

How to...

INCORPORATE VOCABULARY INTO DAILY LESSONS

America: The Last Best Hope (volumes I and II), by William Bennett uses an advanced vocabulary that some students will find challenging. In fact, the vocabulary is probably beyond that used in most high school history textbooks. But in spite of this, students should still find the books engaging because of the strong narrative. Bennett's great gift is capturing the *story* of history. In the end, what separates *Last Best Hope* from other textbooks is that it is a book that students will actually *want* to pick up and read!



The student version of the *Roadmap* has a list of words that students might find challenging in each chapter. The words are in alphabetical order. Teachers might look over that list before assigning each chapter to determine which words will indeed be troubling for their students.

Teachers can use the book to strengthen their students' word power. Nothing builds one's vocabulary like reading, and that, of course, is where to begin. Below are some ideas to creatively build on the vocabulary students will find in the book.

1. As students read *The Last Best Hope*, encourage them to stop and write down words they don't know. Have them to read the sentence again and see if they can use the context of the sentence to figure out what the word means.
2. If the meaning of the word is still not clear, have students go to the word list for each chapter in the *Roadmap* and see if that word is listed. If it is, the word is linked to a definition that can make finding the meaning of the word easy.
3. Students might be encouraged to keep a "vocabulary notebook" in which they write and define new words they have learned in their reading of *The Last Best Hope*. Teachers can suggest a minimum number of words to be added to the notebook for each chapter.
4. Think of fun ways to build vocabulary into daily classes. Most teachers are too young to remember Groucho Marx and his T.V. show *You Bet Your Life*. But Groucho's "secret

word” could be incorporated into a teacher’s classroom culture. On Groucho’s show, whenever a contestant said that episode’s “secret word” a duck dropped from the rafters and the contestant won special prizes. Teachers might have a secret word picked out each day from the assigned reading in *The Last Best Hope*. If a student uses that word correctly (and appropriately) in a sentence, that student might earn a reward (candy bar, pen, extra credit points, etc.). Teachers will likely find that students will intensely study the book’s vocabulary in order to win the daily prize!

5. Offer students a limited number of bonus points for each word from *The Last Best Hope* used correctly and appropriately in class writing assignments. Students learn vocabulary when they use it. Try to provide opportunities for them to do so.

6. Write words from the chapter’s vocabulary list on 3x5 index cards – one word per card. Have enough cards so that each student in class will have at least one card (could also give each student more than one card). At the beginning of class, while the teacher is taking roll, students should make sure they know the meaning of their word(s). By the end of class, each student should use his word(s) correctly and appropriately in classroom discussion or conversation.

7. Teachers *themselves* should work on incorporating the vocabulary found in *The Last Best Hope* into their lectures and presentations. When a challenging word is used, the teacher should stop and ask if someone in class can define that word. Model a rich vocabulary for students and help them see how a strong vocabulary helps us express ourselves in more creative ways.

Hopefully, students will see that a strong vocabulary unlocks the world of reading and communication. Building up their word power *will indeed* increase students’ SAT or ACT scores, but throughout life, it will do so much more.