Dear Houghton Mifflin Reading Teacher,

Welcome to the **fifth issue** of the Houghton Mifflin California Newsletter!

In this issue, we will spotlight spelling, vocabulary, writing and more! Look for tips on using resources in *Houghton Mifflin Reading* to deliver instruction effectively.

---

**Visit the Houghton Mifflin California Website!**

Visit www.eduplace.com, click on state resources, then click on California.

- **Download** the previous 4 volumes of the Houghton Mifflin Newsletter
- **Sign up** to receive future editions online
- **Find** valuable resources to use with *Houghton Mifflin Reading*

---

**THIS ISSUE!**

- **✓ AUTHOR’S CORNER**
  Spelling Makes Sense: A Revolution in Reading and Vocabulary Instruction
  by Shane Templeton, Ph. D.

- **✓ TEACHER’S TIPS**
  Incorporating writing into instruction

- **✓ COMPONENT SPOTLIGHT**
  Vocabulary Leveled Readers

- **✓ UNIVERSAL ACCESS**
  Graphic Organizers

- **✓ TEACHERS ASK**
  Using Leveled Books

- **✓ NEW FROM Houghton Mifflin**
  Houghton Mifflin History–Social Science
Every parent wants their child to learn to read in order to succeed in school. Every teacher and school administrator in California is working to fulfill that wish, aiming for higher levels of literacy than have ever been achieved in California history. What most people do not realize, however, is that the key to reaching those higher levels may lie in a better understanding of spelling and spelling instruction. And while many people don’t consider themselves strong spellers, the spelling system of English makes more sense than most of us think. We just have to know where and how to look for the clues.

Spelling knowledge is the foundation of students’ ability to read more effectively. The more students understand the structure of words as they are written—their spelling—the more rapidly they will identify words when they read. This in turn leaves more brain space available for thinking during reading. Importantly, students’ understanding of spelling will also help them grow their vocabularies as they read.

Our children will learn in the primary grades that, while there may not always be a one-for-one correspondence between letter and sound, on balance there are more predictable spelling patterns according to which sounds are spelled than not. In the later elementary school years and beyond, students learn that spelling represents meaning in a strikingly consistent manner: Thanks to the way they are spelled, words that are similar in meaning look similar. This connection between spelling and meaning is not obvious when we look at words one at a time, as we traditionally have done, because we then invariably ask questions about sound: “Why is there a g in sign?” or “Why does column have a silent n at the end?” It is only when we group words together like sign-signature and column-columnist that the connection between spelling and meaning becomes obvious: Words that are related in meaning are often related in spelling as well, despite changes in sound.

Students’ awareness of this spelling-meaning connection becomes a tool for growing vocabulary. For example, when a fifth-grade student misspells mental as mentle, her teacher could introduce the word mentality—which most students do not know until they are sophomores in high school—but this will do two things: It will help the student remember the spelling of mental, and because the student knows the meaning of the word mental she can learn the meaning of the word mentality. Spelling and vocabulary instruction become two sides of the same instructional coin. This relationship between spelling and meaning suggests that we do not have to wait until students are in high school to teach so much of the vocabulary that is critical to reading, writing, and communicating—and which is also critical to learning across all subject areas in the curriculum. We can begin much earlier, and in the process, help our students develop a lifelong fascination with words.

Dr. Shane Templeton
Foundation Professor of Literacy Studies at the University of Nevada, Reno
Senior Author of Houghton Mifflin Spelling and Vocabulary
Author, Houghton Mifflin Reading California
Vocabulary Readers support the robust vocabulary instruction in Houghton Mifflin Reading and build fluency and independence through nonfiction text.

- Vocabulary Readers are developed to align with each grade-specific anthology selection in Houghton Mifflin Reading.
- Lessons for before, during, and after reading in addition to selection summaries save teachers valuable prep time.
- Support for English learners and oral language development is built through three levels of language acquisition.
- Each classroom selection contains age- and grade-appropriate nonfiction text to meet the diverse needs in any classroom.

Vocabulary Readers provide accessible text, engaging visual support, multiple encounters with key vocabulary, and opportunities to deepen and expand word knowledge—a valuable addition to Houghton Mifflin Reading classrooms!

- High-interest nonfiction topics
- Fountas–Pinnell guided reading levels
- Support for below-level readers
- Oral language development for English learners
- Audio CDs

**UNIVERSAL ACCESS:**

“Graphic Organizers create "power pictures" you remember and store." (Sprenger, 1999 ASCD)

Graphic organizers have been widely researched for their effectiveness in improving learning outcomes for various students. They are valuable instructional tools that can be used flexibly for both reading and writing instruction.

- As part of the writing process, they add organization to thoughts generated by brainstorming. Since many graphic organizers use short words or phrases, they are particularly ideal for the struggling student and English Learners.
- Graphic organizers show the order and completeness of a student’s thought process. Consequently, teachers can provide appropriate instruction and/or intervention based on the student’s strengths and weaknesses, as evidenced in the graphic organizer.

**Benefits of Using Graphic Organizers for Writing**

- Help the brain organize isolated information into a unified schema.
- Provide a tool to organize ideas/concepts for writing.
- Demonstrate the relationship among key parts and the whole.
- Link new information to prior retrievable information.
- Create a schema that is culturally constructed and changes with experience.
- Demonstrate relationships in ways words alone cannot convey.

**How to Introduce a Graphic Organizer**

- Model its use with a specific type of writing; e.g., Story Map for Personal Narrative.
- Fill out the graphic organizer as you model the “Think Aloud”: “I think this relates so I will list it underneath.”
- Let students practice – first in small groups, then pairs, then independently.
- Use different color markers or pens to ensure participation by all students.
- Students can work independently once they are familiar with the purpose.

Be sure to check out the printable Graphic Organizers at [www.eduplace.com](http://www.eduplace.com)!

Also available in Spanish!
Why have Guided Reading Levels not been indicated on Houghton Mifflin’s Leveled Readers?
Where do you suggest our teachers put Guided Reading labels on their books?

Guided Reading Levels are an approximation of a text’s difficulty in relation to other texts. They are adjusted after use with many different children in different locations.

You should expect some variation in the reading levels. You may find that a book is a little easier or harder for your students and may want to adjust the level of a book up or down after you have used it many times and feel an adjustment is needed. For example, a book about the desert will be easier for students in Tucson or books about the ocean may be easier for children living by the seashore.

The levels are not printed on the books to allow for changes and also to allow teachers to place the letter indications in less obvious places if they so choose. You can have the levels on the books for your use by penciling in the level on the inside or back cover or by placing a sticker on the back. When a level changes, you can just change the sticker. The level indication is for your reference only. If children notice them and comment, explain that the letters help you find good books to help them learn how to read and they need not be concerned about them.

Teachers are concerned about using leveled books when they feel the pressure of “No Child Left Behind” to use grade level materials. How can I, as a Reading Specialist, assure them that it is appropriate to use a gradient of leveled books?

Not all children can read grade level materials, though we all wish that they could. If you use grade level materials, it does not mean all the children are actually reading them or will be able to read similar level materials.

When you use a gradient, start with a book the child can read successfully with your teaching support and then bring the reader forward to grade level. If you continue to use only grade level materials, the children will not expand their reading powers and will not be able to read the grade level materials for themselves. Children build fluency and independence by practicing at their current reading level.

Use grade level materials for reading aloud and for shared reading to include all the children in common grade level experiences. Some children will simply not yet be able to process the print for themselves and will need other supportive text in order to get to the grade level goal. In other words, the pressure to get children to grade level is best met by starting where the learners are and bringing them to the goal.