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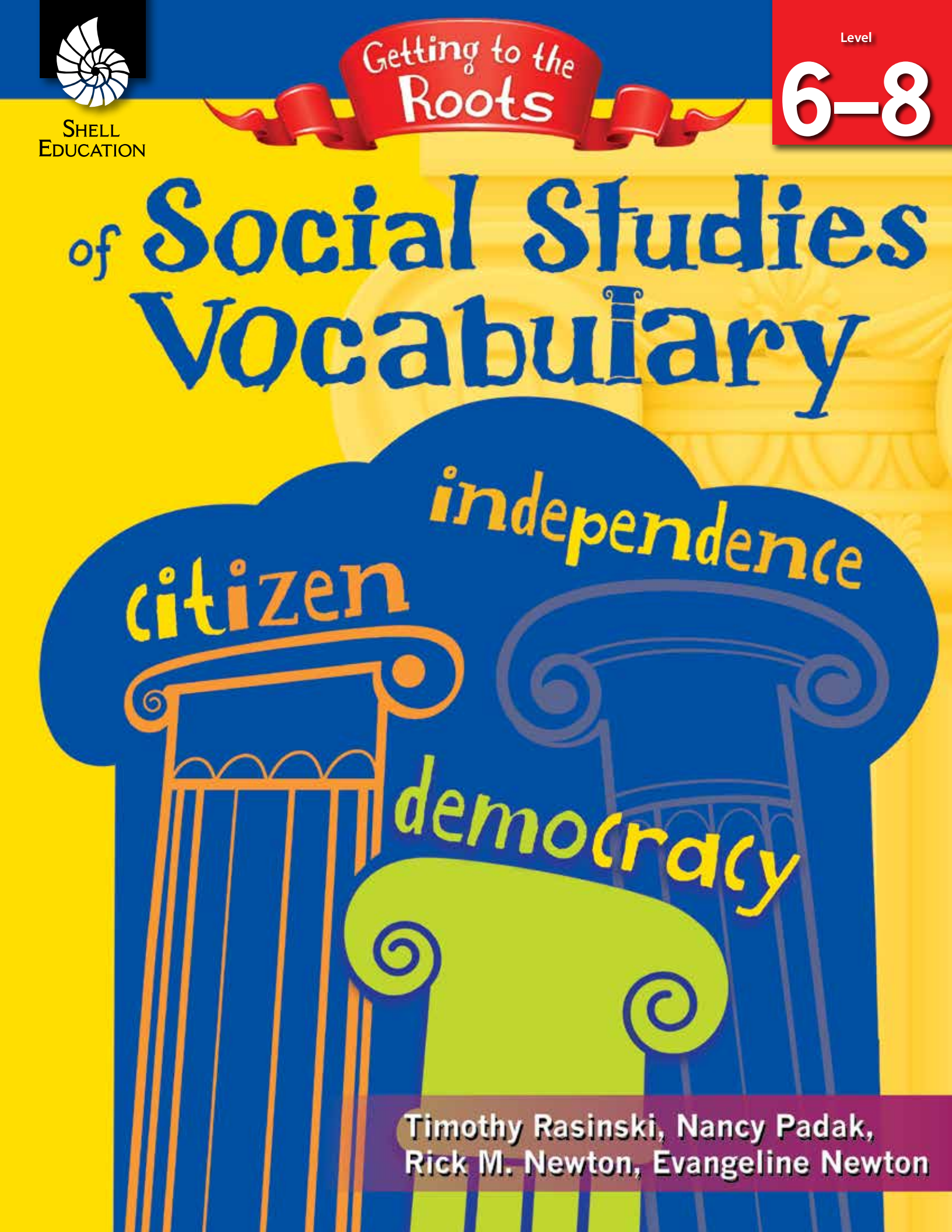
Shell Education
Getting to the Roots
Level
6–8
of Social Studies Vocabulary
citizen
independence
democracy
Timothy Rasinski, Nancy Padak,
Rick M. Newton, Evangeline Newton

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Social Studies Vocabulary Research and Practice

Words are labels for key concepts in social studies. Although learning these words is critical to student success, teaching them can be challenging. Asking students to look words up in their dictionaries or glossaries and then to memorize definitions provides, at best, a short-term solution. Many of the concepts are new to students, and most of the concepts are abstract. Moreover, students may have insufficient background knowledge to learn these new concepts well.

Over 90 percent of all academic vocabulary (including social studies) derives from Greek and Latin roots.

In this book, we present a systematic and research-based alternative to vocabulary learning: a roots approach. Because most words are defined (and spelled) by what their parts mean, students can expand their vocabularies by learning how to build words from the roots up. Over 90 percent of all academic vocabulary derives from Latin or Greek roots (prefixes, suffixes, bases).

The lessons in this book center on bases, which provide the core meaning in words. Prefixes, attached to the beginnings of words, and suffixes, attached to the endings of words, are used throughout the book, but the focus is on 25 Latin and Greek roots that generate hundreds of social studies words. As students learn these word parts and recognize them as the essential components in specific words from social studies, their growing verbal skills support their increasing ability to comprehend social studies principles as well as to increase and enhance their general vocabulary.

What Does Research Say About Using a Roots Approach?

The size and depth of students' vocabulary is associated with proficiency in reading comprehension. (Baumann et al. 2002; Beck, Perfetti, and McKeown 1982; Kame'enui, Carnine, and Freschi 1982; Stahl and Fairbanks 1986).

Morphological analysis (e.g., via a roots approach) is important because it is generative and allows students to make connections among semantically related words or word families (Nagy and Scott 2000). In fact, developing morphological awareness is an integral component of word learning (Biemiller and Slonim 2001). In a comprehensive review of 16 studies analyzing the effect of instruction in morphological awareness on literacy achievement, Carlisle (2010) observes that "People learn morphemes as they learn language" (465).

Social Studies Vocabulary Research and Practice *(cont.)*

Classroom-based studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of teaching word parts and context clues in the primary and intermediate grades (Baumann et al. 2002; Baumann et al. 2005; Biemiller 2005; Carlisle 2000; Kieffer and Lesaux 2007; Mountain 2005; Porter-Collier 2010). Research in content-area vocabulary has demonstrated the effectiveness of teaching Greek and Latin word roots, especially for struggling readers (Harmon, Hedrick, and Wood 2005). Moreover, vocabulary knowledge is associated with higher scores on high-stakes tests like the ACT; students with knowledge of Latin score significantly higher on the SAT than those without such knowledge (ACT 2006; LaFleur 1981).

No single instructional method is sufficient. Teachers need a variety of methods that teach word meanings while also increasing the depth of word knowledge (Blachowicz et al. 2006; Lehr, Osborn, and Hiebert 2004). These methods should aim at fostering:

- **Immersion**

  Students need frequent opportunities to use new words in diverse oral and print contexts in order to learn them thoroughly (Blachowicz and Fisher 2006).

- **Metacognitive and metalinguistic awareness**

  Students must understand and know how to manipulate the structural features of language (Nagy and Scott 2000).

- **Word consciousness**

  Word exploration (e.g., etymology) and word play (e.g., puns, riddles, games) help students develop an awareness of and interest in words (Graves and Watts-Taffe 2002; Lehr, Osborn, and Hiebert 2004).

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Social Studies Vocabulary Research and Practice *(cont.)*

Why Teach with a Roots Approach?

Teaching with a roots approach is efficient. Over 60 percent of the words students encounter in their reading have recognizable word parts (Nagy et al. 1989). Moreover, content-area vocabulary is largely of Greek and Latin origin (Harmon, Hedrick, and Wood 2005). Many words from Greek and Latin roots meet the criteria for "tier two" words and are appropriate for instruction (Beck, McKeown, and Kucan 2002).

Root study promotes independent word learning (Carlisle 2010). In addition, students learn to make connections among words that are semantically related (Nagy and Scott 2000). Research suggests that the brain is a pattern detector (Cunningham 2004). Latin and Greek word roots follow linguistic patterns that can help students with the meaning, sound, and spelling of English words. Indeed, Latin and Greek roots have consistent orthographic (spelling) patterns (Rasinski and Padak 2013; Bear et al. 2011).

Many English language learners speak first languages semantically related to Latin. For example, more than 75 percent of the words in Spanish come from Latin (Chandler and Schwartz 1961, 1991). In fact, Spanish, Portuguese, French, Catalan, Italian, and Rumanian are all classified as "Romance Languages" because they derive from Latin, the language of ancient Romans. Enhancing this natural linguistic connection inherent in many of these languages can accelerate these students' vocabulary growth (Blachowicz et al. 2006).

Many states are beginning to include root study in their elementary and middle school literacy standards. Indeed, the *Common Core State Standards* focus extensively on root-specific standards in the "Reading Foundational Skills" and "Language/ Vocabulary Acquisition and Use" sections. According to these standards, attention to roots should begin in kindergarten.

prefix

A root at the beginning of a word. For example, in the word *segregate*, the initial *se-* is a prefix, meaning "aside," "apart."

base

The core root, which provides a word with its basic meaning. In the word *segregate*, the base is *greg-*, which means "flock," herd."

suffix

A root that ends a word. In the word *segregate*, the final *-ate* is a verbal suffix, meaning "to do."

Note: You can find out more about what prefixes and suffixes do on the Digital Resource CD (filename: functions.pdf).

What Is a Root?

A *root* is a word part that contains meaning (and not merely sound). Roots are vocabulary multipliers—each root taught helps students discover the meaning to multiple words. The three types of roots, depending on their placement within a word, are prefix, base, and suffix.

Social Studies Vocabulary Research and Practice *(cont.)*

Differentiating Instruction

Some students may need additional support. Others may benefit from additional challenge. These ideas may help you differentiate instruction:

- Use visual aids.
- Ask students to sketch or act out words. Others can guess the depicted words.
- Reduce length of activity.
- Pair students. Encourage them to talk about the roots and the activities.
- Challenge students to create new words that contain the root.
- Talk students through the necessary process to complete an activity. Your aim should be to scaffold students' thinking, not to provide answers.
- Alert other teachers (mathematics, science, etc.) of the roots you are working on with students. Ask them to include them, when possible, in their own instruction with students.
- Have students keep a personal vocabulary journal in which they list the roots and related words they learn. Encourage students to use their new vocabulary in their oral and written language (e.g., "Use at least one word containing the [*demo*-] root in your social studies journal entry today.")
- Put the roots and words derived from the roots on display in the classroom. Keep them on display over the course of several weeks. (You may wish to move some of the displays into the hallway or other sites outside your classroom.)
- Play word games that involve the roots with your students often. Word lists containing the roots in this book are found on the Digital Resource CD (filename: wordlists.pdf).

Students who need additional challenge can a) look for words containing the featured root in their content-area texts, b) write riddles for others to solve, using several words that contain the root, or c) use an online resource to find additional words containing the root (e.g., http://www.onelook.com) or to create word puzzles featuring the root (e.g., http://www.puzzlemaker.com).

Like their peers, English language learners benefit from the focus on meaning using research-based strategies to learn new roots and words. Especially if students' native languages derive from Latin (e.g., Spanish), make comparisons to the native languages whenever possible. (You can look online for resources to assist with this.) When Spanish speakers learn to look for roots within words, they will be able to relate many word roots in English to their counterparts in Spanish. Sharing their knowledge with other classmates will help everyone grow.

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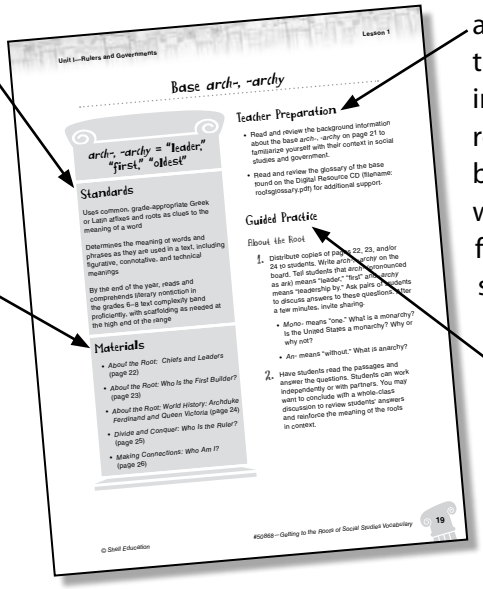
How to Use This Book

The following information will help you implement each lesson.

Lesson Overview

A list of **Standards** (McREL and Common Core State Standards) is included in each lesson.

The **Materials** listed include the activity pages for students.


Unit I—Rulers and Governments

Lesson 1

Base arch-, -archy

arch-, -archy = "leader," "first," "oldest"

Standards

Uses common, grade-appropriate Greek or Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word

Determines the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings

By the end of the year, reads and comprehends literary nonfiction in the grades 6–8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range

Materials

- About the Root: Chiefs and Leaders (page 22)
- About the Root: Who Is the First Builder? (page 23)
- About the Root: World History: Archduke Ferdinand and Queen Victoria (page 24)
- Divide and Conquer: Who Is the Ruler? (page 25)
- Making Connections: Who Am I? (page 26)

Teacher Preparation

- Read and review the background information about the base arch-, -archy on page 21 to familiarize yourself with their context in social studies and government.
- Read and review the glossary of the base found on the Digital Resource CD (filename: rootsglossary.pdf) for additional support.

Guided Practice

About the Root

1. Distribute copies of pages 22, 23, and/or 24 to students. Write arch-, -archy on the board. Tell students that arch- (pronounced as ark) means "leader," "first" and -archy means "leadership by." Ask pairs of students to discuss answers to these questions. After a few minutes, invite sharing.
   - Mono- means "one." What is a monarchy? Is the United States a monarchy? Why or why not?
   - An- means "without." What is anarchy?
2. Have students read the passages and answer the questions. Students can work independently or with partners. You may want to conclude with a whole-class discussion to review students' answers and reinforce the meaning of the roots in context.

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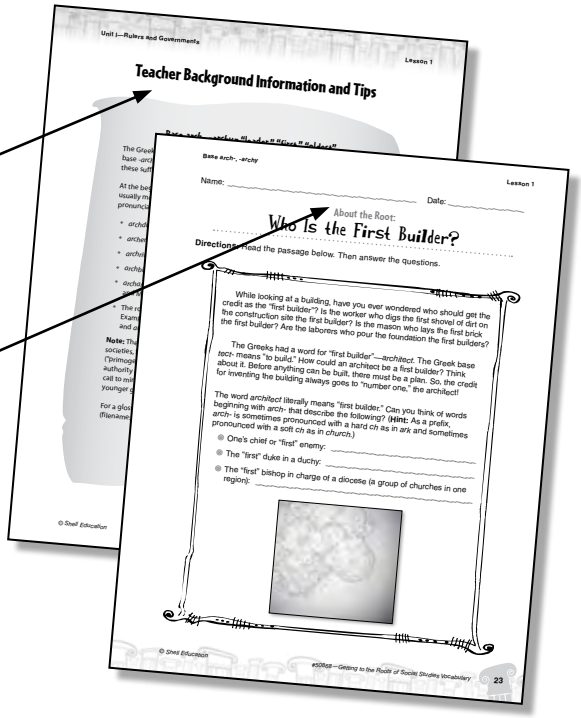
Each lesson begins with a **Teacher Preparation** that provides essential information about the root. Reading this section before you teach the lesson will provide you with a foundation to ensure student success.

The **Guided Practice** portion of each lesson includes suggestions for implementing each of the student activity pages.


Unit I—Rulers and Governments

Lesson 1

Teacher Background Information and Tips

Base arch-, -archy

Name: _____ Date: _____

About the Root:

Who Is the First Builder?

Directions: Read the passage below. Then answer the questions.

While looking at a building, have you ever wondered who should get the credit as the "first builder"? Is the worker who digs the first shovel of dirt on the construction site the first builder? Is the mason who lays the first brick the first builder? Are the laborers who pour the foundation the first builders?

The Greeks had a word for "first builder"—*architect*. The Greek base *tect-* means "to build." How could an architect be a first builder? Think about it. Before anything can be built, there must be a plan. So, the credit for inventing the building always goes to "number one," the architect!

The word *architect* literally means "first builder." Can you think of words beginning with *arch-* that describe the following? (**Hint:** As a prefix, *arch-* is sometimes pronounced with a hard *ch* as in *ark* and sometimes pronounced with a soft *ch* as in *church*.)

- One's chief or "first" enemy: _____
- The "first" duke in a duchy: _____
- The "first" bishop in charge of a diocese (a group of churches in one region): _____

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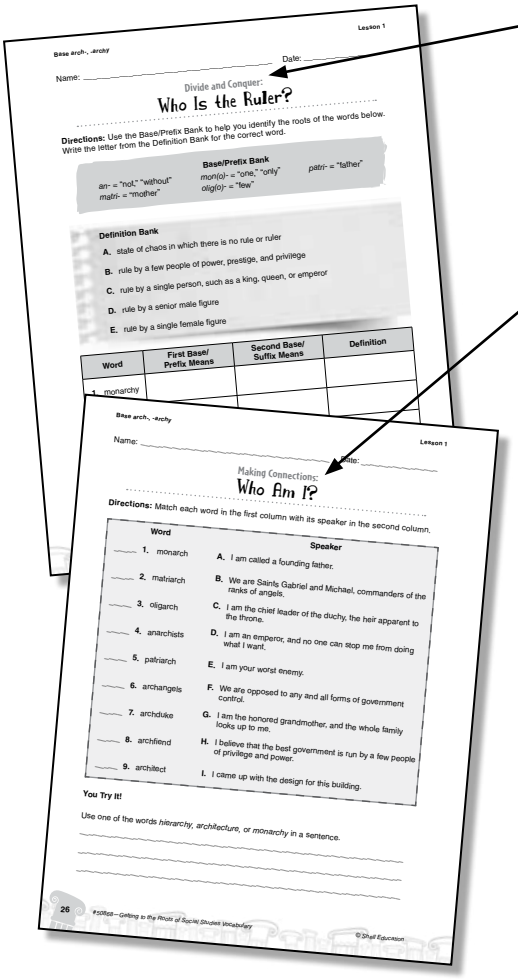
Before beginning each lesson, review the **Teacher Background Information and Tips** page to provide additional help for students. Additional information to introduce each unit can be found on pages 12–13.

The **About the Root** activities are introductions and include short passages using the root of focus. The purpose of these passages is to show students contextual use of the root in social studies. As students read to themselves or listen to the teacher read aloud, they identify words containing the roots in extended texts that center on a wide range of interesting topics.

How to Use This Book *(cont.)*


Base arch-, -archy

Lesson 1

Name: _____ Date: _____

Divide and Conquer:
Who Is the Ruler?

Directions: Use the Base/Prefix Bank to help you identify the roots of the words below. Write the letter from the Definition Bank for the correct word.

Base/Prefix Bank

an- = "not," "without"
matri- = "mother"
mon(o)- = "one," "only"
olig(o)- = "few"
patri- = "father"

Definition Bank

A. state of chaos in which there is no rule or ruler
B. rule by a few people of power, prestige, and privilege
C. rule by a single person, such as a king, queen, or emperor
D. rule by a senior male figure
E. rule by a single female figure

Word	First Base/ Prefix Means	Second Base/ Suffix Means	Definition
1. monarchy			

Base arch-, -archy

Lesson 1

Name: _____ Date: _____

Making Connections:
Who Am I?

Directions: Match each word in the first column with its speaker in the second column.

Word	Speaker
_____ 1. monarch	**A.** I am called a founding father.
_____ 2. matriarch	**B.** We are Saints Gabriel and Michael, commanders of the ranks of angels.
_____ 3. oligarch	**C.** I am the chief leader of the duchy, the heir apparent to the throne.
_____ 4. anarchists	**D.** I am an emperor, and no one can stop me from doing what I want.
_____ 5. patriarch	**E.** I am your worst enemy.
_____ 6. archangels	**F.** We are opposed to any and all forms of government control.
_____ 7. archduke	**G.** I am the honored grandmother, and the whole family looks up to me.
_____ 8. archfiend	**H.** I believe that the best government is run by a few people of privilege and power.
_____ 9. architect	**I.** I came up with the design for this building.

You Try It!

Use one of the words *hierarchy*, *architecture*, or *monarchy* in a sentence.

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The **Divide and Conquer** activities allow students to pull words apart. They dissect the parts of the words, understand the meaning of these parts, and then gain a greater understanding of the word as a whole.

The **Making Connections** activities allow students to use their knowledge of roots to make connections to vocabulary and offer students the opportunity to extend their exploration of the root(s) through activities such as word sorts, riddles, representing the roots and related words in drawings, and game-like tasks. They may need to distinguish when to use a certain root or which way the root is used in a word.

All of the student activity pages and additional resources such as word lists and flashcards can be found on the **Digital Resource CD**.

How to Use This Book *(cont.)*

Tips for Implementation

These tips will help you think about how to teach the lessons in this book.

- You will find many suggestions in this text, but remember that they are just that—suggestions. You should feel free to adapt the lessons to meet your students' needs.
- Plan to spend five to ten minutes per day on vocabulary related to social studies.
- You can teach the lessons in any order. You may want to coordinate with your curriculum. Each lesson addresses one basic social studies idea or concept. You can also expand on any lesson as you see fit. If students need more work on a particular root, you may wish to use some of the additional practice activities described in Appendix C.
- Before beginning a new lesson, read the Teacher Background Information and Tips page. These notes provide general information and identify many social studies words built on the base of the lesson.
- Talking about the roots is very important for student learning. This approach to vocabulary development goes far beyond mere memorization of specific words (which, according to research, does not work). Students need to learn to think about how roots contribute to meanings. Talking this through can help them develop this realization. So, encourage students to talk, Talk, TALK!!!
- Each week, display the root(s) and meaning(s) prominently in your classroom.
- Encourage students to use the root as much as possible throughout the entire week. Reading, writing, speaking, and listening to words containing the root will facilitate learning. Several generic activities (see Appendix C) provide additional instruction or practice, if you or your students wish.
- You may wish to provide students with dictionaries as they work through the activities sheets.

Base *vert-*, *vers-*

***vert-*, *vers-* = "turn," "change"**

Standards

Uses common, grade-appropriate Greek or Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word

Determines the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies

By the end of the year, reads and comprehends literary nonfiction in the grades 6–8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range

Materials

- *About the Root: World History: The World, So Diverse, Is One* (page 109)
- *About the Root: The Turning of Time* (page 110)
- *About the Root: American History: The Conversion of the Native Americans* (page 111)
- *Divide and Conquer: Many Changes* (page 112)
- *Making Connections: Fill in the Blank* (page 113)

Teacher Preparation

- Read and review the background information about the base *vert-*, *vers-* on page 108 to familiarize yourself with their context in history and social studies.
- Read and review the glossary of the base found on the Digital Resource CD (filename: rootsglossary.pdf) for additional support.

Guided Practice

About the Root

1. Distribute copies of pages 109, 110, and/or 111 to students. If necessary, remind students about literal (actual) and figurative (symbolic or abstract) meanings. You could use these sentences as examples:
   - I *see* your point.
   - I *see* the school bus coming.
2. Have students read the passages and answer the questions. Students can work independently or with partners. You may want to conclude with a whole-class discussion to review students' answers and reinforce the meaning of the roots in context.

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Base *vert-, vers-* *(cont.)*

Divide and Conquer

3. Distribute copies of *Divide and Conquer* (page 112). As you guide students through the activity page, use questions like these to generate discussion about each of the words:
   - Where is the meaning of "turn" or "change" in the word _____?
   - Where might you see the word _____?
   - Can you think of an example of _____?

Making Connections

4. Distribute copies of *Making Connections* (page 113).

5. Have students preview all of the sentences before completing the activity sheet.

6. Conclude with a whole-class discussion that focuses on root meaning. You may also ask pairs of students to rewrite a couple of sentences to maintain meaning without using the words put in the blanks. You can then invite sharing and talk with students about the process of rewriting.

Words with *vert-, vers-*

adverse	extrovert
adversity	extroverted
advertise	inadvertent
advertisement	incontrovertible
anniversary	introvert
averse	introverted
aversion	invert
avert	inverse
controversial	inversion
controversy	pervert
conversion	revert
convert	subvert
convertible	traverse
diverse	universal
diversion	universe
diversity	versatile
divert	version
	vertigo

A list of words to print out for students can be found on the Digital Resource CD (filename: wordlists.pdf).

Teacher Background Information and Tips

Base *vert-*, *vers-* = "turn," "change"

The Latin base *vert-*, *vers-*, meaning "turn," "change," generates a large number of English words, many of which are related to social studies and other content areas. Students may already know some derivatives but may not have associated them with the base meaning of "turn" or "change." Words like *convert*, *universe*, *diversity*, *controversy*, *advertise*, *subvert*, *version*, and *vertical* are all built on this base. The base attaches to no fewer than 14 Latin prefixes.

This lesson presents derivatives that students are likely to encounter in social studies texts dealing with world cultures (e.g., *universe*, *diversity*, *conversion*) and history (e.g., *controversy*, *subvert*, *subversive*, *avert*, *adverse*, *adversity*).

Important social studies words that are built on this base include *diverse, cultural diversity, anniversary, divert,* and *perverse.*

For a glossary of words with this root, see the Digital Resource CD (filename: rootsglossary.pdf).

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Name: _____ Date: _____

About the Root: World History:

The World, So Diverse, Is One

Directions: Read the information. Then answer the questions.

The Latin base *vert-, vers-* means "turn," "change." Many words contain this base, including social studies words. Sometimes, the idea of "turning" is literal in *vert-, vers-* words. Other times, the "turning" is figurative.

- Is the "turning" in *reverse* literal or figurative? How do you know?

_____

_____

_____

- Is the "turning" in *convert* literal or figurative? How do you know?

_____

_____

_____

The Romans gave us the word and the concept of *diversity*. As they expanded their empire, they came into contact with many different peoples. They saw people who lived around the Mediterranean Sea, including Egypt and Libya. They also saw other Europeans and Asians. These people spoke different languages, worshipped different gods, and observed different customs. The Romans brought these diverse populations into their empire and made them Roman subjects. Yet they allowed them to maintain their own ways of life, speak their own languages, and keep their own customs. Many of the new subjects had to pay taxes to Rome and recognize the emperor's authority. It is hardly a wonder that *diversity* is a Latin-based word.

But as Roman philosophers thought about this *diverse* world, they searched to find what everyone had in common. They sought to understand the *universal* things that all human beings share. In the third century A.D., a scholar named Lucius Ampelius came up with this explanation of the word for *world*: "The world, in which all things exist, is the *universality* and sum total of everything." The one *universe*, it seems, is full of differences!

- What do you think the Romans understood about the value of diversity? Write your thoughts on a separate sheet of paper.

Name: _____ Date: _____

About the Root:
The Turning of Time

Directions: Read the information. Then answer the question.

Have you ever wondered why many clocks and watches have round faces? The passage of time is measured in circles, which is why the words *clockwise* and *counterclockwise* describe circular motion. As Earth makes one complete turn on its axis, we complete one day. As Earth completes one full turn around the sun, we mark the completion of a year. This is why we have the word *anniversary,* which means "the turning of a year." The world turns, and time marches on. We turn the pages of our calendars!

- Using the word *turn*, explain what we do when we *reverse* the movement of the hands of a clock or watch.

_____

_____

_____

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Name: _____ Date: _____

About the Root: American History:

The Conversion of the Native Americans

Directions: Read the information. Then answer the questions.

Historians believe that more than 500 different Native American tribes lived in the New World at the time of Christopher Columbus. These people had their own languages, religions, and ways of life. Little is known for certain about their various religions because Native Americans did not write. Moreover, the settlers who wrote about Native Americans were probably influenced by their own assumptions and prejudices. Their opinions may not have been accurate.

Many European settlers believed the Native Americans were "heathens." They wanted to *convert* them to Christianity. In fact, a priest was charged with this very task was on Columbus's second voyage. This man, along with many other Spanish and later French explorers, tried to *convert* the native peoples.

- Explain the meaning of the word *convert* using the concept of turning or changing.

_____

_____

_____

_____

- Do you think people should try to *convert* others to their religions? Why or why not?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Name: _____ Date: _____

Divide and Conquer:
Many Changes

Directions: Use the Base/Prefix Bank to help you identify the roots of the words below. Write the letter from the Definition Bank for the correct word.

Base/Prefix Bank

con- = "with," "together"
di- = "apart," "in different directions"
contro- = "against"
sub- = "under," "below," "up from under"
uni- = "one"

Definition Bank

A. encompassing all people and things; whole and entire

B. varied; made up of many different things or people

C. to undermine and attempt to overthrow

D. the adoption of a different religion or belief

E. characterized by disagreement and disputes

Word	First Base/ Prefix Means	Second Base/ Suffix Means	Definition
1. diverse			
2. controversial			
3. universal			
4. conversion			
5. subvert			

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Name: _____ Date: _____

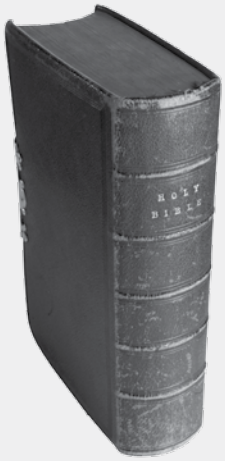
Making Connections:
Fill in the Blank

Directions: Use the words from the Word Bank to complete the sentences.

Word Bank

avert controversial convert subversives version

1. North American history contains many accounts of Spanish missionaries who attempted to _____ Native Americans to Christianity.
2. As soon as the dictator seized power, he rounded up all of the political _____ and had them executed.
3. Government leaders and economists held a conference in hopes that they could _____ a global financial disaster.
4. The King James _____ of the Bible has had a profound impact on the English language.
5. When addressing large audiences, a speaker should avoid _____ subjects that might offend listeners.



You Try It!

Use one or more of the following words in your own sentence: *universal, versatile, diversity*. Leave a blank where the word belongs. Then share your sentence with a partner. Ask him or her to fill in the blank.

_____

_____

_____

_____