

Reading Lesson Plan – Word Sorts

Standard

CC.3.5.11-12.D: Determine the meaning of symbols, key terms, and other domain-specific words and phrases as they are used in a specific scientific or technical context relevant to grades 11–12 texts and topics.

Objective

Identify relationships among key vocabulary terms

Strategy

Word Sorts –Group vocabulary terms by categories

Phase of Reading

Before, After

Skill Review

None required.

Definitions

Symbol--a letter, figure, or other character or mark used to designate an object or idea

Key Term--a word or phrase that is central to understanding a concept

Context--parts of a statement that precede or follow a specific word or passage, usually influencing its meaning or effect

Lesson Preparation

Before the lesson, select 15-25 important terms related to the topic. Create cards (through an Excel file or write the terms on notecards). Create multiple sets so that small groups (four to six students) each have a set to work with. Put sets in sandwich or snack bags for ease of grouping. Include three to four blank cards in each pack.

Create vocabulary sheets for lesson introduction activity (see below).

Lesson

Whole Group Instruction

Explain to students that we remember vocabulary and concepts better when we associate terms. This activity will help them categorize key terms so that they can make connections.

Demonstrate the connection between memory and relationships by providing each student with a slip of paper with the same 14 terms. For some, list the words randomly and for others, put words in a group. Give students 30 seconds to look at their individual sheets. Ask them to write down the terms they remember. Debrief students by asking how many terms they got right. Typically, students with the grouped terms will remember more. Point this out.

Random Terms	
Sunshine	Dirt
Rain	Soil
Snow	Mud
Cloudy	Loam
Sleet	Earth
Cold	Ground
Warm	Dust

Grouped Terms	
Sunshine	Cloudy
Loam	Soil
Dust	Dirt
Sleet	Snow
Ground	Earth
Cold	Warm
Rain	Mud

Next, organize the class into groups of four to six students. Ideally, each group should have students with different abilities and prior knowledge.

Guided Practice

Ask students to group the terms from the warm-up exercise. Possible categories could include light, precipitation, temperature dependent, things underfoot, things from the sky. Any categories are acceptable as long as students have an appropriate rationale.

Application

Distribute one set of Word Sorts cards to each group. Direct each team to group the terms into three or more categories; each category must have at least three terms. Give students four to six minutes to sort the terms and label each category. Put the category label on the blank cards.

Have each team present their categories and how the items in the category fit together. It does not matter if the groups come up with the same answers; what is important is that they justify their groupings.

Post the various groupings in the classroom. Have students revisit their groups periodically and determine if they need to move any terms or change any categories based on what they have learned.

Extensions/Notes:

- For formative assessment, provide additional relevant terms for students to place in categories and justify the relationships they identify.
- Ask teams to identify important vocabulary terms from the unit or project and put them on cards. Distribute these card sets to other teams for them to organize and categories.
- For students needing extra support, provide category cards.
- Posted cards serve as a word wall for student reference.

For More Information on Strategy

Vacca, R.D., Vacca J. (1995). *Content area reading*. (5th. Ed.). Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman.