

Introduction

To be literate in content classrooms, students must learn how to use language processes to explore and construct meaning with texts. When students put language to work for them in content classrooms, it helps them to discover, organize, retrieve, and elaborate on what they are learning.

Richard T. Vacca, “Taking the Mystery Out of Content-Area Literacy”

Meeting the challenges of content literacy can be an almost overwhelming task for students and teachers. What is it that makes content reading and writing so difficult for so many students? Many professional texts have been written to analyze these difficulties. As I see it, and for the purposes of this flipchart, content reading and writing require

- knowledge of specialized vocabulary;
- a wide range of background knowledge;
- the use of study and memory techniques;
- strategies for reading expository, rather than narrative, texts;
- diverse levels of readability in a single text or chapter of a text;
- a high level of monitoring for understanding;
- the ability to hold multiple concepts in memory while judging for importance;
- knowledge of sources and the reliability of those sources; and
- the ability to overcome lack of interest in reading and writing to learn.

You have probably encountered difficulties in most, or all, of these areas as you try to engage your students and address your state and national content standards. Fortunately, there is an extensive body of research supporting the effectiveness of instruction in comprehension strategies (Fielding and Pearson 1994). This flipchart is designed to highlight effective instructional strategies that will help your students overcome the challenges they face in content reading and writing. It describes the instructional strategy, discusses when and why you might use that strategy, and illustrates the strategy in practice in content classrooms. Each strategy credits the originator of the strategy and the research related to its use. All the strategies can be used in any order at various points in your lessons, but I have organized them into three broad areas of purpose: assessing and building content knowledge; supporting and monitoring comprehension; and evaluating, extending, and transferring content knowledge. The strategies can be used in any order, depending on student needs and instructional pur-

poses. Kept in your plan book, the chart provides a ready reference as you create instructional lessons that engage and challenge your students as readers, writers, thinkers, and learners.

References/Further Reading

- Fielding, L. G., and P. D. Pearson. 1994. “Synthesis of Research: Reading Comprehension: What Works.” *Educational Leadership* 51 (5): 62–67.
- Vacca, R. T. 2000. “Taking the Mystery Out of Content-Area Literacy.” In M. McLaughlin and M. Vogt, eds., *Creativity and Innovation in Content-Area Teaching*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.



K-W-L, K-W-L Plus, B-K-W-L-Q

What Is a K-W-L?

A K-W-L (Ogle 1986) is an instructional tool for helping readers engage in active thinking and reading by articulating what they already know about a topic (K), deciding on what they hope to learn from their reading and inquiry (W), and highlighting or summarizing what they learned (L) after their reading.

When and Why Would I Use a K-W-L in My Classroom?

Using the instructional strategy of a K-W-L provides many benefits for you and your students. As students generate what they already know (K) about the topic, they activate their own background knowledge as well as build background for their peers. In this process, you are able to assess what you need to teach or help students learn about the concept to be studied. From their background knowledge, students develop lists of questions about the topic for which they would like to find answers as they read and research (W).

When the reading and research is completed, students can revisit their questions to see which have been answered and what they have learned (L) in their reading. Students can then map the collective body of information in their K-W-L to synthesize what they have learned about this topic (K-W-L Plus).

In the Classroom

When using the K-W-L with my students, I found that I needed to add two categories: B for building background knowledge and Q for new questions after our initial reading and prior to further reading and research. For example, when my students and I were exploring the Hindenburg together, we used the graphic organizer B-K-W-L-Q (see Appendix). In the first column students described or drew something about the Hindenburg as I read a selection from Harrison Powers's book, *Buried Alive!*, titled "The Last Moments of the Hindenburg."

We then used the K-W-L part of our graphic as we would have after using this background to lead us into reading about the Hindenburg from a picture book on the Hindenburg. When our knowledge base was summarized (K), questions posed (W) and answered (L), we then added a list of new questions we had after the additional reading. For example, the picture book implied that the Hindenburg event remains a mystery that might have been an act of

terrorism. This inspired questions that pushed students into more reading and inquiry.

Research/Origins

Carr, E., and D. Ogle. 1987. "K-W-L Plus: A Strategy for Comprehension and Summarization." *Journal of Reading* 30: 626-631.

Ogle, D. 1986. "K-W-L: A Teaching Model That Develops Active Reading of Expository Text." *Reading Teacher* 39: 563-570.

References/Further Reading

Blachowicz, C., and D. Ogle. 2001. *Reading Comprehension: Strategies for Independent Learners*. New York: Guilford Press.

Powers, H. 1983. "The Last Moments of the Hindenburg." In *Buried Alive!* Mahwah, NJ: Watermill Press.

Reciprocal Teaching

What Is Reciprocal Teaching?

Reciprocal Teaching (Palinscar and Brown 1986) is an instructional strategy that helps students focus and monitor their reading in order to achieve higher comprehension. Students watch teacher demonstrations and then have the opportunity to develop skills during guided practice in four areas: predict, question, clarify, and summarize.

Why Would I Use This Instructional Strategy?

Reciprocal Teaching gives students who have difficulty reading their textbooks or other challenging texts a concrete way to make sense of the text. As students take on the roles in Reciprocal Teaching, they predict content, question and clarify their understandings of that content, and summarize what they have learned. As readers become more adept at Reciprocal Teaching, they begin to acquire the ability to anticipate the teacher's questions and demonstrate a deeper understanding of their reading.

How Does It Work?

1. Choose a short passage from an expository text to use for demonstration and modeling.
2. Demonstrate one strategy at a time as you read this text: predict what you believe will occur next; generate questions you have about the text or that you believe someone might ask you about this reading; stop and attempt to clarify words or sections in the text by talking through your confusions; and summarize what you believe are the most important ideas the author would want you to take away from reading this.
3. After the demonstration, assign each student a reading partner and provide them with another text sample, or a continuation of the text you read. Have students read the text and then work together through each of the stages of reciprocal teaching. For example, one student asks questions of the other student. These questions should be real questions that occurred during the reading and not questions designed to challenge the reader. Partners then reverse roles and the other partner takes on the role of questioner. Each of the readers in the partnership can predict and clarify at critical points. During the reading, partners can stop at important points and summarize what they have read up to that point.

4. You can debrief the effectiveness of this strategy by charting students' predictions, questions, clarifications, and summaries as a way to look at how readers overcome challenges in difficult reading.

Research/Origins

Palinscar, A. S., and A. Brown. 1986. "Interactive Teaching to Promote Independent Learning from Text." *Reading Teacher* 39 (8): 771-777.

References/Further Reading

Palinscar, A. S., and A. L. Brown. 1984. "Reciprocal Teaching of Comprehension-Fostering and Comprehension-Monitoring Activities." *Cognition and Instruction* 1: 117-175.



Text Highlighting

What Is Text Highlighting?

Text Highlighting (Chambers 1996) is an instructional approach that moves teachers and students away from dependence on teacher-directed talk and questioning and toward student-generated talk and questioning. This approach works with any type of narrative or informational text. After students have read the text, they highlight the text by noting their likes, dislikes, puzzles (things they wonder about), and patterns they discovered. Individual student highlights are combined for a class Text Highlighting, which then focuses the class discussion.

Why Should We Use Text Highlighting in Our Content Classes?

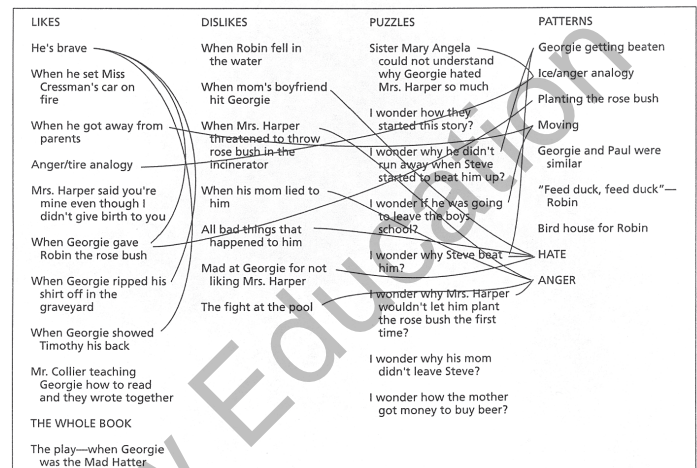
Text Highlighting provides a structure for helping students learn to depend on their individual and collective active reading strategies as a way to comprehend text. Whether used in conjunction with students' textbooks or with supplemental reading such as journals, letters, novels, poetry, or feature articles, this approach requires that readers think deeply about the text by visualizing, predicting, questioning, connecting, inferring, and analyzing for patterns. In the process of using these active comprehension strategies, students retain more content information because the text becomes more meaningful and more relevant.

In the Classroom

In Kyle Gonzalez's classroom, students completed their shared reading of Irene Hunt's *The Lottery Rose* at the beginning of class on the last day of school. Typically, this is not a time of outstanding student achievement, but Kyle had decided to focus their discussion of the text using the Text Highlighting approach. After the reading was completed, she asked each of the students to devote some thought and quiet writing time to filling out the Text Highlighting form she gave them (see Appendix). She asked them to complete only the first three columns: likes, dislikes, and puzzles.

When students completed their individual forms, they worked collaboratively to compile their responses in a class Text Highlighting. The discussion that came out of this collaboration as students discovered patterns in their likes, dislikes, and puzzles led them to identify the thing they wanted most to talk about in this book: how anger can hurt people (see Figure).

While Kyle offered students a form to record their thoughts and guidance as they searched for patterns, students generated and led the entire discussion, which lasted for over an hour on this final day of school—and students were still talking animatedly as they left school for the summer.



Research/Origins

Chambers, A. 1996. *Tell Me: Children, Reading, and Talk*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

References/Further Reading

- Allen, J., and K. Gonzalez. 1998. *There's Room for Me Here: Literacy Workshop in the Middle School*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Hunt, I. 1970. *The Lottery Rose*. New York: Tempo Books.



Inquiry and Research: I-Charts

What Are I-Charts?

An I-Chart (Hoffman 1992) is an inquiry chart that can be used to support content-area inquiry and research. The I-Chart uses students' knowledge of a subject (see K-W-L) in order to pose questions for research. As students read about the research topic from a variety of sources, they are able to contribute answers to the questions they have posed (see Appendix for I-Chart form). Students can then summarize what they know about their question at the bottom of each column. Since the original question is based on what students already know about the topic, as they read, they will discover new questions that will lead them to more reading and research.

Why Would I Use I-Charts in My Classroom?

Most districts require that students form questions and conduct research. We often get caught up in the protocols that go with writing the research and spend little time helping students figure out a question they really want to answer—the kind of question that actually drives us to do research in our adult lives. The I-Chart can guide students through the inquiry process, which could result in oral reports, written research, or demonstrations and performances.

In the Classroom

I adapted the model slightly for my students, in order to model for them how to do research. When we used the I-Chart to help in our collaborative writing of the research, students were able to see how this organization could serve them as they worked on their own inquiry projects. We covered an entire chalkboard for our I-Chart, but chart paper is more effective because the work can be saved for later reference.

I chose a topic for which I knew my high school students had some background for our collaborative I-Chart: alcohol abuse. Students then brainstormed an umbrella question that would guide our research. For this topic, the question they agreed on was “Why shouldn’t people be able to drink as much as they want?”

Based on students' knowledge of alcohol abuse, the four questions that came out of our umbrella question were (1) Who does alcohol abuse hurt? (2) What is alcohol abuse and how is that different from just having a drink? (3) What are the symptoms of alcohol abuse? (4) What should I do if I know someone is abusing alcohol? We entered

those questions in place of the question marks at the top of each column.

We then gathered sources that would help us find answers to our questions. We decided to use the novel we were currently reading, *My Name Is Davy and I'm an Alcoholic*, as one of our sources. Our other sources included pamphlets from AA, a guest speaker from AA, and information from students' health books and encyclopedias. As we read each of these sources, students worked in groups to add information from each source in the appropriate question column. During the reading, we also wrote down related words, which formed a word bank for us as we moved into the writing stage.

When we finished the reading we did together, students summarized information in each of the columns. These summaries allowed us to see which questions still needed more explanation, and we wrote any new questions the reading had prompted. At this point, we were able to write a collaborative research paper, using a form of the umbrella question as our title, the student-generated questions as headings, the information gathered and our word bank as support in the body of the paper, and our summaries as introduction and closing for the research. Students then used this model as a guide for the independent research projects they would do.

Research/Origins

Hoffman, J. 1992. “Critical Reading/Thinking Across the Curriculum: Using I-Charts to Support Learning.” *Language Arts* 69: 121–127.

References/Further Reading

Romano, T. 2000. *Blending Genre, Altering Style: Writing Multigenre Papers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann-Boynton/Cook.

Snyder, A. 1977. *My Name Is Davy and I'm an Alcoholic*. New York: Signet Vista.