

# Most Important Word



## Reading Skills

- Identifying the main idea
- Making generalizations
- Summarizing

## Overview of the “Most Important Word “ Strategy

The craft of writing is primarily a process of choosing individual words to comprise precise phrases and choosing ways to place those phrases in an order that will yield well-crafted, meaningful sentences. Throughout *Wish You Well*, Baldacci uses a number of words consistently to draw the reader into the body of the text, making unfamiliar characters become familiar in the readers’ minds. Baldacci’s use of important words assists the reader in maneuvering through the text while maintaining a focus on overall meaning.

The “Most Important Word” strategy may be used at any point in the reading of *Wish You Well*, but teachers and students may find the strategy most useful if it is used from the beginning to the end of the text.

## Activity for the “Most Important Word “ Strategy

1. Invite the students into a discussion of the words *wish* and *well*, as found in the title of the novel.
2. Begin the discussion by brainstorming definitions of the two words. These definitions may be from the dictionary or may be student-generated. Record these definitions on an overhead.
3. Ask students to identify various passages in which these two words are used as part of a phrase or alone, and ask them to explain the significance of these instances. (Note: The wishing well is first introduced and identified as such toward the end of chapter 11.)
4. With a number of examples listed and explained, have the students discuss in small groups or write about the significance of the words *wish* and *well* in the title of Baldacci’s novel.
5. Divide students into small groups, and assign each group a certain number of chapters of the novel to examine.
6. Have the students scour their assigned chapters for important words used by Baldacci to support the theme of the novel.
7. Have each group report to the class the words they found most important in their second reading.
8. Keep a tally of the “Most Important Words” each group identifies.
9. Use this list as the basis for a whole-class discussion, noting any common words/phrases identified. The ensuing discussion will help solidify for students an author’s intent in choosing words carefully to craft a message.

## Assessment

As a concluding activity, ask students to write an essay in which they show how important words affect their understanding of one of the elements of fiction in this novel. Use the following rubric to assess the writing:

# Argumentative Writing: Primary Trait Rubric

## Criteria

- statement of opinion
- language control
- treatment of opposing point of view
- supporting reasons
- appropriate voice/control
- developed arguments
- mechanical correctness

## Presenting an Argument

**Elaborated Argument (6):** The paper states an opinion and gives compelling reasons to support the opinion. It also presents clear, detailed, and specific explanations in support of the argument. It demonstrates strong language control (word choice, sentence variety). Voice and tone are appropriate for audience and topic. It acknowledges and refutes opposing points of view. It contains almost no mechanical and usage errors.

**Developed Argument (5):** The paper states an opinion and provides legitimate reasons to support the opinion. It also presents several clearly developed explanations in support of the argument. It demonstrates an awareness of audience through the use of voice and/or selection of supporting details. It demonstrates good language control and addresses the opposite point of view. There may be a few errors in mechanics, usage, or sentence structure, but they do not interfere with communication.

## Attempting to Present an Argument

**Argument (4):** The paper states an opinion and gives reasons to support the opinion. Although logical, the explanations are not well developed or detailed. It contains a brief summary of the opposite point of view but does not discuss or refute it. There may be consistent errors in mechanics, usage, or sentence structure, but these errors do not interfere with communication.

**Elaborated Opinion (3):** The paper states an opinion, gives reasons to support the opinion, and attempts to develop the opinion with further explanation. However, the explanations given are vague, inconsistent, incomplete, or disjointed. The paper may or may not contain a brief reference to the opposite point of view. Generally, the writing demonstrates weak control of such elements as word choice and organization. Errors in mechanics, usage, or sentence structure occasionally interfere with communication.

## Writing about an Opinion

**Extended Opinion (2):** The paper states an opinion and gives reasons to support the opinion, but the reasons are not explained or the explanations are confusing. There is no reference to another point of view. There are frequent problems with sentence structure and word choice. The paper may evidence a consistent pattern of errors in mechanics, usage, and sentence structure that interferes with communication.

**Opinion (1):** The paper is a statement of opinion, but no reasons are given to support the opinion, or the reasons given are inconsistent or unrelated to the opinion. Although an attempt may have

been made to support an opinion, the writer's views typically are presented with little clarity, organization, coherence, or supporting evidence. The writing reflects little or no writer's voice or audience awareness. It may contain many distracting errors in mechanics, usage, and sentence structure.