

This document contains *Chapter 1: Word Analysis, Fluency, and Systematic Vocabulary Development* from the **2008 California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE): English-Language Arts Teacher Guide** published by the California Department of Education. The entire guide is available at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/elateacherguide.asp>



7 questions	18 questions	20 questions	12 questions	15 questions	1 question
Word Analysis, Fluency, and Systematic Vocabulary Development	Reading Comprehension	Literary Response and Analysis	Writing Strategies	Written and Oral English Language Conventions	Writing Applications

Skills addressed in this strand are basic to the development of fluent readers. Students must start building strategies to identify words and their meanings as they begin developing their reading skills and continue strengthening and extending those strategies as they become fluent readers. Students should have the opportunity to study the origins, derivations, and use of words over time in different types of text. Independent reading is the primary means of increasing vocabulary development, and ongoing opportunities to read are essential.

Students who are not reading at a sufficient level to achieve grade level and/or course expectations may need intensive decoding instruction. The ability to recognize synonyms, antonyms, idioms, and words with multiple meanings is a fundamental skill required for comprehending text. Knowledge of affixes and roots, and their meanings and origins, should be limited to elements that are common and useful. A dictionary and a thesaurus should be used to identify related words and concepts.

Teachers should target specific vocabulary words to be learned and explain why they are important. Students should be held accountable for the content of what they read and important vocabulary words used in assigned text.

In the Classroom

Students who have not acquired fluency in reading will not have the essential knowledge and skills to address the subject-matter content in subject areas across the curriculum. Beyond their English courses, students must be able to decipher and understand a body of information as it relates to the subject being taught (e.g., history, science, and mathematics).

Since the best tool for vocabulary development is independent reading, it is necessary to plan time for this type of activity. Students who have learned how to use context clues and historical clues, along with dictionaries and thesauruses, will be able to use these strategies during independent reading. This type of practice reinforces foundational skills, builds confidence, and motivates students to read a broader range of topics.

Students should be able to:

- Clarify word meanings through definitions, examples, restatements, and contrasts
- Use a dictionary and a thesaurus to determine related words and meanings
- Understand the meanings of unfamiliar words through context clues
- Recognize that knowledge of root words can lead to the meaning of many other words (e.g., solar, solstice, solarium)
- Distinguish between what the words say and the implied meaning of the words

On the CAHSEE

CAHSEE contains 7 Word Analysis items. To demonstrate achievement, students must know the meaning of words at the tenth-grade reading level. All target vocabulary words are located within reading passages. Students are expected to know the meaning of tenth-grade words whether or not the passage provides context clues. Questions may include a phrase or sentence quoted from the passage, or they may simply refer to a paragraph, line number, stanza, or scene number in which the word may be found.

Some questions in Word Analysis require students to determine the meaning of words that are above the tenth-grade level. When these more difficult words are tested, students are expected to use appropriate strategies for determining word meaning. One such strategy is the use of context clues. In questions requiring this strategy, there is sufficient context within the passage for students to derive the meaning. Target words are presented in the question with the phrase or sentences in which they are used in the passage. Students are expected to use the phrase or sentence, as well as the entire passage, to help them determine the meaning of the unknown word.

A second vocabulary strategy is the analysis of affixes and roots to determine meaning. Target words contain common roots, prefixes, or suffixes appropriate to the tenth grade. Students are expected to use knowledge of roots and affixes to determine the meaning of the word or to identify the meaning of the individual word parts.

Questions in Word Analysis may also address the connotation of words or phrases within reading passages. The target words usually are adjectives or adverbs that suggest qualities of people, animals, or actions. However, the target words may also be verbs with a clear connotative interpretation.

The California academic content standards tested on the CAHSEE also require students to determine the meaning of figurative words or phrases, including idioms, metaphors, and similes. Questions do not ask students simply to identify the terms *idiom*, *metaphor*, and *simile*; instead, they require students to use context clues and knowledge of denotative meanings to determine the meaning of the figurative language.

The following pages discuss the two California academic content standards in Word Analysis.

Word Analysis

Standard **10RW1.1**
Identify and use the literal and figurative meanings of words and understand word derivations.

5 test questions

Read this sentence from the selection.

Visitors are treated to an impressive, if garish, display: At the end of the tour, in front of the grandest formation of all, the cave suddenly goes dark, New Age music swells, and dozens of pulsating lasers swirl about the towering Kubla Khan, a 58-foot-high column of sandstone.

The word *garish* means—

- A** short
- B** pitiful
- C** annoying
- D** flashy

CAHSEE questions in standard 10RW1.1 may focus on one of the several components of this academic content standard: the literal meaning of words, the figurative meaning of words, or word derivations. Some questions in standard 10RW1.1 also assess students' use of context clues.

Questions that focus on this component of standard 10RW1.1 require students to demonstrate their knowledge of words at or below the tenth grade reading level. The meaning of brief phrases may also be tested. Target vocabulary may or may not be supported by context clues. The tested vocabulary will be important to an understanding of the overall meaning of the passage in which it is used. The tested words are drawn from either informational or literary texts.

The sample question is based on the passage “Slow Death of a Cave,” which is reproduced on pages 96 and 97 in Appendix B of this guide. The question is representative of others under this standard in that it requires students to know the literal meaning of words at or below the tenth grade level. The sentence from the passage is included in the stem of the question so that students who wish to see the word *garish* in its context do not have to take time to search the entire passage. Sufficient context clues are provided in the passage, “impressive . . . display,” “grandest formation,” “music swells,” and “pulsating lasers swirl,” so that students should recognize that D is the only option that fits logically within the excerpt. Often simply replacing the word being tested with the options will direct students to the correct answer. Such is the case in this test item since only Option D complements the context clues.

Word Analysis

Standard **10RW1.2**
Distinguish between the denotative and connotative meanings of words and interpret the connotative power of words.

2 test questions

The words casual, wander, and gaze in paragraph 3 suggest a feeling of—

- A** determination.
- B** solitude.
- C** bewilderment.
- D** relaxation.

CAHSEE questions in this standard require students to understand the connotative meaning of words or phrases within a reading passage. The target vocabulary is at or below the tenth grade level. Words usually are adjectives or adverbs that suggest qualities of people, animals, or actions. However, verbs with connotative meaning may also be tested. Target words or phrases are drawn from informational or literary texts.

The sample question is based on the passage “A Day Away,” which is reproduced on pages 80 and 81 in Appendix B of this guide. The question focuses on the connotative overtones of three words in the passage. Students should recognize that because all three words carry a connotation of being informal and unhurried, the best choice is **D**, *relaxation*, which is the correct answer. Choice **A**, “determination,” is partially related to the meaning of the three words, but it can be ruled out because the concept of wandering is its opposite. Choices **B** and **C**, “solitude” and “bewilderment,” are not related to the meaning of the three words.