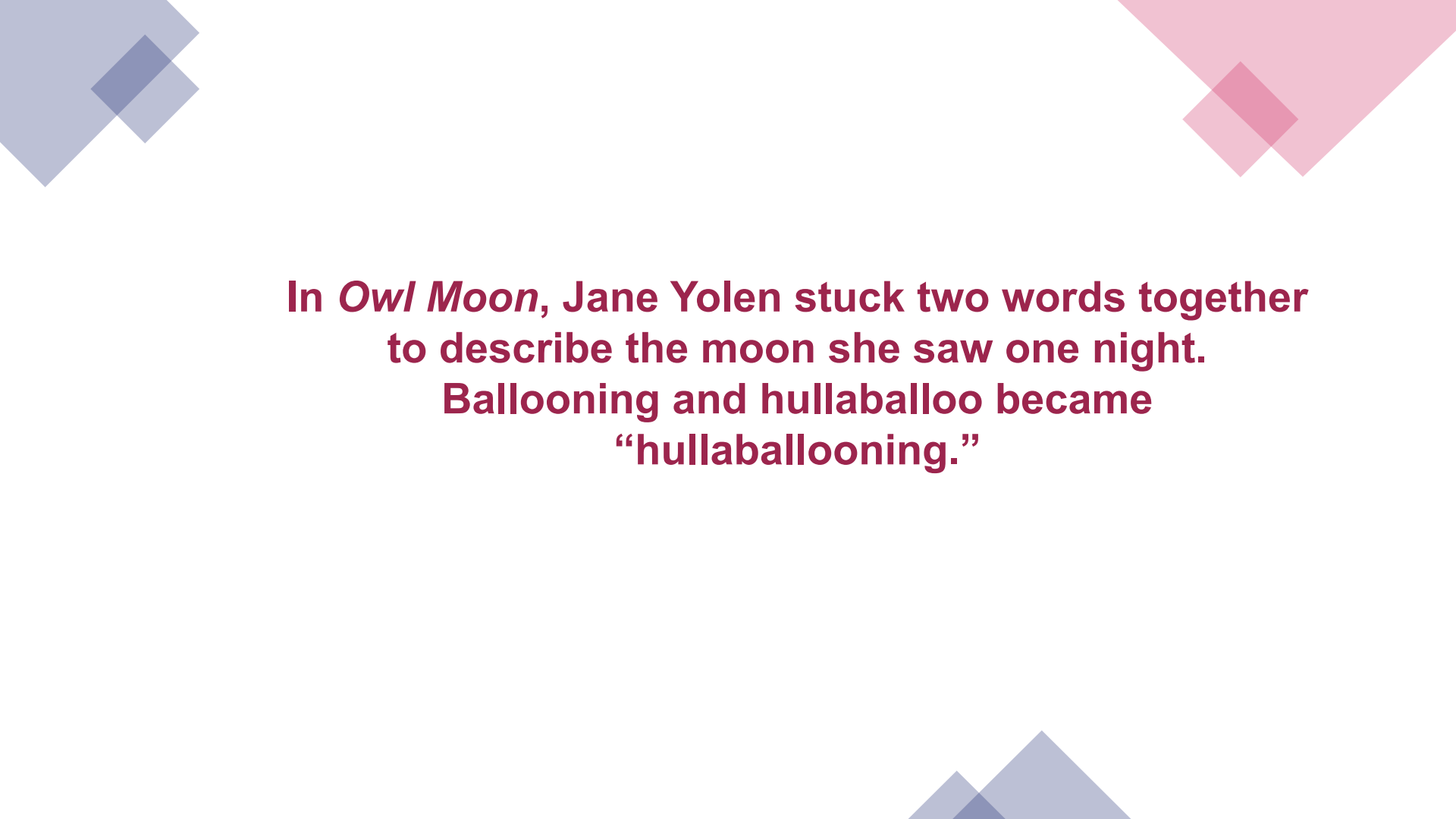
Nikki Grimes:

“The challenge is to tell our story painting mental pictures but using as few words as possible. Each word counts.”



**Obert Skye's parents didn't say
"How was school?" or "Our son broke his arm."**

**They said, "Did you solve any mysteries today?" and,
"His bones were just trying to be creative."**



In *Owl Moon*, Jane Yolen stuck two words together to describe the moon she saw one night. Ballooning and hullabaloo became “hullaballooning.”

Teachers we thank

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Q & A

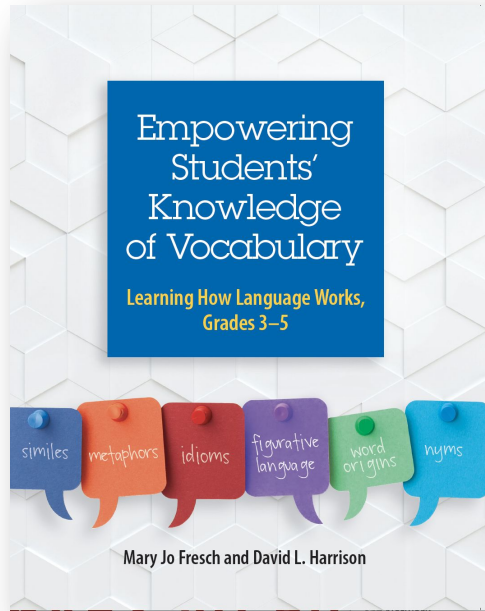
We wrote this book because, as David Crystal states:

“Vocabulary is a matter of word-building as well as word-using.”

To contact us:

Mary Jo Fresch fresch.1@osu.edu; <https://maryjofresch.com>

David L. Harrison davidlharrison1@att.net; <http://www.davidlharrison.com>;
[@DavidLHarrison1](https://twitter.com/DavidLHarrison1)



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