

Rebecca Sitton's APPLESEED



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

Hot Tips for an Upper 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 sticky note. Discuss 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, yams, cornbread, squash, quail, sweet potatoes, fish, apple cider, mashed potatoes, gravy, stuffing, custard, cranberries, and pumpkin pie* go together. Students might label this set of words “food.” More sophisticated students may choose to have food subgroups and sort these words into specialized sets, such as compound food words. *Wampanoag Indians, Pilgrims, colonists, Governor William Bradford, Pocahontas, and Myles Standish* could be labeled “people.”

Ask questions to guide students to group words that do not have such obvious groupings: “When I think about these words, I see capital letters—*Mayflower, Plymouth Rock, and Virginia Company*. Could we create a category here?”

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! Ask students to write doubles for these word cards and place them in the appropriate sets. Word properties to consider for labels might include vowel sounds, spelling patterns, double letters, silent letters, plural words, compound words, number of letters, number of syllables—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 studies and readings introduce students to more words associated with the special day.

Use the words as a spelling reference for students as they write on the topic.

The Word Wall can be a source of words for wordplay. First, model the wordplay game you want to play, such as Mystery Word. Say, “I’m thinking of a word that has more than one meaning.” If the words *fall* or *squash* are guessed, discuss their different meanings. Acknowledge the words as a possibility, but tell students that these words are not the Mystery Word. Then add another clue. “One of the Mystery Word’s meanings is always spelled

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Hot Tips for an Upper Grade Thanksgiving Word Wall (continued)

with a capital letter.” Play until students correctly identify the Mystery Word (turkey/Turkey). Then you may wish to challenge students by asking, “Are there other words like *turkey* and *Turkey* in which one of the two is always capitalized?” Students might identify words that include twosomes such as *may/May*, *miss/Miss*, *march/March*. Extend the lesson to help students discover *polish/Polish*, *rainier/Rainier*, *nice/Nice*, *tangier/Tangier*—all of these twosomes have different pronunciations as well as different meanings!

Other wordplay games might include word scrambles (sglpiimr/pilgrims), synonyms (thankful/grateful, autumn/fall), words with the most other word forms (prefix/suffix additions), word codes (rennid/dinner).

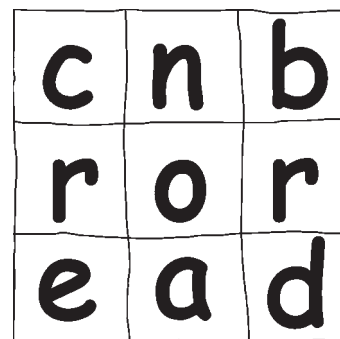
Use the Word Wall words in a Stretch It activity such as the one that you use in each Sourcebook unit’s Exercise Express: *Pilgrims harvested their crops*. Students add words and ideas to the bare-bones sentence to make it longer and stronger. Emphasize use of the skills students should be learning, such as compound sentence constructions or use of descriptive words or phrases. Provide time for proofreading and sharing.

The words can begin a Sourcebook Finish It sentence: *Plymouth Rock...* Here students use the sentence starter as a topic sentence for a short paragraph or longer expository piece of writing. 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 were separatists who came too American a board the Santa Maria in 1820*. Students rewrite the sentence correctly—*Pilgrims were Separatists who came to America aboard the Mayflower in 1620*.

Don’t forget the opportunities the Word Wall presents for students to make crossword puzzles or word searches.

Spelling Squares can be played with any nine-letter word on the Thanksgiving Word Wall, such as *cornbread*. Students make words by using letters in the boxes that have a common corner or side. In the example provided here, *board* can be made, but not *bread*. Let students arrange the letters in the boxes the way they wish, and soon they’ll determine that the vowels must be accessible. Which words and letter arrangements prove to elicit the most words?



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, if one of the sorted sets of words was compound “food” words, how many more compound words can students add to the category? Now the field of words is wide open!