



Powerful
Language,
AKA

Cool
Words

Celebrate Words with “Alphabet Stew”

by Jack Prelutsky

Words can be stuffy, as sticky as glue,
but words can be tutored to tickle you, too,
to rumble and tumble and tingle and sing
to buzz like a bumblebee, coil like a spring.

Juggle their letters and jumble their sounds,
swirl them in circles and stack them in mounds,
twist them and tease them and turn them about,
teach them to dance upside down, inside out.

Make mighty words whisper and tiny words roar
in ways no one ever had thought of before;
cook an improbable alphabet stew,
and words will reveal little secrets to you.

Ways to expand vocabulary ...

- * **Wide reading** (Anderson, 1996)
- * **Teaching affixes and derivational patterns** (Rasinski & Padak, 2008)
- * **Systemic approaches**, especially for struggling readers and second language learners (Freeman & Freeman, 2005)

Or NOT: “diet of synonyms and short glossary definitions (Nagy & Scott, 2004)

SO, given that **learning is linked with interest and motivation** (Snow, Griffin & Burns, 2005) and that “**Children can get hooked on words through the study of interesting words [my emphasis]**” (Vacca et al. 2009), I suggest **COOL WORDS**.

cherished

Why do you like it?

I like the first four letters. “Cher” in French means *dear* and I like the meaning and the softness of the sound.

What does it mean?

“Cherished” means “to protect and care for” to “to hold something close to one’s heart”

What kind of text?

Label (of a stuffed bear)

devastating

Why do you like it?

The harshness of the word matches its meaning.

What does it mean?

“Devastating” means causing great harm or damage, extreme emotional pain, or extremely effective or powerful.

What kind of text?

Packaging (of a DVD)

Fuji / fuji

Why do you like it?

I like “j” juxtaposed with the “i.”

What does it mean?

“Fuji” is a kind of apple and also a volcanic mountain in Japan. When it is not capitalized, it means a spun silk clothing fabric in plain weave originally made in Japan

What kind of text?

Advertisement from a grocery store

habitat

Why do you like it?

I like the ending of the word. The “tat” is just appealing to me.

What does it mean?

“Habitat” means the place or environment where something lives and grows, a typical residence, a created place to live surrounded by inhospitable conditions, or the place where something is commonly found.

What kind of text?

Notecard soliciting donations

mercurial

Why do you like it?

I like all four syllables of this word.

What does it mean?

“Mercurial” means having to do with the planet Mercury, or the god named Mercury which means something is eloquent, shows ingenuity, or thievishness, or characterized by rapid and unpredictable changeableness of mood.

What kind of text?

Word from the book *From Scratch* by Tembi Locke.

Expanding vocabulary through personifying words

Well Defined: Vocabulary in Rhyme (Wordsong, 2009) by Michael Salinger. Illustrated by Sam Henderson

“Giving each word a personality all its own, Salinger creates mini story lines and amusing images full of wit and irony that will keep readers chuckling.” Front book flap

Examples: **incessant** and **inevitable**

Expanding vocabulary through playing with word forms

Book Speak: Poems about Books (Clarion Books , 2011) by Laura Purdie Salas.
Illustrated by Josee Bisailon

- * Acrostic poems which define the word using each letter of the word “Top Secret”
- * Poem which defines its title: “Hydrophobic”

Expanding vocabulary through playing
with **words as visuals**....

A Poke in the Eye: A Collection of Concrete Poetry (Candlewick Press, 2002)

selected by Paul B. Janeczko. Illustrated by Chris Raschka

Examples: “Queue” by Sylvia Cassedy

 “Giraffe” by Maureen W. Armour

Expanding vocabulary through playing
with the sounds of words

A Foot in the Mouth: Poems to Speak, Sing, and Shout (Candlewick Press, 2009) selected
by Paul B. Janeczko. Illustrated by Chris Raschka

Examples: “Pasta Parade” by Bobbi Katz

“Ping Pong Poem” by Douglas Florian

PLUS *A Kick in the Head: An Everyday Guide to Poetic Forms* (Candlewick Press,
2005) selected by Paul B. Janeczko. Illustrated by Chris Raschka

Expanding vocabulary through poems with two voices

Joyful Noise (Harper Trophy, 1988) by Paul Fleischman. Illustrated by Eric Beddows

Examples: “Fireflies”

“Book Lice”

I Am Phoenix (Harper Trophy, 1985) by Paul Fleischman. Illustrated by Ken Nutt

Flip Sides: Poem for Two Voices

by Alexa Sandmann

Inference

and

Implication

each have their say

Expanding vocabulary through writing... even in small snippets...

Daniel Finds a Poem (Nancy Paulsen Books, 2016) by Micha Archer.

A Found Poem, “**Born with an Affinity with Nature,**”

created on August 13, 2019 at

Cuyahoga Valley National Park

It all began as we spoke of “place-based writing” that morning and I began with ...

Expanding vocabulary through reading the writing of others ...

"Nature" by Emily Dickinson

"Nature" is what we see—

The Hill—the Afternoon—
Squirrel—Eclipse— the Bumble bee—
Nay—Nature is Heaven—

Nature is what we hear—

The Bobolink—the Sea—
Thunder—the Cricket—
Nay—Nature is Harmony—

Nature is what we know—

Yet have no art to say—
So impotent Our Wisdom is
To her Simplicity.

Expanding vocabulary through **reading** the
writing of others ...

“Central Park Lesson” (Dial Books, 1998) by Nikki Grimes

Poem paired with prose--

Expanding vocabulary through **appreciating** the writing of others

Poetry Perspective Page by Alexa Sandmann (asandman@kent.edu)
inspired by literature circle roles by Harvey Daniels

which could even be used to analyze

our Found Poem, “Born with an Affinity with Nature,”

created on August 13, 2019 at

Cuyahoga Valley National Park

And I will let the chorus of educators have the final **POWERFUL WORDS** this
morning.