



Research-Based Vocabulary

**WORDLY WISE 3000® 2nd Edition,
Books K-12
Kenneth Hodkinson and Sandra Adams
(Books 2-12), Cheryl Dressler (Books K-1)**

By Lee Mountain

For young children, one of the most effective ways to learn new words is to listen to read-alouds. Older children, on the other hand, learn many new words through reading. Whether children are pre-readers or already reading independently, there is a growing consensus among educators regarding the need for direct teaching of academic vocabulary in a systematic program. In fact, recent research has shown not only that it is important, but that it is important much earlier than was previously thought. This is especially true for children who come from disadvantaged backgrounds, many of whom enter school knowing far fewer words than their middle class peers.

The words in the *Wordly Wise 3000*® series will expand the vocabularies and minds of today's students. The Second Edition, which now extends from kindergarten through high school, provides teachers with effective research-based lessons for direct instruction in vocabulary.

In this millennium, educators are becoming increasingly aware of the benefits of a structured vocabulary curriculum. Thomas Gunning, author of *Creating Literacy Instruction for All Children*, calls a planned program of vocabulary development "highly advisable," and he suggests that a certain amount of time be set aside each week for vocabulary instruction: "A planned approach ensures that vocabulary instruction is given the attention it deserves. Important words and techniques for learning words are taught systematically and in depth" (2003, p. 236). Research studies have established that even though children learn many words incidentally, they also need and profit from the direct teaching of vocabulary (Curtis, 1987; Petty, Herold, and Stoll, 1968). "It is important that teachers provide explicit and direct vocabulary instruction for all students" (Vacca et al, 2003, p. 308).

Andrew Biemiller of the Institute of Child Study in Toronto recommends an increased emphasis on vocabulary instruction. With respect to the earliest primary grades, K and 1, Biemiller maintains that an exclusive emphasis on decoding without concurrent instruction in challenging vocabulary results in reading comprehension difficulties in the middle elementary years. For all students, Biemiller suggests "a teacher-centered and curriculum-structured approach to ensure adequate vocabulary development" (2001, p. 24). *Wordly Wise 3000* embodies this approach.

Wordly Wise 3000 is a kindergarten through grade 12 vocabulary series that includes reproducible tests and an online test generator. The entire program introduces over 3,000 words, and exercises become more challenging for upper grades.



The standards movement has raised the bar for all students, making vocabulary instruction essential beginning as early as kindergarten. The research-into-practice aim of the standards movement parallels the aim of the *Wordly Wise 3000* series.

The Gap in Vocabulary Instruction

In the past, vocabulary was often addressed indirectly through a core reading, language arts, or spelling program. Moreover, researchers in the last century, such as Thorndike (1921, 1944), Rinsland (1945), Fry (1957), and Dale and O'Rourke (1981), developed word lists and teachers' word books, suggesting which words to teach within these programs. Even today, word-frequency research is a building block of textbook programs (Steinmetz, 1999; Harris and Jacobson, 1982).

No longer, however, can vocabulary instruction be treated as merely a subsection of reading, language arts, and spelling programs. The National Reading Panel (2000) has identified five pillars as the basis for reading instruction: phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary. Among these topics, vocabulary is unique. The other topics involve learning a finite number of skills or suggest a finite amount of practice. Only vocabulary acquisition is ongoing throughout life (Stahl, 2004).

Vocabulary knowledge is essential for success on all of today's high-stakes tests. Even if teachers do not emphasize word study for its own sake, they are held accountable for their students' performance on state and national assessments. The *Wordly Wise 3000* series was designed to include a large percentage of words drawn from a variety of standardized tests in order to help students succeed.

The standards movement has raised the bar for all students, making vocabulary instruction essential beginning as early as kindergarten. Expectations are higher, and the curriculum is more challenging (Wixson and Dutro, 1998; Editorial Projects in Education, 2001). The need is greater, therefore, for vocabulary instruction for the many students who are struggling to pass the high-stakes tests based on the new standards.

The research of the late Jeanne Chall and her colleagues showed a pressing need for direct vocabulary instruction for many children. Those researchers pointed out that, even after strong phonics instruction, children who are not exposed to broad vocabulary outside school declined in

reading comprehension between grades 3 and 7 because of their vocabulary limitations—the limits of their language (Chall, Jacobs, and Baldwin, 1990). But research has also shown that those limits can be extended: Stahl and Fairbanks (1986) established that direct vocabulary instruction can significantly improve comprehension. In fact, vocabulary knowledge is the most important factor in reading comprehension (LaFlamme, 1997).

Better comprehension is one of the primary benefits of the vocabulary curriculum of *Wordly Wise 3000*. But the other benefits extend into all areas of oral and written communication. Vocabulary is also an avenue to better writing (Tompkins, 2003). Students are led to use the featured words from their *Wordly Wise 3000* lessons in their writing, as well as to comprehend them in reading.

According to Kenneth Hodkinson, the author of *Wordly Wise 3000* Books 2 through 12, "We have to stop thinking of vocabulary as a supplemental activity. We must put it where it belongs, at the very core of the curriculum" (2002, p. 4).

Choosing Words and Designing Instruction and Activities for *Wordly Wise 3000*

Books K and 1

Children enter kindergarten with a wide range of vocabulary knowledge (Hart and Risley, 1995). For children who enter school with smaller vocabularies, *Wordly Wise 3000* Books K and 1 ensure exposure to a core of high-utility vocabulary used frequently across domains. For children with larger vocabularies, more challenging words are taught through a supplementary *Extend and Challenge* activity. In all cases, children learn words that are both developmentally appropriate and important for content-area reading comprehension in later grades.

Cheryl Dressler has chosen the words for *Wordly Wise 3000* Books K and 1 in consultation with two references: *The Living Word Vocabulary* (Dale and O'Rourke, 1981) and *The Reading Teacher's Book of Lists* (Fry, Kress, and Fountoukidis, 2000). *The Living Word Vocabulary* provides information about the grade levels at which a given word is known by most children. Following current research guidelines



for vocabulary instruction of kindergarteners and first graders (Biemiller and Boote, 2006), Dressler has selected words that are known by most children in fourth grade and that correspond to the conceptual level of development of children in kindergarten and grade 1. *The Reading Teacher's Book of Lists* provides words that appear in upper elementary science and social studies texts, as well as frequently used descriptive adjectives and adverbs. Most words in *Wordly Wise 3000* Books K and 1 appear on one of these lists and meet *The Living Word Vocabulary* criteria.

Many of the words chosen are more sophisticated words for known concepts, such as *release* (let go), *leap* (jump), and *delighted* (happy). Other words, such as *nation*, *decay*, and *reflect*, name important new concepts. In addition, because "A person with a larger vocabulary not only knows more words, but also knows more meanings for many words" (Qian, 1999; Vermeer, 2001, as cited in Stahl and Nagy, p. 13), *Wordly Wise 3000* Books K and 1 introduce children to the notion of multiple meanings. Thus, multiple meanings of familiar words such as *row*, *ring*, *patch*, *trunk*, and *store* are systematically taught.

Books 2 through 12

When Kenneth Hodkinson speaks to teachers around the country about his *Wordly Wise 3000* series, he frequently gets inquiries about how he chose the words and what he considers important in vocabulary exercises. His answers show both his research orientation and his creativity.

Hodkinson's starting point was the research by Harris and Jacobson (1982) on word frequency in school readers and the grade level of a word's first appearance. For example, consider Hodkinson's reasoning regarding the words *enormous* and *gigantic*: "*Enormous* occurred two hundred times and first appeared in most third or fourth grade readers. *Gigantic* occurred fifty times, and in the majority of readers did not appear until fifth or sixth grade level. *Enormous* is in Book 2 of the series, and *gigantic* appears several books later" (2002, p. 13). Other factors that Hodkinson considered in the choice of words were usefulness (thereby favoring *arduous* and eliminating *aardvark*), number of meanings

(including *mammoth*, as both noun and adjective, and rejecting *mermaid*), and correlations with the SAT and various high-stakes tests (2002, p. 14).

Hodkinson maintains that questions of all kinds, even multiple choice, can be engaging, challenging, and creatively designed. He gives this example:

Which of the following is *ancient*?

- (a) a joke you've heard before
- (b) last year's calendar
- (c) an Egyptian mummy
- (d) a dinosaur bone

More than one answer may be correct, which of course makes it harder. An Egyptian mummy and a dinosaur bone are obviously ancient, while last year's calendar may be out of date but is hardly ancient. But what about a joke or a juicy bit of gossip you've heard before? A typical response might be, 'Oh! That's ancient!' using the word colloquially. Is that a correct answer? Opinions could differ" (Hodkinson, 2002, p.10).

Differing opinions make for lively discussions of words. Active participation in such discussions promotes the learning of vocabulary (Carr and Wixson, 1986).

Organization and Progression of Wordly Wise 3000

The progression through various levels of the *Wordly Wise 3000* series is developmentally appropriate (Mountain, 2000). Books K and 1 focus on oral presentation of the words, with clear, colorful picture support. Pictures show the action of each story and are used in the activities that follow. Picture and Concept Cards are also used to introduce children to the words and to present background knowledge. Book K features 12 lessons, and Book 1 features 15 lessons. Books 2 and 3, each comprising 15 lessons, also use pictures to enrich definitions. Books K through 3 feature 10 words per lesson; in Books K and 1, they are introduced over a two-week period, 5 words per week. The manageable numbers of words and lessons incrementally lead young students into awareness and appreciation of vocabulary as an ongoing part of their elementary curriculum.

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Books 4 through 12 feature 300 words each. Research indicates that 300 words (20 lessons of 15 words each) is a realistically achievable number to be taught through direct instruction in the middle grades (Stahl, 1999). While working with struggling readers in the eighth grade, Beers (2003) determined that 20 words per lesson were too many. She suggested a more intense focus on fewer words.

Research-based Structure of Lessons in *Wordly Wise 3000*

Children learn words best by meeting them many times in many different contexts. The structure of lessons in *Wordly Wise 3000* helps retention, since repeated engagements with a new word can lead to deep processing of the meaning (Dole, Sloan, and Trathen, 1995; Rosenbaum, 2001).

Throughout the *Wordly Wise 3000* series, students receive multiple exposures to each word. They meet the word again and again in the lesson (and in subsequent lessons and reviews) in a variety of listening, reading, and writing situations. Estimates of when mastery of a particular word occurs differ, since children learn words in stages (Graves, 1987; Dale and O'Rourke, 1971). So while researchers differ on the ideal number of exposures, ranging from two to a dozen (Beck, McKeown, and Omanson 1987; Stahl and Fairbanks, 1986), they agree that multiple exposures help a child learn a word.

In *Wordly Wise 3000* Books K and 1, lessons begin with an oral and visual presentation of the words, followed by a read-aloud. The read-aloud stories describe the adventures of three children as they enter kindergarten and progress through first grade together. Lessons in Books 2 and 3 use definitions and a sentence using the word as starting points. Books 4 through 12 add parts of speech and pronunciations. These lessons quickly branch into activities in which the students encounter and use the words, culminating with a passage where all the words appear in context. This methodology is supported by the studies of Stahl and Fairbanks (1986) and Stahl (1999), which recommend that direct instruction include both definitional and contextual knowledge. The activities also encourage students to use the

words in their own writing, as recommended by Beers (2003).

Most lessons in Books 2 through 12 also offer entertaining and informative commentary on word histories, homophones, derivations, shades of meaning, roots and affixes, word relationships, and extended meanings, in a section called Fun & Fascinating Facts.

Additional reviews come in the form of hidden message puzzles and crossword puzzles. Thus, study and game playing combine for reinforcement (Mountain, 2002).

In-depth Learning of Words in *Wordly Wise 3000*

“Knowing a word is more like being able to use a tool than it is like being able to state a fact” (Nagy and Scott, 2000, p. 273). In the *Wordly Wise 3000* series, students truly learn to use the featured words “like tools.”

Books K and 1

How can you teach the meanings of new words to children who are not yet independent readers—or even readers? In *Wordly Wise 3000* Books K and 1, initial instruction takes place primarily through the medium of spoken language, followed by Student Book activities that invite children to circle, connect, cut and paste, color, draw, and discuss. This lesson structure ensures that children interact with each word in a variety of ways across multiple contexts that highlight different dimensions of the word's meaning.

To illustrate, let's follow the word *compass*, which first appears in Book 1, Lesson 2, “Camping at the Lake,” through a typical course of instruction.

- The teacher introduces the word *compass* using the Picture Card and provides a brief definition and description.
- The teacher then reads the story “Camping at the Lake” aloud as children follow along by looking at pictures in the Student Book. The word *compass* appears in the following sentence: “To make Jordan feel better, Chris showed him how to use the *compass* his dad gave him.”



- After the teacher asks questions to clarify understanding, the children respond to a question about the word, circling the compass in the Student Book story picture.
- When the story is reread, children are asked to touch their nose when they hear the word *compass*.
- Children cut and paste (Book K) or number (Book 1) story pictures to put them in the correct sequence. Then, using the pictures as cues, children retell the story using the vocabulary words.
- Children do a series of activities in their Student Books in which they color, match pictures, or choose pictures from a group to identify words such as *compass*.
- Many vocabulary words reappear in review activities and subsequent stories.

Because studies have shown that hearing a story several times results in better vocabulary learning than hearing it only once (Senechal, 1997), each story in Books K and 1 is read aloud on three different occasions. Each reading involves the children in a different manner. During the first reading, children point to illustrations in their Student Books that correspond to the story being read; during subsequent readings, they listen for specific words and put a finger on their nose to indicate when they hear them.

Books 2 through 12

Like Books K and 1, these levels follow a similar plan for interacting with a word in several contexts. Throughout these levels, the first exercise in each lesson focuses on word meanings, and the last exercise requires students to write answers to questions about a passage in which the words appear in context. The activities demonstrate to students the shades of meaning of each word. Students form a network of associations and connections with a word when they identify its synonyms and antonyms, determine whether it fits certain contexts, encounter it in an article, and answer questions that make it clear that the comprehension of the material depends upon

word knowledge. Each word in the *Wordly Wise 3000* series is taught thoroughly and memorably.

Books 5 through 12 feature more intensive work with synonyms, antonyms, analogies, and images. The efficacy of such word work is well supported by research. Stahl (1999) places the teaching of synonyms and antonyms first on his list of things a teacher might do to provide definitional information. Tompkins (2003) sees the study of synonyms and antonyms as an effective route to the thesaurus. The benefits of instruction in analogies carry over into the content areas (Glynn, 1994).

Let's follow the word *represent* through a typical series of exercises in Book 4, Lesson 1. First, students see the dictionary definitions of the word. Then they meet the word in a variety of exercises and contexts.

From Word List 1

<i>represent</i>	v. 1. To stand for or in place of.
re pri zent'	[Three dots represent the letter "S" in the Morse code.]
	2. To act in place of.
	[Each state in the U.S. elects two senators to represent it in Congress.]

1A Finding Meanings

Choose two phrases to form a sentence that correctly uses a word from Word List 1. Write each sentence in the space provided.

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| (a) stand in for him or her. | (c) To represent someone is to |
| (b) invite him or her. | (d) To recommend someone is to |

1B Just the Right Word

Improve each of the following sentences by crossing out the bold phrase and replacing it with a word (or a form of the word) from Word List 1.

In English, the letter "c" **stands for** two different sounds.

Active participation in... discussions promotes the learning of vocabulary.



Multiple exposures help a child learn a word.

The curriculum of the *Wordly Wise 3000* series is closely aligned with the national standards of the National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association.

1C Applying Meanings

Circle the letter of each correct answer to the questions below. A question may have more than one correct answer.

Which of the following represent other people?

- (a) state senators (c) storekeepers
(b) taxi drivers (d) lawyers

1D Word Study

Synonyms are words that have the same or similar meaning. *Big* and *large* are synonyms. Both words have to do with great size.

Look at the words below. Circle the two words that are synonyms in each group of four.

repeat utter represent say

Passage, Questions, and Fun & Fascinating Facts

Students read a passage in which the words from the lesson appear. Then they write answers to questions about words, such as *represent*, as they are used in context. The Fun & Fascinating Facts section concludes the lesson with interesting facts about words and their histories.

Review and Reinforcement

Within and beyond each book, students have even more opportunities to encounter each featured word. In the case of the word *represent*, for example, students are questioned about it in a passage in the Book 4 Midterm Test 1 (covering Lessons 1–10):

Nadia Comaneci, a fourteen-year-old gymnast, was **representing** Romania at the Olympic Games.

The Second Edition offers a new feature called Lesson Review Exercises. These appear in reproducible form in the Teacher's Resource Book. These cloze exercises (one per lesson) can be used to solidify and reinforce learning or as assessment.

Assessment

Wordly Wise 3000 Books K and 1 feature oral assessments, both formal and informal. Reproducible checklists for each lesson make keeping track of student progress easy and convenient.

Reproducible tests are available for *Wordly Wise 3000* Books 2 through 12 in the corresponding Teacher's Resource Book. Tests contain multiple-choice questions for every word in formats resembling those of standardized tests. In addition to being effective for high-stakes test preparation, the *Wordly Wise 3000* tests also reinforce the application of word knowledge in new contexts because context is the most frequently invoked aid to comprehension (Allen, 1999; Alvermann and Phelps, 1998; Nagy, 1988).

An online Test Generator offers teachers the flexibility of testing only those words they choose or of grouping words as they see fit. The Test Generator provides three times as many items per word as the printed reproducible tests. It also includes a choice of passages at each cumulative, midterm, and final testing point.

Technology

Students who struggle to read and comprehend can be helped by listening to text as they read it. For these students, having texts read aloud promotes both retention and fluency.

Wordly Wise 3000 provides Audio CDs that allow students to listen to words, definitions, and reading passages being read aloud as they follow along. This provides a way for teachers to differentiate instruction for the needs of individual students.

Recent research has provided evidence to support the effectiveness of audio support while reading (Balajthy, 2005; Balajthy, in press). This research indicates that many types of learners can be helped by audio support, including older struggling readers (Elkind, 1998; Wattenberg, 2004) and those suffering from attentional difficulties (Hecker, Burns, Elkind, Elkind, & Katz, 2002).



In order to provide this support, as well as to facilitate independent practice, *Wordly Wise 3000* now has two additional resources:

Audio CDs for Books 2–12

- The word list for every lesson is available and includes definitions and a bonus quick-check comprehension question to ensure that students understand word meaning.
- Modeling of correct pronunciation of all words is featured.
- All reading passages are read aloud with fluency.
- All vocabulary words are used in context.

Free Online Web Resources

Go to WordlyWise3000.com to find:

- Word lists and definitions with downloadable MP3 audio to promote independent study
- Interactive vocabulary games for all word lists
- Graphic organizers

Alignment of *Wordly Wise 3000* with NCTE/IRA and McREL Standards

The standards movement has set higher goals for all students, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, English Language Learners, and struggling readers (Stotsky, 1997; Biemiller, 1999). These students need a vocabulary curriculum to help them meet these goals.

The curriculum of the *Wordly Wise 3000* series is closely aligned with the national standards of the National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association (1996). Most state standards for reading, language arts, and vocabulary have been drawn from these national standards. The alignment of *Wordly Wise 3000* materials is evident in the inclusion of nonfiction passages on a wide variety of topics in both the lessons and tests. The standards emphasize the desirability of range, variety, and diversity in students' reading.

Additional standards focus on reading and writing strategies. These standards point out the importance of context and knowledge of word meaning, as well as the use of vocabulary in effective communication. The *Wordly Wise 3000* series relates writing, as well as reading, to vocabulary study. The series also addresses language conventions and figurative language.

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) has worked with many states, attempting to add some grade-level specificity to the standards. For example, the grade 9–12 standards for English/language arts includes this statement under Vocabulary: "Extends general and specialized reading vocabulary (e.g., interprets the meaning of codes, symbols, abbreviations, and acronyms; uses Latin, Greek, Anglo-Saxon roots and affixes to infer meaning; understands subject-area terminology; understands word relationships, such as analogies or synonyms and antonyms; uses cognates; understands allusions to mythology and other literature; understands connotative and denotative meanings)" (McREL Standards Vocabulary, 2006). The *Wordly Wise 3000* series meets these standards as well.

Conclusion

The research-into-practice aim of the standards movement parallels the aim of the *Wordly Wise 3000* series. The lessons in this series give specificity to the standards and put them into teachable form for teachers facing the perennial problem of too much to do in too little time. "Given the pressures of extensive curricula, limited time, and a wide range of student abilities, teachers need vocabulary strategies that can yield the greatest benefit in student learning with the least cost in planning and instructional time" (Alvermann and Phelps, 1998, p. 261). The *Wordly Wise 3000* series is a time-saver in that it provides teachers with an organized vocabulary curriculum that has sequence, structure, and research-based strategies for instruction.

Throughout the series, students learn multiple forms of each word.



Kenneth Hodkinson has taught English to elementary, junior high, and high school students in the United States, Canada, and England. A playwright who studied at the Yale Drama School, Mr. Hodkinson has had several plays performed, and is also a poet and an inventor of games. His puzzles have appeared in newspapers and books, and he gives workshops on vocabulary development to teachers, students, and administrators.

Cheryl Dressler is a literacy consultant who has taught English in Switzerland and the United States. Dr. Dressler received an EdD from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, where she assisted in a longitudinal, in-depth study of vocabulary development. She has published articles in *Reading Research Quarterly* and *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice*. Her latest publication, with coauthor Michael Kamil, is "First- and second-language literacy," in August, D. and Shanahan, T. (Eds.) *Developing Literacy in Second-Language Learners: Report of the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006.

Lee Mountain is Professor of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Houston in Houston, Texas. She is the author of many books, including *Early 3 Rs* (Erlbaum, 2000), *Math Connections* (Barrett Kendall Publishers, 2001), the *Heritage Readers Series* (Jamestown/Wright Group/McGraw Hill, 1997), *Strategies for Guiding Content Reading* (Allyn & Bacon, 1995), and *Vocabulary From Classical Roots*, Books 4, 5, and 6 (Educators Publishing Service, 2006, 2007). Mountain has also written numerous journal articles published in *English Journal*, *The Reading Teacher*, and the *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*. With degrees from George Washington University in Washington, D.C. and from Pennsylvania State University, Mountain has extensive teaching experience. In 2000, she received the National Freedoms Foundation Award for contributions to education. Her textbooks have received both the McGuffey Award (*Uncle Sam and the Flag*) and the Texty Award (*Pocketful of Posies Primer*). She is a Fellow of the Text and Academic Authors Association, a member of Phi Beta Kappa, and recipient of the Distinguished Career Award at the University of Houston.

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