



## **Using Mnemonics to Teach Social Studies Vocabulary**

**Objective:** To teach students (using direct instruction) to use a mnemonic device (i.e., acoustically similar [rhyming or alliterative] or diminutive [i.e., portions of the term]) to learn social studies vocabulary.

### **Setting and Materials:**

**Settings:** Inclusion classroom (20 -minute sessions at the beginning of class)

### **Materials:**

#### **All:**

- District-adopted textbooks and ancillaries

#### **Teachers:**

- Lesson plans
- Procedural outline
- Transparencies with scripts and samples of student materials

#### **Students:**

- Note-taking and practice templates
- Reduced-size reproductions of keywords with interactive illustrations (see Figure 1)

### **Content Taught**

20-minute instructional periods; 4-day-units used to teach vocabulary (i.e., each unit was taught over four days)

### **Teaching Procedures**

1. Maximize student engagement and utilize direct questioning
2. Identify terms
3. Define terms
4. Link terms to keywords and illustrations
5. Create a script for the term
  - Scripts should reflect dialogue between the teacher and student (see example below)
  - Example – anarchist Anarchists are people who are against all forms of government. To remember that anarchists are against all forms of government, recall this strategy of the ants pushing over the capitol or government building. When I ask you what an anarchist is, think of the keyword, ant, and what is happening in the picture (Fontana, Scruggs, & Mastropieri, 2007).

6. Day 1 (of the 4-day unit)

- Introduce the mnemonic condition with two sample items
- Use transparencies and scripts to teach five new terms
- Students use templates to take notes and practice previous learning with worksheets

Days 2 and 3

- Review previous day's content
- Repeat instructional condition with notetaking and practice

Day 4

- Students given free study time before the test

7. Encourage students to take home notes and worksheets to study before tests

### Evaluation

1. Criterion-referenced tests (multiple choice)

#### Lesson Plan Based on:

Fontana, J. L., Scruggs, T., Mastropieri, M. A. (2007). Mnemonic strategy instruction in inclusive secondary social studies classes. *Remedial and Special Education*, 28, 345-355.

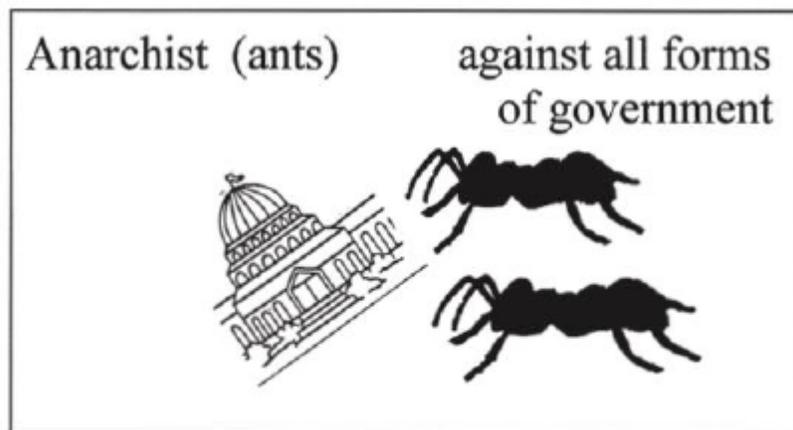


FIGURE 1. Mnemonic strategy illustration for the word *anarchist*.  
Image from Fontana, Scruggs, & Mastropieri (2007).

This Lesson Plan Starter was developed by The National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT), Charlotte, NC, funded by Cooperative Agreement Number H326E140004 with the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS). This document has been reviewed and approved by the OSERS. Opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education. OSEP Project Officer: Dr. Selete Avoke. RSA Project Officer: Kristen Rhinehart-Fernandez. This product is public domain. Authorization to reproduce it in whole or in part is granted. While permission to reprint this publication is not necessary, the citation should be: National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (2018). *Using Mnemonics to Teach Social Studies Vocabulary*

