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Lesson in Action

AT A GLANCE

Before Reading

- Review strategies for approaching new words.
- List strategies on the whiteboard and publish in class wiki.
- Display links to various online resources.
- Explain how the resources can help uncover meaning.

During Reading

- Model word analysis strategies with an unfamiliar word that will appear frequently in upcoming readings from archeology website.
- Elicit a list of sound alike words and model using these words to find and define a common root.
- Use an online resource to define a root.
- Display images illustrating the new word.
- Arrange students into groups and have them review assigned sections of social studies website.

After Reading

- Have students collect information, images, and key vocabulary words.
- Have teams organize their information into the categories of important facts, key details, and vocabulary words.
- Have class share what they've learned, adding content to the class wiki.
- Create list of new vocabulary words.

Word Analysis: Finding Clues in Words

Context

Mr. Chen's Grade 5 class is starting a unit on Ancient India. To learn about the cities, they will use [Harappa.com \(http://www.harappa.com\)](http://www.harappa.com) to explore audio, video, text, and full-color photos of artifacts and excavation sites. Mr. Chen realizes that his struggling readers will be encountering challenging terms. He wants to give them strategies they can use to tackle unfamiliar words. They are familiar with roots, prefixes, and suffixes.

Common Core State Standards

- ▶ [CCSS.ELA.RI.5.4 \(http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RI/5/4\)](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RI/5/4) Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a *Grade 5 topic or subject area*.
- ▶ [CCSS.ELA.RF.5.3 \(http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RF/5/3\)](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RF/5/3) Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.
- ▶ [CCSS.ELA.RF.5.3a \(http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RF/5/3/a\)](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RF/5/3/a) Use combined knowledge of all letter-sound correspondences, syllabication patterns, and morphology (e.g., roots and affixes) to read unfamiliar multisyllabic words accurately, both in context and out of context.

Lesson Objective

Students will recognize root words, prefixes, and suffixes, and they will learn to apply this knowledge to identifying words and building academic vocabulary.

Technology

- ▶ Harappa.com (<http://www.harappa.com/>) to explore audio, video, text, and photos
- ▶ Online reference tools [Visual Thesaurus \(http://www.visualthesaurus.com/\)](http://www.visualthesaurus.com/), [Merriam-Webster Online \(http://www.merriam-webster.com/\)](http://www.merriam-webster.com/), [PrefixSuffix.com \(http://prefixsuffix.com/\)](http://prefixsuffix.com/), [Online Etymology Dictionary \(http://www.etymonline.com/\)](http://www.etymonline.com/) to help students understand word parts
- ▶ Classroom wiki to record and share words
- ▶ Interactive whiteboard to display content and engage students

Assessment

- ▶ Informal student-teacher check-ins of ongoing tasks
- ▶ Review of the classroom wiki

Mr. Chen’s Class in Action

Before Reading

Mr. Chen asks students to think about past lessons and share some of the strategies they can use when they come across new words. As students offer strategies, he lists them on his whiteboard as follows, in the class wiki.

- ▶ A “morpheme” is the smallest meaningful part of a word.
- ▶ Any word can contain morphemes, and the same morphemes show up in lots of words.
- ▶ When you know roots, prefixes, and suffixes, you have a head start on figuring out what a word means.
- ▶ Even if you have never seen a word before, its parts can tell you a lot.

Then, one by one, Mr. Chen displays and reviews the online resources they can use:

- ▶ [Visual Thesaurus](#)
- ▶ [Merriam-Webster Online](#)
- ▶ [PrefixSuffix.com](#)
- ▶ [Online Etymology Dictionary](#)

He discusses again how the resources will help them find word meanings, information about morphemes, and other reference materials to help them build their knowledge.

During Reading

Mr. Chen brings up a word that he knows his students will read often as they learn about the civilizations of the Indus River Valley: “terra-cotta.” Several future lessons on ancient civilizations will feature this word. He thinks it’s a good word to use as a starting point for the lesson.

He asks his students if anyone knows what the word means. After a few guesses, he can see that his students are uncertain. He asks his students how they might approach figuring out this new word based on word analysis strategies. “Let’s look at the first part of the word—‘terra,’” he says. “Can anyone think of some other words that are based on the same root?”

Students raise their hands and offer several suggestions:

- ▶ Terrible
- ▶ Terrarium
- ▶ Extraterrestrial

Mr. Chen writes each suggestion on the whiteboard at the front of the room and adds one of his own: “all-terrain vehicle.” Next, he prompts students to look at each word to see if they have similar meanings. “Do terrible, terrarium, extraterrestrial, and all-terrain vehicle have anything in common? Do they seem like they might have similar meanings?” He asks the students who have volunteered words to help them out with the meaning. “Devon, you suggested ‘terrarium’—what is that? Is it something like an aquarium?”

Devon replies, “Yeah, I have one at home for my snake—it’s like a fish tank, but you don’t put any water in it, just dirt and stuff.” “Janet, what about you,” asks Mr. Chen. “You suggested ‘extraterrestrial’; where did you get that?” “I like reading science fiction,” Janet

responds, “and I watch things like *Star Trek* and *E.T.* with my mom; extraterrestrial is another word for alien.”

Mr. Chen muses, “Hmm, so we have one word that means a fish tank that you put dirt or earth in, and one word that means alien, or a creature that isn’t from the planet Earth. What about this other one I suggested, does anyone know what an ‘all-terrain vehicle’ is? Or maybe you’ve heard ‘ATV’ before?”

Anna raises her hand and shares, “When we go to my cousin’s house, we ride four-wheelers, and my uncle calls them *ATVs*.” Mr. Chen prompts Anna to go further, asking, “Where do you ride them?” “Through the woods on dirt tracks near my uncle’s house,” Anna says.

“So looking at all these words, what do they seem to have in common?” Mr. Chen asks. “They all seem to be about dirt, or earth, or soil. Now let’s look back at the last word on our list—‘terrible.’ Does this word seem to relate to the others? No? So, can we assume that terrible doesn’t share the same root as these other words? Now we have figured out that the root ‘terra’ might relate to something having to do with the earth.”

Mr. Chen shows the class how to use a website to look up “cotta” and to arrive at a definition of “terra-cotta,” meaning literally “cooked earth.” He connects this definition to the work his students have done in art class with clay. “In a minute,” Mr. Chen tells his class, “we’ll start looking at examples of terra-cotta figurines from the Indus River Valley.”

Mr. Chen uses the whiteboard to project the section on terra-cotta figurines for the class.



[Image source](#)

Students continue to flip through the images. They talk about where scientists found the clay figures and what people from long ago might have used the figures for.

Next, Mr. Chen assigns students to work in small groups of three or four to explore the materials on the website. He assigns each team a different section of materials to review:

- ▶ A unicorn seal
- ▶ Ancient Indus city walks: Mohenjo-daro

- ▶ Ancient Indus city walks: Harappa
- ▶ The latest discoveries

Some of the content is above the students' grade level, so Mr. Chen pairs students carefully so that struggling students will have support.

After Reading

Over the course of several class periods, Mr. Chen's students work on collecting information, images, and key vocabulary words on the cities. Each team is responsible for organizing their information into the following categories: important facts, key details, and vocabulary words. Mr. Chen then leads the class in sharing what they've learned. Together, students identify important information to add to the class wiki. (Using the wiki ensures that students have easy access to the information compiled by all class members, with appropriate supports such as online dictionaries and text-to-speech software.)

Mr. Chen has already created several web pages. These pages address art, architecture, important findings, ideas about what the ancient Harappan civilizations were like, discoveries of the ancient cities, and key vocabulary words. Each student team has compiled a list of unfamiliar words they came across in their reading and has provided information about definitions, including roots, prefixes, and suffixes.

Reflection

Mr. Chen draws on several sources as he looks back on students' learning and analyzes his teaching. Reviewing the classroom wiki helps him recall the lesson's successes and challenges. At the end of each day, he jotted down what he learned from his many check-ins and listen-ins. Given the story these sources tell, Mr. Chen is satisfied that he has met his RI.5.4- and RF.5.3-related goals for students. Almost all of the students are becoming more proficient at figuring out the meaning of domain-specific words. Their word analysis skills are also growing stronger, and they are becoming adept users of the technology tools he has shared.