BUILDING LANGUAGE

Second Edition

Teacher Manual

Michael Clay Thompson

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ROME, ROCKS, WORDS

Two thousand years ago, before Europeans discovered the back of the world and its people, ancient Rome ruled the lands surrounding the Mediterranean Sea.
Today, the ruins of the ancient capital of Rome are in the modern city of Rome, Italy, and the remains of the great buildings and roads that the Romans built can be found from England, to Africa, to Spain.

Italy is shaped like a boot.

This is a good time for a brief geography lesson, showing students Italy’s relationship to other places in the world.
In these silent ruins, we still see one of Rome’s greatest gifts to human civilization, the **arch**. 

Point out the arches among these ruins. Have students think about the long time that has passed as these buildings have fallen into ruin.
THE ARCH

The arch, with its graceful curve of hand-shaped stones, gave Roman buildings strength and beauty and was important to ancient construction.

✎ The aesthetic side of knowledge is important. Emphasize the beauty of the arch. Often, perfect forms are beautiful.
Have students examine this beautiful arch to see how one big thing is made of many smaller things (like words made of stems).

Point out that each stone is carefully shaped.
But the gifts of Rome to modern civilization include more than the arch or Roman architecture.

From the Romans we also received important ideas about law and government, classics of literature, and perhaps most important, language.

It is almost impossible to believe that the Romans built such magnificent structures 2,000 years ago. Will our buildings be standing in 4000 A.D.?
ROMAN ROCKS, ROMAN WORDS

Just as many arches that the Romans built more than 2,000 years ago still stand, so many of the words and parts of words that the Romans spoke are still spoken. Even today, we can see familiar words carved in ancient Roman stones.

The Romans borrowed the word *amphitheater* from the Greeks. *Amphi* means both; an amphitheater curves around both sides of the stage.
Latin, the language of the Romans, is the rock that many modern languages—including English, Spanish, and others—are built on. In part, English and Spanish are made of Latin, and so they are a word-bridge to the distant past.

✎ You could almost say that Rome used the arch to conquer the world. Look at this massive, long bridge. How impressive!
STEMS AND STONES

Just as the Romans put stones together to make an arch, so they put parts of words together to make words.

These word parts, which we call stems, join together to make words. For example, if we add the stem pre, which means before, to the stem dict, we get the word predict.
RE

AGAIN

Re means again.

We find Rome’s re in English words, we do, such as repeat, return, reverse, review, revise, reflect, recall, redo, rehearse, respect, and even renew.
When the arches fall to ruin, we **rebuild** them by **renewing** them again.

Much of the text is poetic or semipoetic, just to make it more fun. This page extends the exposure to example words. Discuss meanings.
Once upon a time, there was a small stem named Re. Re saw Sub crouching under an arch, and Sub said, “Hi!” “Hi, hi, hi!” said Re. Sub laughed in his low voice; then Re laughed and laughed and laughed. Sub asked Re, “Do you remember why arches are strong, or should I review?” “I recall,” said Re. “I recall.” “Good,” said Sub, with new respect. Then they looked up at the keystone.
Respect, to admire, is a wonderful word, containing re, again, and spec, look. When we learn to respect someone, we look at that person again in a new way!
RE IN SPANISH

Just as re is an important stem in English, it is also important in Spanish. Here is a Spanish re word:

repetir, to repeat

Yo quiero repetir la palabra.
I want to repeat the word.

✎ The key here is the stem and the idea that it inhabits BOTH languages and means the same in both. English and Spanish are connected.
When Flea saw Skin again, his feelings were renewed. He stalled, reviewed, recalled it all, and returned to his food!

See if you can write a poem of four lines using lots of re words and even some rhymes. It is okay if your poem is funny!
A RE SIMILE

Here is something fun to do. Pick a re word, and then compare it to something very different.

A memory IS LIKE a return.

This kind of comparison is called a simile (SIM ih lee). Write your own simile, and explain it!
An aqueduct is like respect.

When we see an aqueduct, we turn and look at it again because it is so impressive. Respect is like that; we look at the person again, with new admiration.
A FOCUSED GOAL

The goal of this book is, in the most profound way, to give elementary students the right vocabulary start. We want children to know, from their earliest thinking, that their world is not new and that they did not come from nowhere. The English they speak, though it has a variety of sources, is in great part a linguistic ruin of Latin. Our minds were born, more than we realize, in Rome. It is the Latin-based words that are the nucleus of successful professional English, and it is the Latin-based words that dominate the classic words of English-language literature. These thousands of Latin-based English words, as if by a miracle, are built primarily with a few dozen easily learned stems and reused in myriad combinations, like children’s blocks. By learning the stems, students discover a clicking vocabulary construction set that shows them how thousands of words are just recombinations of dozens of stems. And beyond just learning what words mean, students discover that spellings are usually logical and that there is a secret poetry inside English words that is only visible if you know the stems. Stems let students begin their intellectual lives with the intellectual truth. Young children can start out as language insiders. Latin stems are power learning at its most beneficial.

The goal: to ground student vocabulary learning in its historical context of Rome and to introduce ten Latin stems that are fundamental in English vocabulary.
TWO-PART DESIGN

In essence, *Building Language* has two parts: the historical background and the stem lessons. The first provides information about ancient Rome, focusing on Roman architecture and especially the arch, which is beautiful and intellectually enchanting and which serves as a metaphor of how words are made of smaller pieces called stems. The book is even set in Roman type fonts, with Times Roman as the text and Trajan as the headline font, enhancing the aesthetic clarity. This is not, though, a history book, and it does not attempt to provide even a summary of Roman history. It introduces Rome as a backdrop to English vocabulary.

The second part provides ten lessons built around ten important Latin stems. In these lessons, a sense of play is enhanced with poetry and stories, and the lessons extend the interest in Rome and the arch through examples and references.

In the stem lessons, the close language relationship between English and Spanish is especially emphasized; Spanish has never been more important than it is today, and its kinship with English is woefully underappreciated. Since the stems that build English also build Spanish, this is a perfect opportunity to demonstrate the connected greatness of our two modern languages and to provide knowledge that informs the study of both languages simultaneously.