

## Vocabulary Word Tournament

In a Word Tournament students work with key vocabulary from a text. Students identify 15–20 words that are important in a given text. Next, students work in small groups to arrive at a narrowed list of eight words that are placed on the far left of a tournament “bracket.” From the eight words, students then discuss which four words will advance to the next “round” on the tournament bracket. Students further narrow to two words and then to the “winning” word. Each group reports out its rationale for choosing a word. (This can also work as a whole class activity, with each student contributing a word, and the class discussing which words to advance.) As an extension, students can write about the words on their bracket. The writing may remain a quickwrite or could lead to deeper research that results in a piece of argument or information writing.

It is not so much *which* words students choose, but rather the talk, explanation, and synthesis of information surrounding the choice. The discussion helps students explore their knowledge of vocabulary, make connections among sets of words, and generate new understandings. Meaning making with vocabulary words assists students in making connections, which improves understanding and assists in information retention. As teachers monitor student discussions, they can clarify concepts and complete formative assessments of the students’ learning.

