

Comprehension Strategy - Synthesis / Summarization / Concluding

What is Synthesis? - *Guided Reading the Four Blocks Way*, pages 44-45 states, "As you read, your brain synthesizes information from the words to comprehend the sentences, information from the sentences to comprehend the paragraphs, information from paragraphs to synthesize sections, and so on, as you move through the text. The text tells you some things, you drew conclusions that pulled together information you had read and what you knew from your own life experiences. As you read, you constantly accumulate information, and you keep this information in mind by subsuming smaller facts into larger generalizations. You summarize, conclude, infer, and generalize, and then you read some more, incorporate the new information, and draw even bigger conclusions."

Strategies That Work, chapter 10 Synthesizing Information

"Synthesizing is the most complex of the comprehension strategies. Synthesizing lies on a continuum of evolving thinking. Synthesizing runs the gamut from taking stock of meaning while reading to achieving new insight. Introducing the strategy of synthesizing in reading, then primarily involves teaching the reader to stop every so often and think about what she has read. Each piece of additional information enhances the reader's understanding and allows her to better construct meaning (*Strategies That Work*, page 144)."

"We need to explicitly teach our students to take stock of meaning while they read and use it to help their thinking evolve, perhaps leading to new insight, perhaps not, but enhancing understanding in the process. To nudge readers toward synthesis, we encourage them to interact personally with the text. Personal response gives readers an opportunity to explore their evolving thinking. Synthesizing information integrates the words and ideas in the text with the reader's personal thoughts and questions and gives the reader the best shot at achieving new insight (*Strategies That Work*, page 144-145)."

Readers...

- Maintain a cognitive synthesis as they read. They monitor the overall meaning, important concepts, and themes in the text as they read and are aware of ways text elements fit together to create that overall meaning and theme. They use knowledge of these elements to make decisions about the overall meaning of a passage, chapter or book.
- Retell or synthesize what they have read. They attend to the most important information and to the clarity or synthesis itself. Readers synthesize in order to better understand what they have read.
- Capitalize on opportunities to share, recommend and criticize books they have read.
- May respond to text in a variety of ways; independently or in groups of other readers. These include written, oral, dramatic, and artistic responses and interpretations of text.
- Synthesis is likely to extend the literal meaning of a text to the inferential level.

Lesson Ideas:

GIST

Someone Wanted But So

Think writing

Written Conversation

Written Responses

Say Something

Two Column Notes Form Headed Content / Process

Exit Slips

Literature Circle Job Descriptions

A summarization strategy

GIST

The group will write a summary in 20 words.

Explanation: The GIST of something is the main idea. Sometimes we don't need to remember all the details but read just to get the GIST of the material.

Procedure:

Draw 20 word sized blanks on the chalkboard.

After reading a short section of text (one-two paragraphs), the students will assist the teacher in writing a 20 word summary to give the gist of what they read.

Now, read an additional section of text (one-two paragraphs). Information from both sections must be incorporated into a new 20 word summary.

It is possible to read a third section and condense the summary one more time.

Take from pp 130-131, Developing Readers and Writers in the Content Areas k-12, Third Edition, (Moore, Moore, Cunningham, and Cunningham, 1998)

A summarization strategy

WHO WANTED TO BUT SO

WHO

WANTED TO

BUT

SO

For example, after reading chapter one from The Jacket by Andrew Clements

WHO Phil

WANTED to get his brother's jacket back from the black kid named Daniel

BUT Daniel claimed it was a birthday present from his Grandmother

SO they ended up in the principal's office

Before reading

WHO needs THINK WRITING?

This activity is appropriate for:

- Readers who refuse to become actively involved with text.
- Readers who bark at print.
- Readers who say reading is boring.

WHY do THINK WRITING?

Readers learn more if they become actively involved with written material. Think writing requires the reader to react to what the author is saying on an ongoing basis. Think writing requires the reader to note reactions to the text. Think writing requires the reader to note when meaning breaks down. Think writing requires the reader to note when personal connections are made. This strategy personalizes the learning situation and encourages readers to develop a point of reference with the writer by trying to interpret the words and meaning they read.

During reading

WHAT does the teacher do to get ready?

- Duplicate a page of the reading assignment
- Allow wide margins on both sides of the selection
- When duplicate pages aren't available, post it notes may be used.

MATERIALS - almost any narrative or expository text

HOW do I teach THINK WRITING?

Use an overhead to demonstrate think writing:

- Begin to read the text aloud.
- As you read, react to the text by writing comments in the margin.
- Talk to the author about his/her ideas. Write to him/her in the margin if you don't understand a concept. If you agree with him/her tell him/her so.
- Guess at meanings of words which are unfamiliar to you. Write your guesses in the margins.
- Distribute the text to readers and ask them to continue THINK WRITING in the margins. Encourage them to respond frequently.

After reading

- When readers have completed the reading guide, help them realize their talk represents true understanding of their reading. The reader can then identify those ideas which are clear to him/her and those which remain fuzzy.

DEVELOP A CODE FOR QUICK THINK WRITING

MI = main idea

T-S = text to self

char = looking at character

D = detail

T - T = text to text

Q = questioning or wondering

ID = important detail

T - W = text to world

S = summary

DI = determining importance

HUH? = I don't get it!

I = inference

Before reading

WHY should we do WRITTEN CONVERSATION?

Readers often benefit from sharing their comprehension of a passage with other readers. Such exchanges help readers to:

1. Confirm that their understanding are accurate,
2. Clear up confusing points, and
3. Extend comprehension when other readers have different responses.

Carrying on written conversations allows readers to begin using writing to explore their understandings. Conversation provides a format / genre for the writing that is both informal and familiar. Written conversation also provides students who do not reread with authentic reasons for doing so.

WHO needs WRITTEN CONVERSATION?

Readers whose comprehension is poor or who do not reread to clarify understanding will benefit from this strategy. With expository material, it also supports readers beginning efforts to write about factual material using a very familiar oral form conversation.

During reading

MATERIALS - almost any narrative or expository text will work

HOW do I teach WRITTEN CONVERSATION?

- Introduce the passage to students and have them read it
- The teacher may want to share an example of a written conversation as a model or engage in one with a student volunteer on an overhead.

After reading

- After reading, pair students to engage in a written conversation about what they have read. The pair takes turns writing back and forth on the same piece of paper, initialing their entries so the teacher may later assess the content and fluency of the conversation.
- After students have written for a predetermined period of time, have pairs read their conversations to other partners.
- Collect written conversations. The teacher may comment further in writing about conversations or use them to guide follow-up teaching.

Summarization Strategy

Written Responses

Before reading

WHY should we do Written Responses?

Responding to reading and writing experiences is a key element to the successful synthesis of new information and literary experiences. Written response in simple literature logs offer specific opportunities for readers to reflect on their reading and at the same time, offer a format for teachers to respond directly to those reflections.

WHO needs Written Responses?

This strategy is an especially effective tool for assessing, tracking, and extending readers comprehension, reading tastes, and reading metacognition.

During reading

While you are reading today... (teacher can give a prompt, see below for ideas)

After reading

WHAT do I need for Written Responses in my classroom?

Daily opportunities to read.

A response log, writer's notebook, or journal.

HOW to I teach a Written Response?

On a regular basis, readers spend time composing responses / reflections pertaining to their book experiences and impressions. Written responses can either be self-generated, free-flowing and open-ended, or can reflect a direct teacher request or prompt.

Keys to successful written responses:

1. multiple teacher demonstration on effective uses and content of written responses.
2. regular two-way response between the teacher and readers.
3. readers keeping in mind the following suggestions:
 - write honestly
 - give reasons
 - expand on the author's thinking
 - admit confusion
 - think on paper

Nonfiction Prompts

I learned...
I never knew...
I already knew that...
I was wrong to think...
I wonder why...
I still don't know...
An important date is...
The confusing thing is...
This helped me explain...
I like learning...
I would recommend this book to...
I would like to share my learning by...
Some interesting facts are...
I want to learn more about...
This book answered my questions about...

General Prompts

I began to think of...
I know the feeling...
I love the way...
I don't really understand...
I can't believe...
I realized...
I wonder why...
I noticed...
I was surprised...
I think...
If I were...
I'm not sure...

Summarization Strategy

Say Something

Proficient readers often carry on a running monologue in their heads while reading. The self-conversation may include what the readers understand, what they agree / disagree with, what they do not yet understand, and what they wonder about as the text unfolds. Teaching developing readers to carry on this type of active, ongoing response to their reading will increase and deepen their comprehension of the texts they read.

WHAT materials do I need?

Multiple copies of almost any narrative or expository text

HOW do I do Say Something?

- Put your readers in partners. Each partner pair should have either two copies of the same text or one text they can both read from.
- Explain the process that they will be trying out. The partners need to decide how much of the text they will read at a time (paragraph, $\frac{1}{2}$ page, a column, a page). The more unfamiliar or complex the text, the smaller the chunk.
- After your readers read the designated passage, invite each to take turns making one significant comment about what they have read; this might be a statement of agreement or disagreement; this might be a statement of what the reader finds most interesting or important in the passage; this might be a comment on how the passage makes the reader feel or a question or request for clarity.
- The pair then continues on reading the next passage. When they complete that passage, the readers switch readers. BOTH the listener and the reader should say something.
- Initial teacher might suggest that readers begin using statements in the beginning:

This reminds me of...

When reading this I felt...

I didn't understand it when the author said... because...

See *Strategies That Work*, chapter 10 Synthesizing Information, pages 159-163

| Content (Facts) | Process (Thinking) |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| | |

Content reading demands that readers pick up factual information as they read. We want our students to become aware of their thinking process as well so they can call up a strategy to access content, particularly in difficult, more challenging text.

Materials Needed: The most compelling piece of expository text you can find.

Procedure:

Give each child a form with the above headings.

Choose material and place the text on the overhead.

Students ask questions and make statements in the process (thinking) column.

Teacher should ask the students to pause after each paragraph and tell any factual information they've learned.

Conversation helps the students to build answers to questions, clear up misconceptions, and immerse themselves in the content.

Teacher leads for several paragraphs.

Teacher then releases the students to work in small groups of two-three for about twenty minutes.

Reading and understanding requires a great deal of ongoing thinking. This form gave us a window into that evolution of thought.

| Content (Facts) | Process (Thinking) |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| | |

When readers / writers are encouraged to reflect on their learning, they come to understand and value the content and process in new and deeper ways. Exit Slips are a simple way to help students reflect on what they have learned and to identify areas that need further exploration. Exit Slips work well after any learning experience, or at the end of the school day, as a way of prompting students to review what they have accomplished.

Basic Procedure

If this is the first formal use of a reflective strategy, talk about the importance of thinking about what is learned (content) and how people go about learning things (process). Teachers should demonstrate by highlighting their own decision-making within a simple context; for example, writing a letter, deviating from a recipe, deciding what to wear, thinking about how to approach a friend about a problem, discovering what route to take to an unfamiliar destination, and so on. Students may need to talk through some of their processes before using this strategy.

1. Following the initial demonstrations and at the end of a school day, or any important learning activity, distribute one 3 x 5 card to each student.
2. Ask students to write one thing they learned during the day, or from a particular activity, on one side of the card. On the other side students are to write one question they still have. Present this part of the strategy in an open ended manner so students are free to consider content or process issues in their responses.
3. Collect the cards for review.
4. Select several questions to use in a whole group setting the following morning or during the class meeting. Questions can be answered directly by the teacher, orally or by writing on the card, or students can be invited to respond. Selected questions can be put aside for future study or be used to inform the teacher about topics from Mini-lessons.

VARIATIONS

1. Exit Slips can be used throughout the reading of a text, much like a written Say Something. The first part of the strategy, then serves as a reflection of what has been learned; the second part, a reader-generated question.
2. RAPID REFLECTION - is a verbal form of Exit Slips. Throughout the school day at the end of important discussions, demonstrations, mini-lessons, or any learning engagement students can be asked to reflect on the experience quickly and at random, call out a response. Responses can be focused by asking open-ended questions before Rapid Reflection begins:
 - What was surprising for you?
 - What were you thinking about the most?
 - What was one question that you have?
 - What is one idea you are excited about?

Various forms of this strategy have been developed by Kittye Copeland, Jerry Harste, and Carolyn Burke from Whole Language: Getting Started, Moving Forward by Linda Crafton

Summarization Strategy

Literature Circle Jobs

Discussion Director

Your job is to develop a list of at least eight questions that your group might want to discuss about this part of the book. Usually the best questions come from your own reactions and concerns as you read.

Word Wizard

You are ready to bring out the magic in the author's words. You'll be searching for 5-7 new, interesting, strange, puzzling, or unfamiliar words. You'll especially be looking for words that members of your group might want to talk about and learn. You should jot down such words while reading then look them up in the dictionary. When done, write an original sentence using the word.

The Connector

Your job is to help everyone make connections to other ideas: stuff we've done in class, stories we've read, and especially to experiences you have had. Be sure to explain your connections clearly, telling how you and the character are alike, or how a situation that you have been in is similar to one in the book.

Passage Picker

You pick several passages or paragraphs from the assigned reading that you find especially interesting or meaningful. You are to share them with the group so you'll need to practice reading them aloud. Be sure to explain your reasons for picking the passage. (Remember: you need to be *specific* comments such as "I found it interesting" are not enough! What did you find interesting and why?)

Time Liner

Your job is to record at least 5 major events from the pages you read. You may do this in a couple ways. A timeline may be drawn to show the events, or you can "bullet" events in an outline form. Whichever method you choose, it must be accurate and neat. Additionally, you need to write down a prediction for the upcoming chapters based on the events you wrote down.

Prediction Person

I think that in the next chapter the robbers will somehow get into the attic. Sally and Betsy seem to be clever girls, so I believe that they will find a way to escape. Hopefully they will manage to take the mystery chest with them. I'm anxious to find out what is inside and why the robbers want it!