KS3-5

Word gap templates

TEMPLATES PACK

teachit

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Word gap templates

Introduction for teachers

In recent years, there has been an increased focus on vocabulary development and the word gap in UK schools. The term 'word gap' is used to describe how students with a limited vocabulary are disadvantaged in a range of ways.

Research suggests that students with a limited vocabulary make slower progress than expected and have lower overall attainment. They can struggle to work independently and even find it more difficult to make friends. They are also more likely to leave school early and to be unemployed as adults.

In the wake of Covid-19, schools throughout the country are focusing on explicit vocabulary teaching as a way to reduce learning loss and close the attainment gap.

What can teachers do to close the word gap?

Although most words are learned indirectly through reading and listening, students still need direct, explicit teaching of important or new words.

Literacy experts have identified three vocabulary tiers:

Tier 1 words are words used often in our everyday conversation, e.g. *walk, play, weather*. At KS3 or KS4, some EAL learners may still need help with acquiring these, but the majority of students will arrive at secondary school well equipped with these words.

Tier 2 words are words that often occur in academic settings or in examinations as command words, e.g. *assess, contrast, devise*.

Tier 3 words are specialised or subject-specific words, e.g. *equation, photosynthesis, soliloquy*.

Tier 1
Basic words used often in everyday conversation such as *book, numbers, castle*.

Tier 2
More complex, academic words such as *compare, analysis, summarise*.

Tier 3
Specialised, subject-specific words such as *tectonics, pythagoras, regime*.
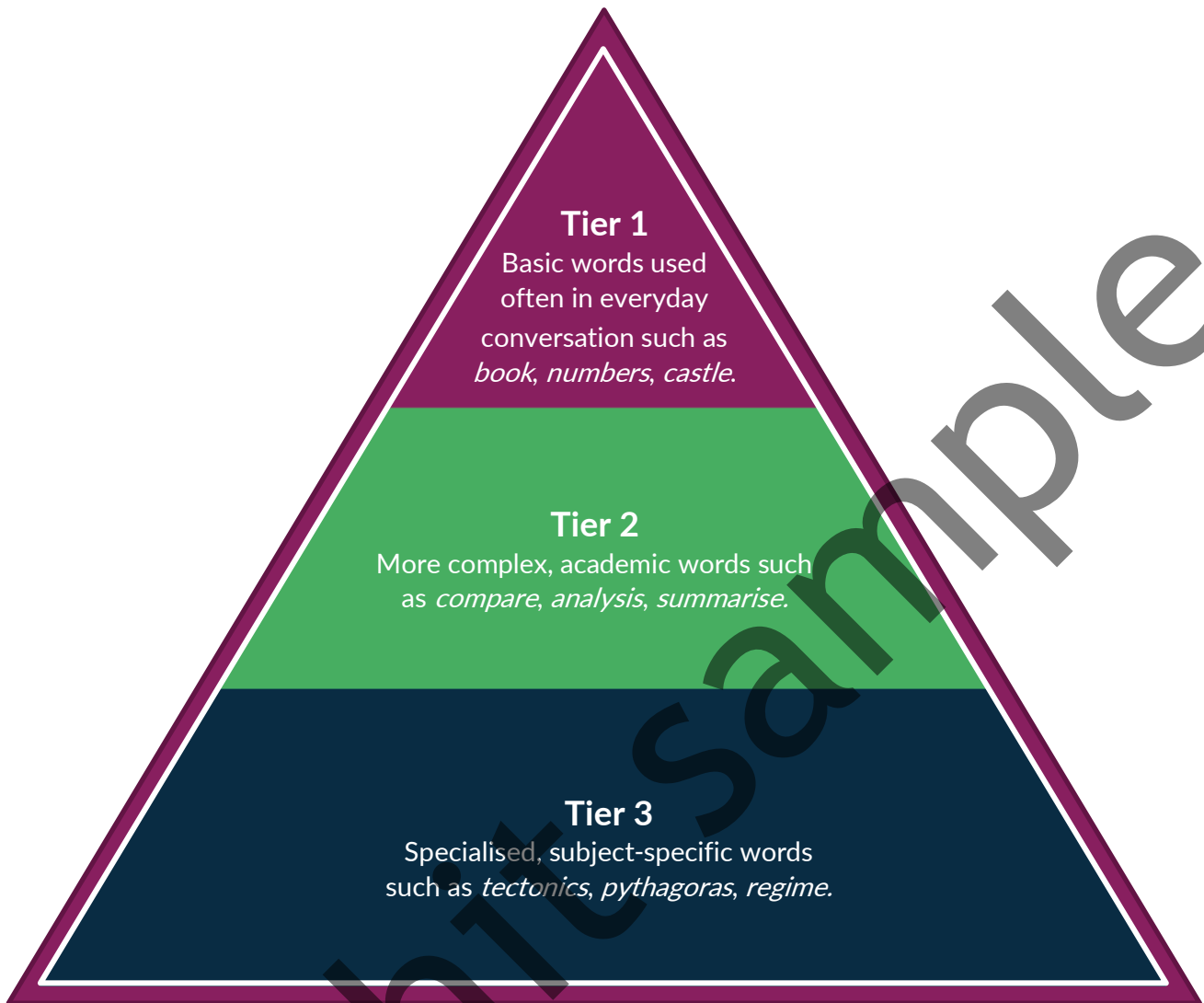
These word gap templates support the explicit teaching of tier 2 and tier 3 vocabulary, and offer a variety of approaches that can be used in the classroom in all subject areas. The aim is to encourage students to engage in meaningful ways with words – to have fun, to be curious and to explore new vocabulary so that they 'own' these words, and the word gap is narrowed.

They are best embedded in the content of the lesson as part of the development of a student's specialist language, rather than the sole focus of a discrete vocabulary lesson. They also work well to support revision, independent study and homework.
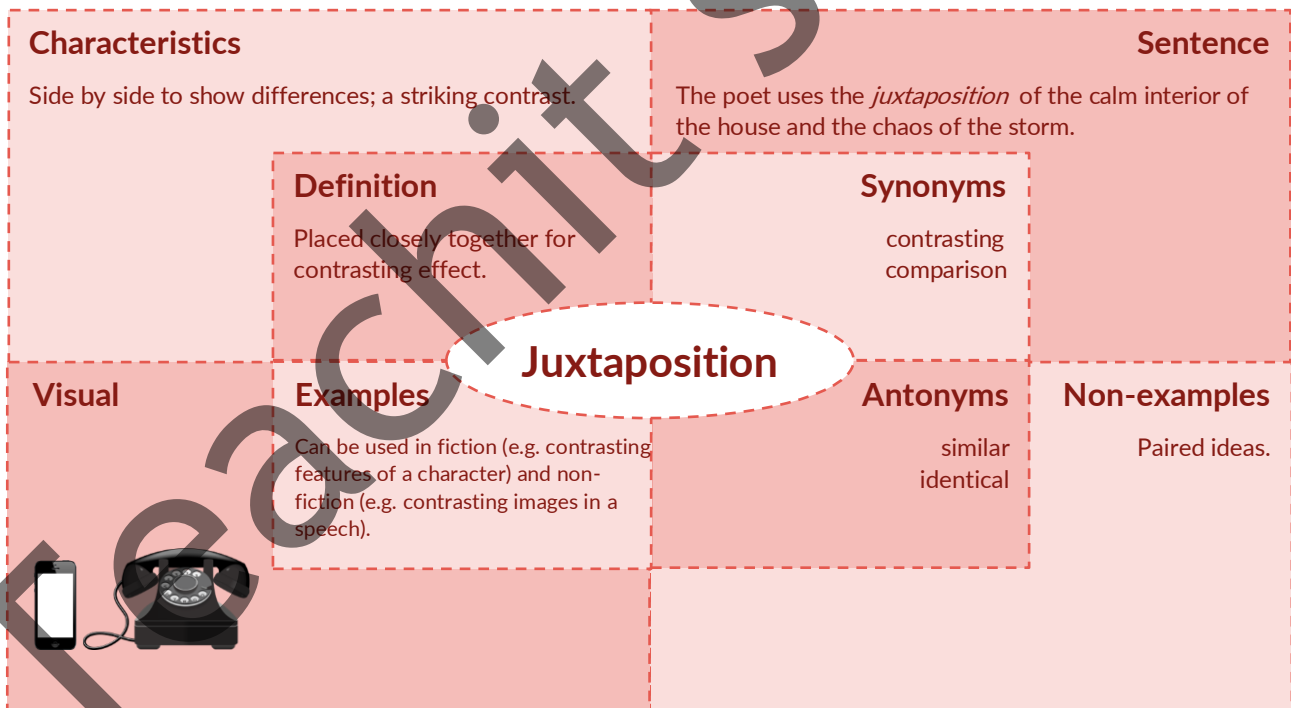
A blank version of each template has been included for you to use and adapt, along with some vocabulary development teaching ideas.

Frayer diagram template (1)

Teaching ideas:

This template supports the detailed exploration of complex tier 3 words and allows students to think about the subtle differences between words.

- Set students a Frayer word challenge. Display a series of Frayer diagrams, partly filled in (for example, the characteristics sections) and the students must work in pairs to populate the other sections.

- Create a dynamic classroom display or vocab wall, adding Frayer diagrams each time you encounter new or unfamiliar words. Work collaboratively as a class to complete the diagram and welcome everyone's input.

- Higher attaining students could create a set of Frayer diagrams of key words at the end of a unit of work. The diagrams could be shared with the class as a revision set, or used in lessons in a variety of ways i.e. guess the key word or play a game of Pictionary etc.

Characteristics		Sentence
Side by side to show differences; a striking contrast.		The poet uses the *juxtaposition* of the calm interior of the house and the chaos of the storm.

Definition	Synonyms
Placed closely together for contrasting effect.	contrasting comparison

Juxtaposition

Visual	Examples	Antonyms	Non-examples
	Can be used in fiction (e.g. contrasting features of a character) and non-fiction (e.g. contrasting images in a speech).	similar identical	Paired ideas.

*Example Frayer diagram for the word juxtaposition in English.*

Characteristics

Sentence

Definition

Synonyms

Visual

Examples

Antonyms

Non-examples

Frayer diagram template (2)

Teaching ideas:

This version of the Frayer diagram has been simplified to make it more accessible as an introductory activity.

● The shape of this diagram lends itself to a jigsaw-style activity. Create a series of Frayer diagrams for five key words and cut them into the five sections (Definition, Visual, Sentence, Word and More information). Students could then work in groups to put the diagrams back together.

● Laminate a series of filled diagrams for tricky tier 2 or 3 words and use them as placemats to support students during lessons. Alternatively put the diagrams in polypockets inside an upturned ringbinder in the middle of tables, and use as a portable glossary to provide additional support for students.

● Give students a filled template with the word missing from the centre (and with a gap in the Example sentence) and ask them to guess the missing word. This could be done in teams with groups racing to guess all the words first, with the teacher handing out the next sheet only when they have the correct answer. This works best if the sheets are a different colour for each team.

Definition	Example sentence
Word	
Image	More information
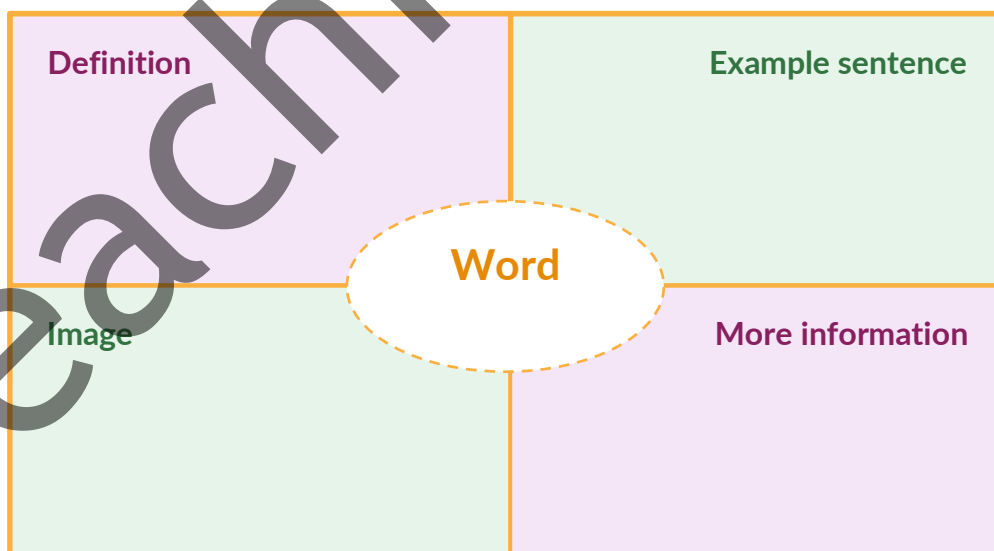
Definition	**Example sentence**
Image	**More information**

Word

Knowledge organisers template

Teaching ideas:

Here are two flexible templates for DIY knowledge organisers which students can use to map the key words and content across a subject/unit.

Students can populate the sections with key words or create glossaries as they study or they can be given a filled organiser at the start of their unit of work.

- These templates support self-quizzing and low-stakes testing in lessons, and can be useful for giving students the 'bigger picture' and reminding them to make links between content and topics.

- Encourage students to map their knowledge on a unit / theme / curriculum focus / exam paper. Ask students to include visual elements such as timelines for history topics and diagrams for science.

- Ask students to create a list of questions, using the knowledge organisers to supply the answer, or use them for a range of low-stakes quizzes.