BRIDGING THE CHASM

An

Integrated Program

Of

Vocabulary Building,

Reading Fluency,

And

Writing Skills

FEATURING

PRE-READING PREDICTION GRAPHICS

UNITS 1-24

THIS ITEM IS INTENDED AS A PREVIEW OF THE BTC TEXBOOK!

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FOREWORD

The following article portrays the backdrop of circumstances that led to the writing of this text. Upon reviewing it, it is my fervent hope that the pedagogical premise upon which this text rests will become self evident and that this text will be judged practical and useable.

Bridging Achievement Deficiency Gaps in Below-Grade-Level Students

There is an acute and immediate need to bridge multiple gaps in the classroom. These are the gaps that exist between the achievement levels that ought to be evident in our students and the achievement levels that are evident. To their great displeasure, many teachers, in virtually all disciplines, are with increasing frequency encountering these gaps. Every teacher at every level must take special care so as not to become anesthetized with resignation to them, thus accepting them as some inevitable and integral aspect of a new and inferior status quo. This would indeed be alarming! Admittedly, the very magnitude of the problem itself causes the gaps to appear chasmal. This tends to aid and abet the onset of this resignation; for, the problem begins to appear insurmountable due to its very depth and scope.

Recently, three instructors at the post high school level spoke distressingly of this problem as existing in their classrooms. This should not be surprising. If the problem exists in the lower grades and continues without adequate remediation year after year, where else can it go but to the higher grades? If college freshmen are reading, writing, and demonstrating vocabulary acuity at the middle school level, at what level were they when they themselves were actually in middle school? And, why weren't the problems addressed then and there? Obviously, the problems were evident then and there, and attempts were made then and there to address them.

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However, the attempts fell somewhat short of the ideal mark. Perhaps there were systemic administrative concerns such as too many failures. Perhaps the scope of the problem again rendered conventional / traditional instructional methodologies ineffective. Whatever the case, many students passed to the next grades without learning, without mastering the requisites for legitimate promotion.

One could invest a great deal of time trying to figure out what happened to set this debilitating and implosive sequence in motion. And, someone definitely should. Searching for the initial cause ostensibly has much merit (if for no other reason than preventing similar sequences from being engendered); however, it would also seem to be equally meritorious and more urgent to invest time in trying to remedy the existing situation. It is to this end that the balance of this article is dedicated.

As a seventh and eighth grade teacher, year after year I found myself encountering students on increasingly lower achievement levels. After investing much time teaching the curriculum as it was written, it became evident that the students, though undoubtedly learning, were not learning enough to bridge the extensive gaps (chasms) that existed. Trying to address the needs of students on multiple achievement levels in a single class was a noble exercise, but a futile one. Another method had to be developed, one that would simultaneously meet the remediation needs and the growth requisites of an academically and culturally diverse population of students.

As the problem was examined, certain items became evident. Most stark among them was that the students had multiple problem areas. Their deficiencies were many and varied. Several of them were reading one full grade level below par; several were two full grade levels below; others were three and even four. When the students read aloud, some would read words

that weren't written. Some would skip words that were written. Others would mispronounce words so grossly that the author's intended message would be lost in inexplicable obscurity. Some had good writing skills; others had fair; others ranged from poor to very poor. Some of the students couldn't write a one-page paper. Some couldn't write a complete paragraph. Others couldn't write a complete sentence. They seemingly had no real grasp of mechanics, no grasp of typical sentence structure, and no notion of organization. In terms of vocabulary development, the major distinction was in their verbal skills. Some of the students had heard words that they couldn't read or write. Others had never heard most of the words on their grade level list of target vocabulary terms. Because these study areas are academically symbiotic, most students were deficient in some aspect of all of them. Of course, when the peculiar dynamics relative to inclusion and class size were factored in, it should be quite apparent what chore was being faced by a single teacher placed into such a classroom.

To address this increasingly common teaching situation effectively, new units of study had to be developed that would span the low and high ends of student achievement. The new units had to be basic in format, with the potential for advanced application. This is the *bridging* aspect of them. All students had to be able to work within the confines of their current development, after receiving a single set of instructions. Thus, the units had to contain teaching instruments (materials) that were adaptive from student to student, with all students manipulating the instruments at their own level.

The units had to address those with severe, moderate, and minimal reading difficulties as well as challenge those who required challenge. The reading opportunities had to be short *and* extended, basic *and* advanced. The reading items had to be repetitive. This repetition would eliminate unpredictability and fear, making the students less resistive. It also, on a more basic

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level, would provide contextualized practice. Literally reading the same passage has major therapeutic and remedial value. Repetitious reading fosters fluency; and, fluency is transferable from document to document! Repetitious reading is practice reading. Practicing the same piece of writing is an excellent method to create and fortify good reading habits. When the prospective readers can stop focusing on mechanic and phonetic decoding, they can more freely focus on deciphering the message, which is the ultimate aim of the reading process. One thing that all struggling readers appear to have in common is they don't practice their reading enough to bring about measurable improvement.

Also, the units had to present writing opportunities as basic as mechanics and punctuation practice with those as challenging as plot and theme continuations. The writing had to be imitative as well as creative (See Appendix B). The students had to have a recognized model for writing. The new units would use teacher modeling as a major means of demonstrative and intuitive transmission. In terms of being creative, the units would provide the students with the opportunity to express in writing their thoughts and judgments relative to a variety of interesting and important issues. As part of the creative writing aspect, group discussion would become a major means of student to teacher and student to student transaction and sharing.

The units, without exception, had to be *vocabulary-laden*. The vocabulary terms had to be presented in meaningful and apparently authentic situations, and they had to be presented repetitiously in varying contexts. Experience has informed that students must have several meaningful exposures to new terms before those terms become internalized and *owned*. Also, for maximum benefit, the students had to be engaged on a *hands-on* level, making personal application as often as possible.

All aspects of these units would necessarily be integrated one with the other, with each verifying and substantiating the others. Each unit must also follow the structured format of the others. Format repetition breeds familiarity and acts to remind and fortify, making it possible for the students to predict what is coming and follow a familiar and non-threatening path to discovery and learning.

Integration of activities is what provides the realistic context necessary for internalization of the target lessons. Virtually nothing in the real world is learned in isolation. Everything is linked to everything else. This seems to be the reason that lessons are learned in the real world so easily by these same students who haven't been learning academically oriented lessons in formal classrooms. When we don't link our lessons, transfer is made a virtual impossibility. And, without transfer, there are no original connectors on which to join new information and learning. When the students are able to fathom the obvious links between and among reading, writing, vocabulary, and thinking then the students will be well on their way to becoming independent learners -- just as they are in the real world.

This book contains some effective gap-bridging units. What makes them gap-bridging is not their physical composition alone; but rather, it is their tandem use and application. There are essentially three components to the units: a vocabulary list, complete with part of speech and denotations; a grammatically incorrect short story that features the same vocabulary words from the first component list; and a set of comprehension / discussion questions that focus back to the short story. Again, these components don't sound altogether unique in and of themselves; but, their utility and virtue is in their tandem use, effective application, and repetitious format. The effectiveness is in great part due to the *pseudo-authentic* settings that are manufactured as these component elements are applied.

The first component is the vocabulary list. This is the prescribed use to maximize its potential: First, the teacher should read the word list twice to the students, having them repeat read it from their copies, focusing on the words – not on the teacher. The teacher should then discuss the denotations, demonstrating and elaborating on the proper application of each term, giving examples and non-examples of proper sentence use. The teacher should then assign the students the task of writing their own meaningful, grammatically perfect sentences, using the new vocabulary words. They should also write shadow versions of the same sentences wherein they substitute the denotations for the actual vocabulary terms. The students should physically write their original sentences that contain the new vocabulary words on the board. This affords several opportunities to teach. The teacher and the class at large then evaluate the sentences for the proper use of the vocabulary words and any and all grammatical problems. These writing situations are also pseudo-authentic, thus prime times to teach grammar rules. Whatever problems are found will determine the components and the scope of the grammar lessons. Normally, there are about thirty words on each list; therefore, it may require as many as 4 to 5 hours to complete these activities from start to finish.

The second component is the grammatically incorrect, new vocabulary-laden, teacher-produced short story. The teacher should always provide copies of the story to the students before reading the story to them. The story must be read as though it were already correct. This gives the students excellent practice hearing how accomplished reading sounds and teaches them that there is a correlation between how material is written and how it ought to be read. This story also affords the students another meaningful exposure to their target list of vocabulary words, which they should highlight or underline as they are encountered. It gives them major opportunities to practice the targeted grammar points that the teacher has built in to the story.

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Also, the students should be instructed to write a shadow version of the short story, substituting the denotations for the actual vocabulary words. After the shadow versions of the short story are complete, the students will then have two versions of the same story – one semantically sophisticated and the other semantically simplistic. Now it's possible to do an *echo reading* of the stories. This is accomplished in several ways. A productive way is having two students do an alternating line by line oral reading. One student reads the first line of the original version. The second student then reads the first line of the shadow version. They alternate back and forth until both readings are complete. This activity greatly reinforces the correlation between vocabulary words and denotations. At this point, having the students volunteer to attempt an error-free reading of the original would be an excellent repeated reading exercise. Finally, it's time to correct the short story for grammar and mechanics. Depending on the teacher's preference, this can be done line by line, correction by correction. This affords one of the greatest grammar / mechanics teaching opportunities that will probably ever occur. For, this is one of those pseudo-authentic situations where the teacher actually gets to address specific and demonstrated student misconceptions. (Optionally, the grammar / mechanics corrections can take place before the echo readings) These short story activities usually take 4 to 5 hours to complete.

The third component is a list of comprehension / discussion questions. These questions are designed to cause the reader to focus on the message in the story, to evaluate various aspects of the story, and to make, to some extent, a personal connection with the story. Struggling readers don't usually read for meaning; they usually go through some kind of frustrating decoding process. After so much exposure to the story – hearing the teacher's professional reading of it, examining it for target vocabulary use, rewriting the story themselves and replacing the challenging vocabulary with denotations they know, hearing the story read in two different

versions (echo style), and participating in making it grammatically perfect, being able to read for meaning at this point is a very reasonable expectation. Real readers discuss what they read with others who have read the same thing. These students, at this point, with this story, are real readers.

Of course, what adds to the benefit of this program is the fact that the next unit follows the exact same format. Thus, the students get repetitive and predictable opportunities to methodically accelerate their basic skills growth. This process facilitates the bridging of the achievement deficiency gaps and draws the students measurably closer to an at-grade-level status.

Activities, Methods, & Procedures Vocab Lists (Days 1, 2, & 3)

The initial vocabulary activities are front-loading, schema-activating activities designed to enhance student achievement and facility in reading and writing through an increase in word power: {LA.A.1.3.2, LA.A.1.3.3, LA.B.1.3.1, LA.B.1.3.2, LA.B.1.3.3}

a. The instructor should introduce the words and denotations list by pronouncing the words and having the students repeat read them in antiphonal style, focusing on the words, not on the teacher. This is the students' initial attempt at owning the words. Unison response is the recommended method of student response.

b. After the pronouncing (reading) of the words has occurred, the instructor should discuss and illustrate the denotations which are given, using examples and non-examples of proper use. Clarify any ambiguities that the students might have.

c. Then, assign a sentence writing activity, having the students write a meaningful, grammatically perfect sentence, using each target vocabulary word from the list. Then write a shadow version of the same sentence, using the denotation of the word.

d. Next, evaluate and correct the student-produced sentences on the chalk board as a class activity, seizing the opportunity to introduce grammar and mechanics lessons into this pseudo-authentic writing situation. The grammar and mechanics lessons should be restricted to those items needed to correct the students' sentences.

e. Finally, have the students copy the corrected sentences for study purposes. As each student writes a sentence on the board, leave it there. Each student should be spot-quizzed on all terms on the board. (In a typical 55 minute class period, about ten to twelve sentences may be covered; thus, it may take two class periods to complete the board work).

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Short Stories (Days 4 & 5)

The next activity is an integrated reading, grammar, and vocabulary exercise. It requires integrated thought. This activity is designed to create a pseudo-authentic setting in which grammar may be taught in a realistic reading/writing environment. This activity affords the full integration of subject data. It was designed to teach a full range of grammatical concepts. It provides a model of writing for the students, creating an opportunity for intuitive learning through teacher demonstration and modeling. Also, the target vocabulary words, in some form, are contained in the story, offering the students another opportunity to see and hear the words in a different context. A number of the stories are open ended, providing the student with the opportunity to write a logical and meaningful conclusion. This conclusion writing exercise gives students an opportunity to demonstrate their comprehension of the plot sequence of the story and an opportunity to use the author's writing as a model for their own. Additionally, **Appendix A** contains enrichment vocabulary words that can be easily infused into any student's writing. Using any of these terms will instantly raise the academic level of the students' writing and manners of expression. {LA.B.1.3.1, LA.B.1.3.2, LA.C.1.3.1, LA.C.1.3.2, LA.C.1.3.3, LA.C.1.3.3}

a.   Using the graphics, predict the story's plot elements and theme.

b.   The teacher should ensure that each student has a copy of the short story.

Then, the teacher should model-read the story aloud to the students, as though it were already grammatically correct. This will aid the students in learning to hear the auditory cues inherent in all reading and writing activities.

c.   The students should be instructed to locate and underline their target vocabulary terms.

d.   The students should be instructed to make all grammatical corrections.

e. Students will write a shadow version of the story. They will substitute the denotations of the target vocabulary words for the actual words.

f. On certain of the stories, the students will write conclusions to the open ended and unresolved plots and climaxes.

g. The teacher will verify and correct the students' corrections, rewarding their approximations and again seizing the opportunity to teach whatever grammar/mechanics lessons are encountered.

h. Additionally, the students will perform an echo reading exercise, wherein one student will read the first sentence of the original story; a second student will read the first sentence of the shadow version. Then, the second sentence from each is read. This continues until both versions have been read completely. This activity demonstrates the unity of the messages and fortifies the relationship between the target terms and their denotations.

i. Finally, on selected stories the students will present their logical conclusions to the class, affording the class a listening and evaluative opportunity to compare and critique. The vocabulary terms presented in Appendix A should be used liberally in all independent writing assignments.

Comprehension / Discussion Questions (Day 5)

Following each story is a page of questions designed to focus the students' attention on the meaning of the story and the various implications that spring forth from the grasping of that meaning. Students should write their responses in complete sentences; then they should participate in student to teacher and student to student discussions of their responses.

Additional Vocabulary Exercises (Day 6)

See **Appendix A** for instructions and philosophy guiding the target exercises.

Repeated Reading Exercises (Day 7)

See **Appendix D** for instructions and philosophy guiding the target exercises.

Mimicry Writing Exercises (Day 8)

See **Appendix B** for instructions and philosophy guiding the target exercise.

Classic Short Story (See the list at the end of the unit.) Vocab Linked (Day 9)

Use the PRE-READING PREDICTION GRAPHIC to predict plots and themes before reading the classic short story (At times, the graphic may refer to the unit narrative which is included in this unit.)!

Testing (Day 10)

The preferred method of testing the vocabulary terms is a direct matching of terms with denotations. This testing exercise is actually a review; for, the students, at this point have already demonstrated facility in using the words in contextual settings. For vocabulary tests and answer keys, see page 195. A copy of the actual uncorrected story should be used as the testing instrument for grammar and punctuation (See Short Story Test section on page 99). The questions which accompany each story can serve as comprehension, discussion, and test questions. {LA.A.1.3.4, LA.A.2.3.5}

Flash Cards -- optional

To reinforce the vocabulary terms, flash cards can be easily created and used. By simply cutting a common manila folder into two-inch strips (cards), writing the vocabulary word on one side and the denotation on the other, practical flash cards can be economically produced. These flash cards provide excellent practice in automaticity for the students. Flash cards are not very productive as vocabulary teaching tools, but are acutely productive as audiovisual aids in fostering the instant recognition and ingraining of words already introduced, studied, and taught.

Additionally, this flash card activity is an excellent student-directed activity. After the teacher has modeled the appropriate routine, students can take over and direct this activity for their peers. It aids in the literal involvement of the students as a whole in their own learning. Plus, it's fun for the students.

Modified Round Robin-- Optional

Assign each student a paragraph of the short story to silently practice-read (utilize both original and shadow versions, alternately or sequentially). In a four-paragraph story, a class of twenty-four students can read both versions of the entire story through three times. All readers will only read aloud what they've practiced silently. This exercise fosters fluency in all readers, especially those struggling. Obviously, as each paragraph is read aloud, all students are to read along, silently. Before the Modified Round Robin activity begins, the teacher should remind the students of the manner in which the teacher read the story, focusing on the idea of phrase reading or chunking, the idea of naturally pausing at any idea shift in a sentence, voice inflection (especially when reading quoted passages), and definitely stopping at periods when ideas are complete. Remind students to paint the pictures in their own minds from the words that are given, essentially making a movie. Remind them to search for meaning in phrases, not only in individual words.

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Little Fox

UNIT -1

~ SAMPLE ~

VOCABULARY-LINKED

WITH DRIVING HAWK SNEVE'S

THE MEDICINE BAG

THIS ITEM IS INTENDED AS A PREVIEW OF THE BTC TEXBOOK!

Name _____ Period _____ Date _____

Target Vocabulary List One

Use each word in a meaningful, grammatically perfect sentence. Use each denotation in a shadow version of that same sentence. Use *Appendix A* sentences as models or patterns.

e.g. mandatory (adj) ....required

e.g. In the finer restaurants in town, wearing collared shirts and jackets is ***mandatory***.
e.g. In the finer restaurants in town, wearing collared shirts and jackets is ***required***.

1. authentic   (adj)   ………   real or genuine

2. moccasins   (n)   ………   shoes (made of animal skin)

3. stately   (adj)   ………   dignified; grand; handsome

4. commotion   (n)   ………   loud noise or confusion

5. procession   (n)   ………   a group (moving together)

6. muttered   (v)   ………   mumbled (talked in an unclear manner)

7. stooped   (v)   ………   bent forward; crouched

8. fatigued   (adj)   ………   tired and exhausted

9. reluctantly   (adv)   ………   unwillingly; unenthusiastically

10. frail   (adj)   ………   thin and weak

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PRE-READING PREDICTIONS!

USE GRAPHIC TO

PREDICT PLOTS AND THEMES!

Joe Iron Shell   **WAKANTANKA**   *The Vision Quest*

Unique 10-Day ELA UNIT

That Thing!   *My Medicine Bag!*

VOCABULARY-LINKED

with

DRIVING HAWK SNEVE'S

The Medicine Bag

Click Here ▲   **ELA UNIT – 1**   *Click Here* ▲

WHAT DETAILS OF PLOT AND THEME CAN YOU PREDICT
ABOUT *THE MEDICINE BAG*?

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Name _____ Period _____ Date _____

Short Story One: Little Fox

Listen carefully as your teacher reads this story to you. Then, locate and underline your target vocabulary words. Grammatically correct the story. Count the corrections made on each story line. Write that number on the solid line adjacent to the story line. Write a shadow version of the story, substituting the denotations for the actual vocabulary terms. Write a logical, two-page conclusion to this story. Be careful to maintain high-level vocabulary and proper sentence structure.

    jeremy a diminutive eighth grader was fascinated by the authentic deer skin moccasins that   ____

little fox was wearing. hed never seen shoes like these before. in fact when little fox walked into   ____

the classroom all stately and proud their was a lot of commotion by the other students to especially   ____

the girls. when the teacher mrs adams asked little fox to introduce himself to the class the students   ____

were struck with awe; for little fox was a descendant of navajo chiefs.   ____

  later that afternoon when they went to lunch a procession of blissful and fascinated students   ____

surrounded him. they were jostling and muttering about whod get to sit the closet to little fox in   ____

the cafeteria. going down the stairs one little girl pretended to lose her balance and stumble so that   ____

little fox would catch her. she had plans of sneaking a secret embrace. however, when the accidental ____

stumble came little fox wasnt watching and she fell down the last seven steps and banged her head   ____

on the floor. everyone jumped and laughed

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Name _____ Period _____ Date _____

Comprehension / Discussion Questions from

Little Fox

Answer fully the following questions on the lines provided. Substantiate all of your answers with logical reasoning. When appropriate, cite details from the story to support your answers.

1. Why were the other children surprised when Little Fox first spoke?

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

2. Do you think Little Fox should ever change his name to something more *American-sounding*? Why or why not?

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Name _____ Period _____ Date _____

Test for Short Story One: Little Fox

Correct the story. Write the number of corrections on the adjacent line.

jeremy a diminutive eighth grader was fascinated by the authentic deer skin moccasins that _____

little fox was wearing. hed never seen shoes like these before. in fact when little fox walked into _____

the classroom all stately and proud their was a lot of commotion by the other students to especially _____

the girls. when the teacher mrs adams asked little fox to introduce himself to the class the students _____

were struck with awe; for little fox was a descendant of navajo chiefs. _____

later that afternoon when they went to lunch a procession of blissful and fascinated students _____

surrounded him. they were jostling and muttering about whod get to sit the closet to little fox in _____

the cafeteria. going down the stairs one little girl pretended to lose her balance and stumble so that _____

little fox would catch her. she had plans of sneaking a secret embrace. however, when the accidental _____

stumble came little fox wasnt watching and she fell down the last seven steps and banged her head _____

on the floor. everyone jumped and laughed

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Test Short Story One: Little Fox (Key)

Corrections are in boldface:

Jeremy**,** a diminutive eighth grader**,** was fascinated by the authentic deer**-**skin moccasins that **L**ittle **F**ox was wearing. **H**e**'**d never seen shoes like these before. **I**n fact**,** when **L**ittle **F**ox walked into the classroom**,** all stately and proud**,** the**re** was a lot of commotion by the other students **too,** especially the girls. **W**hen the teacher**, M**rs**. A**dams**,** asked **L**ittle **F**ox to introduce himself to the class**,** the students were struck with awe; for**, L**ittle **F**ox was a descendant of **N**avajo chiefs.

Later that afternoon**,** when they went to lunch**,** a procession of blissful and fascinated students surrounded him. **T**hey were jostling and muttering about who**'**d get to sit the closest to **L**ittle **F**ox in the cafeteria. **G**oing down the stairs**,** one little girl pretended to lose her balance and stumble so that **L**ittle **F**ox would catch her. **S**he had plans of sneaking a secret embrace. **H**owever, when the *accidental* stumble came**, L**ittle **F**ox wasn**'**t watching**,** and she fell down the last seven steps and banged her head on the floor. **E**veryone jumped and laughed

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Sample Key

for

Short Story

Shadow

Version

(Below is a version of what the students should have written.)

Shadow Version Little Fox Key

Jeremy, a very small eighth grader, was fascinated by the real deer-skin shoes that Little Fox was wearing. He'd never seen shoes like these before. In fact, when Little Fox walked to the classroom, all handsome and proud, there was a lot of noise by the other students too, especially the girls. When the teacher, Mrs. Adams, asked Little Fox to introduce himself to the class, the students were struck with an attitude of respect; for, Little Fox was a descendant of Navajo chiefs.

Later that afternoon, when they went to lunch, a group of happy and fascinated students surrounded him.They were jostling and mumbling about who'd get to sit the closest to Little Fox in the cafeteria. Going down the stairs, one little girl pretended to lose her balance and stumble so that Little Fox would catch her. She had plans of sneaking a secret hug. However, when the *accidental* stumble came, Little Fox wasn't watching, and she fell down the last seven steps and banged her head on the floor. Everyone jumped and laughed

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Vocabulary

Test

&

Key

Short Story -1

Name _____ Period _____ Date _____

Test for Vocabulary List One

Match the following terms and denotations by writing the matching letter on the line.

1.	Authentic	_____	a.	Thin and weak
2.	Moccasins	_____	b.	A hug
3.	Stately	_____	c.	Cold chills
4.	Commotion	_____	d.	Real or genuine
5.	Procession	_____	e.	Very happy
6.	Muttered	_____	f.	A group moving together
7.	Stooped	_____	g.	Holy or blessed
8.	Fatigued	_____	h.	Shoes
9.	Reluctantly	_____	i.	Very sad
10.	Frail	_____	j.	Confirmed; made stronger

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Test for Vocabulary List One Answer (Key)

Match the following terms and denotations by writing the matching letter on the line.

1.	Authentic	d	a.	Thin and weak
2.	Moccasins	h	b.	A hug
3.	Stately	n	c.	Cold chills
4.	Commotion	u	d.	Real or genuine
5.	Procession	f	e.	Very happy
6.	Muttered	bb	f.	A group moving together
7.	Stooped	m	g.	Holy or blessed
8.	Fatigued	y	h.	Shoes
9.	Reluctantly	dd	i.	Very sad
10.	Frail	a	j.	Confirmed; made stronger

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APPENDIX

"A"

Using Enrichment Vocabulary

One of the most significant hindrances impeding low achieving students attempting to read, write, or think is a severe lack in their word power. Consider these questions: What do students read? What do students write? What form do students' ideas take? The answer to all three is this: **WORDS**. An increase in word power is fundamental and foundational to the acquisition of any desired increase in reading, writing, or thinking proficiency.

The following lists of words comprise a *bank of illustrated synonyms* which represents not an exhaustive list but a thorough sampling of the kinds of words that can be readily used by upper elementary through high school students. These words are easily used because they can be defined by common words, words the students already know and already use. Sample sentences are provided, and have three major utilities: (1) they restrict and illustrate the *connotations* of the given terms. This allows the students to *plug them in* with a higher degree of accuracy with their initial attempts at using them. (2) These sentences also serve as graphic paradigms, sentences that are designed to be *mimicked* as writing exercises, where focus is on the phraseology and the punctuation patterns (See Appendix B). (3) These sentences are appropriate for *repeated reading* exercises, where focus is on the stated or the implied messages as well as the phraseology and punctuation patterns (See Appendix D).

An excellent investment in time would be the following: Take as many classes as necessary (probably no more than two to three hour-long classes) to explain and illustrate the subtleties conveyed in each term. For example, one of the synonyms for the word *terrific* is the word *divine*. Of course, the word ambrosia, mythologically speaking, referred to the *food of the gods*. Thus, illustrating the word divine in a sentence that speaks of ambrosia and *recipes* would seem to be very apropos. Pointing out these kinds of features in the sample sentences will jump start the ability of the students to begin to *own* these words. These sentences are designed to facilitate and encourage student ownership of the words by illustrating the meanings in as simple and as direct a fashion as possible, while simultaneously demonstrating typical phrasing and punctuation patterns that occur in American writing.

The suggested method for teaching these terms as vocabulary words is to demonstrate to the student the connotative meanings of the target terms. Of course, the denotative terms heading each list and defining each section of words are established; and each bold faced term

that leads each sample sentence has been defined by the denotative term. However, it's the sentence itself that demonstrates the particular restrictions and connotations of each term; thus, it's the sentences that truly define the terms by illustrating their ideal use. Consequently, when starting vocabulary lessons, the following instructions would be typical:

(1). Students, notice that each bold face word means the same thing as the word at the top of the section.

(2). Even though every word means the same as the top word, every word has its own special use.

(3). Every word has a special use because every word suggests something that the other words don't. This is called the word's **connotation**. The *denotation* is what the word *means*; the *connotation* is what the word *suggests*.

e.g. The word *smell* has several synonyms that properly define it: odor, fragrance, aroma, and stench. Even though a smell can be an odor, it can also be a fragrance or an aroma or a stench. Though these words are *defined* essentially the same way, they *suggest* something very different. An odor suggests something that's probably unpleasant; a fragrance suggests something that's probably pleasant and perfume-like; an aroma suggests something that's pleasant and probably good to eat; a stench suggests something that's foul and intensely unpleasant. Sweaty socks have an odor; Red roses have a fragrance; Baking pizzas have an aroma; However, road kill has a stench! Do you see how important connotations are and how they work?

(4). Now, students, though we know what each italicized word *means*, let's read each sentence and discover what each italicized word is *suggesting* about its proper use.

ENRICHMENT

VOCABULARY

FOR

COMMON

WRITING

ASSIGNMENTS

Terrific vocabulary words

1. **Superb**: The chocolate cake was *superb*; we all had seconds.
2. **Magnificent**: You did a *magnificent* job cleaning; everything was spotless.
3. **Marvelous**: Sharon, you have a *marvelous* singing voice; you should make records.
4. **Wonderful**: "We had a *wonderful* time at Disney; I can't wait until next year!" he cried.
5. **Tremendous**: He put forth *tremendous* effort; I've never seen anyone work harder.
6. **Glorious**: "This was a *glorious* day," said Dr. Salk; "all our patients are walking again."
7. **Divine**: Martha, the ambrosia was simply *divine*; I must have your recipe.
8. **Sensational**: Coach, that game was *sensational*; I'm still tingling all over.
9. **Great**: "You did a *great* job, Wilhelm; I'm really proud of you," Maestro Bach said.
10. **Fantastic**: What a *fantastic* performance, Elizabeth; the audience is still cheering!

Terrible vocabulary words

1. **Dreadful**: Dean's performance was so *dreadful,* the audience booed him for hours.
2. **Horrible**: "The accident was *horrible*; no one survived!" the teary-eyed student wailed.
3. **Deplorable**: Kenny has *deplorable* table manners; he wipes his mouth with his sleeve.
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Teaching Writing Skills Through Mimicry

Understanding the utility of this approach hinges on an ability to grasp this concept: *The Language of Writing*. Writing ostensibly has its own language, and this language evidently exists on two adjoining though distinct and separate planes. These planes are complementary, both being essential and integral components of this language. The *overt plane* of this language (which is the obvious one) is comprised of concrete grammar rules and tangible regulations that govern its mechanical uses. The *subliminal plane* (which is the unsuspected one) is comprised of subtle understandings, senses, and impressions of those same rules and uses. Because these understandings, senses, and impressions are primarily subliminal, they are indirectly and incidentally imparted as byproducts of constant, meaningful exposure to typical American writing.

Importantly, these understandings, senses, and impressions act as *primers* and *catalysts*, aiding and abetting the comprehension of the rules that govern the overt plane. Because some students have constantly been exposed to the application of the rules (though not necessarily the legalistic rules themselves), these students invariably develop a deeper understanding at an early age of the subliminal plane of this language. Thus, the apprehension of the concrete plane during formal schooling becomes infinitely easier for them.

There are routine phraseologies which tend to typify our methods of expression. The punctuation patterns necessary to convey these expressions also tend to become routine and typical as well. If one is not aware of these phraseologies and punctuation patterns, one would be hard pressed indeed to write with clarity and ease according to the normal standards which govern American writing.

This language of writing is first and best learned on an intuitive level as the verbal expression of this language is being mastered. Our mainstream children are exposed to it somewhat fortuitously during early childhood by way of bedtime stories; these are the children who tend to know it best. They have a *sense* for the language. However, those children of ours who are not a part of the mainstream / middle class culture, those whose parents don't read Snow White and Cinderella to them are not adequately exposed to the phraseologies which typify and comprise this language of writing. These are the children who struggle most with their writing efforts.

Consider the following phrases: A long, long time ago…there lived a great and mighty king…once upon a time…in a distant and far away land. For the children who were taught the language of writing from their infancy, ordering these phrases would be a relatively easy task. After just a short time they'd figure out that they should be ordered thusly: Once upon a time, long, long ago, in a distant and far away land, there lived a great and mighty king. Though there are alternate arrangements which would be grammatically acceptable, there is only one that *sounds right*. For the children who were not repetitiously read to in their early childhood, who weren't impressed with the subliminal component of this language of writing, this arrangement doesn't sound any better or any more *right* than one of the alternate arrangements might.

When children are read to during their pre-literate childhood, they have conveyed to them on an intuitive and impressionable level this language of writing. These children aren't necessarily cognizant of this impartation as it happens. They are enraptured by the plot and fascinating characters in the stories. Nonetheless, through repetitious, constant exposure to the patterns inherent in most early childhood literature, the lessons are indelibly impressed (taught). These children will forever know what *sounds right* and what *makes sense*.

So, what of those children who were not so taught, not so impressed? Is it too late to teach them? The answer to the latter is no; it's never too late! Though most of them won't actually sit still for bedtime stories anymore, there is still a way to impress this language in their minds. The method is deceptively simple. It is the same approach used by the parents. Consider carefully what the parents did. They read the stories repetitiously, the way the stories were written, adding a bit of emotional flavor, periodically. This process imparted the understanding of the subliminal plane of this language to these children. This impartation can yet be accomplished now in older children through ***mimicry writing***.

Mimicry writing is essentially what the name suggests. It is mimicking writing – writing that is designed to demonstrate itself, modeling the typical flow and patterns of expression, writing that illustrates the combining of related ideas and the concise expression of single thoughts.

Students have experienced excellent success in developing writing skills by mimicking the writing of others. The sentences in Appendix A cannot only be used to illustrate the connotations of the target synonyms which are located there, but also can be used as sample sentences to mimic. Those sentences can and do function as *graphic paradigms* (patterned

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examples designed to be imitated). If students (1.) **listen** to the reading of these sentences; (2.) **reread** the sentences themselves; (3.) **copy** the sentences as they are; and (4.) are instructed to **write** shadow versions, substituting the target denotation for the italicized words, the same impressions that were made through the repetitious reading of the fairytales can be made through the repetitious writing of these (or similar) sentences. These exercises in tandem become multilayered reading, writing, and vocabulary exercises.

Traditional thinking touts the five-step writing sequence (prewriting through publication) as the primary means to teach writing. The problem with this traditional approach is that it assumes that the writers already know how to write. It assumes that they have a mainstream background. What if they don't? What if the students are emigrants from another place, another culture – a place where Little Red Riding Hood never ventured? What if they don't know what sounds right? What if they aren't even sure what a complete sentence is? What if double negatives sound perfectly normal to them? It seems an obvious conclusion that these would-be writers in order to develop facility as proficient writers must first be *impressed* with the knowledge of the language of writing as it exists on the subliminal plane. These impressions are nothing less than foundational to any hope of building writing facility in any student at any age.

The adage, *A picture is worth a thousand words*, is borne out rather starkly. The sole reason that this adage is revered as a truism is that the picture has been observed time and again by scrutinizing eyes taking the place of the thousand words. This fact has become axiomatic. Hence, the necessary lesson is conveyed through observation, not necessarily through overt traditional instruction. Thus, the picture becomes an illustrative model or paradigm of what the student needs to know. The lesson, in effect, becomes *tacitly* and *intuitively* imparted through directed repetition.

The instructor should surely explain to the student what the process involves. This will not hinder it from working; it will actually facilitate and foster it. Just as the teacher would explain the theory of echo reading to the echo readers, this is simply a form of echo writing which should also be explained. Echo readers are told by their teachers, "I want you to read the way I do. Read after me." Mimicry writers are told by their teachers, "I want you to write the way I write. Write after me."

Allow the illustrative sentences in Appendix A to serve as intuitive models and graphic paradigms for your struggling writers. You will be astounded at the understanding that will be

imparted by these *word pictures*. These sentences will aid the underdeveloped literates in learning how to think in the language of writing. Once they start to think in that language and develop a sense for the language, writing in that language will be a matter of natural expression for them, just as it is for those who were earlier impressed.

A typical Day 8 instruction for mimicry sentence writing is as follows:

1. **Read** the first sentence in each group, focusing on the phrasing and punctuation patterns.
2. **Copy** the first sentence in each group, focusing on the phrasing and punctuation patterns.
3. Write a **shadow version** of the first sentence in each group, substituting the target denotation for the italicized word.

An excellent progress check methodology is to dictate selected sentences to the students and have them write them with grammatical perfection. Allow volunteers to go to the chalk board and write their sentences up. The class will serve as *perfection assessors*, verifying or offering correction as the individual student sentences allow (This is the **Day 9** suggested activity.).

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Repeated Reading Exercises

Reading is a dynamic, multidimensional communicative process. Like all communicative processes, it involves sending and receiving thoughts. These thoughts are encoded on the sending end and consequently must be decoded accurately on the receiving end, else miscommunication occurs. The assembly (encoding) / decoding process begins at the most basic level of communication, and progresses predictably to its highest level. Therefore, one concludes that reading requires basic grapho-phonemic assembly and decoding; grapheme-to-word; word-to-phrase; and phrase-to-sentence. Assuming the reader is actually reading more than a single sentence, of course, the process goes on to include sentence-to-paragraph; paragraph-to-document; and, ultimately the process extends to the end of all related literature.

The above paragraph expresses a facet of the technical aspect of reading. As any fluent reader can attest, however, *meaningful reading is reading for meaning*. Because meaning itself is an intangible, there is an element involved in the reading process that is necessarily intangible also; that is, it functions on an internal, entirely unobservable plane. This plane is centered in the mind of the reader. Thus, its existence can be determined only by examining the concrete impact of its operations. Because of the unavailability, indeed inaccessibility, of this element, when reading problems manifest themselves, typically there are limited opportunities to quickly and accurately diagnose their causes. Thus, one is left with a cabinet of potions and elixirs, all of which *might* remediate but might not.

Admittedly, repeated reading is one such elixir. It's hailed an elixir not because its worth is in doubt, but because its actual remedying mechanisms are a matter of speculation and conjecture. Despite this, however, repeated reading tends to address a multitude of reading concerns: from grapho-phonemic to message grasping. Of the numerous techniques employed to remedy reading deficiency, in my experience repeated reading is the one that has been most productive. Perhaps it's because perfect practice makes perfect, or constant repetition breeds familiarity. It is difficult to say with certainty. Nonetheless, it seems that one of the byproducts of using repeated reading exercises is the creation of memories or *impressions* on the psyche. It's primarily this byproduct of the process that prompts its recommendation.

Guarding against appearing too metaphysical, these impressions appear to be something akin to engravings or imprints of distinct memories. Though the exact substance of the memory may have eroded due to the passing of time or the accumulation of excessive and unrelated experience, the residue of what remains is very much functional. Its chief function is to serve as an initial *groove*. When an identical action sequence occurs, it finds the same groove on the psyche each time, deepening it, ultimately causing it to become a channel. For instance, when ten different names are spoken, ten different groves are formed. However, when the same name is spoken ten different times, one groove is formed, then impressed nine additional times; thus, a *channel* is formed.

These channels or deep, indelible impressions serve as direction finders and meaning guides, similar to the channels on a mountain side that restrict the direction water is allowed to flow. To continue the metaphor, the deeper the channel, the greater its pull on the flowing water. Shallow channels are places where little water has flowed in the past; deeper channels, however, are places where most water usually flows. When a reader reads material similar in thrust and context to material previously read, these channels of contextualized meaning will guide it accordingly, not allowing it to mean anything entirely different from what similar information has meant previously. Thus, the possible meanings of the similar information become restricted. Consequently, apprehension is more immediate and clarity more certain.

If we can recall and relate the philosophy expressed in **Appendix B**, it becomes rather clear that reading, like writing, requires critical foundations to be laid. Repeated reading is a means of laying down these necessary foundations. In as much as reading proficiency is closely linked to writing proficiency, logic would dictate that similar, if not identical, conclusions are reached regarding them both.

Because of the design of the sentences in **Appendix A**, they serve as viable repeated reading sentences. Consider these three major reasons: First, these sentences were written to demonstrate the punctuation patterns that signal and aid in identifying the phrases and the messages they contain. In order to understand the value and function of the impressions that punctuation marks make on the psyche, one must understand that punctuation patterns are as meaningful as phrasing patterns. Without understanding the value of punctuation, few would-be readers are liable to give punctuation its necessary due. For instance, what are these sentences saying? (1) Dr. Bernard is leaving. (2) Dr., Bernard is leaving. (3) Dr. Bernard is leaving? (4) Dr.

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Bernard is leaving! (5) Dr., Bernard is leaving! Without proper punctuation, there's only a 20% chance that the thought sent will equal the thought received. Remember, punctuation marks aren't just encoding guides for writers; they are also decoding guides for readers. Thus, having the struggling reader to actually repeat read the sentences as they are written, focusing on the punctuation as well as the words and phrases, will take the reader one step closer to reading fluency.

Second, these sentences were designed to demonstrate typical phraseologies that exist in American writing. Thus, the repeated reading of these typical sentences will impress the reader with the typical channels that American phrases tend to follow both in form and meaning. If the practicing readers are impressed with these phrases, they will without doubt encounter similar phrases with similar meanings as they read typical American writing and will consequently find them less cumbersome to grasp.

Third, the majority of the sentences in **Appendix A** demonstrate specific contexts from which the messages of the sentences spring. The only variable that can cause a phrase to convey a variety of meanings, other than its punctuation, is the context in which it is formed. Thus, having a clear and recognizable context helps to create not just an impression or channel, but a definitive one, one in which the meaning is certain and fixed. Because meaning cannot exist outside an understood context, being impressed with contextually clear impressions becomes an aid to the easy addition of similar information.

Finally, a word on fluency is appropriate. Fluency is, by definition, *a smooth flowing*. Directed repeated reading, through sheer repetition, creates that smooth flow, not only in recognition and pronunciation of words, but also in apprehension of meaning. The most remarkable aspect of this fluency is the fact that it's transferable. For instance, when a student becomes fluent reading the **Appendix A** sentences, that fluency will be transferred to other sentences which the student has never read! Remembering the typicality of the sentences, the typicality of their messages, the definitiveness of their contexts, these sentences serve well as the raw reading material that repeated reading exercises require, maximizing their benefit.

Procedure / Methodology

Repeated reading exercises can take many forms. The most basic of which is for the teacher or model reader to read a sentence aloud, instructing the student or struggling reader to *read* (not just listen to) the same sentence silently *as* it's being read aloud, focusing on the punctuation and phrasing patterns. After the model reader has read the sentence one or more times, the struggling reader should repeat read the sentence orally, being careful to mimic the voice inflections of the model reader. For students who struggle severely, this needs to be the first method employed!

Additionally, the model reader needs to include a discussion of the meaning of each sentence, even paraphrasing with the struggling reader, noting how the meaning of the sentence is derived not just from the individual words but more so from the phrases and combination of phrases.

After the student has started to form impressions (grooves and channels) of their own, they can be allowed to practice read similar sentences, repeat reading each of them until they sound like their model. Ensure that the struggling readers understand that the message or meaning of the sentence is what they are searching for, not just the pronouncing of the words. Each sentence in **Appendix A** contains a stated or strongly implied situation or context. Have the student explain to the model reader what that context or situation is. When the struggling readers begin to understand that they are to *always* read for meaning, and search for situations and context, much of their struggle will begin to be alleviated. They will be well on their way to reading fluency.

Vocabulary Correlation List for
Bridging the Chasm Units and Classic Short Stories

1. *Little Fox* by Ray Gosa .... *The Medicine Bag* by Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve

2. *Terrible Tommy* by Ray Gosa .... *Charles* by Shirley Jackson

3. *The Speech of Dynamos* by Ray Gosa .... *The Devil and Daniel Webster* by Stephen Benet

4. *The Boxcar Man* by Ray Gosa .... *The Landlady* by Roald Dahl

5. *The Captain's Warning* by Ray Gosa .... *Broken Chain* by Gary Soto

6. *The Karate Kid* by Ray Gosa .... *Raymond's Run* by Toni Bambara

7. *Snowflakes* by Ray Gosa .... *The Dogs Could Teach Me* by Gary Paulsen

8. *The Woodshed* by Ray Gosa .... *The Smallest Dragonboy* by Anne McCaffrey

9. *Captured* by Ray Gosa .... Go On or Die by Ann Petry

10. *Lester – The Dreaming Hero* by Ray Gosa .... *Too Soon a Woman* by Dorothy Johnson

11. *Injustice* by Ray Gosa .... *Camp Harmony* by Monica Stone

12. *Middle School Antics* by Ray Gosa .... *Miss Awful* by Authur Cavanaugh

13. *The Beast* by Ray Gosa .... *The Labors of Hercules* retold by Rex Warner

14. *The General and Spike* by Ray Gosa .... *The Monkey's Paw* by W. W. Jacobs

15. *Killer Bee's* by Ray Gosa .... *Three Skeleton Key* by George Toudouze

16. *The Night Hawks* by Ray Gosa .... *Amigo Brothers* by Piri Thomas

17. *Mr. Sanders* by Ray Gosa .... *Bargain* by A. B. Guthrie

18. *The Cobra* by Ray Gosa .... *Rikki-Tikki-Tavi* by Rudyard Kipling

19. *The Memory* by Ray Gosa .... *Aschenputtel* by Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm

20. *Mr. Dumas's Hometown* by Ray Gosa .... *The Treasure of Lemon Brown* by Walter Dean Myers

21. *Midnight Mischief* by Ray Gosa .... *The Tell-Tale Heart* by Edgar Allan Poe

22. *Trust Me – I'm Honest* by Ray Gosa .... *A Mason Dixon Memory* by Clifton Davis

23. *The Tiny Titanic* by Ray Gosa .... *Survive the Savage Sea* by Dougal Robertson

24. *The Children of Mars* by Ray Gosa .... *Return of the Hero* by Catherine Gourley