Clever Language
This book is a terrific writing model for students. Our story teller enjoys defining words and regularly stops sentences to define a word.

“I thought she was an ancestor, an ancient relative long dead, who had left us...”

For the most part she makes her own definitions. Clever stories could be written using this strategy - as well as being an opportunity to encourage the development of an extensive vocabulary.

The A-Z Vocabulary Challenge
In the borders of the book are sentences relating to the plot but emphasizing the letters of the alphabet in order:

- B What did I tell you? This berserk, bacteria has bulldozed me badly. Help!
- D I am defective and delirious, and so I will dwindle away.

(The author has the flu at the time.)

After students have written a story, ask them to change it to ensure it has 24 sentences. Then ask them to place 3 A words (using fresh verbs, adjectives, etc.) into the first sentence, 3 B words in the second...skipping X and Z (hence 24 sentences).

The Author: Debra Frasier
Debra Frasier was born in Florida, but after her marriage she moved to cold Minnesota. Her training was at an art school and at first she made wind sculptures that moved in response to the wind. During her difficult pregnancy with her only child Calla, she wrote On the Day You Were Born to celebrate all the wonderful things her child would experience when she was born.

The Vocabulary Parade
Although it is not worth classroom time, and although it might be considered more a primary activity, Debra’s website shows lots of students enjoying making hats to represent different interesting words and displaying them in a hat parade with prizes. It might make a nice “easter parade” type school event - where students make the hats at home and then parade and display them - so it’s fun but doesn’t take class time.
How Miss Alaineus Started
Debrafrasier.com has a YouTube interview where she explains how Miss Alaineus rose from a story from her child that is exactly how her daughter misunderstood the word. It's a very good example of how a good story can come out of a simple real-life experience.

Words You Have Confused
Tell students a few examples of words that have confused you. In my case, I once asked my father, “Where did our family come from?” and he said, “Prussia.” I had never heard of Prussia, but from the Arabian Nights had heard of Persia. Until I was in my twenties I said, “Persia” and mentally struggled with how the Mennonites (my family’s origins) of Russia must have migrated through to the Middle East from the Ukraine and from thence to Canada. And then one day...

Or...my husband had no trouble with the yawts (fancy boats) that he heard orally and the ya-chits (fancy boats) that he read about being separate things until one day...

Or...my friend’s daughter who cheerfully would sing “Go spiders in the sky” instead of “Ghost Riders in the Sky.” And my son loved doors that opened “automagically”.

Vocabulary Development
Vocabulary develops best from encountering words approximately 8 times in context. Never ask students to “look it up in the dictionary” because the definition is often as confusing as the word itself. It is better to use a book like this to model for students how to create a definition in their own words. Create a grid with “my definition”, “my group definition” and “visual reminder” as headings. Then ask students to write a set of definitions in their own words in the first column. Working with their group, they then improve the definitions. Finally, they create a little simple sketch that illustrates the word for them (particularly valuable for visual learners.)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>My Definition</th>
<th>Group Definition</th>
<th>Visual Reminder</th>
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Personal Writing Topics
A picture book that can stimulate an appropriate “reader response” in the form of a personal story is a valuable one. Some possible topics include:
- A time I was embarrassed.
- A time our class performed at an assembly (or a performance outside of school).
- A time I got help with an assignment from a friend.
- A time I had to stay home sick from school.
- A shopping adventure of some kind.