

Rebecca Sitton's APPLESEED



PLANT THE SEEDS TO GROW SPELLING AND WORD-SKILL LITERACY.

Hot Tips for a Primary Grade Thanksgiving Word Wall

A Word Wall is a terrific way to develop word skills. That is, if it is more than a wall decoration, but is an interactive process of collecting, analyzing, and using words. In the March 2006 *Appleseed*, I suggested a word collection strategy that is one way a productive Word Wall can be built. But there's so much more! Word Wall ideas are limited only by your imagination and that of your students. Gobble up these hot tips to make an exciting Word Wall during this Thanksgiving season!

Begin with students brainstorming Thanksgiving words—individually, in small groups, or as a class. Who knows what holiday words your students might suggest! Make a cumulative list. Write each word on a large word card or big sticky note. Let students predict the spellings as the words are written. Display the word cards in the chalk tray, in a pocket chart, or with magnets on a magnetic board. If you made big sticky-note words, attach them to a chart.

The movable word cards are ideal for sorting. Ask students how the Thanksgiving words could be grouped or sorted in some way, and then labeled. For example, *turkey*, *corn*, and *pumpkin pie* might go together. Students might label this set of words “things you can eat.” *Indian* or *Native American* and *Pilgrim* could be labeled “words that name people.”

Use think-alouds to guide students to identify word commonalities that may not be obvious: “When I say these words, I hear two parts in each one—*harvest*, *autumn*, *thankful*, *dinner*. I could put these words in a set called ‘words with two parts, or syllables.’ And then I might put *Mayflower* and *Plymouth Rock* together—they have capital letters. What do you think?”

Soon students will discover that some words have properties that allow them to belong to more than one set of words on the Word Wall. Good! Write doubles for these word cards and have students help you place them in the appropriate sets. Word properties to consider may include vowel sounds, spelling patterns, double letters, silent letters, plural words, compound words, number of letters—ask students for ideas!

Once the words are sorted and labeled, what to do with the Word Wall?

Add words to the Word Wall as Thanksgiving stories or mini-lessons on the holiday history introduce students to more words associated with the special day.

Use the words as a spelling reference for student writing on the subject. Students can copy the words from the Word Wall, or sometimes it's easier for developing writers to borrow a word from the Word Wall temporarily and take the word to their desk to write it on their paper. Then they replace the word on the Word Wall.

Wordplay is fun with the Word Wall. First, model the game you want to play, such as Mystery Word. Say, “I'm thinking of a word that is a synonym for *grateful*. I'm grateful for this harvest of fine food.” Write *grateful* on the

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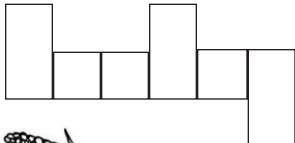



Hot Tips for a Primary Grade Thanksgiving Word Wall (continued)

chalkboard. Continue with clues until *thankful* is identified. Next, students can give the class clues to unlock their Mystery Word.

Other wordplay games might include:

🍷 Word Scrambles: What word is this? **sglpimr** (pilgrims)

🍷 Word Shapes: What word is this?  (turkey)

🍷 Word Pictures: What word is this?  (corn)

🍷 Word Features: What double-letter word is this? _ _ _ _ _ _ _ (dinner)

Use the Word Wall words in a Stretch It activity such as the one that you use in each Sourcebook unit's Exercise Express: *Pilgrims harvested corn*. Students add words and ideas to the bare-bones sentence to make it longer and stronger. Provide time for proofreading and sharing.

Many pilgrims harvested their corn so they could cook it and eat it.

The words can begin a Sourcebook Finish It sentence: *Plymouth Rock...* Here students finish the sentence. This might be done in partners or small groups. The writing is proofread, and then passed to another set of students for sharing and checking.

Of course, the Sourcebook Fix It activity can be played with the words: *pilgrims wer thankfull for meny things?* Students rewrite the sentence correctly—*Pilgrims were thankful for many things.*

And when Thanksgiving has come to pass, the Word Wall can still be pertinent. Now students can expand their words and activities to include *any word* that has the properties of the labeled sets! For example, how many more words can students find to add to the set of words that begin with a capital letter—or which compound words can they add to *Thanksgiving* and *cornbread*? Now the field of words is wide open!