

Inside the Word, Outside the Word

“Neither inferring from surrounding text nor breaking down a word into meaningful chunks is a failsafe decoding tool on its own. However, in combination they are probably the most effective word-solving strategy we have, especially for struggling readers. The first thing struggling readers need to do is recognize when they encounter a word they don’t know; the next thing is to apply strategies for solving that word. One effective process for solving unfamiliar words is to read outside the word to see if there are context clues nearby, then read inside the word to see if there are root or affixes that help confirm the meaning.”

Lori Jamison Rog, *Struggling Readers*, 2013

Many of the words that challenge our students, especially in nonfiction, have multiple syllables. But they are often easier to decode than they look. Just because they’re “long” doesn’t mean they’re difficult. In fact, many of them are pretty easy to figure out if we break them down into meaningful chunks. Root (or base) words, prefixes and suffixes are all chunks of meaning. For example, let’s take apart the word “ghostbuster”. It’s a compound word made up of the words *ghost* and *buster*. We know that the suffix “er” often means “someone who does” or “someone who is.” Therefore a *ghostbuster* is someone who “busts” or gets rid of, ghosts.

Use the HIP Books passage *Real Life Ghostbusters* or another passage of your choice to send students on a hunt for tricky words. List the words the students suggested and then break them down into morphological chunks. Use these prefixes, suffixes and roots to construct a definition of these words.

Tricky Word	Root	Meaning of prefix	Meaning of suffix	What does the word mean?	Other words with the same chunks
ghostbuster	ghost bust		er – someone who is or does	someone who busts ghosts	hunter
unfinished	finish	un – not	ed – past tense	not completed	unpainted
electromagnetic	magnet	electro – relating to electricity	ic - relating to or having characteristics of	Having both electricity and magnetism	electronic magnetism

VOCABULARY CHUNKING

Tricky Word	Root	Meaning of prefix	Meaning of suffix	What does the word mean?	Other words with the same chunks

Real-Life Ghost Busters

If there's something strange going on in your neighborhood, who ya gonna call? Ghostbusters!

The movie "Ghostbusters" may have made ghost hunting a joke, but looking for ghosts is no laughing matter for a lot of people. All over the world, thousands of people are searching for ghosts, and even claiming to "bust" them.

What does it take to be a ghost hunter these days? First, you have to believe in ghosts and other supernatural phenomena. One ghost hunter described ghosts as human beings who have passed out of their bodies, while their spirits still remain on earth. According to believers, these ghosts haunt the places they died or places they loved when they were alive. They might have unfinished business: perhaps warning of something that is going to happen or explaining something that already did happen. Sometimes they just want to bring messages of comfort to those who miss them.

Then, you need some special equipment. A "deluxe ghost-hunting kit" is available online for \$99. It contains an EVP (Electronic Voice Phenomena) listener that enables you to record sounds that the human ear may not be able to hear. An EMF (Electromagnetic Field) meter detects changes in the air that might indicate ghostly energy. There's an ultrasonic motion sensor to note movements in the dark and an infrared thermometer to measure cold spots in a room.

Even with all this equipment, there's no guarantee that you've found a ghost. Non-believers argue that there is an everyday explanation for everything. That strange sound may just be an animal or a distant radio. EMF detectors can be fooled by microwaves. And there's no proof that ghosts cause changes in temperature. A ghost-hunting kit may look like scientific equipment, but it is fake science, say skeptics.

According to surveys, about a third of people believe in ghosts. Another third absolutely do not believe. The remaining third are not sure. Which group do you belong to?

GLOSSARY:

phenomena: [fi-**nom**-uh-nuh] facts, occurrences, or circumstances observed or observable: *to study the phenomena of nature*. (singular: phenomenon)

skeptic: (skēp'tik) someone who questions or disagrees with ideas that are accepted by others