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(• indicates that a blank form is included in the appendix)



Introduction

Reading is focused by the domain of knowledge in which it is employed. To read well in any discipline is to think well in that discipline. Each discipline has a conceptual vocabulary. Each has a manner of statement. Each has structures through which it develops, applies, and appraises its ideas.

W. J. Iverson, "Trends in Reading:
Elementary and Secondary"

Iverson's statement was true in 1972, when it was written, and it is still true today. In order for learners to understand content, they have to be able to think critically and deeply about that content. They have to understand its language, structures, and implicit as well as explicit statements of information. They have to connect new learning to prior knowledge and be able to connect both across time, place, and unknown contexts. In an age where information is everywhere and easily accessible, the task for learners is in making sense of it all.

This flip chart has been written to help you help your students make sense of the information that is coming at them on a daily basis. In creating it, I have chosen some of my favorite instructional tools for assisting students as they discover, think about, and apply content information. I have been asked many times by those who use *Tools for Teaching Content Literacy* to share more of those tools. This, then, is an extension of that earlier flip chart. I have included some tools I created in response to students' needs and my instructional purposes as well as tools I have used since I started teaching in the early 1970s.

I was fortunate to begin my career at a time when many researchers and educators were exploring effective instructional strategies for helping students become interested in and competent to read a variety of content materials. My teaching mentors were these researchers and the books they wrote. I read their words; adapted their ideas; and, in the course of that exploration, found instructional strategies that supported *some* of my students, *some* of the time, with *some* of the things they were learning. If I had times when we were successful in meeting our goals, it was because I had many of these tools. Although it was a rare day that any one of them met the needs of all my students, on most days, these tools made a difference in my students' level of comprehension and their connection to the content we were exploring.

In Margaret Meek's book *Learning to Read*, she says, "No adolescent learns to read in a vacuum, with artificial reading matter and no purpose of his

own. He needs real books, real intentions and real help and he ought to have all of these" (1982, 210). *More Tools for Teaching Content Literacy* has been written to help students discover real reasons to read, inquire, write, and think about content. In addition, the tools will help them make these discoveries meaningful and memorable.

References

- Iverson, W. J. 1972. "Trends in Reading: Elementary and Secondary."
In *English and Reading in a Changing World*, ed. E. L. Everetts.
Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
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Content Pass

What Is a Content Pass?

A Book Pass is an activity I designed to give my students a chance to examine a variety of books before choosing one or more titles for independent reading (Allen 2000). My original Book Pass form had spaces for students to record the title, author, and a comment about each book sampled.

After using the Book Pass for this purpose for several years, I came up with a Content Pass so students could build background knowledge prior to beginning a study unit or reading a work of literature. The Content Pass differs from the Book Pass in purpose and design. It includes spaces for students to record the type of text, facts, and questions as well as the title and author.

Why Would I Use a Content Pass in My Classroom?

Content Passes are an engaging way for students to construct a knowledge base prior to beginning a new topic, unit of study, or major text. Many times I tried to do a K-W-L (Know-What- Learn) (Ogle 1986) with my students, but we experienced little success if my students had limited or no knowledge prior to our reading or study. By the end of a Content Pass activity, students have encountered a topic from a variety of text types and from a variety of points of view in a short period of time. They have gathered many facts, and from those facts arise the questions that guide their reading and inquiry.

How Would I Use a Content Pass in My Classroom?

1. As you plan your unit of study, look for a variety of resources related to the topic, question, or text. You will need enough different texts for each student to have one, or enough for students to work in small groups, with each group sharing a text.
2. Give students a blank Content Pass and explain the directions to them (see appendix).
3. Give each student one book, one article, or one other text.
4. Model for them how you would list the title, author, and type of text prior to skimming it.
5. After skimming the text, show them how you would note at least one fact and one question prompted by the text.
6. Give students two to five minutes per text and then say, "Book Pass." Each student or group passes the text on to the next person or group

and receives a new text from the person or group sitting on the other side. The process is then repeated.

7. After several passes, you call the class back together to create lists of facts and questions the students discovered.

The Content Pass can be used with any topic, unit, or question. If you are using a textbook, this activity will give you an opportunity to assess and develop background knowledge beforehand, which will increase their comprehension.

Research/Origins

Allen, J. 2000. *Yellow Brick Roads: Shared and Guided Paths to Independent Reading 4–12*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

References/Further Reading

Allen, J. 2003. *Tools for Teaching Content Literacy*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

Ogle, D. 1986. "K-W-L: A Teaching Model That Develops Active Reading of Expository Text." *The Reading Teacher* 39: 564–570.

Writing Alphabet Books

What Are Alphabet Books?

Alphabet books have been around for centuries. They have been used to preach to children as well as to teach and entertain them since the early 1500s. In early ABC books, children were taught the alphabet through cautionary tales (Huck et al. 1997). Today, many alphabet books are used as a format to present detailed, complex information to older readers.

Why Would I Use Alphabet Books in My Classroom?

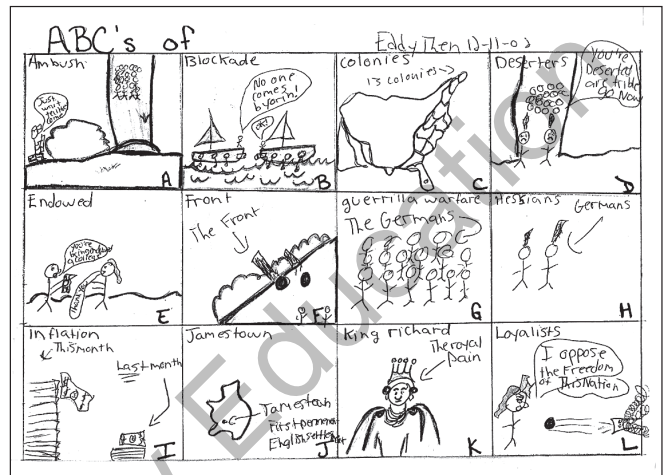
It takes only one reading of an alphabet book such as *G Is for Google* (Schwartz and Moss 1998) or *Q Is for Quark* (Schwartz and Doner 2001) to realize that alphabet books today are very different from alphabet books we may have read as children. Reading alphabet books written for older readers helps students build subject-matter background, and writing alphabet books can help students organize and synthesize their subject-matter knowledge. When students collaborate to write subject-matter alphabet books, they employ many complex thinking skills: They have to read carefully, find details, analyze, compare, visualize, question and determine importance, use content-specific language, and organize information. As you can see, there are many benefits in asking students to synthesize content knowledge by writing alphabet books.

How Would I Use Alphabet Books in My Classroom?

When my high school students worked on a cross-grade project reading to and writing with first graders, we read and analyzed many alphabet books as possible shared reading for our younger reading partners. In the process, we were all amazed at how much we learned about math, science, history, and literature (Allen 1995). When we finished the project, I realized that writing an alphabet book about their experiences “teaching” first graders would be a great assessment for the project. This led very naturally to my using this process to assess students throughout the year as a follow-up to reading major works of literature or studying time periods and events.

The example shown here is from a middle school student in Christine Landaker’s social studies class. This is a thumbnail alphabet book with many letters in a small, sequenced format. This page highlights a student’s knowledge of the Revolutionary War. These students have moved from written text that

was fairly dense (textbook, novel, biography, etc.) to a visual text that has minimal writing for support. They have used this format to demonstrate what they have learned about the topic. In this scenario, the alphabet book has been the bridge between information and understanding.



Following are directions for creating an alphabet book:

1. Students will need to read several examples of alphabet books because they may be unaware of the complexity of alphabet books written for older readers.
2. After reading the alphabet books, students construct a list of the characteristics of alphabet books: language, visuals, repetition, authors’ purposes, and content.
3. Students then work in groups to write and illustrate their own alphabet books to show what they have learned about a concept, unit of study, or work of literature.

Research/Origins

Huck, C. S., S. Hepler, J. Hickman, and B. Z. Kiefer. 1997. *Children’s Literature in the Elementary School*. 6th ed. Dubuque, IA: Brown and Benchmark.

References/Further Reading

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- Schwartz, D., and K. Doner. 2001. *Q Is for Quark: A Science Alphabet Book*. Berkeley, CA: Tricycle Press.
- Schwartz, D., and M. Moss. 1998. *G Is for Google: A Math Alphabet Book*. Berkeley, CA: Tricycle Press.



FLIP

What Is FLIP?

FLIP is an instructional tool offering a quick method for previewing text. The earliest systematic form of previewing text came from SQ3R (Robinson 1946). FLIP, adapted from that format, is an acronym for the steps used to preview a text prior to reading: *F* stands for *flip* through the text for an overview; *L* stands for *look* at the visuals to gain visual information; *I* stands for *information* that can be gained from text features; and *P* stands for *predict* in order to establish a personal purpose and plan for reading.

Why Would I Use FLIP with My Students?

The value of previewing text has a significant and historical research base (Good 1926; Spitzer 1939; Robinson and Hall 1941). Since SQ3R was created in 1946, many forms of previewing have arisen, with as many acronyms: PQ4R (Slavin 1994); CATAPULT (Zwiers 2004); THIEVES (Manz 2002). Regardless of the form or acronym, each previewing tool has the same purpose: to increase student comprehension of a text by building background knowledge about the topic, organization, style, and supports prior to actually reading the text. And although the importance of previewing has a long history, few students actually employ this practice on a regular basis. Most students either still try to read text word for word or don't bother to read it at all. FLIP quickly shows students how much more they can learn from a text by taking a few minutes to get ready to read.

How Does FLIP Work in the Classroom?

I began teaching my students how to preview texts when I realized that not one of them was reading textbook assignments. I had discovered SQ3R in a study skills book and adapted it for my students. I called it the Five-Finger Rule of Reading a Textbook. I asked students to draw their hands on a sheet of paper and label each finger for things they needed to do every time they were given a textbook assignment. On the thumb they wrote, "Read the title. Do I know anything about this topic?" For each of the other fingers, they wrote the following:

- "Take a picture walk and ask, 'What do these pictures have to do with the title?'"
- "List all the bold (or colored or italicized) words. What might these words have to do with the title?"
- "Write down all the headings and subheadings in order: 'This is my outline.'"
- "Read the first and last paragraph. The first should be an introduction and the last should be a summary."

It was amazing to see how quickly my students' grades improved once they started this simple practice.

FLIP	
F	Flip through the book or text to get a general sense of the topic, organization, and readability. Is the print too small? Are you interested in the topic? Do you know anything about the topic? Do you like this author's style of writing?
L	Look at all the visuals. What can you learn from them? How might they relate to the title?
I	Information can be found in many places. Find as much information as you can by flipping through the book and looking at titles, chapters, headings, table of contents, index, and highlighted words.
P	Predict what you will learn, how the story or information will be told, and any challenges you might have to overcome.

Based on the success of this method for reading textbooks, I designed FLIP as a way of previewing any text. I didn't want students thinking that the only time it was important to preview was when reading a textbook. I knew the process would have to be fast, and I wanted a term they would remember. Students have lots of definitions for the word *flip*, and I was hoping that at least one of them related to flipping through a book. The figure shown here has the directions I gave my students. These worked well for our purposes (for a blank FLIP form, see the appendix).

As with any organizer, FLIP should reflect your instructional purpose and your students' needs, so you may want to create your own version of this previewing activity. The more meaningful and memorable the acronym is for your students, the more likely they are to use the process for this critical step in reading.

Research/Origins

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References/Further Reading

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- Manz, S. L. 2002. "A Strategy for Previewing Textbooks: Teaching Readers to Become THIEVES." *The Reading Teacher* 55: 434-435.
- Slavin, R. 1994. *Educational Psychology: Theory and Practice*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Zwiers, J. 2004. *Building Reading Comprehension Habits in Grades 6-12: A Toolkit of Classroom Activities*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Writing Frames

What Are Writing Frames?

Writing Frames are structures or overviews that provide learners with the amount of scaffolding they need to complete effective pieces of writing. Some students need a frame that has a great deal of support: these contain more of the teacher's words, with short spaces for students to fill in to complete sentences and paragraphs. Other writers require only minimal support. Frames for these learners simply provide prompts or examples of steps, directions, or flow of writing. Your goal is for the flow of writing to become internalized by the writer so that a physical frame is no longer necessary.

Why Would I Use Writing Frames in My Classroom?

Much of the academic writing students are assigned has a specific format. Whether writing a persuasive essay or a dissertation, we have all experienced the frustration of getting our ideas down but not having expressed them in the right format. Writing Frames may be the only way some students will be able to complete a finished piece of writing that demonstrates an understanding of content and is written in the proper format. Most of us have seen simple frames for teaching students how to write letters or address envelopes. That concept can be expanded to support students who are engaged in more complex pieces of writing. Writing frames can anchor writers as they navigate the wide range of formal and informal modes of writing.

How Would I Use Writing Frames in the Classroom?

Writing Frames guide students to successfully complete any type of writing that calls for a particular structure and content. The first frame I ever used came out of my frustration with reading students' responses to their reading. I explained responses to reading, and I shared responses I wrote for my independent reading. Still, each week, I received many summaries and many one- or two-sentence highlights from their reading. In some cases, I could not even tell what they had read.

The Response Frame shown here is a copy of the first frame I created. I explained to my students that this wasn't

the *only* way to write a response to reading, but it was *one* way. Many of my students didn't even have one way, and this provided them with a beginning and a framework to complete a writing assignment. I then created two more frames; each time I wrote fewer words and left longer spaces for them

to write. By the time students had used all three of the frames, each of them could write an effective response to reading. Each time, we identified critical aspects of a response to reading so they could create their own and find their own writing voices.

When I discovered that a significant number of my students were failing their science classes because they refused to or couldn't write their weekly lab reports, I went to the science teacher and asked for three samples of "A" lab reports. I took

the reports and used the same process in order to provide my students with models for writing an effective lab report. I'm sure there are many ways to write lab reports, but the frame in the second figure was the one I chose for my students to complete the task of writing the required lab reports. This frame includes the common components of a lab report:

- introduction
- hypothesis analysis
- appendices
- statement of problem
- procedure
- conclusion
- purpose
- data
- references

As you can see, I made the frame more prescriptive at the beginning and less prescriptive as students wrote through the stages of the report. This was enough for many students to become more proficient because they soon realized that the reports for each lab shared both a common language and a common format. The science teacher was able to add adaptations to the frame once he recognized the levels of support students needed to complete the task.

Many kinds of writing have a specific format, content, language, and features, ranging from the highly specific structure of a term paper to the relatively loose structure of persuasive writing. It is even helpful for students to practice using frames to write constructed responses, such as those required by high-stakes assessments. The frames in the Lewis and Wray references (1996, Wray and Lewis 1998) are excellent tools for showing students the categories of a wide variety of content writing. Included in these two books are frames for many writing purposes across content areas such as frames for writing investigations in math, science, and technology. These resources may be a good beginning for you to create your own frames to match the writing protocols of your classroom, school, or district.

Research/Origins

Nichols, J. N. 1980. "Using Paragraph Frames to Help Remedial High School Students with Writing Assignments." *Journal of Reading* 24: 228-231.

References/Further Reading

- Lewis, M., and D. Wray. 1996. *Writing Frames*. Reading, UK: National Centre for Language and Literacy/The University of Reading.
- Wood, K. D., and J. M. Harmon. 2001. *Strategies for Integrating Reading and Writing in Middle and High School Classrooms*. Westerville, OH: National Middle School Association.
- Wray, D., and M. Lewis. 1998. *Writing Across the Curriculum: Frames to Support Learning*. Reading, UK: National Centre for Language and Literacy/The University of Reading.

Lab Report Frame

Introduction
Statement of Problem
 For many years, _____. Scientists have _____. By bringing this issue to the public, scientists have _____.
 In addition to the problem cited above, a more serious issue is _____. This has caused _____ and _____ leaving the area _____. Initially, this _____ but recent _____.
 Unfortunately, _____. According to statistics, _____. The results have _____. If something is not done soon, _____. This experiment is designed to _____ before _____.
Purpose
 The purpose of this experiment is _____.

Hypothesis

Procedure
 On _____ (date), _____ (what I did). I then _____ (details of what you did). This procedure was designed to _____ (why you did this).
 Periodically, _____. At the end of _____, After further observation, I noted _____. Those results are shown in _____ (see Figure 1).
 On _____ (date), the researchers noted _____. After several more days, _____. Finally, we recorded _____.
Data Analysis
Conclusion
References
Appendices

Response Frame

I chose to read _____ (title of book), which was written by _____ (author) because _____. When I first started reading this book, I thought _____, but after reading further, I discovered _____. The story takes place _____ (setting) where the characters _____ (action).
 The main problem occurs when _____. After that, I discovered _____. The problem is finally resolved when _____.
 I can sum up my feelings about this book with one word: _____ because _____. If you like a book that _____, then this is the book for you.