6th Grade

General Strategies

- Select, create and use graphic organizers to interpret textual information
- Answer literal, inferential, evaluative and synthesizing questions to demonstrate comprehension of grade-appropriate print texts, electronic and visual media

What Students Need to Know:

- graphic organizers
- questions
  - literal
  - inferential
  - evaluative
  - synthesizing
- comprehension
- grade-appropriate texts
  - print
  - electronic
  - visual media

What Students Need to be Able to Do:

- select (graphic organizers)
- create (graphic organizers)
- use (graphic organizers)
- interpret (textual information
- answer (questions)
- demonstrate (comprehension)

Important Vocabulary

Evaluative—Making a judgment.
Graphic organizer—A method of organization of information which incorporates diagrams or other pictorial devices.
Inferential—To be assumed but not directly expressed.
Literal—Actual, what is stated.
Synthesize—To combine separate elements into one concept.

GENERAL STRATEGIES

The indicators about graphic organizers and answering questions appear in the middle of the power standards web because these are ways that students have of demonstrating their comprehension of a text and they are applicable to all of the other indicators. It should never be the goal of instruction to teach students to complete a graphic organizer. Graphic organizers are simply tools that can be used to help students understand what they are reading. If that purpose is not being achieved, then the graphic organizer should not be used. The ultimate goal would be that students are able to understand a selection without needing to complete a graphic organizer.

Similarly, instruction should not focus on answering questions. It's through answering questions that students are able to demonstrate their level of understanding of the other indicators. Some instruction should occur to help students learn to write answers to questions, especially in preparation for short answer and extended response items found on achievement tests. It is also important that students understand the demands of certain types of questions. The process for answering a literal question is very different from that needed to answer an inferential question. The QAR strategy will be helpful in teaching students these differences.

Although any type of graphic organizer might appear on a test, there are several that commonly occur. These include the following:

- webs
- Venn diagrams
- T-charts
- timelines

Explanations and samples of each of these graphic organizers are contained in the strategies section.

Exposure to these four organizers repeatedly throughout the year should prepare students for whatever form they may take on the achievement test.

Suggested Strategies for Teaching General Strategies

QAR—Question Answer Relationship

QAR (Question-Answer-Relationship) is a strategy to help students relate prior knowledge and text information. This strategy helps students become aware of the relationship between questions and answers, helps them know different types and levels of questions, and helps them analyze, comprehend and respond to text concepts.

Start by discussing the two main categories and four different kinds of questions students may encounter.

<u>In the book</u>

Right There — The answers are RIGHT THERE in the text in one or two continuous sentences.

Think and Search — The answers are found by THINKING and SEARCHNG from different parts of a text.

<u>In my head</u>

Author and You — Students use their own knowledge AND text information to answer a question.

On My Own — The answer is not in the text. Students use their own knowledge and experience to answer questions.

The teacher first models using the following procedure:

1. Read a selection
2. Ask a question
3. Consider and state the answer
4. State the QAR — right there, think & search, author & you, or on my own
5. Explain the QAR choice

Gradually relinquish these responsibilities to the students, starting with #5 and going backward. Eventually have students write their own questions for passages, varying the types.

When students understand the process needed to answer a question, they will be better able to answer it correctly.

Question Around

Have students read a selection and write a number of questions about the text. (This could be done for homework.) Students take turns in class reading their questions. Other students answer the questions and identify the QAR. If a student is successful, he reads one of his questions, calling on another student to answer the question and identify the type. Continue with this process until all students have had an opportunity to share at least one question.

Sample QARs

Based on the passage in the box at the right, it's possible to write all types of questions. Samples are listed below:

Right There — According to the speaker in the poem, what does Dad take him when he's sick?

Think and Search — Where do the crumbs in the speaker's bed come from?

Author and Me — The next time the speaker is sick, do you think he will want his father to bring him toast in bed? Why or why not?

On My Own — Should people eat in bed? Why or why not?

Crumbs in Bed!
Crumbs in bed!
Crumbs in bed!
Whenever I'm sick, I get
Crumbs in bed!

Dad's so nice
When he brings me toast
But when I'm done
What I hate most

Is
Crumbs in bed!
Crumbs in bed!
Feels so yucchy with
Crumbs in bed!
They sneak in your pjs
And itch your head!
Next time I'll have
Soup instead
'Cause boy do I hate
Crumbs in bed!
-Jeff Moss

Have students fill in empty comic strip bubbles. What might the characters be saying to each other? During discussion, have students support their thinking.

Tips for Answering Questions Requiring Inferences:

- *Get the big picture first by pulling together details from the selection*
- *Use logic and common sense but do not base an inference on something that isn't in the selection*

Other Inference Activities

- Play charades — in order to guess what's being acted out, students must make inferences
- Show students an unfamiliar object and allow them to make inferences about what the object might be — antique tools work well for this
- Share a newspaper headline with students and have them infer what the article may be about. Headlines that could have more than one meaning provide interesting practice (Safety Experts Say School Bus Passengers Should Be Belted, Miners Refuse to Work after Death, etc.)

Two-Column Notes for Inferring

Perhaps the most important part of teaching students to infer involves teaching them how to find support for the inference in the text. Two-column notes can help with finding support for inferences. Divide a sheet of paper into two columns using a T-chart format. Label the left hand side "The text says" and the right hand side "I Know." As students are reading, they make inferences and record them in the right hand column. In the left hand column they write quotes from the text that have led them to make the inference they recorded on the right.

Several other headings can be used with the two-column note strategy to increase students' abilities to make inferences:

- Facts/Inferences
- Quote or Picture from Text/My Inference
- Words in the Text/Prediction of What Will Happen
- Direct quote from text/I Think This Means
- Direct quote from text/The picture in my head looks like
- Direct quote from text/This reminds me of

Drawing Inferences

Bring in comic strips or political cartoons that require students to infer what the cartoonist meant. Ask students to work with a partner or small group to identify what inferences they need to make to interpret the point of the cartoon, and what connections they need to draw to do so.

Discussion questions to encourage inferring:

- *Why did the character act in a certain way?*
- *What influenced the character's action?*
- *How did a character's actions affect the outcome of an event?*
- *What would have happened if another event had not occurred?*

Clues Lead to Inferences

Students often enjoy solving puzzles or riddles. Capitalize on this interest by giving them riddles to solve that require them to make inferences. Use the clues provided in this handbook to encourage them to make multiple valid inferences based on information provided. Then help them transfer this skill to their reading when they must make inferences based on the information provided in the text.

Students might also try to write their own clues to use for a similar activity. Let them choose a picture from an assortment you've collected — examples might include pictures of rainstorms, snowstorms, hurricanes, rivers, lakes, forest, tornadoes, etc. Have them write a simple riddle about their selection using details from their picture. They can then share the clues with their classmates who try to make inferences and solve the riddle.

Who Is It?

Start working on the skill of inferring by pointing out to students how they regularly infer during the course of every day. To personalize the skill, ask students to write a description of their rooms. They should include not only a general description but also details that they feel might indicate that this is their room and no one else's without giving away their identity. Collect the descriptions and read them to the class, allowing students to guess whose room is being described. Discuss what clues led them to make these inferences.

Put 5-10 objects in a bag and give one bag to each group of students. Tell them that all of the items in the bag came from the same person's home. Ask students to examine the objects in their bag then make inferences about the person's age, sex, occupation, lifestyle, hobbies, personality traits, etc. Have students share the contents of their bag with the rest of the class and explain the inferences they've made about the person.

Try one of these to expand students' understanding of making inferences:

- **Read a play — by using the stage directions, students can make inferences about the characters**
- **Read poetry — poets must choose their words carefully and often expect the reader to make inferences based on the words and format chosen**

Mystery Reports

After doing research about a topic, have students try a mystery report. The student should write ten sentences, each giving a clue about the topic. The sentences should be numbered, and one of them should be a give away clue. A member of the class gives a number. The clue for that number is read. The student can guess the answer or pass. The game continues until the correct answer is given or all clues are read. A sample is provided below:

1. The state bird is the bluebird.
2. This was the 24th state.
3. This state is 19th in area size among the states.
4. The state song is *The Missouri Waltz*.
5. For many years the state's most important mineral was lead.
6. The capital is Jefferson City.
7. The state has about 10,000 springs.
8. The Clydesdale horses live in this state when not on parade.
9. One of Laura Ingalls Wilder's homes is in this state.
10. The greatest distance north to south in this state is 335 miles.

Answer — Missouri (Polette, 1999)

"Reading between the lines to determine a character's motivation and personality, to discover themes, and to identify the main points in informational texts is what comprehension is all about."

Prompts that Support Inferring

- ✓Why did the character say that (restate the words)?
- ✓What were the character's inner thoughts that were not spoken?
- ✓Why won't the character say her/his inner thoughts out loud?
- ✓Does the situation or setting for the dialogue help you draw conclusions about the character's feelings? Thoughts? Personality?
- ✓How does the tone of voice you imagine for the character help you understand his or her mood? Feelings?
- ✓Try to visualize the character's expression and gestures. What can you infer from these?
- ✓What words said by the character enable you to infer feelings, attitude, personality, and inner conflicts?

Want Ad Inferences

Have students choose a job described in the classified section of the newspaper. Let them tape their want ad on a sheet of paper, then have them write inferences about the job based on the description in the want ad. In addition to the inferences, require them to cite information from the want ad and their own prior knowledge that helped them make the inferences.

Sketch to Stretch

"Sketch-to-stretch is a visually representing activity that moves students beyond literal comprehension to think more deeply about the characters, theme, and other elements of story structure and the author's craft in a story they are reading. Students work in small groups to draw pictures or diagrams to represent what the story means to them, not pictures of their favorite character or episode. In their sketches, students use lines, shapes, colors, symbols, and words to express their interpretations and feelings. Since students work in a social setting with the support of classmates, they share ideas with each other, extend their understanding, and generate new insights."

Follow these steps to have your students do the Sketch-to-Stretch activity:

- Read and respond to a selection.
- Talk about the themes in the selection and ways to symbolize meanings. Teachers remind students that there are many ways to represent the meaning of an experience, and that students can use lines, colors, shapes, symbols, and words to visually represent what a story means to them. Students and the teacher talk about possible meanings and ways they might visually represent these meanings.
- Have students draw sketches. Students work in small groups to draw sketches that reflect what the story means to them. Emphasize that students should focus on the meaning of the story, not their favorite part, and that there is no single correct interpretation of the story.
- Have students share their sketches with classmates. Students meet in small groups to share their sketches and talk about the symbols they used. Encourage classmates to study each student's sketch and tell what they think the student is trying to convey.
- Have some students share with the class. Each group chooses one sketch from their group to share with the class.
- Revise sketches and make final copies. Some students will want to revise and add to their sketches based on feedback they received and ideas from classmates. Also, students make final copies if the sketches are being used as projects.

Students need many opportunities to experiment with this activity before they move beyond drawing pictures of the story events or characters and are think able to think symbolically. Make sure you model several times, then guide students through the process before expecting them to do it independently.

The Inference Game

"Students naturally make inferences in their daily lives. By playing "the inference game" with struggling readers, you can help them recognize that they are constantly drawing conclusions about family, friends, and teachers. Help students see that they base their conclusions on the talk and actions of these people.

"The inference game offers mini-dramas that can link the inferences that students make every day to the inferences they can learn to make from books. Selected students dramatize situations, while their classmates — the audience — draw conclusions from the mini-drama. The game can be played as a whole-class or small-group activity.

1. Write each mini-drama on an index card. Mini-dramas for the Inference Game include:
    - Sit at your desk, yawn loudly, stretch, and put your head on the desk.
    - Take a classmate's pen or pencil without asking.
    - Three girls whisper in a group. A fourth girl tries to enter the group but is told to "bug off."
    - Two students toss a ball. A third asks to play, but the first two do not answer. The third just hangs around and watches.
    - A student carries books down the hallway. Another student walks up and knocks the books out of the student's arms, laughs, and walks away.
    - A teacher gives directions to a class, and the class begins working. A student arrives five minutes later. The student is loud and disruptive.
    - For two nights, Student A calls Student B to get the answers to the math homework. On the third night, Student A calls, but Student B refuses to give the answers. Student A then tells Student B not to expect to be invited to the big weekend party.
    - Two students sit in the back of the classroom, pass notes, and talk.
    - A student enters the classroom, crying.
2. Have one or more students perform the scene. Scenes require no rehearsals. The audience should not see what is on the card before the dramatization.
3. The audience can then draw inferences that offer explanations for the actors' behavior and words.
4. Prompt students with these questions: *What is the person thinking? Feeling? How do you know that?*

What Good Readers Do When They Infer

- Predict and revise predictions as they read.
- Weave their background knowledge and information into the text to answer questions they continuously pose during reading.
- Evaluate characters' decisions, motivations, talk, and the author's themes.
- Draw conclusions about people, conflicts, settings, and information.
- Interpret the book, basing interpretations on their own experience and the author's words.
- Connect what they know to what they are learning as they read and adapt their background knowledge to the new understandings they've gained.

Inferring While Reading Poetry

The reading of poetry often requires making many inferences. Try the follow process for helping students do a better job of reading poetry:

1. Divide students into groups.
2. In your group have one person read the poem aloud; highlight any words you don't know.
3. As a group, define any words that anyone doesn't know.
4. Sketch the major image(s) of the poem, share with a partner, share with the whole group. Discuss the similarities and differences in your pictures.
5. What connotations do you see in the words/images of this poem?
6. What does the author "mean" in this poem?
7. Once your group has decided on an answer to #6, prepare a reading of your poem that expresses that meaning.
8. Prepare and present your choral reading to the whole group.

Time to Draw Some Inferences

Name _____

Choose a question from your reading that hasn't been answered to your satisfaction. Record the question below. Then, using the clues in the text, add any background knowledge you have to supply an inference. Remember many of these questions don't have one right answer. Be brave!

1. Record a question you have from your reading that you are most curious about.

2. Go back to the text and record any textual evidence that might help you answer your question.

3. Combine the clues in the text with your background knowledge and try to answer the question you asked in number 1.

Clues for Inferences

There is a bubbling sound in the room.
The stove is on.
The kitchen is filled with steam.

Mr. Johnson is wearing grey coveralls.
Mr. Johnson has a set of thirty keys.
Mr. Johnson is carrying a broom and dustpan.

The counters and cutting board are covered with dust.
The cupboard door squeaks on its hinges.
There are cobwebs in the sink.

There is a ring of stones about three feet across.
The stones are black on the inside of the ring and grey on the other.
There are warm ashes inside the ring.

A shopping cart contains arrowroot cookies.
A shopping cart contains a stuffed animal.
A shopping cart contains diapers.

The porch light of the house is on.
There are many cars parked outside the house.
Music can be heard from the back yard.

The refrigerator has an unpleasant odor coming from it.
There are letters from the electric company piled on the table.
The lights in the house will not turn on.

The store is unusually crowded.
Outside of the store, a woman is collecting money.
The store is decorated with red ribbon.

Louise looks at her test paper and sighs heavily.
Louise knows that she will be grounded if she fails the test.
Louis thinks of all the fun she will miss.

The corners of the furniture are scratched.
There is a sandy powder on parts of the floor.
Two small dishes – one empty and one filled with water – sit on the floor.

Students are sitting quietly in their chairs
No one is talking before class.
All of the students have their textbooks open.

The temperature has just dropped suddenly.
The wind has increased in speed.
A low rumbling noise can be heard in the distance.

Jessica is walking home from school around sunset.
She is bruised, and her muscles are sore.
She is carrying her school books in a helmet.

Roxanne puts two folding chairs in the trunk of her car.
Roxanne makes sure that she has bug spray and sun screen.
Roxanne puts a tent in the back seat of her car.

Alfred is wearing dark sunglasses at night.
Alfred is holding a German shepherd's leash.
Alfred is carrying a white cane.

The mailbox outside the house is stuffed full.
There are seven newspapers in the front lawn.
There are no cars in the driveway.

Julio is driving a classic Volkswagen Beetle with a "Bach to Basics" bumper sticker.
Julio is wearing a black suit.
In the back seat of his car is a violin case.

Carolyn is having trouble keeping her balance on her bicycle.
A heavy cloth bag full of paper hangs from her shoulders.
Carolyn's hands are smeared with black ink.

There is a set of false teeth in a glass by the sink.
There is a jar of Geritol in the medicine cabinet.
There is grey hair in the hair brush.

Mr. Cumquat crosses his arms and frowns.
Mr. Cumquat shifts his weight and sighs.
Mr. Cumquat looks at his watch.

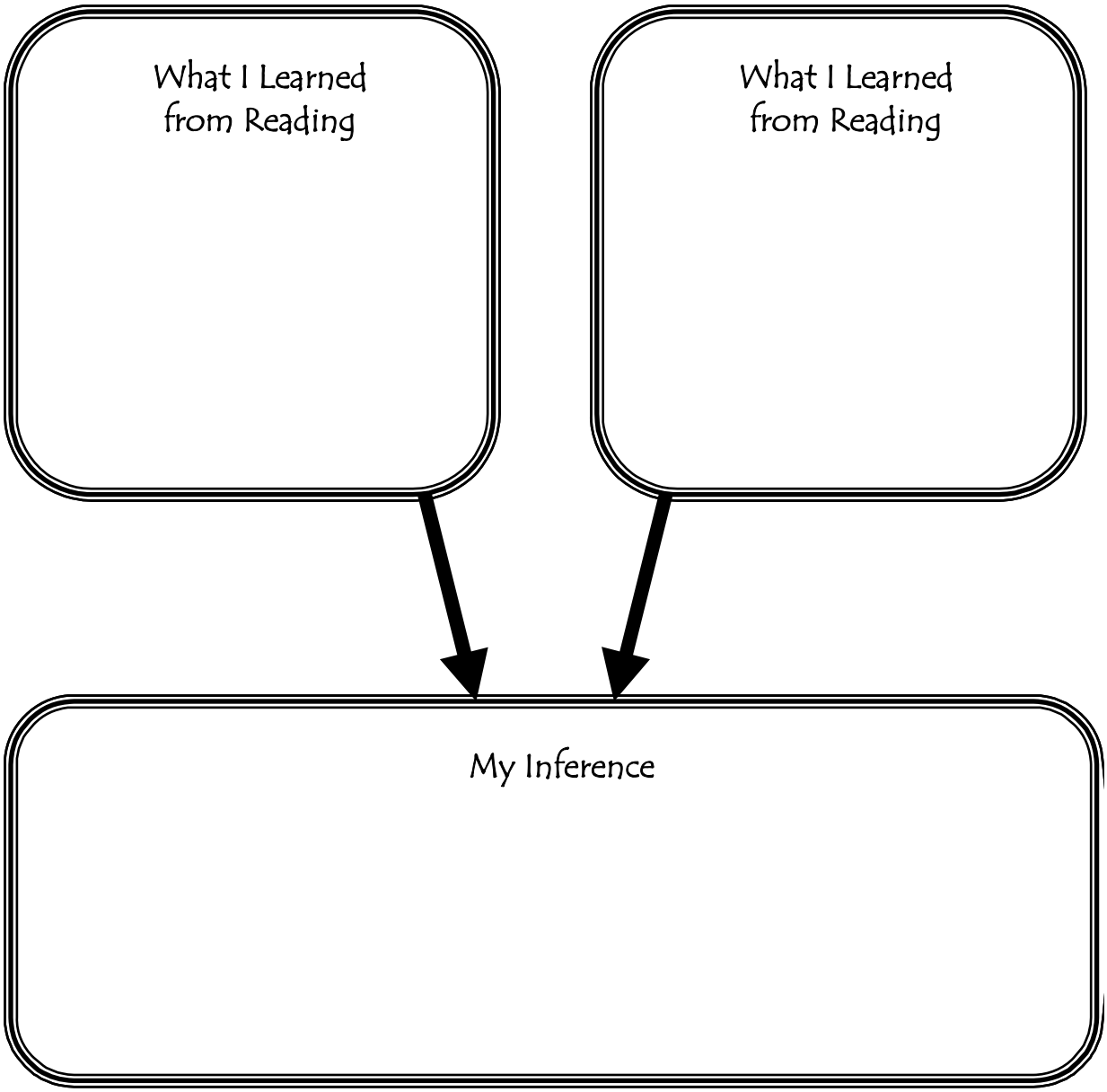
Jolene's mouth drops open.
Jolene stares at Richard.
Jolene says, "I can't believe you said that."

Children wearing shorts and tee shirts are playing.
The children cast long shadows.
An ice cream truck rumbles by.

Make Inferences

Sometimes a book does not tell you everything. But you can combine the information given with things you already know in order to make a guess. This is called making an **inference.**

Use this chart to help you think it through.

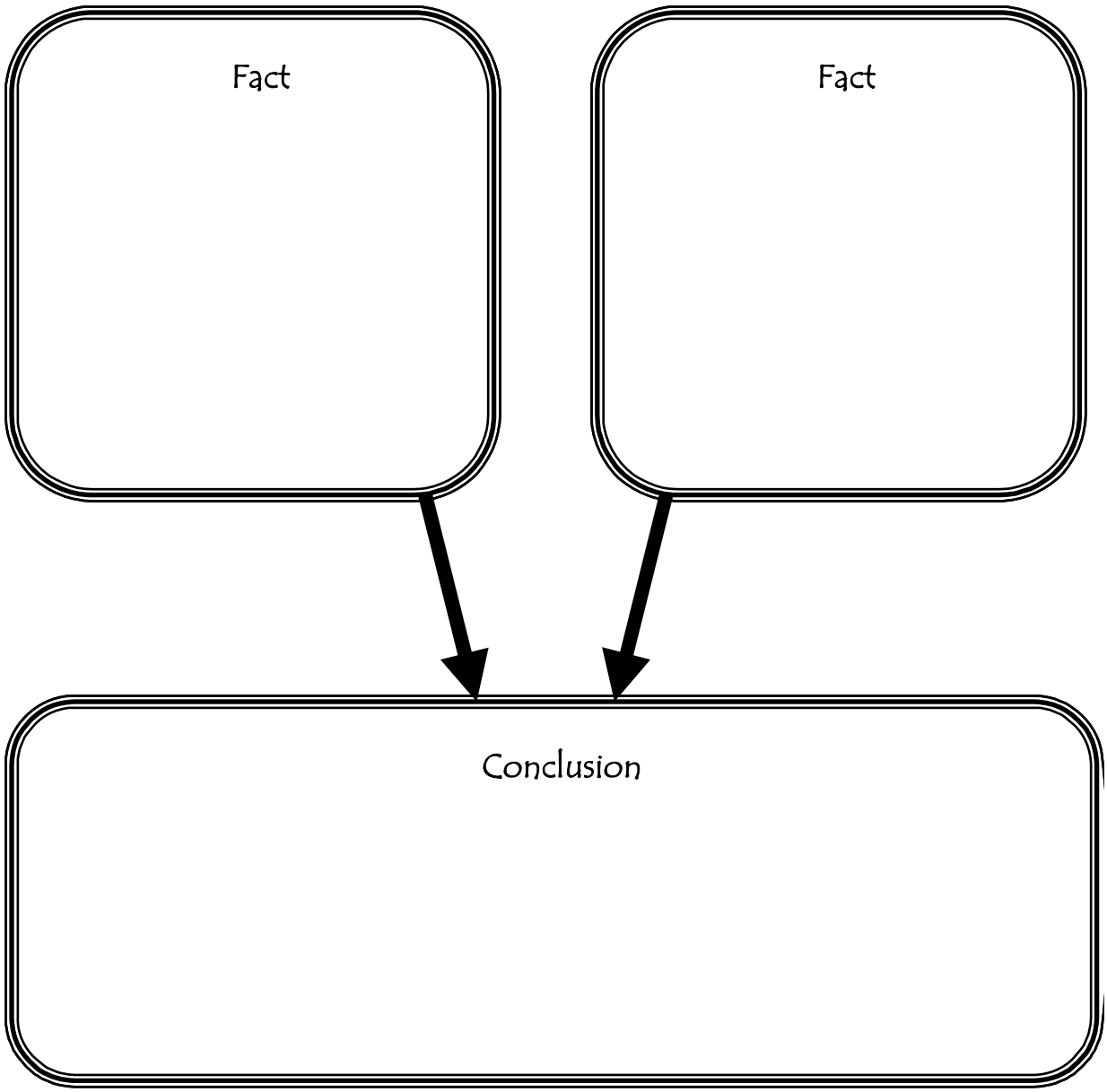


Draw Conclusions

When you draw a **conclusion**, you come to an understanding about something. To draw a conclusion, start by finding out as many facts as you can about the subject. Think about the facts and decide what you consider to be true about the subject.

Use this chart to help you work on drawing a conclusion.

Title: _____



The Inference Equation

To help students understand the process of inferring, encourage them to think in terms of an Inference Equation. The equation provides a visual support system for readers as they strive to understand this comprehension strategy.

Information (clues) + Reader Knowledge = Inference

Learners need a broad extent of experiences with inferring in many different kinds of text. They need to see the process modeled over and over and over again.

A form for recording inferences is found on the next page.

Mini-Lessons on Inferring

The following mini-lessons are kernels of possibility to demonstrate how multiple books and multiple exposures across read aloud, shared reading, guided reading, independent reading, and content-area study anchor deep understanding of a strategy. Once just isn't enough!

Mini-lesson 1: Understanding Inferring

Read *Seven Blind Mice* by Ed Young. As you share the book stop frequently to share your inferential thinking with the students. Model by selecting a stem such as: I can infer that _____. Or, based on what we have read so far, I can infer _____. Help students to realize that it is the mouse who uses *all* the information about the elephant to infer that they are dealing with an elephant. You might use the inference equation to illustrate how the clues from the text were added to the prior knowledge of that one mouse who then put the clues together, and created his ending inference: an elephant!

Mini-lesson 2: Looking for Inferences about a Character

Read *Old Henry* by Joan Blos (or another book with a strong character). Gather explicitly stated information from the text and ask the students to generate inferences about the character's traits. You might use the inference equation or a simple spider map to record their observations. It is important to have learners justify their thinking with evidence from the text as they generate inferences about character traits. (More mini-lessons follow)

INFERENCES

INFERENCE EQUATION

Information (clues) + Reader Knowledge = Inference

 +  = 

Spend time really thinking about inferences. Try to notice times when you infer. If you smell something good coming from the kitchen, can you infer what it is? If you notice your teacher looking unhappy, can you infer what is wrong? Look all around in your life. Notice inferences in your reading. Record your inferences below.

Clues . . . (from real life or from a book)	**What I Know . . .**	**My Inference . . .**
Example: There are big, black clouds in the sky.	Dark clouds can mean rain.	I think it is going to rain.

RECORDING MY INFERENCES

Reader _____ Text _____

During Independent Reading, focus on inferences. Jot your thoughts in the chart below.

While reading, I was able to infer that:	Support for my inference is on page _____	Text + Me = Inference I was able to make this inference because:

Mini-Lessons on Inferring (con't.)

Mini-lesson 3: Inferring about Events

Remind students that there are many kinds of inferences. We infer by drawing conclusions, making predictions, etc. Explain that all of these require the reader-text partnership as in the inference equation. *The Keeping Quilt* by Patricia Polacco has several critical points where you might pause to engage in the process of predicting (generating possible outcomes), the need for drawing conclusions (to bring ideas to resolution), and to look for cause and effect relationships (to infer a link between two events). As you engage in your think-aloud, help the learners to notice these various kinds of inferences.

As you demonstrate and model different kinds of inferences, you might consider making a chart that captures different types of inferences.

Mini-lesson 4: Inferring in a Poem

Make an overhead of an age-appropriate, narrative poem. Draw a line on the right side of the poem to make a blank column for jotting down inferences and notes as you read. Model how you make inferences within the text of the poem, using key words, images, etc., to support your thinking. Help learners to understand that it is especially important to infer in poetry because poets can't use as many words as authors of books. The reader must supply a good bit of the information. To build comprehension, the author gives clues and the reader puts them together to make inferences.

Mini-lesson 5: Inferring a Theme

Read *When I Was Young in the Mountains* by Cynthia Rylant, engaging in a think aloud as you wonder about the theme. Turn to the final page and read and talk about Rylant's words, "I never wanted to go anywhere else in the world, for I was in the mountains. And that was always enough." Share your thinking now, wondering, what might you infer about the theme? What clues helped you? Guide the students in discussing the gathering of clues that lead us to our inferences about theme.

Mini-lesson 6: Inferring in Informational Texts

It is essential to extend understanding of inference into science, social studies, and math. Learners need to understand that inferences are important tools in all of the texts we read. Using a nonfiction picture book or a transparency of a nonfiction text, do a think aloud using the "I can infer . . ." stem to show students how the same strategies will deepen their thinking in every text they read.

Directed Reading and Thinking Activity

The DR-TA is very helpful for processing text of all types at high levels. In the DR-TA, teachers walk students through setting purpose, making predictions, asking questions, and clarifying points in the text. The approach can be used in all content areas, from science to language arts to math.

The DR-TA begins with the students examining the title of the story or section to be read. From this information, they make predictions and set expectations regarding what the text is about. Next, either the teacher reads the material out loud or students read sections, stopping at designated points. Logical stopping points include subheadings, ends of chapters, or high points of a story. At each stopping point, teachers ask open-ended questions designed to elicit predictions or opinions about the text. The more they read, the more focused the students' predictions and opinions should become. Your role is to help maintain this focus by asking students to describe how elements in the text are connected and to provide evidence for any assertions, acting all the while as a nonjudgmental facilitator rather than a participant. The DR-TA structure forces students to justify their thoughts and link their opinions back to the text. As teachers, we can learn a lot about our students by listening to their ideas, values, background knowledge, and reasoning.

ORDER

This strategy can be used for a variety of subject areas to assist students in visually organizing and reviewing information. Once the strategy is learned, students can use it independently.

Procedure

First instruct the class on the following steps in the strategy and assist them until they become familiar enough to use it on their own.

Open your mind and take notes.
Recognize the structure of the text.
Draw an organizer — something visual (e.g., outline, map, chart).
Explain the organizer to others.
Reuse it as a study guide.

It is helpful to model this strategy several times and then have students assist in completing a visual organizer before they are required to do this on their own.

Question-Answer Relationship (QAR)

This strategy helps students to recognize the four possible areas in which answers can be found:

1. Right there—in a single sentence in the text.
2. Putting it together — in several sentences in the text.
3. On my own — in the student's background knowledge.
4. Writer and me — in a combination of information from text and reader's background.

Procedure

Have students read a story, text selection, or math problem. Use questions from the textbook or create questions on your own for students to answer. Determine what information is needed to answer each question. Decide if the information is "right there" stated plainly in one sentence in the text; if it will require reading several questions to answer; if the answer is not in the text but can be answered using students' background information; or if it can be answered by combining background information with information from the text.

Examples

Language Arts—short story
Right there: What is the setting?
Putting it together: Why was the character upset?
On my own: In what situations have you been upset?
Writer and me: Is there anyone who reminds you of the character in the story? Who and why?

Social Studies—Egyptian religion
Right there: Who was the god of the living and dead?
Putting it together: What beliefs did people have about Amon-Re?
On my own: Why would religion be important to the people?
Writer and me: Why would Egyptians prepare so much for the afterlife?

Science—erosion
Right there — What is erosion?
Putting it together: How is erosion related to weathering?
On my own: Have you experienced any difficulties dealing with erosion in your life?
Writer and me: What areas around you have problems with erosion and what can be done about it?

R.A.F.T.

This activity teaches divergent thinking, student choice, and complexity. The acronym RAFT stands for *role, audience, form, time*.

Raft assignments are fairly easy to put together. A RAFT list example is found on the next page. Create a list that fits the topic and needs of your students. Have students consider a variety of people associated with the content (roles), a variety of people for whom the students are to communicate in those roles (audience), multiple ways in which to communicate the content (form), and a variety of settings or a specific period (time). If you don't want to add the complexity of a setting or time period, then the "T" can be the topic about which students are to speak or write. Students will take on a role and will communicate a given topic to a specific audience using a specific format.

Basic Sequence

Students can choose one factor from each column and can incorporate those factors into their summarization. An example of an assignment might be a candidate for the Green Party (role) who must try to convince election board members (audience) to let her participate in a formal debate with the Democratic and Republican Party candidates. The student writes a speech (form) to give to the election board during the 2016 presidential campaign (time). To do this assignment, students will use arguments and information from past elections that had third-party candidates, as well as their knowledge of the election and debate process. Another student could be given a RAFT assignment to be a member of the election board who has just listened to the first student's speech.

After you have created lists for each column as a demonstration for your students, mix and match the lists, looking for combinations that suggest interesting and substantive interactions. If you as the teacher see any elements in any column that seem frivolous, consider removing them from the choices.

Note that the ideas in the example on the next page apply to general subjects, not a specific subject, and the selections of people, audiences and formats are random. If you are doing a specific unit, purposefully align the choices with subject-related people, audiences and formats.

Variations

Students get to choose how they express content, and this personal choice and opportunity to express creativity helps to generate ownership of the task. On RAFT activities, motivation is usually pretty high. Be open to combinations that you don't see at first. As long as students demonstrate a good grasp of what's being summarized, unconventional approaches aren't a bad thing.

RAFT

Role	Audience	Format	Time (or Topic)
Scuba diver	PTA	Deck of cards	Industrial Revolution
Ballet dancer	Kindergarteners	Travel brochure	Modern day
Comic strip character	Coast Guard	journal entry	The Renaissance
Doctors	Parole board	Advice column	Pre-Civil War
Coach	Principal	Autobiography	Ancient Greece
Dot-com CEO	Young adolescents	Court testimony	2200
Soldier	Nursing home	Lyrics	1950
Sharecroppers	School board meeting	Field guide	1969
Mayor	Thomas Edison	Newscast	Potato famine
Mother of sick child	Zoo visitors	Fable	Late at night
Custodian	Radio listeners	Monologue	During a storm
Shoppers	Disenfranchised citizen	Posted flyers	Hot summer afternoon
Museum curator	Ancient Sumerians	Correspondence by e-mail	Cuban Missile Crisis
Judge	Journalists	Political cartoon	At Hogwarts School

Bloom's Taxonomy Summary Cubes

Teachers can use Bloom's taxonomy of higher order thinking in many ways to help students summarize and interact with what they've learned. One way is Bloom's taxonomy summary cubes, which provide creative, hands-on activities and promote substantive review and reflection. The cubes also meet the needs of those students who respond best to kinesthetic experiences.

Basic Sequence

Distribute poster board, rulers, glue or tape, and scissors, and ask your students to make cubes with each side at least five inches long. Have them record each level of Bloom's taxonomy on each of the six faces: *Recall* (knowledge), *Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis,* and *Evaluation.* They'll need to make the titles fairly small so they will have room to make notations (or draw pictures) on each face — interpretations of the topic, based on the particular taxonomy level.

While students are constructing their cubes, distribute or post a list of suggested ways to manifest each level of Bloom's taxonomy. Such explanations or definitions are fairly common and readily available on the Internet. Basic information is found on the next page.

Provide students with a list of sample prompts keyed to the content and ask them to choose a way to express what they've learned about a topic for each level.

Here's an example of how one student might create a summary cube based on the U.S. Bill of Rights:

1. *Recall* — Student records one of the first six Amendments from the Bill of Rights.
2. *Comprehension* — Student writes an explanation of why the Amendment he chose for Face 1 was so important to the authors of the Bill of Rights.
3. *Application*—Student draws a picture or creates a small collage of magazine pictures that depicts the Amendment being applied to everyday life.
4. *Analysis*—Student identifies a modern-day situation in which strict adherence to the Amendment would prove hurtful.
5. *Synthesis*—Student explains how another culture might feel toward such a right, and how legislators in that culture might change the Amendment's wording to better meet their culture's preferences and values.
6. *Evaluation*—Student indicates whether he believes this Amendment still serves us well today, and he is prepared to explain his thinking to the rest of the class.

Variation: Depending on your students, you may want to provide more or less specific prompts for each face. Advanced students might come up with their own prompts.

Bloom's Taxonomy Levels and Sample Prompts

Level	Explanation	Sample Prompts
Recall	Students cite content they remember	• What color was the dress? • What is the formula for . . .? • In what year did . . .? • What were the author's two arguments? • What are the four steps in the process?
Comprehension	Students demonstrate whether or not they understand a topic	• What is a clear example of each category .. .? • Can you explain how . . .? • Can you classify the items according to . . .? • Which word doesn't fit? • Why did . . .? • What's the difference between X and Y?
Application	Students use knowledge and skills in different situations.	• Predict what would happen if we changed . . • Create a proposal for . . . • Explain how a literary device changed the tone of the novel. • Offer solutions to a problem
Analysis	Students break down topics into component pieces and analyze them in the context of the whole	• Can you defend the character's decision to . .? • What is the function of . . .? • How did the theorist arrive at his theory? • Rank the arguments in order of importance. • Which comment seems the most sincere? • Identify the mistake in . . .
Synthesis	Students bring together seemingly contradictory aspects or topics to form something new	• Add a character to the scene and explain how it would change the outcome. • Write a song that teaches students about . . . • Create and present a public service announcement that convinces viewers to . . . • Create a cartoon that depicts . . . • Design a better system or process for . . .
Evaluation	Students use all the other levels to judge the validity, success, or value of something, given specific criteria	• Can you judge the value of . . .? • Which essay succeeds and why? • Did the group meet its goal? Explain why or why not. • Which process is most efficient and why? • Could this policy have worked 20 years ago? If so, why; if not, why not? • Which decision is unethical?