FOR CLASS >> from Linda Barrington, Update editor

Improving students' writing with vocabulary enrichment

The power of language compels teachers to encourage vocabulary development in their students. Armed with a rich chest of words, students improve their expression, their arguments, their stories.

Where better to look for exemplars than in the relevant and authentic writing of The New York Times, says Bob Greenman, newspaper-in-education consultant for the Times. He should know. Greenman is the author of the curriculum guide, "Using the New York Times as Your Journalism Textbook."

Start off your students with his great essay on falling in love with vocabulary on his website: http://www.robertgreenman.com. The essay is titled "Portrait of the Author as a Young Word Lover."

Then click on the vocabulary tab and click on the Living Vocabulary of The New York Times. Read Greenman's intro and then take your pick from 15 pages of vocabulary in context taken from excerpts from The New York Times.

Greenman says in his introduction: "On a daily basis, The Times is the richest source of vocabulary in the English language. Teachers from elementary school through college could use The Times as their single source of vocabulary instruction and never run out of new words, expressions and terms for their students to encounter as they read the paper."

Have the kids read the examples aloud, figure out what the words mean in context. Discuss the choice, the preciseness of the words. Examine the phrasing.

> If your students turn into word lovers, maybe it's time to enroll your class for a subscription to the New York Times Electronic Edition. For free classroom subscriptions, print out the next two pages of this update, fill out the form and mail or FAX to The New York Times.
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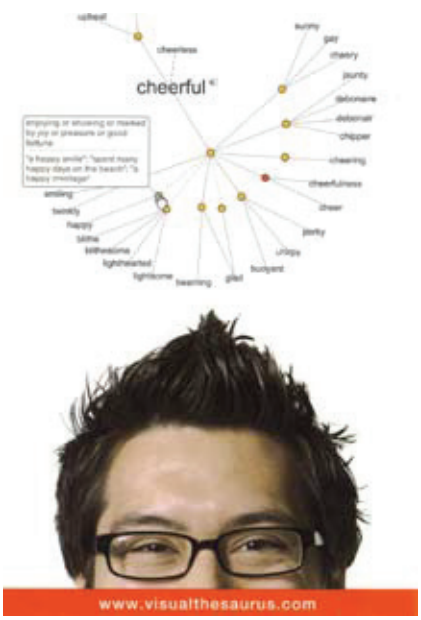
> If you prefer, go to http://www.nytimes.com/learning/teachers/NIE/NYT_EE_Class_Sub_Writable_2009-2010.pdf to fill out the form and send it in.



You can also go to one of my favorite articles by Greenman at the Visual Thesaurus, "The Magic of Three: Teaching Students About Triplets." [Click on title to link to the Web page.] Greenman says, "Rhetorically, three has magic properties. Something within us is affected by a series of three items, read or spoken, and skilled writers know how to use series of three to appeal to our aesthetic sense, our emotions, and perhaps to something even deeper."

He goes on to provide example after example of writers' use of series of three. This article will give you all kinds of ideas for teaching your students.

Another good article is called "Voice: the Least of Your Worries," written by Michele Dunaway. You'll be surprised to learn what this teacher and author has to say about teaching students about voice in writing. Really.

To learn more about about the educational features of this site, go to Visual Thesaurus at http://www.visualthesaurus.com/educators/benefits/

Visual Thesaurus is a subscription site, costing $20 a year. Ben Zimmer, the editor of Visual Thesaurus, has provided WCTE members with a free promotion, good until Feb. 15. Use this special URL: **http://www.visualthesaurus.com/promo/AG7ADD8F.** You can then get the entire site free except for being able to write comments.

The Visual Thesaurus editor, Ben Zimmer, is one of the writers of the late William Safire's New York Times column, "On Language."

Greenman is a writer, educator and speaker with major interests in journalism education, vocabulary acquisition and education in general. He taught high school and college English and journalism, and advised student publications, for 30 years, all in Brooklyn, New York.

Since the early 1970s Bob has been a newspaper in education consultant for The New York Times, producing and editing Times curriculum guides and presenting Times workshops and talks to teachers, students and other audiences.

The Visual Thesaurus is an interactive dictionary and thesaurus which creates word maps that blossom with meanings and branch to related words. Its innovative display encourages exploration and learning. You'll understand language in a powerful new way.

Say you have a meaning in mind, like "happy." The VT helps you find related words, from "cheerful" to "euphoric." The best part is the VT works like your brain, not a paper-bound book. You'll want to explore just to see what might happen. You'll discover -- and learn -- naturally and intuitively. You'll find the right word, write more descriptively, free associate -- and gain a more precise understanding of the English language.

>>Taken from the Visual Thesaurus Web site