

Expanding Your Vocabulary Module

In-class Activity

Read the following excerpt from “Our Semi-Literate Youth? Not So Fast,” by Andrea Lunsford (*The Norton Sampler*, p. 571), and in your team, paraphrase the paragraph using a dictionary and thesaurus.

Once you have written the paragraph in your team complete the following:

- Trade papers with another team, and edit each other’s work to see if you have correctly interpreted the author’s meaning. Focus specifically on vocabulary. Underline each new vocabulary item.
- Note the various types of vocabulary that you, your team, and the original authors use. What new words, idioms, and phrases have you learned? Which ones are worth imitating in your own academic writing?
- As a class, discuss what skills you gained through these exercises.

No doubt there’s a grain of truth in both these depictions. But the doomsayers who tell these stories are turning a blind eye on compelling alternative narratives. As one who has spent the last 30-plus years studying the writing of college students, I see a different picture. For those who think Google is making us stupid and Facebook is frying our brains, let me sketch that picture in briefly.