WORD CONSCIOUSNESS
SAMPLE LESSON
Possible Sentences

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

INTRODUCTION

The Possible Sentences activity is designed to improve students' comprehension and retention of what they learn (Stahl & Kapinus, 1991). It taps into students' prior knowledge and asks them to make predictions about sentences they might read in a particular passage or chapter. This instructional activity was found to improve students' recall of word meaning and passage comprehension (Stahl & Kapinus, 1991). It is easy to implement; works well with narrative, expository, and content area text; and requires little preparation.

PREPARATION

Preview the text, looking for academic words, or challenging words that students are likely to see and use often.

Choose 6–8 words that are related to the content of the text and might be difficult for students.

Choose 4–6 words that students likely know and can use to form logical sentences with the more difficult words.

Write the 10–12 words on the board or overhead.

FIGURE 76. SAMPLE WORD LIST FOR A PASSAGE OR CHAPTER ABOUT FREDERICK DOUGLASS.

Renowned	Slavery
Eloquence	Escape
Abolitionist	Freedom
Emancipation	Brutality
Advocate	Persuade
Recruit	

OBJECTIVE

The students will use prior knowledge to make predictions about sentences they might read in a particular passage or chapter.

MATERIALS

- Chapter or passage.

- Overhead projector, chart paper, or chalkboard.

DAILY REVIEW

Sample Review of Narrative Text

Teacher:
We have been reading the novel, "Amos Fortune". Can anyone give me a word to describe Amos?

Accept responses.

How do we know that Amos is patient? Courageous? … etc.

Sample Review of Expository Text

Teacher:
You have been studying the Civil War in your social studies class. Who can tell me one thing that you have learned about the Civil War?

Accept responses.

Who are some of the important people involved in this war?

Accept and discuss responses.

HELPFUL HABIT	Repeat students' accurate responses. For example, if a student responds, "Abraham Lincoln," you would immediately say, "Yes, that is correct, Cyndi. Abraham Lincoln was an important Civil War figure." And then extend, "Can anyone tell me why Abraham Lincoln was important?"

STATE OBJECTIVE/PURPOSE

Genre: Narrative or expository

> **Teacher:**
> Today we are going to read a passage (or chapter) about Frederick Douglass. Frederick Douglass was an important figure of the Civil War. He was born into slavery. During his lifetime, he escaped from slavery, became known worldwide as an advocate for freedom and the anti-slavery movement, worked for the national government, and had a personal relationship with Abraham Lincoln. Before we read about him, we will review some words included in the passage about him. We will use those words to generate a list of possible sentences that we might read in the chapter. Using your prior knowledge to make predictions about the ideas that will be discussed in the chapter will help you remember important words and understand what you read.

MODEL AND TEACH

Grouping: Whole class

Refer to the 10–12 words written on the board or overhead. Read each word aloud and have students repeat words after you.

HELPFUL HABIT	Even struggling readers like the challenge of reading a few words in front of the class. After you have read each word and had the entire class repeat them, stop and ask for a volunteer to read the first row or first five words. Then ask for another volunteer to read the final five. Next, ask a volunteer to read the entire list and maybe a final volunteer to read the list starting with the last word and moving to the first. This takes only 2 or 3 minutes, but it helps the students solidify the pronunciation of the words. If students have difficulty pronouncing a word, model reading the word one syllable at a time, then reading the whole word, and have students do the same after you.

Ask students to raise their hands if they know what any of the words mean.

Accept responses and write students' definitions next to the word. Clarify or correct students' definitions through questioning. Example: A student says that *escape* means "to run away". Ask follow-up questions to encourage the student to extend the definition.

> **Teacher:**
> Is escaping a special kind of running away? For example, if my dog was playing catch with me in the back yard and ran away from me each time I threw the ball, would I say he was escaping? Why not?

If any words are undefined, you may provide a brief, student-friendly definition next to those words.

> **Teacher:**
> I am thinking about what I already know about slavery and the Civil War. We are about to read a passage (or chapter) about Frederick Douglass. I'm asking myself what type of sentences might we read. Using our preview words, I will predict some possible sentences we might find in our passage. Each sentence must contain at least two of our preview words.

For example, I might think, "I see the word *abolish* in *abolitionist*. *Abolish* means 'to get rid of,' and the abolitionists worked to get rid of slavery." So I could write: "Frederick Douglass supported the abolitionists, who fought to get rid of slavery."

GUIDED PRACTICE

Grouping: Whole class and partners

1. Brainstorm possible sentences.

   At this point, the board or overhead might look like this:

FIGURE 77. SETUP FOR POSSIBLE SENTENCES EXAMPLE.

Preview Words
Slavery: Being forced to work for somebody else.
Escape: To free yourself; get away from danger or harm.
Renowned: Famous.
Persuade: Make someone believe something.
Brutality: Cruel behavior.
Abolitionist: A person who wanted to get rid of slavery.
Eloquence: Speaking with expression and persuasion.
Freedom: Ability to live the way you choose.
Emancipation: The process of setting someone free.
Recruit: To get a person to be involved in or work for a cause.
Advocate: To support or speak in favor of something.
Example Possible Sentence: Frederick Douglass supported the abolitionists who fought to get rid of slavery.

With partners, ask students to think of and write another possible sentence they might read in the chapter or passage. In this way, students are essentially predicting ideas that will be emphasized in the passage. Remind the class that a possible sentence must make sense and include at least two preview words.

Give students 2–3 minutes to think and write. Circulate around the room and be available for guidance and clarification.

Return to the board or overhead and ask several students to share their sentence. Write all possible sentences on the board or overhead. Do not discuss at this point whether the sentence is correct.

Repeat steps 1–3 a few more times or until all preview words are used at least once.

2. Read the chapter or passage.

With their partners, have students read the passage (or chapter) aloud to each other. Direct pairs to alternate reading one paragraph at a time.

After each paragraph has been read, ask the reader to tell his or her partner briefly what the paragraph was about.

Circulate the room, pausing at each pair of students to listen to their reading.

3. Discuss and revise possible sentences.

After students have read the passage (or chapter), return to the sentences on the board.

Think aloud: Model the thinking process for the students. Read a sentence and decide, based on the reading, whether the sentence makes sense. If it does, leave it alone. If it does not, think aloud ways to change the sentence to make it correct. For example, if the word *renowned* is used incorrectly in a possible sentence, you might say, "I'm going to look back at the chapter and see how the word *renowned* is used." Then locate and read examples from the text. Discuss how to modify the sentence to make it make sense.

4. Partner practice: Ask students to work with a partner to read through and modify the remaining possible sentences.

INDEPENDENT PRACTICE

Grouping: Partners

Follow the procedure before reading a selection or a chapter:

1. Preview text for academic words.

2. Write target and known words on the board.

3. As a class, discuss the meaning of each word.

4. With their partners, students generate a list of possible sentences using the procedures described above.

5. Record sentences on the board.

6. With their partners, students read the selection or chapter.

7. With their partners, students read each sentence and decide whether it is logical and based on the word meaning and what was read in the selection or chapter. If a sentence does not make sense, students are expected to change it.

8. Conduct a class discussion. Read through each possible sentence and discuss its accuracy.

GENERALIZATION

Teacher:
Did thinking of possible sentences help you understand our reading about Frederick Douglas?

Student:
Yes. It made me pay attention. When I saw one of the words we used in the possible sentences, I looked carefully because I wanted to see whether I used it correctly in the possible sentence.

Teacher:
Good. Do you think you could make possible sentences in your other classes?

Student:
Yes. We could make a list of the boldface words in the chapter before we start reading. Then we could think of what types of sentences we might read in the chapter and make possible sentences with the boldface words.

Teacher:
Very good thinking. When you make predictions about what you are going to read, it helps you to anticipate what you are going to learn and to understand the text better, and when you use the vocabulary words in your predictions, it helps you to learn the meaning of the new words.

MONITOR STUDENT LEARNING

Grouping: Whole group

Check students' revisions of possible sentences for accuracy and understanding of word meaning.

PERIODIC REVIEW/MULTIPLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRACTICE

Have students generate additional sentences or a story using the vocabulary words. Assign points when a student uses one of the vocabulary words correctly during class discussion. Explain to students that they "own" their words when they can use them in writing or conversation.

Word Pairs

Using current and previously studied vocabulary words, make a chart like the following sample.

Figure 78. Sample Word Pairs Chart: Uncompleted.

	Similar	Different	No Relation
renowned unknown			
slavery emancipation			
abolitionist astonish			
eloquence persuade			
eloquence brutality			
feeble bully			

Stahl, S., & Kapinus, B. (2001). Word power: What every educator needs to know about teaching vocabulary. *Washington, DC: National Education Association. Reprinted with permission of the NEA Professional Library.*

Ask students to mark an *X* in the box or boxes that indicate the relationship of the words. For example, students may mark that *slavery* and *emancipation* are different. The beauty of this activity is the discussion of the relationships between the words. Discussion about relationships encourages deeper thinking about word meaning.

Your completed chart might look like this:

FIGURE 79. SAMPLE WORD PAIRS CHART: UNCOMPLETED.

	Similar	Different	No Relation
renowned unknown		X	
slavery emancipation		X	
abolitionist astonish			X
eloquence persuade	X		
eloquence brutality			X
feeble bully		X	

Stahl, S., & Kapinus, B. (2001). Word power: What every educator needs to know about teaching vocabulary. *Washington, DC: National Education Association. Reprinted with permission of the NEA Professional Library.*