Desktop Teaching: A Vocabulary Strategy

*The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde (Signet Classics, 2004)

**Purpose of this Strategy**
The Desktop Teaching method is designed to strengthen students’ vocabulary as they research the definition, etymology and meaning of one particular word and then teach what they have learned to each other. This strategy works to help students remember the vocabulary words and their definitions in the reading.

**Directions**

**Step One: Create a list of vocabulary words**
Find words in the play that may be challenging for students. List them on a sheet of paper.
Examples of challenging words found in *The Importance of Being Earnest* are:
- Perambulator
- Expurgations
- Semi-recumbent
- Profligate
- Apoplexy
- Utilitarian
- Quixotic
- Misanthrope
- Horticulture
- Betoken
- Interment
- Effrontery
- Credulity
- Insuperable
- Ostentatiously
- Oxonian

**Step Two: Assign words to students**
Cut out the words and put them into a hat from which students will draw. Ensure that each student is assigned one vocabulary word.

**Step Three: Explain the assignment**
Hand out an assignment sheet that explicitly tells students what they need to do to complete the task. Answer any questions. Instruct them to come prepared next class with information regarding their word’s definition and origin, as well as anything that will help them teach the meaning of the word – food, props, pictures, etc.

**Step Four: Show an example**
Display a correct example of the assignment for the class to see how the assignment should be done.

**Step Five: Let the students teach each other**
The following class period, arrange the desks into four large rows with two rows facing each other. Instruct the students to present their findings in under two minutes. When time is up, ring a bell and two of the four rows will move over one seat. During the class period, this rotation will continue until each student has had an opportunity to learn about each new vocabulary word.

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Assessment
The assessment for this activity can be informal. Write one of the vocabulary words on the board and call on a few students to say what they have learned about that word. This process can be repeated as many times as desired. Another option for assessment is a short quiz in which the vocabulary terms are presented and students must list their definitions.

Desktop Teaching: Assignment Sheet
Each of you has drawn from the bag and selected a vocabulary word from the play we are reading. This is how Desktop Teaching works:

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1. You will write your word on an index card given to you. The word needs to be fairly large so it can be easily seen. If you want to draw on the index card you can do that as well, but it is not required.

2. You need to write the word on the front side of the card, along with the definition of the word on the back of the card, in large enough print so that it may be easily seen.

3. You are required to teach the meaning of the word, along with its origin. You may use anything to help teach the meaning of the word – food, props, pictures, etc. I will show you some examples.

4. You will do this in front of the class. Whew! You will be seated in desks facing each other, and each person in the class will rotate from desk to desk. You will present your word to each person. One group will present, and one will be presented to. When each person has presented, the group will switch places.

5. When you have your partner facing you, you will say the word, say the definition, and then ask them to repeat the word and the definition. You will then proceed to show your picture, use your props, etc. to help us understand the definition of the word. Each time you present your word it should only take about 2 minutes or less. You may use anything to help with presenting your definition (i.e., music, food, etc.).

6. You’ll get the hang of this. This is a really fun activity, and one that will help you remember your vocabulary words and their definitions.

This activity is worth 100 points, and each of you is responsible for helping the rest of us learn the word that you have. Please come prepared to class. If you need an idea for your word, just ask me!