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 [Print This Page](#)

## LESSON PLAN

# Acquiring New Vocabulary Through Book Discussion Groups



Grades	3 - 5
Lesson Plan Type	Recurring Lesson
Estimated Time	60 minutes
Lesson Author	<b>Peggy Harper</b> Mobile, Alabama
Publisher	

## PREVIEW

### OVERVIEW

While reading the book *Pink and Say* by Patricia Polacco, students identify words that are unfamiliar to them. Working collaboratively in small groups, they discuss the meaning of these new words, using context clues from the text, prior knowledge, and both print and online resources. Students then apply their knowledge of the new vocabulary to further their understanding of the text. With moderate preparation and further research of topic-related resources, this lesson can be modified and reused for other areas of the curriculum.

### FEATURED RESOURCES

**Individual Performance and Group Participation Rubric:** Use this rubric to evaluate students' individual and group performance during small-group collaborations.

### FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

Harmon, J.M. (1998). Vocabulary teaching and learning in a seventh-grade literature-based classroom. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 41(7), 518-529.

- As children approach the middle grades and become more proficient in decoding and recognizing known words, vocabulary acquisition focuses more on meaning than recognition (Chall, 1987).
- Direct instruction is an important aspect of vocabulary acquisition, and relates to reading comprehension in that children integrate new words with their prior knowledge.
- An important component of vocabulary development is social interactions and interventions in the classroom. Grand conversations (Peterson & Eeds, 1990) about shared readings of literature can include rich discussions about new words and their meanings. Students can find it motivating to work collaboratively to define new words using creative means, such as context clues or drama, and traditional methods, such as a dictionary or other media sources.

Chall, J. (1987). Two vocabularies for reading: Recognition and meaning. In M.G. McKeown, & M.E. Curtis (Eds).

*The nature of vocabulary acquisition* (pp. 7-17). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Peterson, R., & Eeds, M. (1990). *Grand conversations: Literature groups in action*. New York: Scholastic.

## STANDARDS

### NCTE/IRA NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

1. Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.
3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).
4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

## RESOURCES & PREPARATION

### MATERIALS AND TECHNOLOGY

- *Pink and Say* by Patricia Polacco (1 copy per group)
- Dictionary
- Thesaurus
- Paper and pencil

### PRINTOUTS

Individual Performance and Group Participation Rubric

### WEBSITES

- Carol Hurst's Children's Literature Site: *Pink and Say*
- The Civil War for Kids
- Dictionary.com

### PREPARATION

1. Prior to the lesson, read the text selection and make note of any words that may be unfamiliar or interesting to your students.
2. Bookmark related websites for students to use during their group work. A list of sites is provided for *Pink and Say*; however, if you are using this lesson with another book or topic, make sure to research a list of appropriate websites in advance of the lesson.
3. Arrange for students to have access to computers with Internet access.

## INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN

### STUDENT OBJECTIVES

Students will

- Develop new strategies to enhance reading comprehension
- Locate unfamiliar words in a story and determine their meaning using a variety of strategies (e.g., prior knowledge, context clues, group discussion, media sources)
- Acquire new vocabulary identified from the assigned text
- Enhance understanding of new vocabulary by making connections to related ideas and other words
- Aim to use new vocabulary in speaking and writing
- Aim to continually use the practiced strategies to enhance reading comprehension and acquire new vocabulary

### INSTRUCTION & ACTIVITIES

1. Read the text selection *Pink and Say* aloud to the whole class, avoiding any interruptions from students who have questions. (Group discussion and understanding of the text will occur later in the lesson.)
2. To introduce the lesson activity, choose a word to model the strategy that students will later use in their small-group work. For example, introduce the term *erratically* as used in this passage:

"The saw didn't want to start. After dozens of attempts Cloyd made it idle *erratically*, but it cut out as soon as he tried the throttle." (Hobbs, p. 55)

Allow students the opportunity to comment on their ideas of what the word *erratically* means. Students can demonstrate their ideas using words and body movements. For example, a student might define the word by swinging his arms, circling faster and faster. Then, share a media definition such as the one from dictionary.com. Other online sources can also be used to provide more information about the word's meaning. Using a thesaurus, identify synonyms for the word and then plug in each synonym to see if it makes sense within the context of the original sentence.

Ask students if they have any questions or comments about how to use this strategy when determining the meaning of an unfamiliar word. Model a few more examples if students need further clarification, or allow a few students to lead whole-class demonstrations of a few more examples for further reinforcement.

3. Divide the class into small groups and provide one copy of the book to each group.
4. Assign students in each group a role, per your discretion (e.g., teacher assignment, student choice, peer vote). Roles include
  - **Vocabulary Enricher**-identifies interesting or unfamiliar words in the reading and leads a discussion about the new words
  - **Literary Luminary**-relates the new words back to the context of the passage, and provides supporting definitions by accessing a dictionary or other media sources
  - **Connector**-makes a connection between the meaning of words as used in the context of the text and prior knowledge or understanding

- **Discussion Director**-facilitates the discussion among members of the group
- **Summarizer**-records and reports the group's activities to the whole class; similar to a secretary or reporter

Ask students to assume their assigned or chosen role in the group, and make sure that they understand their individual responsibilities.

5. Explain that the group's task is to locate and creatively define unfamiliar or interesting words from the text *Pink and Say*. When encountering new words, students should be encouraged to look at the context of the surrounding sentences, engage in a group discussion about the new words, draw upon their prior knowledge of the word or topic, and access print and online resources for supporting definitions. For the text *Pink and Say*, the following websites are recommended to assist students in defining unfamiliar words:
  - **Dictionary.com**. This website is an online version of the dictionary.
  - **The Civil War for Kids**. This website was created by students and provides information about the Civil War.
  - **Carol Hurst's Children's Literature Site: *Pink and Say***. This site provides a review of the book *Pink and Say* and a list of "Related Areas on the Internet."

This exercise gives students the opportunity to practice using a new strategy when encountering unfamiliar words. It also helps them to realize that understanding new words will enable them to understand the story better. Thus, they will be developing their reading comprehension skills while also acquiring new vocabulary.

6. Rotate among the groups as students are working and keep anecdotal records describing the students' interactions with one another, participation in the discussion, and role behavior.
7. After the group work, which will assume the bulk of the time allotted, gather students as a whole class and ask the summarizer from each group to share the group's activities.
8. Create a chart to record each group's findings as the summarizer presents them.
9. Relate the new words that students identified back to the story *Pink and Say*. Engage in a whole-class discussion of the text, reinforcing the new vocabulary and students' understanding of the story.
10. To end the session, ask students to choose one word that they learned during this session. Have them write their understanding of the word's definition, copy the sentence from the text highlighting the specified word, rewrite the sentence substituting a synonym for the word that makes sense within the context of the sentence, and then provide an illustration of the word. The illustration does not have to be related to the story.

## EXTENSIONS

- Have students keep a word log during Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) as a way to repeat this activity regularly on an independent level. The lesson **Using a Word Journal to Create a Personal Dictionary**, although intended for grades 6-8, can easily be adapted for younger students.
- Practice the strategy using words that students encounter during their other classes. After introducing a word, ask students to predict what they think the word means, refer to the dictionary to find the actual definition, engage in a group discussion relating the word to their prior knowledge, and use the word in a sentence of their own. Continued repetition and practice with the strategy is beneficial.
- Repeat this lesson with other trade books or basal assignments. Be sure to compile a list of age-appropriate

resources related to the text selection to assist students in defining new words.

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT/REFLECTIONS

- Teacher observation
- Anecdotal records
- Student's written response
- Individual Performance and Group Participation Rubric

## RELATED RESOURCES

### CALENDAR ACTIVITIES

Grades **3 - 8** | Calendar Activity | July 11

**Children's author Patricia Polacco was born in 1944.**

Students share family stories of their own by writing original poems and reviewing parts of speech using the Diamante Poems tool.

### STRATEGY GUIDES

Grades **3 - 12** | Strategy Guide

**Using Concept Circles to Develop Academic Vocabulary**

In this guide, you will learn how to use the Concept Circles strategy to support vocabulary development and comprehension of complex text.

## COMMENTS

### ■ Published Comments

**Nora** | great lesson; easily adaptable for ELL. Thanks for sharing!  
May 03, 2013

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