

# CRAFT AND STRUCTURE

# ANCHOR 4

## English Language Arts Standards Reading: Informational Text **ANCHOR 4**

**Reading Anchor 4:** Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

K	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth
With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text.	Ask and answer questions to help determine or clarify the meaning of words or phrases in a text.	Determine the meaning of words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 2 topic or subject area.	Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 3 topic or subject area.	Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text relevant to a grade 4 topic or subject area.	Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 5 topic or subject area.

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## Decision Tree for Reading: Informational Text ANCHOR 4

### Do my students need focused instruction in relation to Reading Anchor 4?

Reading Anchor 4 requires that students *determine the meaning of key words and phrases in text*. (Refer to your grade-level standards for specific details.)

When some or all of your students could use support in this area, it is recommended that you start the process by implementing three types of instruction in sequence over the course of about a week:



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**Independent Application**  
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The initial demonstration requires just one session (to be repeated as needed), leaving one or two days for collaborative engagement and one or two days to begin the independent applications, which become ongoing as you choose. If you find during any phase of the instruction that some or all of your students could use more intensified support, it is recommended that you consider the lessons for intensifying the instruction.



#### Do my students need intensified support with vocabulary-learning strategies?

Students who do not have a strong repertoire of strategies for seeking the meaning of unfamiliar words can benefit from vocabulary-learning strategy lessons. We see this need in students who do not take action in relation to critical words even though they do not know their meaning. See page 212.



#### Do my students need intensified support to develop new vocabulary?

Vocabulary studies are frameworks for studying words within the wider context in which they appear. Any student who has not yet developed key conceptual knowledge in relation to a topic being studied can benefit from intensified vocabulary support. English language learners who are still developing their academic vocabulary in the new language, regardless of their amount of prior knowledge in relation to the topic, can also benefit. See page 213.

## Demonstration

Anchor 4 requires that students *determine the meanings of key words and phrases* in text, with a focus on academic or domain-specific vocabulary. It is widely recommended that instruction related to vocabulary be steeped in an effort to develop in students a word consciousness—an awareness of and interest in learning new words—because ultimately students are the ones who must be willing to take action or initiative when they come to unfamiliar words.

Read-alouds are an important source of development in relation to vocabulary because books are full of words that might not be used in ordinary conversation and because they provide a rich context for understanding and investigating word meanings (Yopp and Yopp 2007). Research shows that when children experience repeated read-alouds, accompanied by direct attention to words, they can show significant growth in vocabulary (Graves and Watts-Taffe 2008). Research also suggests that children benefit from exposure to new words in many contexts and that their exposure should involve engagement in meaningful discussion (Caldwell and Leslie 2009). “Connecting words to literature, the world, and life experiences helps children to make the necessary connections needed to make the new word theirs” (Strickland 2005, 62).

The present lesson is designed to support students in developing domain-specific vocabulary as well as word consciousness. It may be implemented several times over the course of the year, using different texts each time. Before teaching the lesson, decide whether you wish to use it as a frame for creating or adding to a word wall. Developing your word walls in connection with literature will provide a meaningful context for vocabulary development.

1. **Choose the text.** Choose a text that is related in an important way to your content-area curriculum. You may use a textbook, a trade book, a magazine, a newspaper, or information from the Internet. The text should provide a meaningful context for building content knowledge by discussing the vocabulary that is central to it.
2. **Introduce the text and the concept.** Let students know that you will be reading the text aloud and then showing them some words you found to be interesting, confusing, or particularly important- and that you will want them to help you interpret their meanings. As part of your introduction, demonstrate a preview of the text, focusing on features connected to the words you have chosen, such as subheads, captions, and bolded font.

3. **Demonstrate and discuss the concept.** Read through the text or section, pausing to discuss key words and phrases of interest. Also, encourage students to identify words they feel should be discussed. Then back up and go through the text a second time to discuss the words in more detail and decide which might be appropriate for a word wall. To prepare words for the word wall, write a small, carefully selected set of words from the lesson on note cards. You can write a dictionary or child-constructed definition on the back. Keep the list short in order to focus on depth. Long word lists for any one lesson are not recommended (Gersten et al. 2007). Figure RIT 4.1 offers a starter set of prompts.

Figure RIT 4.1

**READING ANCHOR 4:**  
**Prompts to Support Teacher-Led Modeling and Discussion**

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**Kindergarten and First Grade**

We are going to look back through the text to talk about some of the interesting words.

I noticed \_\_\_\_\_ What do you think it means? I think it means \_\_\_\_\_  
because \_\_\_\_\_.

Did you have any questions about words? Let's listen again. . . .

Figure RIT 4.2 offers a template for students to record words and their meanings.

**Second Through Fifth Grades**

We are going to look back through the text to talk about some of the interesting words.

I noticed \_\_\_\_\_ What do you think it means? I think it means \_\_\_\_\_  
because \_\_\_\_\_.

Did you have any questions about words? Let's listen again. . . . What questions do you have  
about the words in this text? What are some ways we could answer these questions?

- Use our own logic?
- Use the surrounding context?
- Look for meaningful parts?
- Ask someone?
- Use a dictionary?

Figure RIT 4.3 offers a template for students to record words and their meanings.

## I Learn About Important Words When I Read!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Write the word.



Draw a picture to show what the word means.



## Words Worth Noticing

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Word	Meaning	Quick Sketch

## INTENSIFYING THE INSTRUCTION

### Vocabulary-Learning Strategies

The vocabulary-learning lesson is for students who do not have a strong repertoire of strategies for dealing with unfamiliar words. You may wish to occasionally use this lesson as a refresher for the whole class.

1. To develop student awareness of vocabulary-learning strategies, select a text for modeling that contains vocabulary you know will challenge the participating students. Each student should have access to a copy of the text.
2. Read a portion of the text, demonstrating your thinking processes for dealing with vocabulary that you think may be new or not fully familiar to your students. You may wish to post the process on a permanent chart:
  - Is this a word I should try to understand or is it not important here?
  - Can I use my own logic to figure out what it means?
  - Do the surrounding sentences provide any clues to the meaning?
  - Do I recognize any of the word parts?
  - Is there someone I could ask?
  - Should I check the dictionary or thesaurus? (It is recommended that you teach students to use online tools if they are available.)
3. After modeling, team students up to read and discuss passages of the text together, identifying unfamiliar words and discussing the best strategies for determining their meanings. Students can use highlighting tape or they can document words on sticky notes or note cards. Pull the students back together to discuss the processes they tried.
4. Continue instruction with students who have not yet developed effective strategies for independently learning new words.

Figure RIT 4.5

## INTENSIFYING THE INSTRUCTION

### Vocabulary Studies

To implement a vocabulary study, work with students to select a word that is critical to understanding the key concepts in a text, and use one of the graphic organizers featured in Part 1 (Figures RL 4.6 to RL 4.10) to guide students to explore it from a variety of angles. The organizers are examples of materials you may use, but ideally, you will create one on your own so that you can tailor the parts to help students home in on key aspects of the particular words you are studying.

As you develop your instruction and create your materials, take into consideration the following three guidelines for effective vocabulary instruction (synthesized from research on vocabulary instruction reviewed by Jitendra et al. 2004).

1. Ensure that students read often.
2. Select words students will need to know to deeply comprehend the material they are reading.
3. Focus not on a casually chosen set of words, but on a key word with multiple connections to other words in the text.

#### For English Learners

English learners benefit when teachers do the following (Echevarria 2006):

- Write the new vocabulary word so that students have a visual reference.
- Model the pronunciation of the word.
- Repeat the word numerous times, in a variety of contexts.
- Provide planned opportunities for students to use the word in context.
- Emphasize the word during reading experiences.
- Provide opportunities for review and practice.
- Provide opportunities to work with peers and small groups so that genuine dialogue may occur.



## Collaborative Engagement

1. **Choose the literature and the reading context.** Either select a text or section to read aloud to the whole class or plan for students to read different texts together in groups. If students are to do the reading, the chosen text need not be the same across groups. You can differentiate by choosing the literature based on student interest or on text difficulty.
2. **Arrange for students to read or listen to the text.** Before the reading, let students know what they will be doing afterward. (See Figure RIT 4.6.) Note: For some of the collaborative engagements, students complete the reading after the group initially meets.
3. **Hold the meetings.** Arrange for students to come together to discuss key words and phrases from the text. Figure RIT 4.6 offers a set of starter prompts.
4. **Arrange a follow-up discussion.** When all groups are working on the same text, or the same concept, organize for a whole-class discussion as a follow-up to the small-group activity.

Figure RIT 4.6

**READING ANCHOR 4:**  
**Prompts to Support Student-Led Group Discussion of Text**

**Word Illustrations (Grades K-5)**

As a group, students choose three key words or phrases from the text or theme of study and work as a team to create a visual representation of each. (Or the teacher can choose the words/phrases and post them for the class.)

**Graphic Organizers (Grades K-5)**

Groups are given a vocabulary-related graphic organizer to enlarge and complete as a team. Use organizers you have modeled with the whole class, as in Figures RIT 4.2 and Part 1 RL 4.6 to 4.10. Students may focus on a word of their choosing or one you have chosen. After they gain experience with organizers, allow students to create their own.

Figure RIT 4.6 (continued)

### **Vocabulary Sorts (Grades K–5)**

Students are given a set of pictures, words, or phrases (prewritten on note cards or sticky notes) to sort. The cards should be created to represent important concepts in the text or thematic unit. Students place the cards in categories in any way that makes sense and develop a title for each category. The words are then visually displayed in a meaningful format, such as a chart or web.

### **Parts Sorts (Grades 2–5)**

Students are given a set of words, some of which are selected from the book or content they are studying. They sort the words into categories based on parts the words have in common, such as prefixes, root words, or suffixes (replay, redo, reassemble; interact, international). They discuss the meanings of the parts and report back to the class.

### **Comparing Word Meaning (Grades 2–5)**

Keep a collection of words the class has studied within a content-area topic on small note cards. Pull two random words from the pile for each group and ask students to discuss or make a list showing how the two words are alike or how they connect (Caldwell and Leslie 2009).

### **Knowledge Rating Charts (Grades 2–5)**

Before reading or listening, students individually rate their knowledge in relation to a teacher-chosen set of words. (See following chart for an example). They discuss their ratings with peers and share knowledge of words they know well.

While reading, they seek new meanings by using background knowledge, context clues, more information from peers, and the dictionary.

After reading, the words are discussed again and rated again on the chart, using a different-color pen.

Word	Know it Well	Have Some Knowledge of It	Don't Know It

## Independent Application

### Independent Reading

A well-documented benefit of independent reading is that it is an important source of vocabulary growth (Nagy, Anderson, and Herman 1987). Encountering words within the meaningful context of a written text helps students deduce the meaning of new words and extend understandings of those that are already familiar. To specifically encourage vocabulary development during *independent reading*, try the following:

- Create bins of book choices based on important topics and themes in your curriculum. The more students read on particular topics, the deeper vocabulary knowledge they can build on that topic.
- Be sure that all students have books they can read with understanding. Books that are too easy can cause boredom and stagnation, and books that are too hard can cause frustration and lead to little time spent actually reading.
- Let students know that after reading they will have time to respond through writing or talk. You might allow students 1 minute to review what they have read and informally prepare to discuss one interesting or important word with a peer. Interactive journals (see below) may be used for this purpose. Or you can give students note cards and ask them to record the word on one side and a sentence or definition on the other. The cards can be kept together on a key ring as a personal dictionary for a unit of study.

### Interactive Journals

*Interactive journals* are notebooks in which students record interesting ideas from their reading and explore them with a partner. The journals may be used any time two or more students are reading the same text. In support of Reading Anchor 4, interactive journals can be used as a tool for recording words and phrases that have special meaning in relation to the content being read and for organizing conversation around these words and phrases. You can ask students to reserve a section of the journal for this purpose.

1. Instruct students to decide on a selected amount of text to read. As they read, they are to choose one or two key words or phrases to record.

2. After recording their words or phrases, students then exchange journals. To respond, peers write what they think the word means. They then discuss any differing points of view or understandings.

### Stop-and-Chats

*Stop-and-chats* provide a useful forum for setting up students to read with a specific purpose in mind and fostering conversations related to that purpose. Two or three students who are reading the same text can work together.

1. Students place a marker at an agreed-upon stopping point. As they read, they use a sticky note to write down unfamiliar words or phrases. Students need not mark every applicable word or phrase they encounter. It is often the case that just one or two key choices will provide enough substance to sustain a rich conversation.
2. Upon reaching the stopping point, students discuss the meaning of their documented words and then place the marker at the next agreed-upon stopping point
3. As a possible follow-up, the words may be revisited through whole- or small-group discussion with the teacher.

### Word Wonder Readings

*Word wonder readings* are sessions organized for students to revisit text with the wonder of words in mind. After students have read or listened to an informational text at least once, they go back into the text to look closely for particularly *interesting* uses of language or uses of language that are particularly *important* to the content they are studying.

1. Prepare students for word wonder by telling them you would like them to read (or listen) closely and to think about the words that stand out as interesting or important.
2. Students use highlighting tape or an erasable highlighter to mark one to three words or phrases that stand out for them. Or they can write the words on a sticky note.
3. Students talk with a partner about the words they marked/wrote, telling why they think they are important to the piece.

## Dictionary Entries

We know that simply reading or copying definitions is not a useful strategy for developing word knowledge or comprehension. Students develop vocabulary as a *concept*, not a word. They need to experience a word many times and in many contexts to fully understand its meaning. Still, dictionaries serve important functions, and students need to learn to use them. Maintaining a collection of words that have been studied in their appropriate contexts—through the creation of a personal dictionary—can be enriching and empowering.

1. Teach your students to read and write dictionary entries by preselecting three or four words from their content-area reading and then showing them the professionally constructed definitions in a children's dictionary, including the illustrative sentences and any lists of related words that are included.
2. Arrange for students to use what you have shown them to build their own dictionaries over the course of the school year. To facilitate this process, have available a key ring for each student and a large stack of note cards with a hole punched in one corner. This allows students to add words in alphabetic order at any time. Keeping the entries meaningful and limited to just a few key words per week will sustain engagement over the course of the year.

## Encyclopedia Entries

Find an online encyclopedia entry for a word that is key to a topic your class is studying. Show students the entry, focusing on the content and how it is set up. Let students know that they will be creating a class encyclopedia on a specific topic, with each student or team writing a different entry. Give guidelines for the project. The following is an example from a third-grade classroom:

- Choose one of the following weather conditions and title your entry using bold font: rain, snow, hail, thunder, lightning, tornado, hurricane, high wind, cloud, precipitation.
- Use a resource to provide a one-sentence definition.
- Explain the key characteristics of your condition. Use 100–150 words.
- Find or draw a picture of your condition.



## Illustrated Definitions

Each student chooses a key word or phrase from a text the class is reading together, writes it in large print on a piece of paper, and creates an illustration to help show the meaning. As an option, students may be asked to write the word in a sentence or write a definition using their own wording. To help students choose appropriate words, you can list several possibilities, having the students choose just one. Compile the pages into a book and share it with the class.

## Number One Word!

Whether they are reading independently, with a group, or with the whole class, students use highlighting tape to mark what they feel is the single most important (number one) word in a designated section of text or in the whole text. You can teach students to choose a word that signifies either an important concept worth considering or one that best signifies what the piece is about. After the students have chosen their words, allow time for small-group or whole-class discussion, asking students to articulate the reasons for their choices.

## Ten Important Words

*Ten important words* (Yopp and Yopp 2003, 2007) involves students in closely reading a text to note the key ideas and then selecting the most important words in relation to those ideas.

1. After an initial read, students reread to identify the ten (or fewer depending on the length of the piece) words they believe to be most important to the content. Each word is written on a separate sticky note.
2. The teacher guides the class in using the sticky notes to construct a bar graph, making columns of words to see which words were chosen by most students.
3. With teacher guidance, the students discuss why certain words were deemed by many to be important to the text and what these words contribute to the content.
4. Each student writes a one-sentence summary of the content. This often results in use of the posted words, offering yet another opportunity for considering and discussing their meanings.



## Word Clouds

A *word cloud* (Dalton and Grisham 2011) is a computer-generated cluster of words created from a text of your choice. Students can use word cloud activities to activate and build background knowledge on a topic and to reflect on the key words used in a text.

To get started, use [www.wordle.net](http://www.wordle.net) to generate a word cloud from a text your students will be reading or listening to. You will need to type in or copy and paste part (or all) of the text. If you are working with longer text, typing in about one hundred words or more from the beginning works well. Trade books, textbooks, or online articles may be used. The application will generate a “word cloud,” with the words used most often standing out most prominently. If you make five or six copies of the word cloud, students can work in groups to discuss the clouds. Dalton and Grisham (2011) suggest prompts including the following:

### Prereading Prompts

- What does the word cloud suggest this piece is about?
- What seem to be the most important words?
- How do these words go together?

### Postreading Prompts

- Do you think the word cloud captured what was most important to learn?

## Focused Word Studies

*Focused word studies* are independent projects designed to support students' vocabulary development in relation to a key content-area topic.

**Kindergarten:** Students choose three words from the word wall and draw a picture that helps show what each word means. (*Note:* The word wall should be of the type that focuses on vocabulary and meanings of words in the content areas you are studying rather than the type that is focused on teaching students to read and write commonly used words.)

**Grade 1:** Students choose a book from a set selected by the teacher. They read the text or a section of it a few times to determine three key words or phrases for study. They record the words or phrases and create an illustration for each.

**Grade 2:** Students choose a text from a set selected by the teacher. The choices may include books or magazine articles. Students read the text or a section of it a few times to determine three key words or phrases for study. They record the words or phrases and create an illustration for each. They write a definition in their own words.

**Grade 3:** Students choose a text from a set selected by the teacher. The choices may include books, magazine articles, or other informational texts. Students read the text or a section of it a few times to determine three key words or phrases for study. They record the words or phrases and create an illustration for each. They use a dictionary to find a formal definition of each word, which they rewrite into their own words.

**Grade 4:** Students choose a text from a set selected by the teacher. The choices may include books, magazine articles, information from the Internet, or other informational texts. Students read the text or a section of it a few times to determine three key words or phrases for study. They record the words or phrases and create an illustration for each. They choose one of the words and use a graphic organizer (such as Figures RL 4.6 to RL 4.10 in Part 1) to fully describe it. Dictionaries and the chosen text may be used as resources.

**Grade 5:** Students choose a text from a set selected by the teacher. The choices may include books, magazine articles, information from the Internet, newspaper articles, or other informational texts. Students read the text or a section of it a few times to determine three key words or phrases for study. They record the words or phrases and create an illustration for each. They choose one of the words and use a graphic organizer (such as Figures RL 4.6 to RL 4.10 in Part 1) to fully describe it or they create their own graphic organizer to suit this purpose. Dictionaries and the chosen text may be used as resources.