

Kingsborough Learning Center

ENGLISH TEAS WORKSHOP Practice Material: Vocabulary

Try These Five Strategies for Tackling Unfamiliar Words

- 1. Break it up into pieces.
- 2. Look for context clues.
- 3. Make connections to other words you've heard.
- 4. Make connections to your own life.
- 5. Take a guess — even if it's wrong.

1. Break it up into pieces.

Edward and Mario started with recognizable parts of their words to piece together the full definitions.

endoscopy | Edward, McAllen, Texas

While researching sterilization for a school project, the word “endoscopy” stood out from an article about locating ulcers. I had definitely heard the prefix “endo-” in my biology class and the word “scope” in my everyday life, so I assumed it meant to look into some part of the body. And to my surprise, the word does actually mean to examine the inside of an organ! I guess some words aren't too hard to figure out if you split them up into little parts.

reinvigorated | Mario, El Salvador

I chose the word “reinvigorated” from the article “A Tense Lunar New Year for the Bay Area After Attacks on Asian Americans.” “Reinvigorated” quickly sparked my curiosity because of the complexity of the word’s etymology. Although I knew that the prefix “re-” meant something like “back or again,” I did not have a clue what “invigorated” meant. Once I discovered that the definition of “invigorate” is “to give strength or energy to something or someone,” I began to see daylight. Then it became easy for me to understand that “reinvigorate” stands for giving strength to something. According to the context of the article, it relates to the racist movement against the Asian American community.

2. Look for context clues.

Amy and Christian scoured the sentences surrounding their chosen vocabulary words. Familiar words nearby clued them into what their words might mean.

torrent | Amy, Elizabeth, N.J.

When I was reading the article “De Blasio Vowed to Make City Streets Safer. They’ve Turned More Deadly,” the word “torrent” caught my eye since I had never heard it before. With the use of context clues like “unleashed” and “anger,” I came to the conclusion that the word might be related to “outburst.” As it turns out, the word did have something to do with an overwhelming number or amount.

heralding | Christian Mereyde, Hoggard High School, Wilmington, N.C.

In the article “One Man’s Endless Hunt for a Dopamine Rush in Virtual Reality,” I discovered the unfamiliar word “heralding.” The paragraph was talking about how Mark Zuckerberg and other executives were “heralding” a digital world. Based on the context of that sentence, I guessed that the word meant to announce something, and upon further research I discovered that the word “herald” is defined as “to be a sign that something is going to happen.” A few synonyms are “proclaiming,” “declaring” and, yes, “announcing.”

3. Make connections to other words you’ve heard.

Maybe a word reminds you of Latin class — or the “Harry Potter” series.

luminaries | Nicholas Wu, Hunter College High School, New York City

Toward the end of an episode of “The Daily” titled “The United States v. Elizabeth Holmes,” I heard the word “luminaries” used to describe certain Silicon Valley investors. I immediately thought of the “Harry Potter” flashlight spell “lumos,” a word whose bright connotations were startling to me when used in a dark podcast episode about fraud and dishonesty. I learned that a “luminary” is a figure who inspires and guides other people, much like the lumos spell itself.

adolescents | Hannah Reiterer, Leibnitz, Austria

I chose the word “adolescents” from an article about whether school should start later. At first glance, I immediately thought

of a Latin lesson last year when we learned the word “adulescentes,” which means “young men.” When I looked up the word in the dictionary I found out that “adolescents” means “teenagers,” which confirmed my assumption that the word might be derived from Latin.

Editors’ Picks



What is a ‘Zombie Mortgage’?



I’m Moving to a New City. Do I Have to Change the Way I Dress?



I Love You, but I Don't Want to Sleep With You

Image



One student interrogated the meaning of a word from this Guest Essay on pronouns. Credit...Michael Morris

4. Make connections to your own life.

James and Jaiden drew from personal experiences to evaluate how a familiar word was being used in an unfamiliar context.

intonation | James Renda, Hall High School, West Hartford, Conn.

While reading the article “What Are Your Texting Dos and Don’ts?”, the word “intonation” stood out to me. The word struck me because we often discuss its relation to pitch accuracy in jazz band class. However, in this case, its meaning is a little different, so I had to apply what I knew to the context of texting to understand that the emphasis is on the rise and fall of a person’s voice through words in a text in order to convey personal style.

Oriental | Jaiden Atluri, Turning Point School, Culver City, Calif.

I chose the word “Oriental” (which is generally considered offensive to Asians; I myself am Asian, so it automatically caught my eye) from an article about how gender pronouns are changing. I didn’t choose the word because I didn’t know what it meant, but because it was controversial, which sparked my interest. The word “Oriental” started from the word “Orient,” which derives from the Latin word “oriens,” meaning “east.” “Oriens” was traditionally used when talking about anything belonging to the East, a region typically synonymous with the continent of Asia. “Oriental” is used nowadays to refer to objects from Asian countries, so many Asian Americans find it an offensive word for describing people.

5. Take a guess — even if it’s wrong.

Nash and Yeira made great guesses about what their words might mean. They then learned more about their words by comparing their guesses to the words’ dictionary definitions.

blowout | Nash Le Hors, Lycée Français Saint Louis, Stockholm

My word is “blowout” from the article “Should Blowouts Be Allowed in Youth Sports?” When I first saw the word I believed it meant to stop a game for weather reasons, but I learned that it really meant an overpowering win or something breaking. A blowout is mostly negative for the losing team and the spectators.

lamprooning | Yeira Marrero, Elizabeth High School Frank J. Cicarell Academy, Elizabeth, N.J.

While reading the article “Do Memes Make the Internet a Better Place?” I was curious about the word “lamprooning.” It was tricky, but I took a wild guess and decided it meant investigating. This thought came to me because it reminded me of a lamp and a spoon, so then I thought to myself that it must mean something like digging for information. Turns out, it actually means to mock or ridicule someone.

Image



A student learned more about the basketball player LeBron James by looking up the definition of the word “relish” from [this article](#). Credit...Harry How/Getty Images