

MAKING TEXTS ACCESSIBLE

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BEFORE READING/FRONTLOADING

- **Preview the text:** Do a *text-walk*: point out and discuss title, section headings, photos, captions, sidebars, charts. On a chart paper or transparency, list the section headings and ask, "where would you find...?". Discuss possibilities in the whole group. Use related videos with guided viewing techniques such as key questions, predicting after watching a section, etc.
- **Make predictions:** From format and other extra-textual clues, ask students to predict major themes, topics.
- **KWL(H):** Make a chart with the headings: *What do we KNOW about (topic)? What do we WANT to learn? What did we LEARN?* (to be filled in after reading and discussion). You might want to add, "*HOW did we learn?*". Begin with whole group, pairs or small groups, and then individual work.
- **Directed reading:** Read aloud the *end-of-the-chapter questions or summary* or give students a list of *essential questions* or an *outline* before they begin reading.
- **Summarize/outline to aid comprehension:** Write a *summary paragraph* for students to read before they read the text. Provide an *outline* before students read.
- **Picture books build prior knowledge:** Use *picture books* related to the main concepts of the more complex text to be read later.
- **Pre-teach key vocabulary:** Keep a *running word list* on chart paper or turn a bulletin board into a *word wall*. Illustrate words wherever possible. Ask students to *scan* text for unfamiliar words—use *post-it's* to tab words. Do *charades*, acting out words; provide or have students make a side-by-side *glossary* for the text and practice its use; *define words* in simple terms and in multiple examples. Vocabulary work should be *connected to text* and used after the students have acquired a general notion about text content.
- **Think-Aloud:** Model the think-aloud procedure while reading a section of text (usually the opening) to the students. Concentrate on *paraphrasing, predicting, questioning, and "This is like/reminds me of..." observations*. Afterwards, think-alouds can be written on the overhead or paper to *build prior knowledge and create a reading guide*.

DURING READING (These may be used as frontloading strategies as well.)

- **Teach transitional words:** Teach students to *identify transitional and logical connector words* (e.g., therefore, since, however, although, in this way, etc.) and to discover their meaning in context, including content area texts.
- **Use visuals:** Make *maps, illustrations, charts, and graphs* to accompany dense text. Use a variety of media. *Appropriate realia* can also facilitate comprehension.
- **Graphic organizers help students process information:** *T-Lists* identify the main idea and supporting details. *Time-lines* help sequence information. *Webbing and semantic mapping and chaining* help make connections and clarify relationships. *Venn diagrams* compare and contrast. *Matrix charts* keep track of large amounts of information. *Character maps* help with fiction. *Fishbone organizers* can sequence events and show cause and effect.
- **Think-pair-share:** During or after reading a selection, ask students to *think*, and perhaps to *write*, about what they read. Next have students turn to a partner and *share* their thoughts. Then have students *share each other's thoughts with another pair (think-pair-square)*. This is a good exercise for developing higher order thinking skills.

- **Modified jigsaw:** Divide students into small groups. Give a *different portion of the text to each group*. Ask the groups to summarize by writing a paragraph or making a semantic web. Each small group presents its *summary to the whole group*.
- **Journal writing:** Students divide a page of their notebooks or journals in half. On one side, they *record interesting facts*, new information, or main ideas chosen by the teacher. On the opposite side, they write their *thoughts and feelings* in response. This can be combined with a *dialogue journal* where the teacher or another student responds to these entries. A *metacognitive journal* is one where the reader records questions and confirms possible answers during reading.
- **Listening center:** Record the selection, such as a textbook chapter, and put it in a listening center for groups of students to *listen to, read, or re-read the material*. Students can borrow the tape to use at home.
- **Truth or lies:** Make a list of *true and false statements*. Students read the text and *identify which are true or false*. Can be used with *Anticipation/Reaction Guide* graphic organizer. This chart has T/F columns on the left side, a fact-statement space in the middle and more T/F columns on the right. Students make predictions in the left column, read the selection, and then re-answer on the right side.
- **Skimming and Scanning:** Teach students to *skim* a section of text to capture the main idea and then predict what might follow in the reading and express it orally or in written form in simplified language. Ask students to *scan for an important idea/concept/detail which you have expressed orally or in writing*; then they report where they found it. Both skimming and scanning can be done individually or collaboratively.

AFTER READING (Many of these activities can be used during reading as well.)

- **List text features / text sorting:** Write the *boldfaced headings* of a text. Students *list subtopics and supporting details*. This can be in the form of a list, outline, or web.
- **ABC Chart:** At the end of a chapter or mini-unit, make an ABC chart of the facts or concepts learned. Ask students to reread to find concepts for letters not filled out.
- **Outline:** Teach students to outline what they have read by using text features such as headings, bold type, etc. The T-List is a good pre-outline activity.
- **Paragraph frame:** Write the first sentence of a paragraph and the sentence leads for three or more supporting ideas found in the reading. Students complete the supporting ideas and perhaps a concluding sentence.
- **Headlines:** Ask students to write important events or facts from the reading in the form of newspaper headlines.
- **Modified Cloze procedure:** White out key words in the text and make a transparency. With the whole group, read the passage aloud and fill in what's missing, accepting all suggestions which make sense. This can also be an individual activity where students have access to a word bank.
- **Storyboard:** Ask students to make a *storyboard to illustrate the main ideas or events of the reading*. A *single illustration with explanation or favorite quotation* can highlight students' favorite parts.
- **Genre-switch:** Students create a *piece using a new genre relating to what they read*. For example, composing a poem/rap/song from a short story, an advertisement for a novel, an html page about a scientific article, a newspaper report from an event in a history text, a bookmark with intriguing questions for a mystery or adventure piece.