

Proficient Readers and Writers . . .

synthesize new information

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 their 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 of the 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

Writers . . .

- make global and focal plans for their writing before and during the drafting process. They use their knowledge of text elements such as character, setting, conflict, sequence of events and resolution to create a structure for their writing.
- study other writers and draw conclusions about what makes good writing. They work to replicate the style of authors they find compelling.
- reveal themes in a way that suggests their importance to readers. Readers can create a cogent synthesis from well-written material.

Mathematicians . . .

- generalize from patterns they observe
- generalize in words, equations, charts, and graphs to retell or synthesize
- synthesize math concepts when they use them in real life applications
- use deductive reasoning (e.g. reach conclusions based on knowns)

Researchers . . .

- develop insight about a topic to create new knowledge or understanding
- utilize information from a variety of resources
- enhance their understanding of a topic by considering different perspectives, opinions, and sources

THINKWRITING

WHO

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

Readers learn more if they become actively involved with written material.

Thinkwriting requires the reader to react to what the author is saying on an ongoing basis noting reactions to the text, noting when the meaning breaks down, noting 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.

WHAT

Duplicate a page of the reading assignment.

Allow wide margins on both sides of the selection.

Almost any text is suitable.

When duplicate pages aren't available, post it notes may be used.

HOW

Use an overhead to demonstrate thinkwriting :

- * 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 do not 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 thinkwriting in the margins. Encourage them to respond frequently.

When readers have completed the reading guide, help them to 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.

HOW ELSE

Any code could be devised and placed in the margin as the reader quickly reads the text. For example, MI for main idea, ID for important detail, S for summary.

adapted from A. Fisher

WRITTEN CONVERSATION

- WHY** Readers often benefit from sharing their comprehension of a passage with other readers. Such exchanges help readers to 1) confirm that their understandings 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** 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.
- MATERIALS** Almost any narrative or expository text.
- HOW** Introduce the passage to students and have them read it.
- 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.
- 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 students have written for a predetermined period of time, have pairs read their conversations to other pairs.
- Collect the written conversations. The teacher may comment further in writing about the conversations or use them to guide follow-up teaching.
- HOW ELSE** Writing conversations can act a first drafts for later pieces students revise into finish products.

adapted from N. L. Shanklin

WRITTEN RESPONSES

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

WHAT Daily opportunities to read.
A response log, writer s notebook, or journal.

HOW 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 (see list below).

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

Non-fiction 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 was surprised . . .
I also want to read . . .
The index helped me . . .
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 . . .

adapted from J. Gurley and A. Allison, N. Wilson (New York City Writing Project)

SAY SOMETHING

- WHY** 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** Multiple copies of almost any narrative or expository text.
- HOW** Ask readers to form pairs. Each 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: they will need to decide how much of the text they will read at a time (a paragraph, a column, a page, etc. the more unfamiliar or complex the text, the smaller the chunk).
- After your readers read a designated passage, invite each to take turns making one significant comment about what they had read. This might be a statement of agreement or disagreement, a statement of what the reader finds most interesting or important in the passage, a comment on how the passage makes the reader feel, or a question or request for clarity. Advise readers to think carefully about what they want to say, since they may make only one comment. Once the first reader has commented, his/her partner may then say something in response. The second reader can make a follow-up comment, a statement of agreement or disagreement, etc.
- The pair then continues on reading the next passage. When they complete that passage, the readers switch who says something first and second.
- Readers may require guidance before feeling comfortable making comments in this setting. The teacher may want to share an audio or video example of say something as a model or demonstrate how it is done with a student volunteer. Initially, the teacher might suggest that readers begin using statements beginning This reminds me of . . . ; When reading this I felt . . . ; or I didn't understand it when the author said . . . because . . .
- HOW ELSE** Teachers can audio tape/video tape Say Something sessions for assessment purposes.

adapted from M. Atwell

EXIT SLIPS

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

When reader/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 for 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?

REFERENCES

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