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BUILDING VOCABULARY

with Greek
2nd Edition Latin Roots

**A Professional Guide to Word Knowledge and
Vocabulary Development**

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Forewords

Having used the first edition of this book with my students for years, I can tell you firsthand that students actually begin to view themselves as geniuses (and rightly so) as they identify words based on Greek and Latin roots. For example, they learn that *val* means “strong,” and they are elated when they find the root in other words: *valiant*, *valor*, *validate*, and *valedictorian*.

So, be prepared for your students to emphatically notify you (repeatedly!) when they find a newly learned Greek or Latin root in the context of their reading, and remember it is a good thing—your students are excited about vocabulary! Arguably, if you can get them to like learning new words, your job is practically done; students will pay more attention to new and unfamiliar words in their reading, and they will likely attempt to understand those words all on their own. Remember, the job of a teacher is making oneself progressively unnecessary.

The second edition of *Building Vocabulary with Greek and Latin Roots* has even more to offer teachers, reading specialists, curriculum coordinators, and others who are charged with the difficult task of vocabulary instruction. Much like the first edition, this text is reader friendly, provides useful insights about planning instruction,



and—my favorite—includes ideas for having fun while playing with words. There are several features of this new edition that are worth noting. First, like a dedicated group of educators, the authors updated the instructional frameworks and activities to reflect the most recent research on vocabulary instruction. In addition, they show how to help students “flex” with words by understanding that the same word can have multiple meanings (“vanilla *extract*” and “*extract* a tooth”) and both a literal and a figurative meaning (“*extract* a tooth” and “*extract* the truth”). This edition also provides considerations for the youngest of students, diverse learners, those who need creative extensions, and those learning English. For teachers curious about how this type of vocabulary program actually plays out in the classroom, there’s an entire chapter devoted to just that. These additions, and many others, make the second edition an even stronger tool to guide your vocabulary instruction.

The power of knowing roots came home to me not long ago, when I visited a private preschool in Texas. I sat in a circle with three- and four-year-olds for a science lesson. Naturally, I sat next to the most energetic boy in the bunch—it’s my comfort zone. The lesson was on viviparous animals. The teacher began by showing flashcards of animals, and students either exclaimed “viviparous” or “oviparous.” Admittedly, I had no idea what was going on. I asked the fidgety genius next to me, and he clued me in: “Mister, viviparous animals have live babies, and oviparous animals lay eggs.” Because of his tone, I halfway expected him to end his explanation with a sarcastic “Duh!” I was a bit ashamed, and the teacher politely helped me understand the Latin roots: *viv* means “alive,” *ovo* means “egg,” and *parus* means “bearing.” It all made sense. At that point, I was able to join the rest of the group by viewing myself as a genius.

Chase Young, Ph.D.
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As I began to read this book, the phrase that caught my eye was “divide and conquer.” What better way is there to help teachers and students at all grade levels learn how to make sense of difficult, multisyllabic words than by dissecting them? *Building Vocabulary with Greek and Latin Roots* is a book that does just this. It shows us how to help students understand the meanings of word parts in order to learn new words. This book is an invaluable resource for classroom teachers, content-area teachers, reading specialists, staff developers, curriculum coordinators, and lovers of language. It provides us with important understandings about the English language that most of us did not grow up with and may not have acquired in our schooling.

Did you know that 90 percent of English words with more than one syllable are Latin based and most of the remaining 10 percent are Greek based? Did you know that a single root can help us understand 5 to 20 related English words? *Building Vocabulary with Greek and Latin Roots* is packed with this kind of information. Because the English language and the content areas contain so many multisyllabic and technical words, teachers of language arts, science, social studies, and mathematics will find this book particularly helpful in supporting their students as they learn to discern word meanings.

Several aspects of this easy-to-read book also caught my eye, making it a valuable addition to my teaching library. First, it provides a synopsis of the theory and research that support teaching multisyllabic words by dissecting roots (prefixes, bases, and suffixes). Second, the book offers ideas for planning vocabulary instruction and includes activities, such as Word Spokes, Wordo, Scattergories, and Making and Writing Words, to engage students in actively understanding roots as they become independent word learners. Third, the book includes valuable resources, such as extensive lists of commonly taught roots and their meanings, professional resources for teachers, websites, dictionaries, and sources for lesson plans. Finally, as I stopped to reflect at the end of each chapter, it occurred to me that this book is a good resource for a teachers’ study group. It is well worth the time spent reading and discussing with colleagues because the ideas it holds are basic to rethinking and transforming vocabulary instruction.

The information in *Building Vocabulary with Greek and Latin Roots* is critical to being a good vocabulary teacher at all grade levels. I believe the authors have written a terrific book that can help classroom teachers, content-area teachers, reading specialists, staff developers, curriculum coordinators, and lovers of language as they support students in learning how to “divide and conquer” multisyllabic words.

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Preface to the Second Edition

In the introduction to the first edition of this book, we asked our readers about a new word: *locavore*. We asked them to guess what this word meant and to speculate about the clues you might use to figure it out. *Locavore* was one of 10 buzzwords of 2007, according to *Time* magazine (Cruz 2007).

Language changes! What was a brand-new word a few years ago is now in common usage. This is just one of the many challenges associated with vocabulary instruction: language is fluid, and vocabulary is dynamic. Other challenges abound: Which words should we teach? How can we best teach them? How can we make sure we reach all learners? These are important questions, for we know that good vocabulary instruction will support much of the other learning students do in school. This is why we have written a second edition.

In these pages, you will find research-based practices that can help your students develop their vocabularies. Throughout, we emphasize using word roots (prefixes, suffixes, and bases) as an efficient and effective way to build vocabulary and word awareness. For example, even the new word *locavore* is built on the Latin bases *vor*

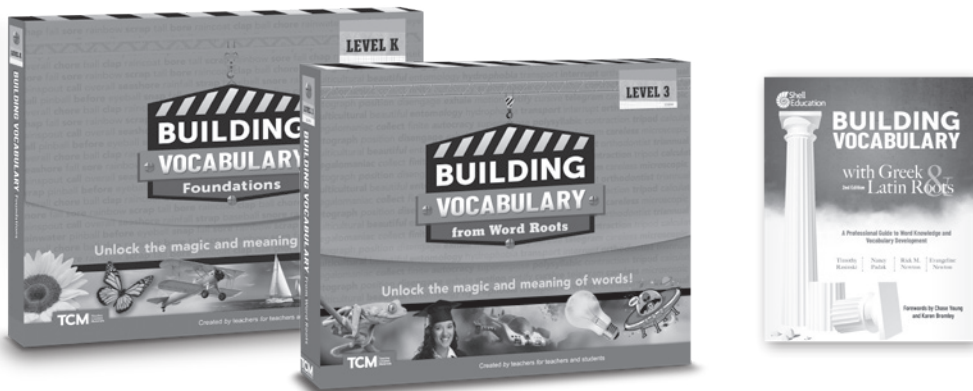


“eat”) and *loc* (“place”). The awareness of how words work from a roots approach is an invaluable asset for lifelong learning.

In the second edition, we incorporate the latest research in morphological vocabulary instruction, underscoring the importance of teaching word patterns. We present updated instructional models and strategies from a roots perspective, drawing on the experience of teachers who use this approach. We also highlight differentiation strategies, including suggestions for assisting English learners, particularly those who speak Spanish. Moreover, we have added two new chapters. One provides guidelines on how to move beginning and early readers from sound to meaning patterns. The other explains how “spelling matters” can be used in vocabulary instruction, offering useful tips on connecting correct spelling with correct meaning. Finally, we have updated appendices of additional resources for students and teachers.

We are grateful for the scores of teachers who have shared their vocabulary instruction stories with us over the years. This book reflects all their suggestions. We particularly thank Dr. Joanna Newton, who has taught and supported the implementation of roots-based vocabulary practices in many classrooms. Insights from her work with teachers as a literacy specialist and through professional development workshops are integral to this book.

Our instructional series *Building Vocabulary* details yearlong word-learning routines for students in grades K–11. If you are using the *Building Vocabulary* curriculum in your classroom, this book will provide you with adaptations that you and your students will find beneficial. You will find many references to the series, as the updates made there are reflected in theory and practice in this second edition. Alternatively, if you are using another vocabulary series (or none at all), this book will provide new insights against which you can evaluate your current program or develop a new one. Happy reading!



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