

# Rebecca Sitton's APPLESEED



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

## Spelling Word Differentiation Using the Cloze Story Word Test

Differentiate students' Spelling Words using the Cloze Story Word Test—one size does *not* fit all! It's a time saver toward better student writers.

Differentiation is good across the curriculum—that is, if it's manageable. Any complicated or overly time-consuming element of the curriculum has little chance for long-term success. The end-of-unit Cloze Story Word Test differentiates Spelling Words, and it's quick and easy. Once the routine is familiar, it takes no longer than the old one-size-fits-all Friday Test. It identifies the words each student needs to learn to be a better writer—and that's the reason we teach spelling. Here's how:

- 🍏 Make a copy of the Cloze Story Word Test for each student. It is on a blackline master in every unit. Ask students to clear their desk of everything—no pencils, nothing. References are not allowed during the test, so position students so that if the classroom features a word wall it is not visible to the students.
- 🍏 Tell students that you will read aloud the story that is on the paper in front of them. Their eyes should follow along as you read. Then you read the Cloze Story—it is in your Sourcebook in the assessment section of each unit.
- 🍏 Next, ask students to get a pencil, write their name on their test paper, put their pencil down, and look at you. Then tell students to point to blank number 1 with their finger (not with their pencil point). Next, you alert students that you are going to read the first sentence to them, and they are to follow along with their eyes, listening for the word that goes in blank number 1. Then read.
- 🍏 Now ask students, “What word goes in blank number 1?” and they reply aloud—usually with *vigor*. If for one reason or another a student did not hear the word that belongs in blank number 1 as you read it, they know it now! Students shouted it! So, next, you direct students to write that word in blank number 1.
- 🍏 Proceed to blank number 2 in the same way, and so forth through the test. Now the test has been given. In each test blank a word has been written. Give students an opportunity to proofread their test words. Then correct the tests.
- 🍏 Some teachers correct the tests themselves, either at each student's desk as the class engages in an assigned activity, or the tests are collected for correction later. A circled word indicates it's spelled incorrectly. Other teachers engage students in the test correction. The teacher spells each word and

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## Spelling Word Differentiation Using Your Cloze Story Word Test (continued)

students circle errors either on their own paper (with a correcting pencil or pen) or on another student's paper.

- 🍎 Tests can be graded. Usually the number wrong goes in the grade book. At the end of a grading period, each student's total figures into the final grade along with the Skill Test, Practice Book and/or Sourcebook activities, Priority Word evaluations, or whatever a teacher wishes to count toward a grade.
- 🍎 So, how does this Cloze Story Word Test differentiate the Spelling Words for students? The words a student misses on the test become that student's Spelling Words, a differentiated list of words each student needs to learn to become a better writer. Spelling Words are targeted for study by the students who specifically need them—rather than all learners having the same predetermined list.
- 🍎 The words on the test are high-use writing words—a cumulative list from past units and past grades. Students do not know which words among all the previous words will be on any one test. If they did know, chances are they'd study the words just for the test, rendering the test futile. It would no longer serve as a tool for determining which words a student really knows long-term, and which were memorized just for the test. Worse, when students study words just for a test and get them right, it misguides both you and them into thinking they know the words when they don't. And students move on, non-spellers. No transfer into writing has taken place.
- 🍎 Spelling Words are targeted for study on the take-home Words to Learn sheet and the at-school running record, the Spelling Notebook. Students independently record the words on these references with the aid of the alphabetical Core Words list, a blackline master of all potential test words at that grade level. If several students miss the same word, class discussion may provide insights to its spelling. But for individual students with different study lists, the skills and concepts taught in each unit cumulatively provide a foundation for students' insights for their personal study. *"Did I miss a silent letter? Is my error a misunderstanding of the meaning of this word? Oh, it's a homophone!"*
- 🍎 Over time, students master the words they miss on their differentiated lists because all words are extensively recycled on subsequent tests. And it may be that for a while some students seem to have mastered a word—and then, as is the nature of learning, it is forgotten. Then upon the recycling of that word, the word is missed, and is again signaled for study. Such is the path toward true spelling mastery.
- 🍎 With minor modifications, the testing can be further adapted to every student's needs. For students who excel on the Cloze Story Word Test, one of several avenues for challenge is to administer each unit's more difficult Sentence Dictation Test. And for students who miss more than half the words on a Cloze Story Word Test, check the Sourcebook Teaching Notes, find the section titled "Students with Spelling Challenges," and read the solution to this by the sidenote question: *How can students challenged by spelling participate in the Word Test?*

It is essential in today's busier-than-ever classrooms to maximize time and effectiveness. Give the Cloze Story Word Test to pinpoint the exact words a student needs in order to be a better writer—it far outperforms the old one-size-fits-all Spelling Word list.