

# Vocabulary Ideas



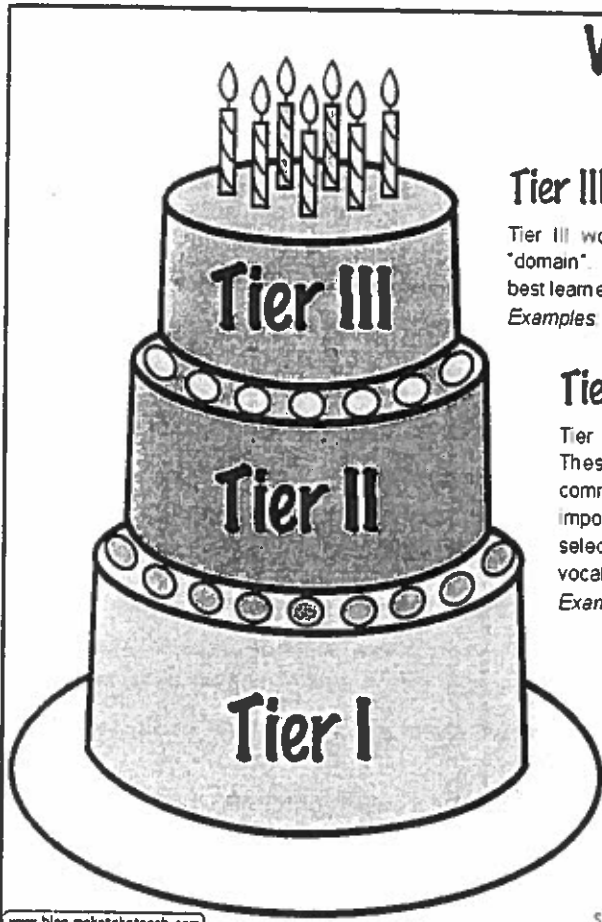
Compiled by

Melissa Salazar  
Teacher Specialist

The Veterans Literacy Line

# Vocabulary Instruction

## Choosing Words to Teach



### Tier III

Tier III words are low-frequency words and are limited to a specific "domain". They often pertain to a specific content area. These words are best learned within the context of the lesson or subject matter.

*Examples: atom, molecule, metamorphic, sedimentary, continent*

### Tier II

Tier II words are high-frequency words that occur across contexts. These words are used by mature language users and are more common in writing than in everyday speech. Tier II words are important for students to know to enhance comprehension of a selected text. Tier II words are the best words for targeted explicit vocabulary instruction.

*Examples: hilarious, endure, despise, arrange, compare, contrast*

### Tier I

Tier I words are the words we use everyday in our speech. These words are typically learned through conversation. These are common words that rarely require direct instruction.

*Examples: come, see, happy, table*

[www.blog.maketaketeach.com](http://www.blog.maketaketeach.com)

Source: Bringing Words To Life (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan 2002)

## 3 Tiers of Vocabulary for Secondary Education

### Tier 1 – NOT INCLUDED IN UNIT PLAN

*Words that we pick up in daily conversation*

- Do not need to be taught

Examples: chair, hand, desk

### Tier 2

*General academic words that occur in conversation or text, but may not be acquired through everyday conversation*

- Frequently encountered because applicable to many content areas
- Often synonyms of common words

Examples: industrious (vs. hardworking), elated (vs. thrilled), saunter (vs. stroll), pervasive (vs. widespread)

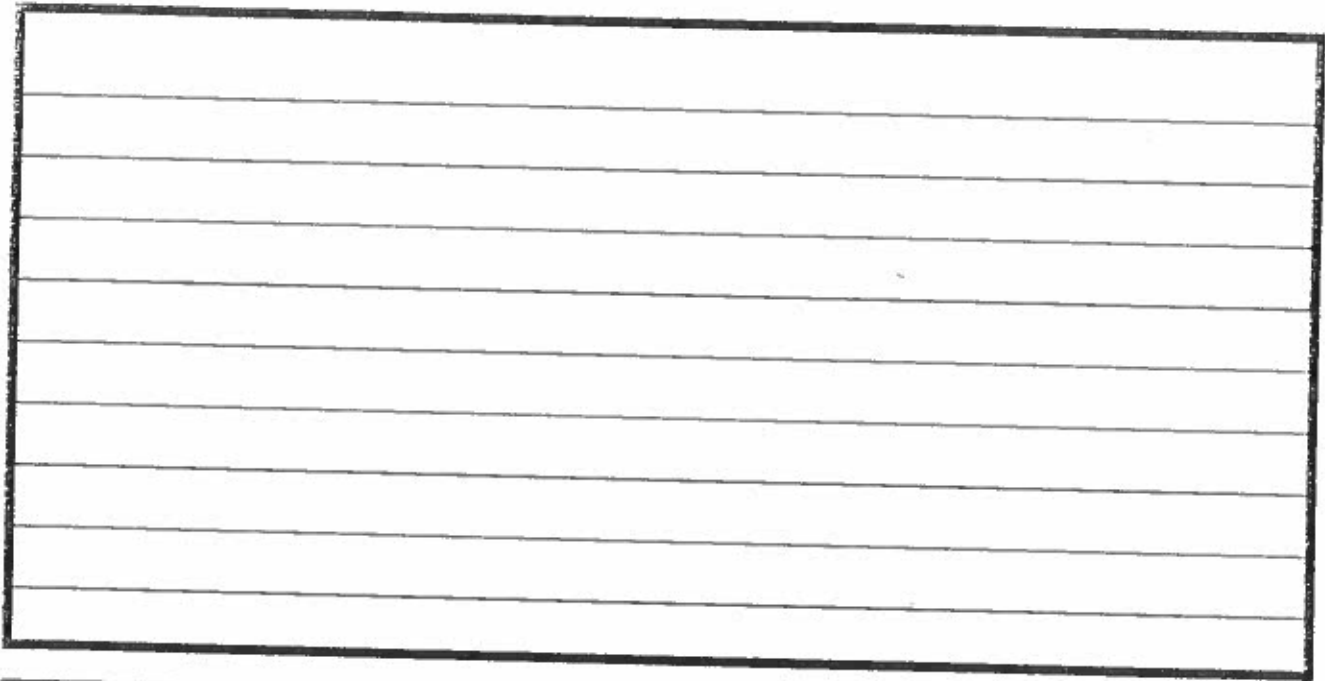
### Tier 3

*Content-specific words applicable to specific areas of study*

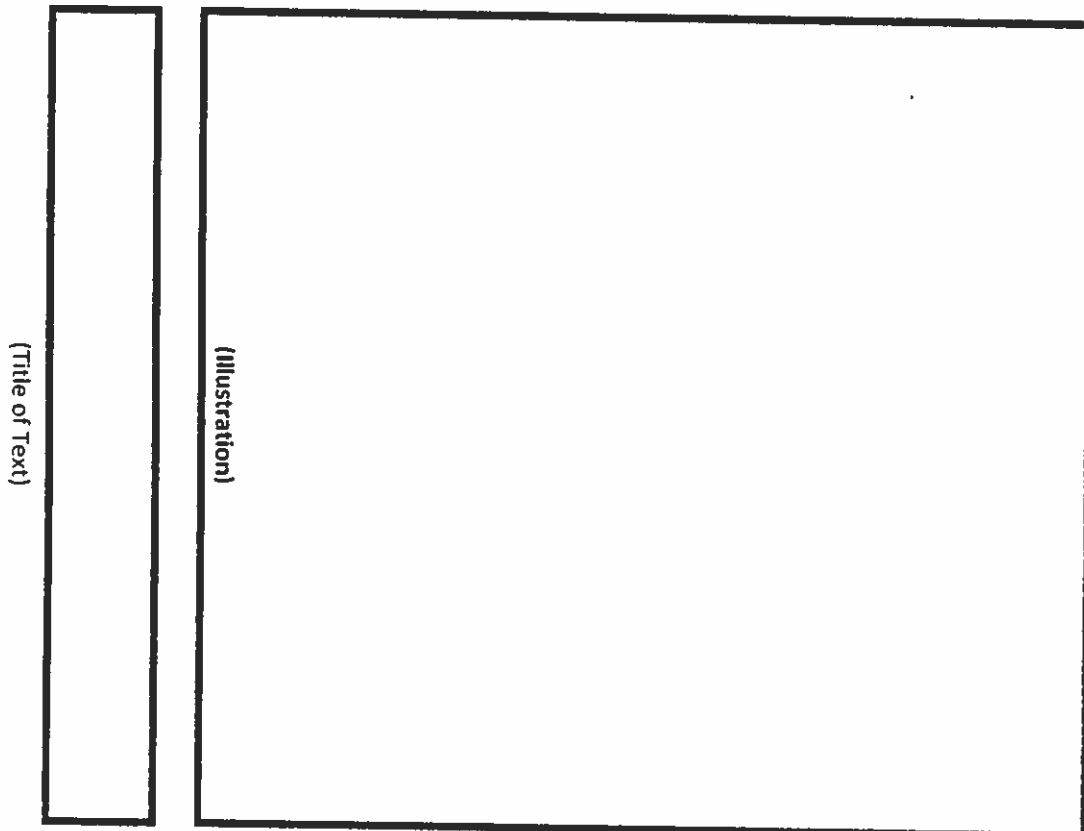
- More common in informational texts
- Recognized as new or “hard” words; may be part of a glossary

Examples: isotope, inalienable rights, remote interior angle

STAAR SHORT ANSWER READING QUESTIONS  
EXAMPLE OF RESPONSE BOX



STUDENTS MAY NOT WRITE OUTSIDE THE BOX



(Title of Text)

(Illustration)

Vocabulary Words

Word:  
Synonym:

Word:  
Synonym:

Word:  
Synonym:

Word:  
Synonym:

Word:  
Synonym:

Word:  
Synonym:

Word:  
Synonym:

Word:  
Synonym:

Word:  
Synonym:

Word:  
Synonym:

Quick Write #1:

Quick Write #2:

Quick Write #3:

## Vocabulary Activities Explanations

- 1. SWAT/SLAP Cards** – 3 sets of cards - One with words only. One with definitions only. One with pictures only. Place the cards in front of two students at a small-group table. Use the cards that would be at the student's appropriate level for time of week (e.g., Teacher puts out word cards and says definition. Student who slaps/swats correct word gets to keep card. OR The teacher puts out definition cards and says the word. Student who slaps correct definition first gets to keep card. Scaffold by placing only two choices for students that may be overwhelmed with all of the available cards. This can be played in a vocabulary workstation using words from previous weeks or as a review later in the week.
- 2. I have, Who has?** – Pass out all cards. The teacher/leader begins the game by saying, "I have (vocabulary word written on the top of the card and underlined)" and then asking, "Who has (question written on the bottom of card)?" The person with the correct word/answer says, "I have (correct vocabulary word written on the top of the card and underlined), who has (question written on the bottom of card)?" They then ask their question until it comes back to the teacher/leader. That person will always end the game. This is a good review for all words whole group, small group, and workstations.
- 3. Pinch Cards** – 3 levels of pinch cards demonstrated at training. Use level appropriate for grade level and/or time of year. Pictures and words for PK through 1<sup>st</sup> grade (beginning of year). May be a cut and paste activities at first, but you eventually want the students to create the cards. Words and definitions can be used with 1<sup>st</sup> grade and beyond. Words, definitions, and deep processing activities can be included as students are able to complete the pinch cards. Scaffold what to add to the back of the card depending on student capabilities: sentences, synonyms, antonyms, examples, non-examples, yes/no questions, degrees of word (e.g., sprinkle, drizzle, rain, downpour). These can be used for a daily grade, quick whole group assessment on day before vocabulary test, during reading of selection, and an independent study aid. Also great activity for multiple opportunities for students to practice, enhanced student participation, and all content areas!
- 4. Vocabulary Check List** – This card can be placed at the silent/independent reading workstation. We referred to this as "the take all the fun out of the reading station" by giving students some accountability. The students write words that would fit in the appropriate column and share some of these words and word meanings at small group time or debriefing session. Teacher can adjust as necessary.
- 5. Word Tag or bracelets** – Students wear the words of the week. Adults in the building are aware of the game and the words. They can ask the student to say the word and give a sentence or definition. The adult can say the word and use it in a sentence. Whatever would be appropriate for grade level and/or time of year. Students share their favorite or best example at the end of the day (or review words). Objective is to provide multiple opportunities for practice and develop oral language/social skills.
- 6. Vocabulary Quick Write Folder** – Use a picture from the cover of the book or selection. Place on front of folder. Write vocabulary words on index cards. Have students write for 1-2 minutes about the word. Do one a day or however many is appropriate for grade level. Have them choose one of their quick writes to expand upon and use as a writing piece. You may have to do this whole group at first and then go to a workstation.

## I Have, Who Has?

I have **energy levels**.

Who has the word that means made of two or more parts, elements, or ingredients?

I have **compound**.

Who has the word that means a cord, rope, etc. that is lit to start an explosive?

I have **fuse**.

Who has the word that means to set fire or to start?

I have **ignite**.

Who has the word that means to make an exact or specific measurement?

I have **calibrate**.

Who has the word that means to give off or let out?

I have **emit**.

Who has the word that means the possible locations around an atom where electrons having specific energy values may be found?

# 10 Principles for Effective Vocabulary Instruction

## (and 10 Things to Avoid)

### ✓ DO THIS

1. Select words to teach.



2. Use strategies to engage students in word study.

3. Help students come up with their own definitions.



4. Assess student use of words in authentic writing and speaking.

5. Teach students morphological strategies to figure out words they do not know, in addition to context-clue strategies.

6. Use symbols and pictures to help bring vocabulary to life.



B Is for Bear

7. Highlight and use a word wall in classroom instruction.

8. Use and apply vocabulary words regularly (versus isolated practice).

9. Allow opportunities for wide reading so students are exposed to words all the time in a variety of books.



10. Model the use of academic language at all times, setting high expectations for language use.

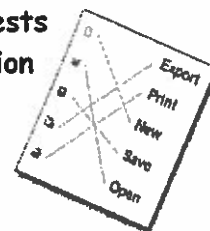
### NOT THAT X

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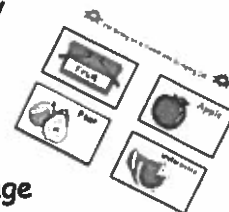
2. Have students look up lists of words in a dictionary, write arbitrary sentences, or copy words multiple times.
3. Have students simply copy definitions.

4. Give students matching tests that show only memorization of definitions.



5. Tell students to use only context clues to figure out unknown words.

6. Lack the use of visual cues in the classroom to assist with vocabulary instruction.



7. Spend a large chunk of language arts working on vocabulary in isolation.

8. Lack or misuse a word wall in classroom.

9. Teach only whole-class books with controlled vocabulary study.

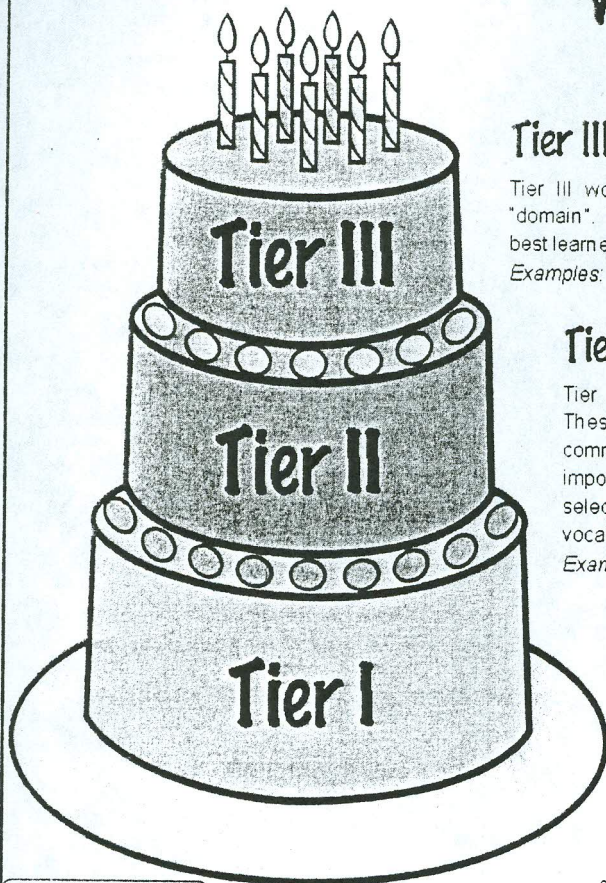


10. Use "kid" language around students and allow students to speak "kid" back.



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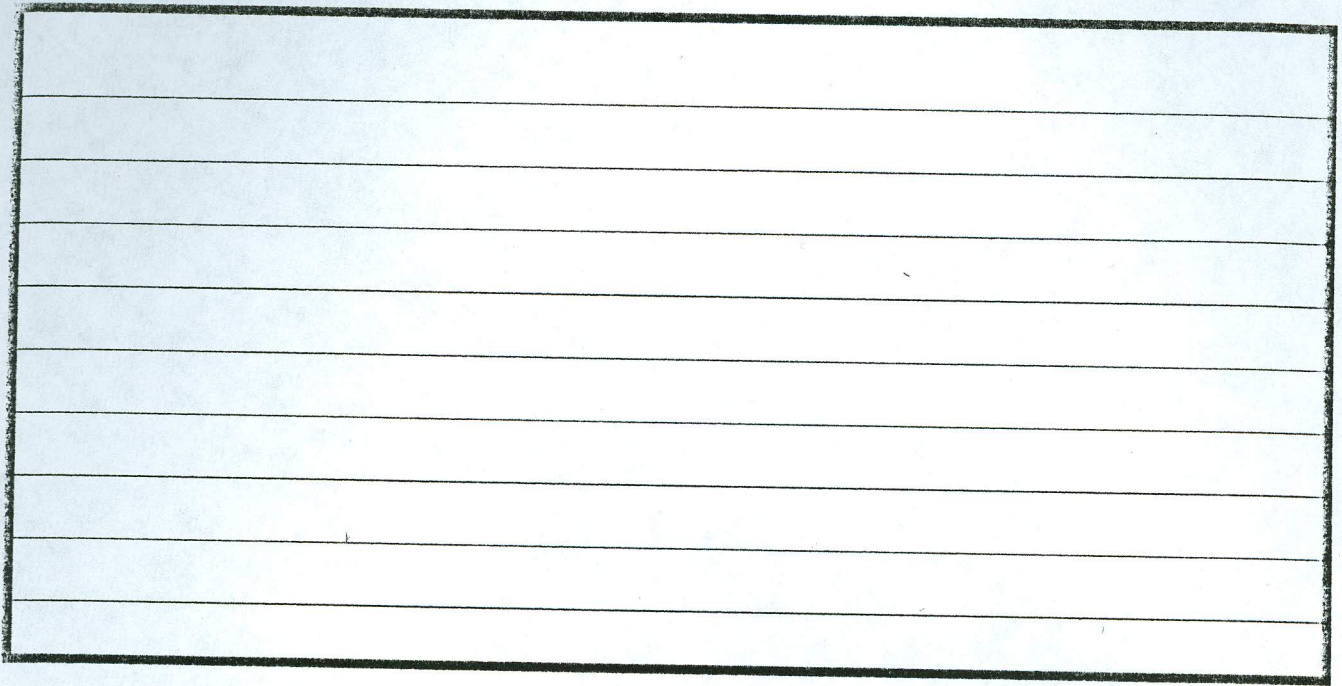
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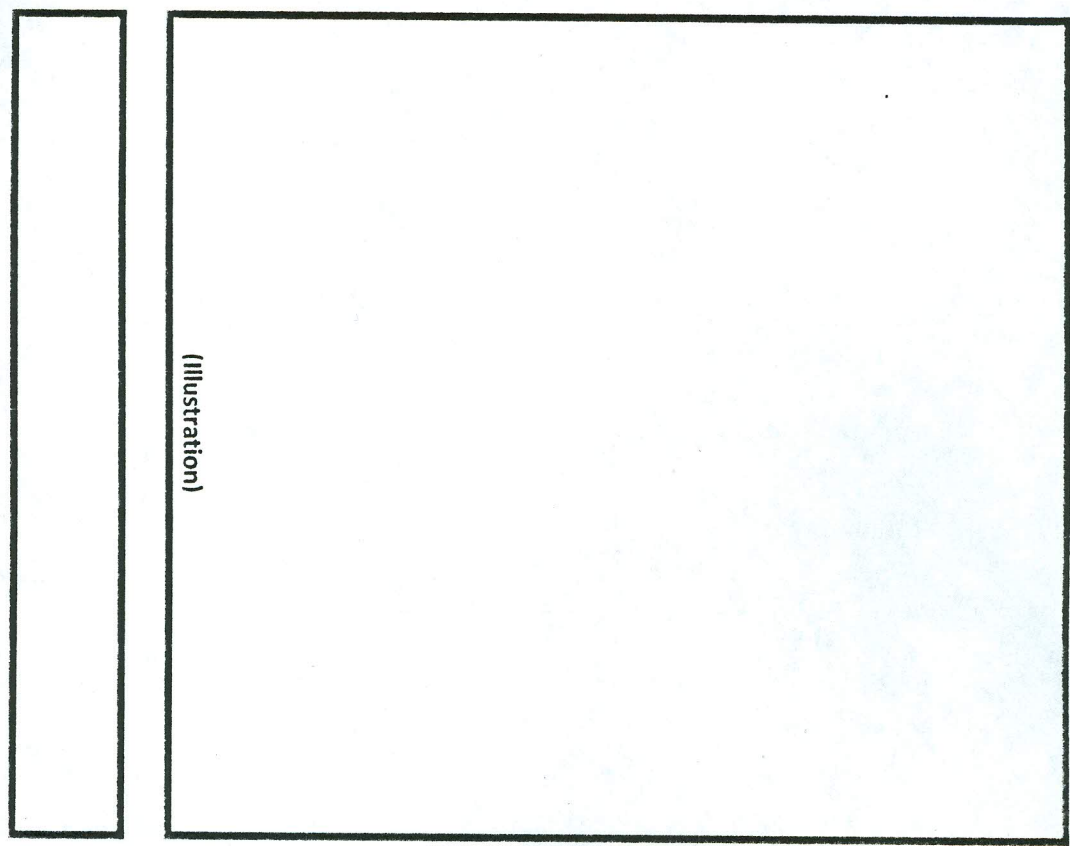
STAAR SHORT ANSWER READING QUESTIONS  
EXAMPLE OF RESPONSE BOX

A large rectangular box with a thick black border, containing ten horizontal lines for writing a response.

STUDENTS MAY NOT WRITE OUTSIDE THE BOX

(Title of Text)

(Illustration)

Two empty rectangular boxes with black borders. The left box is tall and narrow, and the right box is wider and shorter. They are positioned side-by-side.

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Adapted from  
*Vocabulary Strategies That Work: Do This—Not That*  
by Lori B. Wilfong

