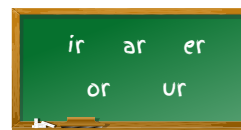


BOOK FIVE EDUCATOR COMPANION



Ideas for Phonics & Fluency Practice



In this book, striving readers practice reading **R-controlled vowels**. Here are concepts that students should be familiar with in order to decode this third book in the series.

What is an R-controlled vowel?

R-controlled vowels are when a vowel's sound changes when it is followed by an r. It is important for students to be able to identify these when they're in multisyllabic words as well as when they're, more obviously, in single syllable words. Students can circle the vowel and the r that follows it to identify when a word has an r-controlled vowel and when the phonemes change because of it. Here are some sounds to explicitly teach:

- **ar** sounds like /ahr/ (barn, scarf)
- **er, ir,** and **ur** sound like /er/ (perch, birch, nurse)
- **or** sounds like /awr/ (corn, fork)

Tips for Explicitly Teaching R-Controlled Vowels

- **The Bossy R:** Sometimes, personifying letters helps us remember their function. In this case, the r is "bossy" because it tells the vowel that precedes it what sound to make.
- **Make and illustrate keywords:** Have students make their own keywords for each R-controlled vowel. Remember that keywords should be visual cues so it's great when their meaning can be drawn as well as written. See above for some examples.
- **Annotate:** When learning/reviewing R-controlled vowels at the syllable level, it can be helpful to highlight or underline them and write their phonetic sound above the letters that it goes along with.
 - Example: t h ^{er}ir s t

Vocabulary Support in Book 5

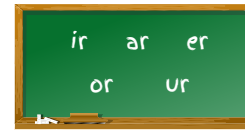
You will notice in the vocabulary guide that Book 5 has more vocabulary words that might be unfamiliar to your students than the previous books in the series. This is an opportunity to build schema, use the vocabulary workbook before reading, and to use context clues to identify the meanings of unfamiliar words.

Beck-Snow Principles for Vocabulary Instruction

Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction by Isabel L. Beck, Margaret G. McKeown, and Linda Kucan was published in 2013 and served as a primer for educators when it comes to teaching new words. Later, Isabel Beck collaborated with educator Catherine Snow to list out high-impact, evidence-based strategies for language acquisition. Here are some from the [Beck-Snow guide](#) that will be particularly helpful when teaching the vocabulary words in the *These First Letters* books.



Ideas for Phonics & Fluency Practice



Beck-Snow Strategies for Language Acquisition

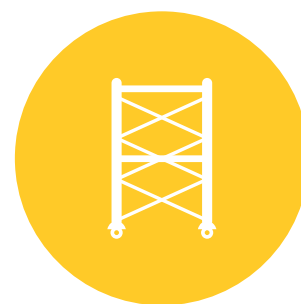
- Use meaningful, culturally responsive examples that situate the new words in schema students have. When doing this, do NOT define the word for the students. Instead, use the target words in ways that are applicable to your students.
- Redirect student responses to include the words. When asking students questions involving the target words, be sure that the response also includes the target words. We want the students to SAY the words as much as possible.
- If students speak another language, use common roots to teach the newer vocabulary. Take note of cognates.
- Promote interaction between the text topic and the words. Use developmentally appropriate examples or asking questions that matter to your students.
- Writing (Sentence stems): Provide students with sentence stems and ask them to complete. Here, students can't just write down the obvious ("The king was miserable") from which student understanding is not clear.

You can access the whole list [here](#).



Additional Scaffolds to Provide

- **Color Coding / Highlighting Multisyllabic Words:** Because these are decodables designed for students in grades 4 and above, there are some multisyllabic words, which can be tricky to read if students have not been explicitly taught syllable division rules. Here are some ways you can support students who have not yet developed word-attack skills in syllable division:
 - color code the syllables, having students read one color at a time: **penpal**
 - box the syllables, having students read one box at a time: pen**pa**l
 - highlight the syllables, having students read one color at a time (note: this can be done directly on the decodables if you have print versions): **penpal**
- **Previewing High-Frequency Words:** Have students read aloud the high-frequency words from the high-frequency words list in the phonics guide at the beginning of the chapter. Formatively assess by taking note of the high-frequency words that students struggle with.
- **High-Frequency Word Practice:** Give students additional practice with both reading and spelling the high-frequency words they struggle with. Have them use them in sentences, write those sentences down, sky-write them, and/or have them make flashcards for them.
- **Previewing Challenge Words:** Similar to the high-frequency words, have students preview the challenge words in the phonics guide. Emphasize that these are challenge words and that students are not expected to be able to decode them at this point (they're called "challenge" for a reason!). Previewing the words will give students greater confidence when they encounter them in context.
- **Interactive Oral Reading with Challenge Words:** Because students are not expected to be able to decode the challenge words, you can read them aloud when they come up in the text in a "we do" approach to reading aloud.
- **Repeated Reading:** Build fluency with decodable texts by having students read pages repeatedly, building momentum with the words each time.



Coloring the World Vocabulary Guide

IES
Recommendation

3A

CHAPTER ONE: Met With a Brush

grand (adjective): great; impressive

- Page 2: "The Mets had a **grand** basketball season."

brisk (adjective): cold and fresh

- Page 3: "In Seattle, it was **brisk** enough to put on a scarf."

cross (adjective): angry; frustrated

- Page 4: "Max grew crabby and **cross** with no basketball after school."

nerves (noun): anxiety; stress

- Page 5: "Do something that will help you with your **nerves**."

snarled (verb): made a rough sound in the throat while showing teeth

- Page 6: "Biff **snarled**."

brimming (verb): completely full with something

- Page 10: "A bowl **brimming** with green grapes perched on a small bench."

fretted (adjective): worried

- Page 11: "He **fretted** about how art club was no help for creating comics."

harp (verb): to keep talking about something others don't want to hear about

- Page 12: "Don't **harp** on it."

critic (noun): someone who does not approve of something, someone, or a group

- Page 13: "Just being a **critic** wouldn't make him a star."

graphics (noun): drawings

- Page 14: "Max made a sign-up sheet for a club that would create **graphics** for comics."

CHAPTER TWO: The Think Tank

firm (adjective): with a lot of force or pressure, but in a controlled way

- Page 19: "Min held Max's art with a **firm** hand."

expand (verb): to grow

- Page 22: "Min's idea was to **expand** friendships through art and drawing."

in **circulation** (noun): used widely by groups of people

- Page 23: "With her idea, friendship, art, and writing would be in **circulation** throughout the world!"

squirmed (verb): moved the body from side to side usually because of nerves

- Page 24: "The robin chirped and **squirmed**."

smirk (noun): a smile due to knowing something someone else might not know

- Page 25: "She spotted Ba at her door with a **smirk**."



Coloring the World Vocabulary Guide

admiration (noun): the feeling of liking or respecting a person or thing a lot

- “He looked at Min with **admiration**.”

CHAPTER THREE: Met With a Network

force (noun): something that has a strong influence on people

- Page 31: “Max was thinking how Min had told him art could be a **force**.”

forlorn (adjective): alone and unhappy

- Page 32: “When he was hurt, art had made Max less **forlorn**.”

borders (noun): things that divide people or where one country ends and another begins

- Page 33: “Art had torn down **borders** between Min and Max to make them friends.”

orbiting (verb): moving around in a circle

- Page 34: “There must be all sorts of stories like that **orbiting** around the world.”

favor (noun): something someone does for someone even though they don't have to

- Page 36: “I'll ask a **favor** of that new kid, Arin.”

labor (noun): work

- Page 37: “He felt he was born for **labor** of the internet sort.”

brainstormed (verb): put forward many ideas and suggestions

- Page 41: “Max and Arin **brainstormed** with Min, while Biff the cat batted a cork across the floor.”

ports (noun): an area where ships load and unload

- Page 44: “America, Australia, and India working together like three **ports** in a storm.”

CHAPTER FOUR: A Project Burst Forth

blurted (verb): said without meaning to

- Page 51: “I **blurted** things out at them that I should not have.”

turf (noun): an area that's familiar to some people

- Page 52: “It was hard being on this new **turf**.”

network (noun): a large group of people that have a connection and work together

- Page 55: “Let us make this **network** of friendship bigger and bigger!”

mature (adjective): balanced in personality and behavior; adult-like

- Page 66: “It helps us become more **mature**.”

lurch (verb): to move in an uncontrolled way

- Page 67: “As you can see, my thinking did **lurch** a bit at the start.”



Comprehension Questions for Book Five

IES
Recommendation
3B



In this book, we start to discover what happens when the characters interact outside of the LEX program. After the basketball season ends, Max discovers other interests. Min is invited to participate in a Think Tank program. When the two penpals find ways to combine their activities, they realize they need Arin's help!

Within the Text

- What advice did Max's parents give him?
- How did the way Max felt change throughout the chapter? What did Max do to feel better?

About the Text

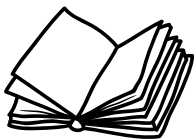
- How did the authors connect the stories of Max, Min, and Arin? What do you think the authors mean by a "network of friendship"?
- What did the robin outside Min's window symbolize, signify, or mean?

Beyond the Text

- Based on what you know about the series so far, predict what the next book will be about.
- What connections can you make between this story and another story that you know about?

Reaction Questions for Book Five:

IES
Recommendation
3D



BOOK

What do you think the authors mean by "a network of friendship"? Who is included in that network? How are they connected?



HEAD

Did anything surprise you when you were reading this book?
If so, what?



HEART

How does the way Max feels change throughout the book? Have you ever felt the way Max felt at the beginning of the book?



Comprehension Questions by Chapter



CHAPTER ONE: Met With a Brush

- What advice did Max's parents give him?
- How did the way Max felt change throughout the chapter? What did Max do to make himself feel better?
- Have you ever felt the way Max felt at the beginning of the chapter? What did you do to feel better?

CHAPTER TWO: The Think Tank

- What did the robin outside Min's window symbolize, signify, or mean?
- On page 25, Ba "looked at Min with admiration." Based on the rest of the sentence, what do you think the word "admiration" means?

CHAPTER THREE: Met With a Network

- What do you think the authors mean by "a network of friendship"? Who is included in that network? How are they connected?
- How did the authors connect the stories of Max, Min, and Arin?

CHAPTER FOUR: A Project Burst Forth

- Based on what you know about the series so far, predict what the next book will be about.
- What life lessons did Arin learn through his experience of moving to the Pacific Northwest?



Written Response to Reading

Writing Prompt: What connections can you make between this book and (choose one):

- your own life?
- another book?
- a movie/TV show?

Optional Template for the Response

In the book, _____ . In my life/another book/a TV show, _____ . These two experiences connect because _____ .

Self-Editing Checklist

- Each sentence begins with a capital letter and ends with punctuation.
- I capitalized the first letter of all proper nouns (names of people, places, and groups).
- If the vowel makes the short sound, it is closed in by a consonant.
- I read my writing out loud, pointing to each word as I said it.

