



Presentation

Greek Myths: Understanding Word Roots and Meanings

Pocomoke Middle School, Maryland • February 2009

Topic: Adolescent Literacy

Practice: Vocabulary Instruction

Highlights

- Carlton Cartwright, a seventh-grade integrated language arts teacher, incorporates vocabulary instruction in his classroom on a daily basis, using planned lessons, informal opportunities, and multiple exposures to words to help students understand meaning.
- Pocomoke's seventh-grade unit on Greek mythology provides students with opportunities to learn about word origins, root words, prefixes, and suffixes.
- In this vocabulary lesson, students apply their vocabulary knowledge in varied contexts, including representing word meanings kinesthetically through voice and movement, using print and online resources to gather information about words derived from Greek myths, and writing riddle poems related to Greek myths.
- Carlton uses a number of vocabulary strategies during this lesson, such as clearly explaining the meaning of new words, starting with what students already know about a word, modeling the use of context cues and how to use print and internet resources, and asking students to use a graphic organizer to display a word's etymology, definition, related words, a graphic or symbol, and at least one example of a modern usage.

About the Site

Pocomoke Middle School

Pocomoke City, MD

Demographics

49% White

47% Black

2% Hispanic

1% Asian

1% Native American

56% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

0% English Language Learners

12% Special Education

Pocomoke Middle School takes a schoolwide approach to meeting the needs of each of their students. Vocabulary instruction, comprehension strategies, and learning aids such as graphic organizers are a part of every content area classroom. Pocomoke staff work together to improve students' reading skills through:

- Adopting a schoolwide emphasis on vocabulary instruction;
- Training content teachers and implementing explicit literacy instruction across all subject areas, including science, social studies, math, and art;
- Using graphic organizers across the content areas to support the development of reading comprehension;
- Engaging students in text discussion to promote higher levels of understanding;
- Supporting staff collaboration through student work review discussions;
- Using assessment data to identify needs and inform instruction for struggling readers; and
- Providing reading interventions for students reading below grade level through targeted classroom instruction and supplemental reading classes designed to meet the needs of students requiring more intensive interventions.

Full Transcript

Slide 1

Welcome to Greek Myths: Understanding Word Roots and Meanings.

Slide 2

I'm Carlton Cartwright, and I teach seventh grade Language Arts at Pocomoke Middle School.

Slide 3

Vocabulary is a priority in my class because, first, I love words myself. And I think, as a teacher, one of the easiest ways to get students to see and to feel enthusiasm for learning in general is through the teacher's enthusiasm.

Slide 4

We're currently in our Greek mythology unit, and we are actually ending the unit. And one of the goals of the unit itself, beyond just literature of Greek mythology, is for students to understand that many of the words, the vocabulary in our language, actually come from Greek Mythology. As we've been reading various myths, one of the focuses for each story has simply been what one or two words that we currently use in our language come from this particular story.

Slide 5

So, what the students have done is they go to a website. The purpose of this particular website is for them to get information about the words, research the origin of various words from our language. We model the process using the online resource simply because they're able to see there's more than one way you can find out where a word comes from or how a word functions than just using the dictionary.

Slide 6

Now that I've modeled the process using a specific group of words, the students, each of them, will be assigned a different list of four to five words, and I chose each of the lists based on the student's ability or readiness.

Slide 7

Then, what the students will do is they have a worksheet that goes—just check for understanding, that they're getting what they're doing. And then the final product from all of this is that they'll choose one word, and the way that they'll demonstrate their understanding of that word is that they'll actually write sort of a riddle poem that demonstrates their understanding of the history or the origin and the derivation

of that specific word.

Slide 8

Another thing we have done is we play a game of Simon Says, and that's kind of connecting to the kinesthetic learners of being able to, through movement, and I say you know, "Simon Says show me titanic." And you have some kids who'll get up, arms like this or another kid actually stands up on his chair. He was a shorter kid, so he stands up kind of big, and I say, "Simon Says stop." And then I say, "Well, why are you standing up on your chair?"

"Well, I am being big like Titanic."

"Oh, why are you doing this?"

"I am showing something large."

And so, that is also an assessment of their understanding of the word.

Slide 9

A lot of our use of new words really comes from discussion. So, as we go along and even maybe a week or so after we discuss the word, I say, "Remember that's like that other word." We also have in the classroom a word wall. It becomes a resource for students, and I actually talk with them about how they might use it, and that's another way of getting the students to realize, "Hey, those are words we can use." Again, to build their vocabulary but also to give them more power with their writing. And that, most of the time, is a teachable moment. The student uses one word. Well, what would be a related word or how would it relate to a word? So, it's just multiple exposures.

Slide 10

I'll be there monitoring, answering questions. And through my discussions with students, I'll then be able to see is the student totally getting it. That'll also give me some guidance as to where I will go from that point.

Slide 11

The mark of true word understanding is being able to apply the word in different settings, like in writing or reading or speaking. By them writing a riddle poem lets me know that they can apply it and, therefore, they know it and own it. It's the culmination of an entire unit, but a different way for me to assess that the kids know the origin of words other than just a paper-and-pencil test. And the kids like writing poetry, so that

was kind of one of the reasons why I tailored this particular assessment as well.

Slide 12

To learn more about Greek Myths: Understanding Word Roots and Meanings, please explore the additional resources on the Doing What Works website.