

25 Foundational Words

for Middle School Readers

A free vocabulary resource from EplusL Edu — Grades 5–7.

Curated from the books your child is already reading.

Includes 2 sample pages from the *100 Essential Words for Smart Thinkers* workbook.

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A note from EunJung

The middle school years are the most important vocabulary window of your child's academic life — and the most overlooked. Between grades 5 and 7, students transition from learning to read to reading to learn. That shift demands a much larger and more precise vocabulary than most children have been given.

The 25 words in this guide are drawn directly from the books your child is reading right now — or should be. They are the words that appear in *Charlotte's Web* and *The Giver* and *Hatchet* and *Anne of Green Gables*. They are the words that will show up again in high school, on standardized tests, and in every academic subject that requires careful reading.

My workbook, *100 Essential Words for Smart Thinkers*, was built for exactly this stage — the student who is ready to be stretched but needs a bridge between everyday language and academic vocabulary. One word a day. A real story. A thinking prompt. That is how vocabulary actually sticks.

I hope this guide gives you a starting point — and a sense of what your child is ready for.

With warmth,
EunJung Park, Ph.D.
Founder, EplusL Edu

The 25 Words

Organized by theme — each word appears in books your child knows or is ready to read.

Feelings & Character			
1	Resilient	Able to recover quickly from difficulty; tough and adaptable	<i>Charlotte's Web; Anne of Green Gables</i>
2	Empathetic	Showing the ability to understand and share the feelings of others	<i>Charlotte's Web; Wonder</i>
3	Candid	Truthful and straightforward; honest even when it's uncomfortable	<i>Anne of Green Gables; The Outsiders</i>
4	Defiant	Boldly resistant to authority or an opposing force	<i>Matilda; The Giver</i>
5	Timid	Showing a lack of courage or confidence; easily frightened	<i>The Hobbit; Charlotte's Web</i>
Thinking & Understanding			
6	Inquisitive	Having a strong desire to learn or know things; curious	<i>Alice in Wonderland; The Phantom Tollbooth</i>
7	Skeptic	A person who questions or doubts accepted beliefs	<i>The Giver; Hatchet</i>
8	Ponder	To think carefully and seriously about something	<i>The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe</i>
9	Hypothesis	A proposed explanation based on limited evidence; an educated guess	<i>A Wrinkle in Time; Hatchet</i>
10	Scrutinize	To examine or inspect something very closely and carefully	<i>Island of the Blue Dolphins; Refugee</i>
Actions & Behavior			
11	Advocate	To support or speak up for a person, cause, or idea	<i>Charlotte's Web; Number the Stars</i>
12	Tolerate	To allow or accept something even if unpleasant, without protest	<i>The Outsiders; Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry</i>
13	Procrastinate	To delay or postpone doing something that needs to be done	<i>The Phantom Tollbooth; Ghost</i>
14	Persevere	To continue in a course of action despite difficulty or opposition	<i>Hatchet; Island of the Blue Dolphins</i>
15	Conceal	To keep something hidden or secret from others	<i>Number the Stars; The Giver</i>
Describing the World			
16	Serene	Calm, peaceful, and untroubled	<i>Anne of Green Gables; My Antonia</i>
17	Vivid	Producing powerful feelings or strong, clear images in the mind	<i>The Hobbit; Anne of Green Gables</i>
18	Immaculate	Perfectly clean and tidy; completely free from fault	<i>Anne of Green Gables; Esperanza Rising</i>

19	Conspicuous	Clearly visible; attracting notice or attention	<i>The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe; Ghost</i>
20	Dismal	Causing or showing gloom or depression; dreary	<i>A Wrinkle in Time; Roll of Thunder</i>

Challenge & Change			
21	Adversity	Difficult or unpleasant circumstances; hardship	<i>Esperanza Rising; Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry</i>
22	Resilience	The ability to recover from setbacks and adapt to change	<i>Island of the Blue Dolphins; Refugee</i>
23	Imminent	About to happen very soon; impending	<i>Number the Stars; Hatchet</i>
24	Dwindle	To gradually decrease in size, amount, or strength	<i>My Antonia; Island of the Blue Dolphins</i>
25	Flourish	To grow or develop in a healthy or vigorous way; to thrive	<i>Anne of Green Gables; Esperanza Rising</i>

Sample workbook page — Day 1: CONSPICUOUS

Day 1 _____ date:

Conspicuous**“The bright red coat made Anne conspicuous in the crowd, drawing everyone’s attention.” – Inspired by Anne of Green Gables (L.M. Montgomery)**Conspicuous means something that is easy to see or stands out and gets noticed.Synonyms & Antonyms:

1. Sort the words into the correct boxes below.

Noticeable, Hidden, Obvious, Unseen, Visible, Invisible

Synonyms	Antonyms

True/False:

2. Is the word “**conspicuous**” used correctly in the sentences below?
- The large billboard was conspicuous from the highway. (True / False)
 - The boy wanted to be conspicuous so he could hide from the teacher. (True / False)
 - The bright yellow car was conspicuous in the parking lot full of black cars. (True / False)
 - The small flower was conspicuous among the tall grass. (True / False)

Fill in the Blank & Word Riddle:

3. After filling in the blank, can you guess what the word is?

Word Options: (stand, bright, proud, miss)

I’m hard to _____,
 I _____ out in the crowd.
 I might be _____ or bold,
 And I make you look _____.
 What am I?

Explain Your Thinking:

4. Describe your favorite object that makes you **conspicuous**.
 What is it, and how does it make you stand out?

Doodle:

5. Draw a picture along the edge of the paper showing something **conspicuous** in a group.



Sample workbook page — Day 24: EMPATHY

Day 24 _____ date: _____

Empathy

"Atticus Finch's empathy for others, even those who wronged him, made him a truly remarkable man." – Inspired by To Kill a Mockingbird (H. Lee)

Empathy means understanding and caring about how someone else feels, even if you haven't experienced it yourself.

Synonyms & Antonyms:

1. Sort the words into the correct boxes below.

Compassion, Cruelty, Understanding, Indifference, Caring

Synonyms	Antonyms

True/False:

2. Is the word **"empathy"** used correctly in the sentences below?
- He showed empathy by listening to his friend's problems and offering support. (True / False)
 - She had empathy for her friend but didn't care if they were sad or upset. (True / False)
 - The teacher showed empathy by making sure every student felt heard and understood. (True / False)
 - They laughed at the boy who fell instead of showing empathy. (True / False)

Real-World Connections:

3. Who might show **empathy** in real life?

Complete the sentences below by choosing whether the person is showing "empathy" or "no empathy."

- A friend who listens and offers support when you are upset is showing _____.
- A classmate who ignores others when they are upset is showing _____.
- A teacher who notices when students are struggling and offers help is showing _____.
- A person who makes fun of someone's problems instead of helping is showing _____.

Explain Your Thinking:

4. Write about a time when someone showed **empathy** toward you.
How did they help you feel better, and what did they do to show they understood your feelings?

Doodle:

5. Draw a picture along the edge of the paper of someone showing **empathy**.



Ready to go further?

Take the free 5-minute vocabulary quiz and find out exactly which level your child is at today.

→ eplusledu.com/quiz

Explore the full middle school workbook:

100 Essential Words for Smart Thinkers

→ eplusledu.com/shop

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