How to Use Word-Part Clues to Define Words

**Word Parts:** Building blocks of words

The Three Word Parts:

**Prefix** – Word part attached to the beginning of the root that adds its meaning to the root

**Root** – Base word with its own meaning

**Suffix** – Word part attached to the end of the root that adds its meaning to the root

Using the word ‘autobiography’ as an example, we can derive the meaning by separating the word into its parts and combining the meaning of the parts into an alternative statement:

In his autobiography, Frederick Douglass describes his escape from slavery and transformation into a prominent abolitionist. It wasn’t his original intent to be the unsung hero during the abolition of slavery in the United States, but sometimes we play the cards we are...

The contents of this work were developed under grant #P116F150077 from the U.S. Department of Education. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.