

# Unlocking Word Problems: It's More Than Key Words

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Problem given to children:

Mrs. Radon had 17 books she no longer could use. She gave them away to a friend.  
Mrs. Radon now has 35 books left. How many did she have before she gave any away?

- What does the student understand?

Student 1

$$10 + 7 = 17 + 18 = 35$$

- What misunderstandings does the student have?

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Student 2

$$35 - 17 = 18$$

$$35 - 10 = 25$$

$$25 - 7 = 18$$

- What does the student understand?

- What misunderstandings does the student have?

Student 3

$$\begin{array}{r}
 +17 \\
 35 \\
 \hline
 \end{array}$$

42 books

What does the student understand?

What misunderstandings does the student have?

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Student 4

$$\begin{array}{r}
 \times 10 \\
 \times 1/2 \\
 - 3/4 \\
 \hline
 7/8
 \end{array}
 \qquad
 \begin{array}{r}
 \times 10 \\
 \times 1/2 \\
 - 3/4 \\
 \hline
 7/8
 \end{array}$$

I am making cookies and I need  $1 \frac{1}{2}$  cups of flour. I only have  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a cup. How much more flour do I need so that I will have  $1 \frac{1}{2}$  cups of flour altogether?

Student 5

