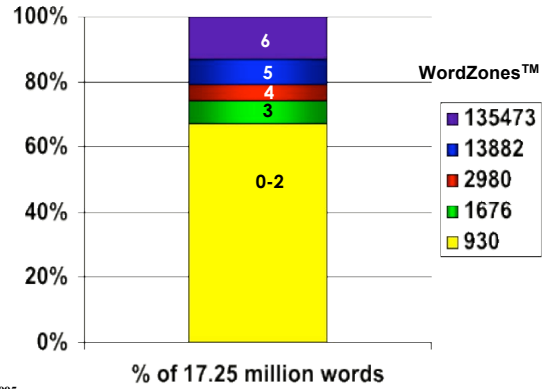


**Strategic Vocabulary Selection:
Choosing Words From Narrative &
Informational Texts**

1. How the words in informational & narrative texts are different
2. What these differences mean for instruction

1a. Words in American Schoolbooks



Zeno et al., 1995

1. What's different?

- a) Ratio of difficult to familiar The ratio of difficult to familiar vocabulary needed to be "high" (i.e., one substance word in three) before reliable effects on comprehension were evident (Freebody & Anderson, 1983)
- b) Rare words are repeated more frequently in informational than narrative texts

1. What's different?

c. Conceptual difficulty of words

Of numerous factors, only conceptual difficulty was significantly related to learning from context (with conceptually difficult words less likely to be known than words with known concepts) (Nagy, Anderson, & Herman, 1987)

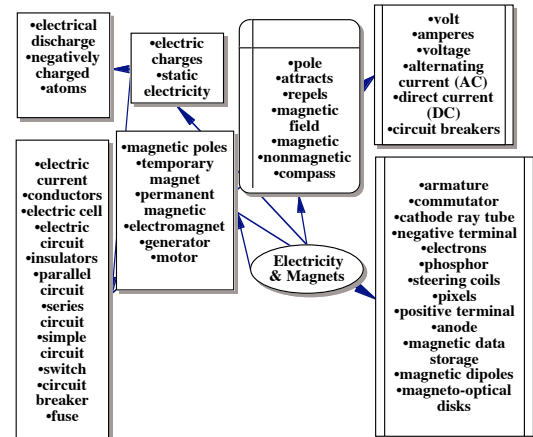
1. Known concepts with one-word synonym (e.g., *altercation*=fight)
2. Known concepts that can be expressed in a familiar phrase (e.g., *apologize*=to say you're sorry)
3. Unknown concept that can be learned from available experiences & information (e.g., *naive*)
4. Unknown concept that is based on new factual information or a related system of concepts (e.g., *divide* as "boundary between drainage basins" requires knowing about river systems)

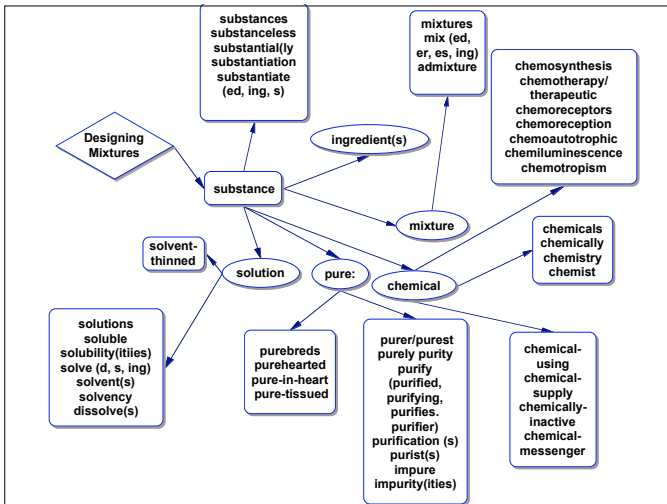
	Categories 1-3	Category 4
Narrative	100% (slithering, wincing, kindling, gestures)	
Science	64% (absorb, microscope)	36% (e.g.: fermentation, cytoplasm)

2. What these differences mean for instruction: *Informational text*

- a. The words in informational texts have been identified by content-area specialists. They represent critical concepts in the field.
- b. Many words have Romance-based morphology (e.g., *combine/combination*; but there are also many compound words and phrases in informational texts.

Grades 2, 4, & 6





Content-area instruction requires indepth experiences with concepts (www.seedsofscience.org)

Do it

Students test ingredients and mixtures to learn more about possible glue ingredients and to select those that are stickiest

Read it

Students read a book that models the design process

Talk it

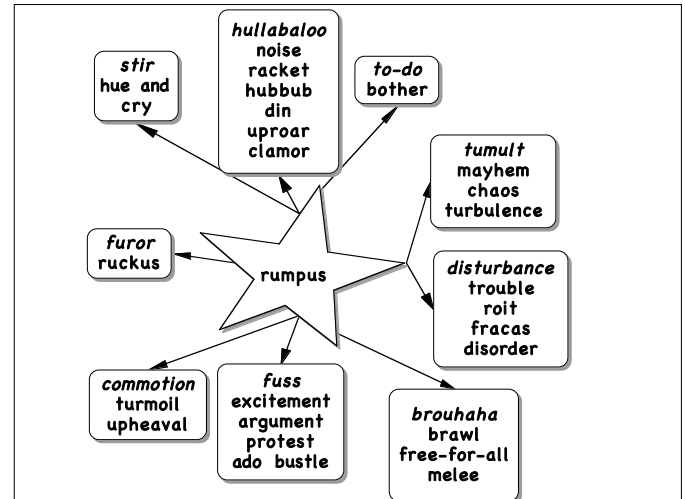
Students evaluate results and decide which ingredients to use to make glue

Write it

Students use their records from first and secondhand sources to decide what combination of ingredients best meets their design goals.

2. What these differences mean for instruction: Narrative text

- a. Unfamiliar words in narrative texts are often synonyms for known concepts. The concept may be repeated but with different synonyms (e.g., *tired, weary, exhausted, worn-out, fatigued, drowsy*)
- b. There are also numerous compound words in narrative texts that require attention (e.g., *icebreaker, high-pitched, waterproof*) and complex phrases (e.g., *open water, main channel, rock and roll, classical music*). In addition, narrative texts have many idioms (e.g., *old ones, near tears, long is the time, the time has come, going home, earliest time*).



Category Name
NAMES FOR PEOPLE & ANIMALS
PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES
FEELINGS & VALUES
BODY & HEALTH
MACHINES & TOOLS
EARTH & SUN
PLACES & DWELLINGS
PHYSICAL ACTIONS & MOTION
COGNITIVE/PERCEPTUAL ACTIONS
COMMUNICATION
ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

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