

Strategies Notebook:  
Fifteen Strategies for Teaching Content Area Reading  
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## Strategy 1: Story Impressions

*Content Area Reading: Literacy and Learning across the Curriculum* Chapter 6

### Strategy Summary and Overview

A story impression is a strategy that stimulates students' curiosity and provides them with an opportunity to predict the content of a story. The first step to creating story impressions is to identify clue words linked with the characters, setting, and events in the story. Students will use these keywords that are provided for them to write their own version of the story before reading it. Essentially the point of this strategy is to get the students to anticipate the events of the story by piecing together the fragments presented to them of the content of the story.

These pieces from the story can be words and/or phrases taken directly from the story to enable readers to form an idea of how the characters and events interact in the story. These words or phrases are sequenced using lines or arrows to form a descriptive chain. This chain is meant to trigger the student's prior knowledge and create impressions of the anticipated events of the story. The student is not expected to guess the details of the story. The object of the strategy is to have the student compare his or her own story to that of the author's.

### Strategy Use in Content Area Classroom

I could adapt this into my language arts classroom very easily. I could use this strategy to get students' attention about the story. It could be used as a way to get students to think about the relationships among characters and/or the events in the story. This would be a great activity to use when studying the plot or character relationships within a story because it draws the students' attention to these elements of the story from the beginning.

This strategy would also be a great way to activate the students' prior knowledge about a certain event or topic that takes place in the story. This could be used as an informational tool to

inform the teacher of how much their students know about a given topic. For example, if you are reading a book about the civil rights movement and you use words such as: negroes, murder, discrimination, and trial, if the student can develop a coherent story based on these words that draws upon the issues of the civil rights movement then you know that your students already are familiar with this time period.

### Impact on Student Learning

The use of story impressions would benefit students by drawing their attention to key characters, events, or concepts within a story before even beginning it. Sometimes it is much easier to read more thoroughly into a piece of literature if you have some idea about what you should be paying attention to. Students need to be trained to pick up on the important aspects of a story and I think that a story impression would help them develop these analytical skills.

This will also help students activate their prior knowledge, which could make the material seem more relevant to them. If students are aware that they know something about the issues that are presented in the story, this could trigger metacognitive learning where the students are actually thinking about what they are learning, which could lead students to understand how they are building on their prior knowledge. In addition if the student realizes that they do not know anything about the issues presented, this may prompt them to ask questions for more clarification.

Finally, this strategy can also help activate students' interest in what they are reading. This activity essentially gives them a glimpse of what is going to happen in the story and this could get students excited about reading it.

## Strategy 2: Guided Imagery

*Content Area Reading: Literacy and Learning across the Curriculum* Chapter 6

### Strategy Summary and Overview

This strategy allows students to explore ideas in a visual manner. This strategy is especially effective for visual learners. This strategy can be used as a common shared experience among the class that could trigger inquiry among the students which could lead to class discussions and/or group work. It could also be used as a way to explore concepts and develop them on a deeper level by adding in the visual dimension to the students' experience. The strategy can also serve as a way to clarify challenging problems presented in the reading or solve them. This can also be used as a way to allow students to explore periods in history, the future, and distant worlds unknown to the student.

Guided imagery is implemented when the teacher asks all of the students to close their eyes and relax their bodies. The teacher can then read a section from the reading or can develop their own passage that describes a similar situation, problem, or setting as the reading. While the teacher is reading the passage that they have selected students are supposed to visualize and try to feel what is going on in the passage. The student is supposed to pretend that they are in that time and place. Following the reading it is a good idea to ask students to share their journey. This strategy is a great way to connect students to what they see and read.

### Strategy Use in Content Area Classroom

Guided imagery could be easily adapted to a Language Arts classroom. It is very important while reading to be able to visualize what is happening in the story. I could use this strategy to increase the visualization skills within my students. When reading a text that may be

difficult for the students to visualize, because the setting or concepts in them are not familiar to the students, this strategy would help the students gain a sense of these aspects of a story. In addition since their teacher is guiding them then they can make sure that the image they are visualizing is consistent with the text.

I could also use this strategy to start a conversation about how a certain character should handle a situation. This could aid students in understanding a character's motivations and actions. This would also help students understand various points of view within a story because they could be forced to visualize a situation from a particular perspective and bring with that all of their prior knowledge and experience.

### Impact on Student Learning

The student loses so much if they do not take the time to visualize what they are reading or has not learned the skills to visualize what they read. This is a very important aspect to consider when reading any material. Some students do not already have this natural ability to visualize things as they read and I think this activity will really help train those skills and teach students how to visualize what they read. I think that students not only understand the material on a deeper level but they also are more interested in the material when they can visualize it. Reading a novel would be a lot more interesting and entertaining if they could visualize what they read.

This strategy could also be used to gain students' interests in a story. When the students pretend that they are in the time and place of the passage they may develop emotional connections to the text that they may not otherwise get. This could increase student interest and achievement when reading.

### Strategy 3: Anticipation Guide

*Content Area Reading: Literacy and Learning across the Curriculum* Chapter 6

#### Strategy Summary and Overview

An anticipation guide is essentially statements that are given to students for them to respond to before they begin reading the text. The students' expectations about what they believe the meaning of the text is addressed in this strategy before they read the text. The most important part of this strategy is the class discussion that takes place after the students answers the statements. The discussion is essentially student lead. The role that the teacher takes is simply as a facilitator of communication, they are there to activate and rouse a class discussion. The teacher must be open to all responses and be sure not to shut down any of the students. The goal is to draw on the students' prior knowledge, and therefore the teacher needs to make sure the conversation keeps going but they should not have pre-determined order of discussion.

There are six guidelines to follow when creating anticipation guides for a classroom. The first is to analyze the reading material to determine the main ideas that students will interact with, both implicit and explicit. The second is to write these ideas in concise declarative statements. These statements should not be abstract and should in some way relate to or reflect the world that the student lives in or a world that they know. The third is to phrase the statements in a way that it will activate anticipation about the text and cause students to make predictions. After this step is completed then the teacher should lead the students in a discussion about their predictions and possible anticipations about the text before they begin reading it. Once the discussion is complete, the students should read the text and evaluate the statements from the guide in comparison to the intent and purpose of the author. After they finish reading they should contrast the predictions they have made with the author's intended message.

### Strategy Use in Content Area Classroom

Anticipation guides could be used for a variety of texts. When teaching fictional texts it could get students to think about the main ideas of the text before they even begin reading. This can aid students in their analytical reading skills. In addition it could help students understand large concepts that they might have trouble grasping otherwise. For example, if students were going to read *The Scarlet Letter* I could create an anticipation guide dealing with themes such as lust, risk, adultery, and secrets.

These guides would also be beneficial for informational texts as well because it would give students an opportunity to think about the main concepts before they begin reading. If I were teaching Abraham Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address" speech, many students might already be familiar, or think they are familiar with the text. I could give them an anticipation guide that they complete before and after reading to compare what they thought he was advocating in the speech before reading compared to after.

### Impact on Student Learning

Anticipation guides are a great way to get students to activate their prior knowledge on a subject. This can be used to inform the teacher how much their students actually know about a topic and it can also make the student realize how much they know about a topic. Anticipation guides force students to think about what they knew before reading the text compared to after. This makes them reflect on the reading that has taken place.

This strategy is also useful in that it sparks students' interest in the reading. Students will be interested in reading the material, if nothing else, to at least see if their anticipations were correct.



## Strategy 4: KWL Strategy

*Content Area Reading: Literacy and Learning across the Curriculum Chapter 7*

### Strategy Summary and Overview

The KWL strategy is a great way to get students to actively engage with the text that they are reading. The first step of the KWL strategy is to have students divide a sheet of paper into three columns and label them K-W-L. The students begin in the first column by writing what they already know about the topic under discussion. After they complete that step they move on to describe what they want to know in the “W” column. In this column they write questions that they have about the topic that they would like answered. After they have read the text they go to the “L” column and try to answer the questions that they have risen using the text. This column is used to display what students have learned through reading the text.

This strategy should be introduced as a whole class activity or in small groups. Once students are comfortable using this strategy they can start doing them individually. A class discussion is only one of many possible follow-up activities to using the KWL strategy, other include: constructing graphic organizers and summary writing.

### Strategy Use in Content Area Classroom

KWL strategy can be very useful in the Language Arts classroom. Whenever you are dealing with a text or reading that contains a large amount of historical concepts that should be grasped, I think this is a great strategy to use. The teacher can determine how much their students understand the events and societal norms of the time. This is also a great way to get students to think about the topic in depth and what they really know or want to know about a given topic. I think this would be a great activity to use if you were trying to set a historical back drop for a

particular piece of work because it would force students to become actively engaged in the information you are giving them.

This could also be used to track character development in a story. If I was teaching a story, students could use a KWL chart maybe after the first assignment of a novel when characters are still being developed. Students can record what they already know about a character, what they want to know about them, and what they have learned about them in that reading. I think a really good novel that this type of use would work well with is *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The students could use a KWL to track Boo Radley's character development.

### Impact on Student Learning

Students would be positively impacted by this strategy because it will force them to think about what they already know about a topic and reflect on what they have learned about a topic in a lesson. Students will more likely remember something they are taught if they are asked to reflect upon it.

This also forces students to think about how the knowledge they are gaining builds onto the knowledge they already have. I think this would add importance to what they are learning if they see the direct connection with the knowledge they already encompass.

Students will also gain a personal connection to the material because they will be seeking answers that they want to know. This will cause students to be more interested in the material because they feel they have a choice in what they are learning. They also feel that they are learning things that are relevant to them because they are getting the questions they posed answered.

## Strategy 5: Discussion Web

*Content Area Reading: Literacy and Learning across the Curriculum* Chapter 7

### Strategy Summary and Overview

Discussion webs are a great alternative to teacher led discussions. This strategy is designed to promote students to engage with the text and fellow students in meaningful discussions using a framework that facilitates students' abilities to explore the text while considering diverse sides of an issue in a discussion before drawing final conclusions. The interactions between students in this strategy are similar to think-pair-share. Students first read the text and then determine what ideas they want to contribute to the discussion based on this interaction. After they have some ideas that they would like to contribute they get into partners or pairs to discuss the ideas.

They create the discussion web by writing the question that is posed in the middle. To the left and right of the question they have two areas to write pros and cons (can use yes or no, plus or minus, etc.). In these areas they write information provided from the reading that corresponds to each category. After they have written their ideas down in the corresponding categories, the group or pair discusses each side. The goal is to come up with a conclusion which they write below the question. This conclusion must answer the question posed and it must be agreed upon by all group members. One member from the group then presents their web to the class.

### Strategy Use in Content Area Classroom

One way to use a discussion web in a classroom is to pose a question to the students that a character in the literature they are reading is faced with. For example, if the students were reading *Romeo and Juliet* the students could be given the question, should Romeo and Juliet try

to run away together? The students could then use the text to come up with reasons why they should and why they should not run away before making their final conclusion.

Another way this could be used for informational texts is for students to read a persuasive argument to determine if they agree with the point the author/speaker is trying to make. This would be great to use when teaching students to break down someone's argumentative claims and evaluate them for relevance.

### Impact on Student Learning

Discussion webs would greatly impact student learning by teaching them a variety of skills. To begin with, students will be forced to look at an argument from various perspectives. This is a very valuable skill that students will learn and use for years to come. They will be able to look at an argument and determine a conclusion based off of the arguments presented. This will also hone their point of view skills.

Students will also learn proper social skills by listening to each other's opinions and ideas about a subject matter. They will learn the skills to politely agree or disagree with each other and how to express an opposing opinion. They will also be forced to learn how to negotiate different viewpoints to create a conclusion that everyone can agree on. This is an invaluable skill that the students must learn to prepare them for college and the workforce.

Discussion webs also facilitate a deeper analysis of the text they are reading. Students are asked to look at the text and dissect it down to its framework and main arguments. This forces students to think about how points are made and developed within a text.

## Strategy 6: Three-Level Comprehension Reading Guide

*Content Area Reading: Literacy and Learning across the Curriculum* Chapter 7

### Strategy Summary and Overview

A three-level comprehension reading guide is a guide that is intended to engage students in the reading material. This guide facilitates a framework that allows students to interact with a text on three different levels of comprehension. These guides need to be viewed as tools for learning not tests. Each statement within the guide needs to be considered as a way to prompt to initiate discussion and strengthen the quality of the reader's comprehension of the text.

There are five steps to creating a three-level comprehension reading guide. The first step to constructing a three-level comprehension reading guide is to begin constructing level II questions, the interpretive level. At this level you should develop your statements by asking yourself "what does the author mean?". These should be clear inferences that fit the content objectives. The next step is to locate the pieces of information that are required to support the inference statements that you have made in level II. Once you put these prepositions and pieces of information into a statement you have the statements for level I. The next decision is whether to add a distracter to one of the levels. After deciding whether to use distracters, the next step is to write the statements for level III, the applied level. This level helps students connect their prior knowledge to the reading. These statements represent conclusions that can be made about the reading by drawing on what the text says explicitly and what it infers. Students are expected to examine each statement and decide whether the statement can be found in the essay, if it was something the author means, or if the author would agree with the statement.

### Strategy Use in Content Area Classroom

I think that the three-level reading comprehension strategy would be a great activity to use when students are examining informational texts such as speeches. Students can read the text and then identify what points the author is saying explicitly, what inferences he is drawing from those statements, and how you should apply the information. I could use the three-level reading comprehension strategy by having students read Martin Luther King Jr's "I Have a Dream" speech. While reading the speech students can identify explicit claims that he makes and inferences that you can draw from the text. After reading the speech students can choose concluding statements that they could defend with evidence. This could also be applied to literature as well. This could be used to get students to concentrate on the main themes of the piece of literature as well as what the author's message is.

#### Impact on Student Learning

Three-level reading comprehension guides benefit students on multiple levels. First, they allow students to think about texts on multiple levels of comprehension. Each level is also scaffold for the students to teach them that you must first know the literal level of information before you can understand the interpretive and applicable level. These levels help students to recognize the difference between explicit and implicit information. It also helps students to identify the relationship among the two.

This guide also gives the students an idea about what the author's message is going to be. By providing students with a framework for what the piece of work is trying to explain, it focuses their reading to better analyze concepts to find relevant information within the reading.

In addition these statements can spark interest and discussion among the students. This can further impact student learning by igniting discussions about the material which can lead to further understanding of the content.

## Strategy 7: Word Exploration

*Content Area Reading: Literacy and Learning across the Curriculum* Chapter 8

### Strategy Summary and Overview

Word exploration is a writing-to-learn activity that compliments vocabulary development. This strategy provokes students to engage in freewriting about a specific topic or concept. Students are expected to write hastily and impulsively without worrying about grammar, neatness, or spelling. The idea is for students to write down everything that they know about the topic or concept. This writing is not for an audience it is only for the student's benefit. The idea is to activate any prior knowledge that the student may have about the topic or concept.

After students have written down their knowledge the teacher should hold a class discussion. The teacher can ask a few students to share what they have written with the class. The students can choose to read exactly what they wrote or just describe what they have written by talking through their thought process. The teacher's job is to draw attention to the differences and similarities that exist between the student responses and relate these initial associations to the topic or concept and then invite students to formulate further connections.

### Strategy Use in Content Area Classroom

Word explorations can be used in a variety of ways in various subject matters. If I was starting a unit on poetry I could ask the students to free write all that they know about poetry. Students would more than likely write about various types of poems, poetic terms, genres, and possibly name some poets. They could also discuss how poetry can appeal to emotions in people. This could spark a discussion of any of these topics and would activate interest in the students amongst the students.

I could also use them to determine what my students know about a certain time period that our reading is set in. If we were reading *The Crucible* I might my students to write all that they know about puritans. I would probably get a variety of answers which could spark a conversation to discuss the time period in which the novel was written in.

Both of these examples would inform me how much my students know about a given subject so that I could adjust my teaching accordingly. For example, if my students did not know any of the poetic elements then I would know that I need to cover this with my students because it is an essential component to understanding how to read and write poetry.

### Impact on Student Learning

Word explorations benefit student learning because it draws connections between the student's prior knowledge and the new concepts they are about to learn. This activity helps activate the schemata in the student's long-term memory, which allows students to go far back into the mind and collect information about the topic. Activating student's prior knowledge about a topic and then discussing it in class is especially important because sometimes students can have misconceptions about a certain topic. In the discussion portion of this strategy these misconceptions can be addressed and dealt with so that they do not affect the student's learning.

Another benefit that this strategy brings to students is hearing other students' ideas. A student may say something that another student had not thought of but it may trigger something in their memory, therefore activating even more prior knowledge. In addition they may benefit by hearing other students' knowledge about a topic because they could have a better understand of the concept or more experiences to draw from. It is always important to consider other people's perspectives when learning a new concept.



## Strategy 8: Brainstorming

*Content Area Reading: Literacy and Learning across the Curriculum* Chapter 8

### Strategy Summary and Overview

Brainstorming is a way to quickly enable students to describe what they know about a topic or concept. This strategy is a great way to activate prior knowledge when developing new vocabulary and concepts. The great thing about this strategy is that it can be something that can be done quickly if there is not much time or it can be elaborated on to take up more time.

There are two simple steps to brainstorming. The first is that the teacher identifies one of the main concepts that are to be studied in the reading. The second step is students will create a list of words or phrases that are related to the topic or concept in small groups within a given amount of time. The teacher can then decide whether they want to hold a brief conversation about the generated words and phrases or if they would like to use the words and phrases to spark a longer conversation of the topic with the class.

### Strategy Use in Content Area Classroom

Brainstorming could easily be applied to a variety of content areas. One way to use brainstorming is to introduce a unit of study with the strategy. For example, if a teacher is doing a unit of poetry they could ask their students to generate words or phrases that they relate to poetry. This could help ignite a class discussion on the topic and could give the students a framework for where the unit is heading. This could also be a way to stimulate small group discussions as well.

This strategy could also be used to come up with synonyms or antonyms of vocabulary words. Sometimes it is easier to describe what a word is by describing what it is not or what it is similar to. This could really help students learn their vocabulary terms for that unit.

This strategy could also be used as a review of a large concept that the students have been studying. The teacher could nominate the topic to be literary devices after students have completed this unit and the students could brainstorm the terms that are associated with literary devices. It could also be used as a way

### Impact on Student Learning

Student learning can be positively impacted using this strategy. Students' prior knowledge can be activated which will help stimulate engagement and interest in the subject. In addition students will be recalling information that they have previously learned but may have forgotten. This activity will give them the opportunity to reach back in their minds and pull that information out.

Students will also be impacted because this strategy allows students to make connections between terms which could help them gain a better understanding of them. This strategy fosters a type of learning that builds off of previous knowledge which many students find useful. In addition it can be easier to remember terms if the students remember their relationship to other terms that may be more familiar.

Brainstorming can also benefit students by stimulating conversation about a topic. During discussion points may be made by the teacher or other students that one student may not have considered before but it may increase their understanding of the topic.

## Strategy 9: Magic Squares

*Content Area Reading: Literacy and Learning across the Curriculum* Chapter 8

### Strategy Summary and Overview

Magic squares strategy is designed to assess students' knowledge of vocabulary terms. The strategy could be used before or after vocabulary is introduced. The activity sheet for this strategy contains two columns: one is a list of vocabulary terms; the other is a list of definitions or statements that correspond to each term. Below the two columns there is a square with a cell for each one of the terms. Each cell contains a letter that corresponds to each term. The definitions or statements each have a number to distinguish them.

The idea is that students match each term with the appropriate definition or statement. Once they determine which statement goes with which term they write the definition's number inside of the cell that contains the letter of the term. If each match is correct they will form a magic square that creates a magic number. To determine if they have identified each one correctly each row and column will add up to the same number. The total of each will form the magic number for the magic square. Students need to double check their answers by adding up the totals each time. If their totals do not match up then they need to go back and reevaluate their matches.

### Strategy Use in Content Area Classroom

This strategy could be used in a variety of classes. In an English classroom this strategy can be used before a unit of vocabulary is introduced to test students' pre-existing knowledge of

the terms. It can also be used as a review activity to assess student's knowledge before they take a quiz or a test over the terms. In this manner it could serve as a study activity.

This strategy could be used for a variety of topics within English. A teacher could use this strategy to introduce or review weekly vocabulary words that the students must learn. It could also be used to introduce a new story, novel, or chapter. In addition a teacher could use this strategy as a way to introduce a new unit of study to the students and could use a main term from each lesson in the activity to give students an idea of what they are about to be learning.

### Impact on Student Learning

This strategy is a great way to involve students who typically like subjects or activities that deal with quantitative properties more. This activity incorporates basic principles of math into the vocabulary exercise. I think that this would appeal to many of the students who enjoy Math or related subjects more than English. These students might feel that this is an activity that is more adapted to their interests.

This is also a great way to foster independent learning within the students. Since this activity incorporates a system of checks and balances then the students are able to check their learning on their own and are given the opportunity to correct their own mistakes. The teacher could also allow students to check their answers using dictionaries after they have completed the squares to ensure that they got all of the answers correct, which would hone the skills necessary to look up that information.

If this strategy is used before the students are introduced to the topic or terms then it could activate curiosity in the students. This could encourage students to want to learn more about the topic and be actively engaged in further lessons.

## Strategy 10: POVGs

*Content Area Reading: Literacy and Learning across the Curriculum* Chapter 9

### Strategy Summary and Overview

A POVG (point of view guide) is used to connect students' reading and writing in a way that allows students to be creative in an informal environment. The idea of this strategy is to have students engage in meaningful reading and writing by putting themselves in the shoes of a character or subject that they are studying. POVGs could be used as a single lesson or as a unit.

There are four main characteristics to POVGs. The first is that the prompts for writing POVGs are questions that are presented in an interview format. These questions should be written in a way that allows students to think about what they are reading from a different perspective. The second characteristic is that POVGs facilitate speculation and inferential thinking about the text as well as requires students to elaborate on what they have learned by putting the students' in a role that requires them to look at concepts from another's point of view. During this activity students are also actively contributing their own experiences in a writing to learn process. In addition these activities require the students to respond to a situation in first-person therefore they must completely take on the role of their subject or character.

### Strategy Use in Content Area Classroom

POVGs would be a great strategy to use in a Language Arts classroom in accompaniment with literature. A teacher could have students take on the role of a character that is faced with a tough decision, which would force students to think about how the character should react in the situation. Teachers could also ask students to put themselves in the time and place that the novel takes place which could give the students a better understanding of the historical context of a novel that might otherwise be foreign to them.

This strategy could also be used with informational texts as well. A teacher could ask students to write a POVG in the perspective of someone who was in the crowd listening to Martin Luther King Jr's "I Have a Dream" speech. By doing so students could evaluate how the speech affected listeners. This could be an activity that students just write on index cards or it could be turned into a longer response.

### Impact on Student Learning

POVGs would have a positive impact on student learning because it would force students to look at situations from a different perspective. Being able to evaluate a situation from various perspectives is an essential skill in life. This activity attempts to foster this skill. By looking at a situation from a variety of perspectives students will gain a better understanding of characters, plot development, and motivations. This could also produce an emotional reaction or attachment to certain situations or characters which would help students remember the ideas and concepts in the readings. POVGs also offer an opportunity for students to analyze a text more deeply. When answering the POVG questions students will need to reflect on the descriptions of events and characters as well as the details of the reading.

If the POVG questions ask students to situate themselves in the historical context of the story it could really benefit their understanding of the time period. Not only would they be reflecting on the details that they have learned about the time period but they would be making personal connections with it. By putting themselves in the shoes of a subject or character in that time it would make a topic that would typically be distant to them close.

## Strategy 11: Admit Slips and Exit Slips

*Content Area Reading: Literacy and Learning across the Curriculum* Chapter 9

### Strategy Summary and Overview

Admit slips are a strategy that provides students an opportunity to anonymously ask questions and raise concerns about the subject being studied to their teacher. Students should write their questions and comments on a half sheet of paper or index cards at the beginning of class. The students are supposed to react to the subject being studying by answering a question or questions posed by the teacher. These questions could ask them to describe what is confusing to them, their problems, or what they like or dislike about the subject. These slips are then collected by the teacher to be used as a way to ignite class discussions by reading the questions or comments on the card anonymously.

Exit slips are similar in that they also provide students an opportunity to anonymously ask questions and raise concerns about the subject being studied, but they are administered at the end of class. The purpose of exit slips is to bring closure to the lesson. The question posed to the students to answer could ask them to summarize, project, evaluate, or synthesize the information in the lesson. The teacher can then decide how to address the questions or concerns in the exit slips. They can choose to talk to students individually or address them in front of the entire class (again anonymously) the following day.

### Strategy Use in Content Area Classroom

A clear use for this strategy is to have students

### Impact on Student Learning

The use of biopoem would have a positive impact on student learning, because it would help students identify important information in a text. Biopoems require students to pick out very particular pieces of information and summarize it briefly. Whether studying fictional or historical characters or even discussing an abstract concept, the students will have to characterize the subject with specific detail, which will help them learn what elements are most important.

The biopoem also makes the use of poetry as a mode of expression less daunting to students. The structure it gives would allow students to explore this venue of expression without the fear of failure and without a sense of hopeless floundering without a guide. Allowing students to explore poetry in this structured manner would be beneficial, because poetry is an important means of expression that students might not otherwise try. Helping students succeed in this structured task might give them the courage to try other forms of poetry, thus expanding their skill set and helping them appreciate language and writing in a whole new form.



## Strategy 12: Response Journal

*Content Area Reading: Literacy and Learning across the Curriculum* Chapter 9

### Strategy Summary and Overview

Response journals are a very adaptable method of allowing students to record their emotional and intellectual responses to the texts they read. A write-to-learn strategy, response journals provide a forum for reflective analysis and creative demonstrations of comprehension. Teachers may require response journals to be kept with certain reading assignments or might require a number of entries every grading period.

Response journal structure will vary depending on the teacher and the content area. Some teachers may tell their students to write their first feelings and reactions to the texts. Other may direct their students' writing with more explicit prompts and requirements. Regardless of the amount of direction given to students, response journal entries must have some sort of instruction given by teachers to direct student writing. This prompt or direction should help the students to focus their writing on a particular topic the teacher wants them to think about, but it should allow them enough freedom to express their ideas creatively.

### Strategy Use in Content Area Classroom

Response journals are easily adaptable to any content area. In language arts, they are frequently found in one form or another, because they give students an opportunity to practice writing skills in a non-threatening environment. Aside from building writing skills, this strategy also helps students develop their ideas about the content being studied. Students might use response journals to reflect on the literature they read and the significance of the themes in their own lives.

In a social studies classroom, students could use response journals to record their reactions to historical events they study or to current events as they watch them unfold. Teachers might use more guided prompts toward the beginning of the year and then allow more freedom for student creativity later on. For some prompts, the teacher might have the students take the perspective of one of the historical figures they are studying. Other prompts might ask students to address a moral or ethical issue related to the issues they are studying. Varying prompts in this way will allow the response journals to be used to their maximum capacity as an adaptable activity.

### Impact on Student Learning

Students will benefit greatly from the consistent use of response journals, because these journals will deepen student understanding and extend student thinking. Response journals are important strategies for use after reading, because they require students to think deeply about the material they have read. Rather than just reading the material and moving on, response journals ask students to reflect, to recall specific facts or details, or to apply the information to a different situation. The more students interact with a text, the deeper their understanding of the text will be. Response journals allow for this deepening of understanding.

Response journals also allow students to extend their thinking beyond the conventional manners of interacting with text. By giving students creative prompts, such as having them take the perspective of an inanimate object in their writing, teachers can extend student thinking. Moreover, teachers could have students apply the information they read to a different situation through the response journals, which would help students to consider the information they read in a new way.

### Strategy 13: Series of Events Chain

*Content Area Reading: Literacy and Learning across the Curriculum* Chapter 10

#### Strategy Summary and Overview

A series of events chain is a graphic organizer that helps students understand and interpret information they read. Series of events chains can be used with virtually any text that has a sequential pattern. It can be used to show linear procedures, cause and effect, or narrative leading up to a climax and resolution.

This graphic organizer is usually a simple set of statements organized vertically with down arrows indicating the flow of the information. Students might be given blank boxes with the arrows provided, so that they have a visual structure in which they can organize their information. Series of events chains can be used while students are reading texts to allow them to record and track information, or they could be used after students have read a text to help them see the internal structures around which a text is organized.

#### Strategy Use in Content Area Classroom

Teachers in every content area can use this strategy to help students understand processes. Social studies teachers could easily make use of this strategy by using it as a simplified timeline to help students visualize the factors that led up to a major historical event. Perhaps teachers could have students read a text and then attempt to complete a chain on their own before receiving further instruction. Because the chains provide a framework around which students can build an understanding of the texts, they could attempt to do so without prior instruction other than the texts they have read. After having students complete the chains

individually, teachers might discuss the information in the text as a whole and clear up any misconceptions held by students.

In a language arts classroom, series of events chains could be used to organize reading or writing. Like social studies teachers, language arts teachers might have students complete these chains while they were reading a text or after they had completed it. Students might use them to chart plot developments or to study cause and effect relationships in informational texts. Teachers might also use series of events chains as a pre-writing activity to help students organize the information they plan to discuss in their writing.

### Impact on Student Learning

The use of series of events chains would have a positive effect on student learning, because it would help students picture the logical flow of ideas in a text and would help them simplify the information for better retention. Having a graphic organizer containing the information in the text would help students clear up any points they found difficult, because they would be able to see the information and its relationship to each other in a simplified manner. This logical structure would help them understand the big picture ideas and how each element contributes to that big picture rather than getting weighed down by lesser supporting details.

While this would aid comprehension, the series of events chain would also help improve student retention of information. Students are more likely to retain information when they can organize it in a connected manner in their minds than they are to retain it when they just try to memorize a list of facts. This simplified version of the textual information, showing the connections visually would help students organize the information mentally and retain it for longer periods of time.

## Strategy 14: Cognitive Mapping

*Content Area Reading: Literacy and Learning across the Curriculum* Chapter 10

### Strategy Summary and Overview

Cognitive maps, also called semantic maps, are a graphic organizer that helps students understand how important ideas or concepts connect to each other. They show relationships between main and subordinate ideas and provide an organizational framework around which to base an understanding of a text. Because students may not understand how to use this strategy to its maximum capacity at first, teachers should model the strategy in their classrooms before expecting students to produce a cognitive map.

Using cognitive mapping in the classroom involves three sections: a core concept, strands, and supports. The core concept is the idea around which the map is based and the concept that the teacher wants the students to understand better. Strands are subordinate ideas that students come up with to clarify or elaborate on the main concept. Supports are specific reasons or details associated with each strand that further support and explain it. Typically, cognitive mapping is done by putting the core concept in a circle in the middle, branching the strands in circles connected by lines to the concept with supports connected with short lines to the strands.

### Strategy Use in Content Area Classroom

A language arts teacher might use this strategy to activate students' prior knowledge about a topic, but a better use for it would be in helping students connect information they have already read in a text. The cognitive map might be used to begin a comparison of different characters in a story, for example, with each character being a strand connected by a similar

feature (the core) they all share. Language arts teachers might also use such a map to help students organize information they have brainstormed before allowing them to begin a long written project.

In a social studies classroom, a teacher might have students use a cognitive map to show the relationship between information given in a text or a collection of texts. After students have read a series of textbooks and tradebooks on the American Revolution, for example, the teacher could have them brainstorm the important battles (strands) and then discuss reasons why each one was so important (supports).

### Impact on Student Learning

This strategy would have a positive impact on student learning, because it would help students relate concepts visually and mentally and because it would help them clarify important concepts. Students would be able to see the relationship between previously disjointed pieces of information by using a cognitive map. They could see how subordinate points were related to major ones as well as how individual aspects of the subordinate points relate to the concept as a whole. As a graphic organizer, the visual aid cognitive mapping provides would help students who are visual learners to understand the connections in the information presented in the texts they had read.

This strategy would also help the students clarify anything uncertain in the texts they had read. Because this strategy would likely be used after students had read a text, it would be a good way for teachers to check on students understanding and clarify points they did not understand. A point they may have glossed over because they did not understand it appear on the cognitive map, forcing students to come to an understanding of its meaning.

## Strategy 15: GRASP Summary Writing

*Content Area Reading: Literacy and Learning across the Curriculum* Chapter 10

### Strategy Summary and Overview

Guided Reading and Summary Procedure (GRASP) is a summary-writing strategy to help students study texts and retain information. In this strategy, teachers direct students to read specific passages and list information before they help the students organize the information and write a more cohesive summary. The teacher might have students work individually or in groups or might lead the group in doing the activity together to help them study the texts they have read.

GRASP has a simple four-step process that makes it easy to implement in the classroom. First, the teacher introduces the topic of the text to students and has students read the text. The teacher should be sure to point out that the students should try to remember as many details as possible as they read. When students have finished reading, the teacher has the students write down a list of as many facts, examples, and details from the text as possible. Once students have written down everything they remember, the teacher helps the students organize their recollections. This third step might be done as a whole-class activity when first using the strategy. Once students are familiar with GRASP, the teacher might give them a few reminders before allowing them to organize their material on their own. Fourth and finally, students write the summary from the details they have listed and organized.

### Strategy Use in Content Area Classroom

This strategy would be particularly helpful when reading nonfiction texts, such as in a social studies classroom. The teacher might have the students use GRASP to write a summary after they have read a section of their textbooks or a short tradebook on a specific topic. Before

having students use GRASP to write a summary on their own, the social studies teacher might read aloud a short passage to the students and model the steps with them. Then the teacher might assign a passage have students use GRASP in working with that passage on their own.

In a language arts classroom, this strategy could be used to have students write summaries of fiction texts. The summaries of fiction texts could be used to talk further about plot or setting development. To use GRASP in this setting, the language arts teacher might have students read a short story and direct them to pay attention to as many of the plot turns as possible. Then students could brainstorm a list of plot details before organizing it into chronological order or a different organizational pattern. Finally, students could use their lists to write a summary. If students all read different short stories, they might present their final product to the group so that all the students knew the basic plot of each story.

### Impact on Student Learning

The use of this strategy would have a positive effect on student learning, because it would give students a more cohesive and comprehensive summary of the text which would aid their comprehension. Having to organize the details they remembered and then write about them in a logical order to form a summary would help the students clarify any points they were unsure of before the strategy was used. Also, knowing before they read what they should pay attention to while reading would help students to focus their reading on the important information in the text.

GRASP would also help students to retain information. Reading the text knowing that they will have to recall certain things later on will help students remember those details for a short time. Writing about the details they remember and giving them a logical order will help students retain the information over a long period of time, positively impacting their learning.