

Trash Talk:
Making Meaning & Vocabulary Construction
using Varian Johnson's novel, Playing the Cards You're Dealt (Oct. 2021).

Sample Lesson & resources prepared by: Alexis Linback
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Audience

- 7th grade (as challenging text) or
- 8th grade
 - As this novel contains themes/topics pertaining to trauma, it could potentially be triggering for some students (especially for younger aged students that have had less time learning how to process their emotions). Consequently, I would recommend this book for any student who shows interest in it, a very intentional 7th grade class (more scaffolding will be necessary), or for 8th grade students. Various ideas for adaptations throughout the lesson are provided in the teacher reference guide, but adapt as *you feel* necessary!

Learning Objectives

SWBAT:

- **Formulate & recognize different strategies to employ in clarifying the meaning of multiple-meaning words and complex phrases**
- **Engage in meaningful conversation about words and language**

Corresponding State Standards

7th:

a. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 7 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

(CCSS: L.7.4)

- i. Use context (for example: the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase. (CCSS: L.7.4a)
- ii. Use common, grade-appropriate Greek or Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (for example: belligerent, bellicose, rebel). (CCSS: L.7.4b)
- iii. Consult general and specialized reference materials (for example: dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning or its part of speech. (CCSS: L.7.4c)
- iv. Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (for example: by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary). (CCSS: L.7.4d)

8th: (the same skills above^ are transferred to 8th grade, but I have provided section a. for reference of that standard to save space here*)

a. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words or phrases based on grade 8 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
(CCSS: L.8.4)

Project Overview

- *Vocabulary* is the literacy pillar associated with this project*

Ideally, this project would begin the **same day or a day after** the class starts the novel to be continuously working on them throughout the course of the unit.

- After the first class-read, the teacher will facilitate conversation to access and assess students' knowledge and then give a brief, **mini-lecture on root words & context clues** using a couple of 'challenge' words from ch. 7 (pg 41) where "**trash talk**" is introduced to readers.
- The teacher will introduce the reference guides and resources to students, including dictionary, thesaurus, and will show students how to navigate and use the William Whitaker's words website provided in this document* (tutorial style*)
 - Teacher should familiarize themselves with the software before class begins-here is a video that might be helpful: [How To Use William Whitaker Words](#)
- Teacher will draw on a few examples from this encounter in the text (adjust for your students' ability levels-possible options are provided on the teacher guide*).
- The teacher will emphasize the use of **contextual clues** and **root-word** meanings to guide students in their word discoveries.
- The teacher will facilitate discussion to instruct students on **researching independently** and coming to some kind of answer or conclusion.
 - This might include going over credible sources and evaluating claims based on the quality and relevance of the evidence the author provides*
 - Extension lesson(s): [etymology research](#); [quality research sourcing](#)
- At this point, the instructor should scaffold class accordingly; if students are unfamiliar with research, teacher may opt to use the quality research sourcing lesson provided and/or to provide students with explicit instruction on etymology research, teacher may opt to present the etymology research lesson linked in this document*
- The teacher will never explicitly give students answers.
- The teacher will be required to redirect students that are struggling in some way*
 - In vocabulary practice, it may become apparent to the teacher that some students are struggling with the words because they are struggling with

reading itself. In this case, the teacher should assess the particular student(s) and suggest RTI from there (it is possible the student(s) need help with another pillar of literacy).

- Some students may claim to “know all of the words in the novel.” If this happens to be the case for your student(s), challenge their knowledge further by asking them to research the history of some of the words that they might be able to share with the rest of the class later during seminar discussion. (Students and teachers alike may be surprised about the history of certain words - this is super fun).
- Teacher will ask that students go into the section that they read from today and search for somewhere **between 3-5 words that they may or may not “know,” and then to use one or multiple of the strategies we practiced together (including context clues and root words*) to increase students' depth of vocabulary understanding.**
- At the end of the class, the teacher will facilitate discussion about what the students found in their research. During this discussion, the teacher will pay close attention to the quality of contributions and ask higher level thinking questions to students that encourage critical thinking in literacy practices. A list of sample questions can be found on the teacher guide,* but try not to be too strict and allow the students to lead the conversation.

Materials needed & Advanced preparation

- Novel: [Playing the Cards You're Dealt](#) (2021) by Varian Johnson
- Access to technology/internet (for independent & group research)
- Access to online and/or physical dictionary and thesaurus
 - [Dictionary](#)
 - [Thesaurus](#)
 - [William Whitaker's Words](#)
- [Vocabulary Research Organizer](#)
- [Instructor Reference Guide*](#)
 - **Mini-lecture:** [root words](#) & [context clues](#) // refresher of **independent research*** (multiple options will be given here because the depth of research content will depend on your classes*):
 - [In-Depth example](#)
 - [Explicitly Instructive/Scaffolded example](#)
 - [Slang, jargon, and colloquialisms*](#)
 - [Connotation v. Denotation*](#)
- [SAMPLE](#) Student Research Organizer for instructor reference*

Session Information

- Your reading timeline will probably look a little different for each of your classes depending on their ability levels, so adjust as you feel is necessary. An example reading schedule has been provided in the **teacher's guide*** for your reference.
- Ideal sessions for this would be blocked class periods, but shortened classes would work if you extend the total project length.
 - Recommendation: 8th graders spend 2-3 weeks with this project; 7th graders spend 3-4 weeks

Procedures (for more details, see teacher guide*)

1. Intro Activity

- a. **Opening Discussion** (See **Teacher Guide***)

Transition:

Students get into **small groups** of their choosing.

2. Main activity

- a. Students will be arranged in groups to complete the project (**groups of 2-3 students, if possible**)
- b. Students will offer teacher different ideas that could help them make meaning from text (teacher will extend learning depth using what the students' already know*)
- c. Students will be tasked to locate words unique to them/their group from this section of the novel to research further; the group members are to decide which strategy will be the most effective for each word they find and to write down their **justification for choosing that strategy over others**; **students are responsible** for executing their chosen strategy for practice in collaborative learning.
- d. Students will participate in and contribute to the end-of-class **socratic** (student-led,

Adaptations:

- Students will be allowed to choose how they want to access the text(s): electronically or a hard copy
- Students will be given the option to submit their exit ticket via a handwritten submission; a typed, online submission; or a voice recording of themselves speaking their answer.
- Extra time and other accommodations will be given to students that require it

teacher facilitated) in which they will discuss the many words they researched, their multiple meanings & uses, the strategies they found most effective for themselves, how they decided to use those strategies, and something new that they learned, OR how their previous understanding of a word (or words) changed after the lesson today*

Closure:

- **Furthering learning**
 - The teacher will facilitate brief discussion on **colloquialisms, slang, and euphemisms**, and help students link their relevance to Johnson's text.
 - e. Students will receive 'credit' for submitting their vocabulary organizer, which will serve as the students' **Exit Ticket** for the day.
 - i. Teacher will look for misconceptions and return feedback and/or address any issues prior to the next class meeting

Teacher tasks:

- **Provide detailed feedback on the students' exit ticket responses in a timely fashion**
- **Ensure that technology is accessible and working for tomorrow**
- **Print any materials required for class tomorrow**

About Me:

Alexis enjoys riding her bike, baking, and writing prose in her free time. She has recently begun guest-teaching in Colorado and is very excited to be back in-person. She resides in the River North district in Denver with her three-year old cat, Ashe.