

Questions to Guide Critical Thinking about Word Study

Problem Solving	Reflection	Application & Transfer
What do you notice about these words? Remember to use your ears and your eyes as you examine them.	What can you tell us about these words now that we have sorted them? How are they alike?	Let's go back to these words we were not sure about earlier. Can we read them now? Can we figure out what they mean?
How are they alike? How are they different from this set over here? Can you tell me more?	Tell me how it went. What kinds of questions were raised? What were you sure of/unsure of?	What if we changed that prefix to another prefix? What would the word mean then?
Where in the word do you find the ____ (sound, spelling patterns, root)? Who can add to that?	Why did you put this word here?	If you're not sure how to spell a word with a --- (long a sound), how would you know which pattern to use? What would be your best bet? Why?
How else could you figure that out? Does anyone have a different idea?	In your reading, which pattern do you see more frequently? Which pattern has the most words in your column? The fewest?	If you weren't sure what a word meant, what could you do to figure it out?
What are some ways we could figure out the meaning of that word? How could we check?	How did you figure that out? What word parts did you use?	Can you think of other words that have the same root or base word?
Which part of the word are you sure about? Which part are you not sure about? What do they rest of you think?	What did we learn from this sort? Can you tell me a little more? Do you think this will apply to other words like this?	One of the things people do when they aren't what a word is to think of another word they know that has a similar base word or root. Let's try it. Let's say you don't know the meaning of <i>recital</i> . What other word might you think of that you do know?
Can you divide the word into parts? What is the base word? Are there any prefixes or suffixes?	Do the word parts give you information about the word's meaning?	What other word can you think of that has the same _____ (sound, pattern, root)?
How are you planning to go about this word sort? What resources will you use?	Write down an observation about this word that you wish you had made	Let's try making some new words with these word parts. Let's try it and see if we can guess the meaning.
Do you all agree? Why or why not? Any more ideas?	What problems did you come across in your sort?	How or when could you use this word?

NOTE: Based on Palmer, J., & Invernizzi, M. (in press). *Not This but That*. Heinemann.
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Continuum of Support for Introducing Word Sorts

Who?	FOR NOVICE SORTERS OR TO INTRODUCE NEW FEATURES		FOR EXPERIENCED SORTERS OR TO ASSESS	
Level of Support	<i>Teacher-Directed Closed Sort</i>	<i>Teacher-Directed Guess My Category</i>	<i>Student-Centered Closed Sort</i>	<i>Student-Centered Open Sort</i>
Materials	One set of words for the group to focus on using a pocket chart, overhead, interactive whiteboard, or other method. Students bring their own set of words already cut apart to the group or are given a set at the end of group work to take back to their seats to cut apart and sort.		Students get their own set of words with key words and/or headers.	Students get their own set of words with no key words or headers.
Introduce the Sort	Review the words and talk about any that students might not know Ask students what they notice about the words. Decide on categories and set up a header and a key word (explicitly describe the features students are to look for only if needed).	Review the words and talk about any that are unfamiliar. Set up the categories with key words but do not describe the feature or put up headers.	Review the words and talk about any that are unfamiliar. Students can also do this on their own, putting aside any words they don't know to discuss and sort later.	Students work on their own to read through words and put aside any words they don't know to talk a out later.
Sorting	Demonstrate how to sort several words in each category and describe why each word goes there. Students help to complete the sort and justify their placements.	Model by sorting several words in each category but do not explain the reasons. Students are then invited to try sorting the rest of the words.	Students use headers and key words to set up categories and sort independently.	Students determine categories and sort their own words. They explain to you or each other why they sorted as they did.
Check and Reflect	Check the columns and create a generalization with student help. Be ready to model as needed to summarize what the sort has revealed. Sort again at this point if time allows to reinforce the features and reflect once more.	Ask students to describe the features in each category and then check each column. Create a generalization with students' help. Supply headers at this point or label key words.	Call group together or check in individually for students to describe the features and talk about any unfamiliar words. Everyone checks.	"Close" the sort. Establish key words so everyone sorts the same way. Check and talk once more about generalizations. Supply or label headers. Discuss word meanings as needed.
Individual Sort	Students sort their own set of words under your supervision or at their seats. Monitor, remind students to check, and ask each student to state generalizations.	Students sort their own set of words using the key words and headers in the group or independently. Monitor and check in during or after students sort.		

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