

Strategies for Increasing Comprehension and Critical Thinking

The purpose of education is to support student growth — yet, traditional classroom environments rely on whole-class instruction. When attempting to teach the entire class a comprehension skill, a small number of students might attain proficiency, but the rest of the class is not being supported. Some students have already progressed beyond the skill, and are therefore bored. Other students may not yet have the prerequisite knowledge to master the skill, and could be left anxious or frustrated after whole-class instruction. Progress — particularly as a reader and critical thinker — is an individual phenomenon; thus, learning experiences must be tailored to individual learners.

There are many ways for a teacher to expose students to comprehension and critical thinking skills without being at the front of the classroom. In fact, as you move to facilitate learning in your classroom, you will find it imperative to develop resources for your students so that they feel supported even when you are not working with them directly.

All teachers have a bag of tricks from which to pull ideas to meet the needs of different learners. This resource is a collection of graphic organizers that you can add to your comprehension and critical thinking repertoire. Give these graphic organizers to students to support them in making connections, questioning, predicting, and making inferences about the text.

The last page of the document is a teacher tool meant to push students to higher levels of metacognition when reading.

Comprehension Constructor: Using Connections

Directions: Good readers make connections to the text they are reading. After reading, look back at the list of connections you made. Then, use those connections to help you better understand the text.

Text: _____

<p>Use your connection to make a statement about the text.</p> <p>Connection:</p> <p>So what?</p> <p>Statement about the text:</p>	<p>Use your connection to ask a question about the text.</p> <p>Connection:</p> <p>So what?</p> <p>Question about the text:</p>
<p>Use your connection to visualize a portion of the text.</p> <p>Connection:</p> <p>So what?</p> <p>Visual image:</p>	<p>Use your connection to relate to a character in the text.</p> <p>Connection:</p> <p>So what?</p> <p>What I understand better about _____:</p>

*Based on Harvey and Goudvis, *Strategies That Work*, 2007

Comprehension Constructor: Asking Strong Questions

Directions: While reading a text, annotate it with questions along the margins or on sticky notes. When you finish reading the text, choose 4 to 5 questions that you like best and place the questions in the organizer below.

Text: _____

Question I asked that I can answer after reading the article:	Question my teacher could answer if I asked:	Question I can answer myself by inferring:
Question:	Question:	Question:
Answer:	Answer:	Answer:

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Question:	Question:	Question:
Answer:	Answer:	Answer:

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FQR
Facts, Questions, Responses

<p style="text-align: center;">F Facts</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Jot down interesting or useful factual information you find as you read.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Q Questions</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Make a list of questions that you think of as you read.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">R Responses</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>After reading, look back at the facts and questions you recorded. Can you make a connection to the facts and why they were important? Can you answer the questions?</i></p>

*Based on Harvey and Goudvis, *Strategies That Work*, 2007

I wonder . . . I think . . .

Good readers make inferences as they read. They gather ideas to develop conclusions and help them understand. As you read, keep WONDERING and THINKING, recording your thoughts below.

I wonder . . . (Questions)	I think . . . (Inferences)

*Based on Harvey and Goudvis, *Strategies That Work*, 2007

Facilitation Questions

(Teacher Tool)

In the *Learner-Active, Technology-Infused Classroom*, we utilize [Five Levels of Facilitation Questions](#). These five levels fall into the categories of comprehension, application, connection, synthesis, and metacognition.

Metacognitive questions push students to think about their own thinking process. Use the sample facilitation questions below as you confer with your readers to help them move toward higher levels of metacognitive awareness. There is space provided for you to add your own questions as well.

Questions for Metacognition

Type of Reader	Possible Facilitation Questions
Tacit Reader: <i>Lacks awareness of how they think when they read</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Did you preview the text?▪ What do you already know about this topic?▪ What were you thinking when you read that part of the story?
Aware Reader: <i>May realize when meaning has broken down, but lacks strategies to fix the problem</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ When/where did the reading start to get confusing?▪ What words are familiar to you?▪ What connections can you make?▪ Did you try stopping and chunking the text?
Strategic Reader: <i>Uses a variety of strategies to enhance understanding and monitor/repair meaning</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ What strategy might be helpful here?▪ Which strategy was most helpful to you: using sticky notes or a double-entry journal? Why?
Reflective Reader: <i>Can apply strategies flexibly depending on their reading goals</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Knowing your goals, which strategy or strategies would be more useful in this case?▪ Which strategy did you choose to help you understand? What did it help you accomplish?