

LESSON
6

Connecting Words to a Text's Concepts



Build Concepts



4a, 4b, 4d, 5a, 5b, 5c, 6

Complex Text:

Excerpt From *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* by Frederick Douglass

Concept T-Chart

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

DIRECTIONS:

- Think of four words or short phrases that come to your mind when you think of "slavery."
- In the first column of the chart, write the word or phrase.
- In the second column, explain how the word or phrase connects to slavery.

WORD OR PHRASE	CONNECTION TO "SLAVERY"
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

Reprinted from *Vocabulary in Comprehension* by Laura Robb, Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin. Reproduction authorized only for the local school site or nonprofit organization that has purchased this book.

If at any one time of my life more than another I was made to drink the bitterest dregs of slavery, that time was during the first six months of my stay with Mr. Covey. We were worked in all weathers. It was never too hot or too cold; it could never rain, blow, hail, or snow, too hard for us to work in the field. Work, work, work, was scarcely more the order of the day than of the night. The longest days were too short for him, and the shortest nights too long for him. I was somewhat unmanageable when I first went there, but a few months of this discipline tamed me. Mr. Covey succeeded in breaking me. I was broken in body, soul, and spirit. My natural elasticity was crushed,

my intellect languished, the disposition to read departed; the cheerful spark that lingered about my eye died; the dark night of slavery closed in upon me; and behold a man transformed into a brute!

Note: See a longer excerpt of this narrative memoir at www.corwin.com/vocabulary-iscomprehension

Goals: The benefit of this vocabulary exercise is having students think through the connections between a word or phrase and the concept. By making connections, students can deepen their understanding of words in a text as well as related words they suggest. By sharing connections, students provide peers with snippets of stories and experiences that can support recall and a clearer understanding of a word or phrase. The selected words are *languished*, *disposition*, and *lingered*.

Materials: Copies of excerpt from *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* and the reproducible Concept T-Chart for each student (see www.corwin.com/vocabularyiscomprehension), chart paper or a computer and whiteboard

- ▶ Give students the excerpt from *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* and read it out loud.
- ▶ Ask students to identify words they don't understand.
- ▶ Have students read the sentence that contains each tough word and use context clues to figure out the word's meaning. In some cases, students might have to read the sentence that comes before or after the word to determine meaning. Having students do this prior to reading the selection on their own can help you decide whether the text is too difficult for them. If students need a more accessible text, choose one from online or your class library.
- ▶ Skip this lesson if students are advanced readers and understand the vocabulary.

Day 1

- ▶ Have students turn to a partner and discuss what slavery means to them. Record students' ideas on chart paper or in a computer that projects onto a whiteboard.

Day 2

Here's what eighth graders suggested: "no rights, property, can't make decisions, controlled by a master, often abused and tortured."

- ▶ Write the words you selected on the chalkboard, chart paper, or a whiteboard. I write *languished*, *disposition*, *lingered*.
- ▶ Organize students into pairs.

- ▶ Help students say the words and ask them if they think they know anything about each word.
- ▶ Write an accessible sentence for each word that uses the word the way the text uses it.
- ▶ Have students use each sentence to figure out the word's meanings.
- ▶ Here are the three sentences I post:

My muscles languished because I could not exercise.

Because I missed so much school, the disposition to study for the unit test was not there.

The odor of pot roast cooking lingered in the kitchen and dining room.
- ▶ Invite pairs to share with classmates what they learned about each word.

Day 3

- ▶ Give students the excerpt from *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* and read it out loud.
- ▶ Ask students to read the selection once to get the gist and a second time to recall details of Douglass's life as a slave.
- ▶ Tell students that the class will start a T-chart about the concept of *slavery*.
- ▶ Explain to students that they can find words and phrases about slavery in the selection, and they can offer other words and phrases that relate to slavery from their experiences.
- ▶ Provide a model for students. Here's what I say for *bitterest dregs*:

Dregs can be coffee grinds or tea leaves at the bottom of a cup. They can also be bits and pieces at the bottom of a bottle of wine. This connects to slavery because Douglass's master, Mr. Covey, made him feel the bitter part of being a slave—whippings, long days of work, not enough time to eat.
- ▶ Invite pairs to use text details to connect *tamed* and *discipline* to the concept of slavery. Here's what students said:

tamed	Made Douglass listen—tamed implies taking a spirited person and training them to listen to orders
discipline	Owners disciplined or made slaves obey by beating them, depriving them of food and sleep, and making them work day and night.

Eighth-grade students connect words to concept of slavery

Day 4

- ▶ Ask students to complete the reproducible Concept T-Chart.

Tips for English Language Learners and Developing Readers

- ▶ Organize students into groups of three.
- ▶ Find an alternate text if the selection is at students' frustration level.

- ▶ Read the selection out loud for ELL students and developing readers who can then read the selection independently.
- ▶ Ask students to identify words that are unfamiliar and discuss these with students.
- ▶ Work one-to-one with students and help them generate a list of words for the reproducible.

How I Might Follow Up This Lesson

- ▶ If students have difficulty connecting words to the concept of slavery, I'd review the meaning of slavery and think aloud to show how I use what I know about slavery to connect a word or phrase to it.



To help ELL students and developing readers, organize students into groups of three and ask them to discuss any words from the text they are unfamiliar with.