Vocabulary to Increase Understanding

Sense and Sensibility

By Jane Austen


Context: This strategy should be used near the beginning of the novel (within the first few chapters) or even variations of it throughout the reading to help students understand the language in the story.

Purpose: This vocabulary activity teaches the reader to understand the language and culture of the text better. Looking up the words and writing them will help students remember them with greater accuracy. Creating their own sentences will help students apply their knowledge and test its use. By doing the worksheet, the students will practice finding the meaning of words not simply through dictionary definitions (which are often as difficult to understand as is the word itself), but through comparison and contrast. This teaches them to make predictions later while reading the text as they eliminate possible definitions that are unlikely. As the students are introduced to new words, learn their meaning, and use them, they will be able to understand the story better by using the words as clues within the context of the book.

Rationale: As this is a difficult text to read, this strategy gives students a basis of knowledge that will be important for them to have as they read. Knowledge of these vocabulary words will allow students to move beyond simple comprehension (as words are no longer the problem) and on to creating meaning within the text.

Directions:
1. Split the class into groups of threes (this should be about 8 groups for a class of 25 students) and have each group race to look up a list of five words (online or in a hand-held dictionary) and type or copy and paste and abbreviated definition of each into a word document. Once all the groups are done, have them email their definitions to you so you may compile to list. ALT: If there are not enough computers for the students have them write the definitions they find on overhead transparencies.
2. Students should share the definitions found by their peers and they copy them down on notebook paper. This becomes their notes. (Display the transparencies on the overhead projector for all the students to see.) Have students select three words and use each in a sentence that they write on their own paper. These sentences should relate to their own lives and interests. If necessary, they may refer to the definitions, pronunciations, and synonyms.
3. Ask volunteers to share a favorite sentence.
4. Pass out the worksheets and ask the students to complete them individually. Correct them together as a class. This tests their retention of the vocabulary. They should keep this worksheet and the vocabulary list together for future reference as they read.
**Materials Needed:** Worksheets, handouts, projector, overhead transparencies, and projector

**Time:** 50 minutes

**Assessment:** Reading the sentences the students created aloud to the class or to a small group will help check for correct usage and meaning and thereby understanding of the words.
## Vocabulary Challenge

### Sense and Sensibility

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Name: ____________________________ Class: ________________________ Date: __________

### A. Which Word Does NOT Belong?

**Directions:** Circle the word in each row that is LEAST similar in meaning to the other words in the row.

1. a. gregarious   b. cantankerous   c. caustic   d. rude
2. a. obliterate   b. glum        c. abolish   d. debunk
3. a. sanguine    b. cheery       c. jubilant   d. aesthetic
4. a. cajole      b. coax         c. didactic  d. provoke
5. a. insolent    b. impertinent  c. eclectic  d. caustic
6. a. allude      b. daring       c. audacity  d. boldness
7. a. banal       b. prosaic     c. profound  d. boring
8. a. urbane      b. polished     c. suave     d. miserly

### B. Identify Synonyms

**Directions:** In each group, circle the synonym (same meaning) of the word in bold.

1. adversary: a. neophyte b. friend c. cynic d. enemy
2. shrewd: a. intelligent b. hapless c. dull d. quagmire
3. fickle: a. wistful b. iniquity c. indecisive d. clandestine
4. pretentious: a. articulate b. sentimental c. precocious d. pompous
5. lavish: a. polemic b. opulent c. lofty d. sparse
6. endorse: a. scrutinize b. vicarious c. support d. oppose
7. entreaty: a. venerate b. plea c. zenith d. ruse
8. ambivalent: a. unprecedented b. substitution c. firm d. unsure

### C. Identify Antonyms

**Directions:** In each group, circle the antonym (opposite meaning) of the word in bold.

1. vilify: a. tacit b. extol c. decorum d. detest
2. cursory: a. superficial b. largess c. meticulous d. decipher
3. fetid: a. myriad b. smelly c. fresh d. serendipity
4. vacuous: a. empty b. vapid c. insightful d. vague
5. clear: a. incomprehensible b. obvious c. odor d. unfortunate
6. thwart: a. undermine b. supplant c. facilitate d. alleviate
7. deride: a. scorn b. debunk c. ridicule d. encourage
8. reckless: a. wild b. responsible c. brash d. thoughtless

Alarie Gifford (adapted from Teacher’s Edition Scholastic Scope), BYU, 2009