Cognitive Strategies for Readers:
Reading for Understanding

Summary

This unit introduces students to the use of a variety of cognitive strategies and tools that good readers use while reading to better understand texts. Through the explicit instruction in these methods -- ranging from summarizing and getting the gist to monitoring for understanding and evaluating a text's merits -- and exposure to a variety of texts, both fiction and non-fiction, students will have the opportunity both to observe the implementation of cognitive strategies (through modelled read-alouds) and to practice their skills in small group settings. Students will develop their own cognitive strategy toolboxes as a concrete take-away.

The unit is divided into three primary sections: pre-reading, during reading, and post-reading. As a class, we will read through a short story or short text together, with read-aloud/think-aloud cognitive markers articulated. Students will then have the chance to read texts in small groups and practice using the cognitive strategies modelled in the read-aloud. At the end of the unit, students will complete an in-class annotation (a piece selected by the teacher)and a self-selected annotation, both of which will demonstrate the successful use of the cognitive strategies discussed and practiced throughout the unit. They will compile their work into a short portfolio demonstrating the knowledge and skills gained over the unit.

Objectives

At the end of the unit, students should be able to
- name the purpose of the following cognitive strategies: *tapping prior knowledge*, *asking questions*, *predicting*, *summarizing*, *forming interpretations*, *monitoring*, *clarifying*, *revising meaning*, *analyzing author's craft*, *reflecting*, and *evaluating*
- confidently use cognitive strategies from their mental toolkit in the appropriate spot
- use cognitive strategies to monitor understanding and adjust reading strategies accordingly
- use cognitive strategies to deepen understanding
- analyze texts for meaning and craft
- evaluate texts for merit, whether personally (reflective and connective) or more objectively (importance, style)

Outcomes

Speaking & Listening

GCO 1: use oral language to learn

    1.2 ask questions for clarification, elaboration, to qualify, or to question relevance, accuracy, and validity

    1.3 thoughtfully answer questions asked by others in order to clarify or give more

information

1.4 state point of view in a convincing way and support it with personal examples as well as multiple pieces of evidence from outside sources

1.5 listen to others closely and identify the key points of their messages; evaluate the relevance of the common details

GCO 2: communicate using clear oral communication

2.1 contribute to small-group and whole-class discussions using a variety of strategies for effective talk

2.2 use appropriate vocabulary, sentence structure, speed of talking, and tone for different audiences and purposes

2.4 respond appropriately to instructions, directions, and questions

2.5 evaluate the effectiveness of their own and others' talk based on the context and message

GCO 3: interact with sensitivity and respect

3.1 demonstrate active listening (eye contact, rephrasing, clarifying, extending, refining, and summarizing)

3.2 show respect and sensitivity toward others and their differences when giving personal opinions

Reading & Viewing

GCO 4: read widely and with understanding

4.1 select texts that meet needs and interests

4.2 read a variety of texts including fiction and literature, non-fiction, and media texts from different provinces and countries

4.3 explain how authors use text features to create meaning

4.4 use text features to construct meaning and understand the text

4.5 read complex text with fluency, confidence, and comprehension as a result of their understanding and use of cueing systems

4.6 independently use a range of reading strategies (predicting, connecting, questioning, inferring)

to make meaning from complex print and media texts

GCO 6: respond personally

6.1 give and elaborate on initial response, orally or in writing, to what is read or viewed

6.2 support personal response to the issues, themes, and situations within texts by giving personal examples and citing evidence from the text

GCO 7: read critically

7.2 question and think critically about the relevance and reliability of the content

presented

7.3 recognize the tools authors use in their writing to achieve different purposes (organization of information, language choice, use of time, imagery)

7.4 analyze and discuss the impact that text form, content, and structure have on meaning

7.5 understand that values and personal experiences influence understanding and critical response

Writing & Representing

GCO 8: use many kinds of writing to think and learn

8.1 demonstrate a number of writing and representing strategies as language learners

8.2 write to extend, to explore, and to reflect

8.3 reflect on the writing strategies that help them learn and describe their personal growth as language learners

8.4 use various forms of note-making for different purposes and situations

Timeframe

6 - 7 weeks (22-24 hours)

Outline

After the introductory class, each week will follow this model:

1) Monday: Introduction of Cognitive Strategies, Modelled Read-Aloud, Whole Group Discussion

2) Tuesday: Small Group Work -- Reading, Annotating, and Discussing a Provided Text (supported reading)

3) Friday: Silent Reading, Individual Practice/Toolbox, Conversation Journal

Assessment

1. Informal and Ongoing: Monitoring discussion and collecting in-class tasks for feedback

2. Mental Toolkit Portfolio:

● Self-Selected Annotation
● Toolbox Representation
● Self-Assessment
● Conversation Journal
● All In-Class Individual Tasks

3. Class-Wide Annotation

4. Effort & Participation Assessment

Texts

Andersson, Lesley. "Chasing Ghosts: The Weird Science of Tracking the Dead." *The Verge*. 31 October 2012. Web.

Akiwenzie-Damm, Kateri. "The Stone Eater." *Modern Morsels: Selections of Canadian Poetry and Short Fiction*. Eds. Dr. Janet E. McIntosh, Sue Schleppe, and Alex White. Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 2012. 56-61. Print.

Bishop, Elizabeth. "The Fish." Poets.org. Web.

Black, Holly. "The Dog King." *The Poison Eaters: And Other Stories*. Easthampton, MA: Bighouse, 2010. Print.

Elliot, Andrea. "Invisible Child: Girl in the Shadows." *The New York Times*. 9 December 2013. Web.

Keefe, Patrick Radden. "The Snakehead." *The New Yorker*. 24 April 2006.

Keilholz, Doertha. "Cities' Tough Stance on Graffiti Threatens Creativity." *Truth Perceived: Perspectives Through Canadian Nonfiction*. Eds. Dr. Geraldine Balzer, Katherine Kristalovich, & Ann Varty. Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 2012. Print.

Kenyon, Jane. "The Blue Bowl." At *Poetry 180* (number 4). Web.

Kuperberg, Ethan. "What Happens When You Deactivate Your Facebook Account." *The New Yorker*. 20 June 2013. Web.

Macguire, Gregory. "How Th'Irth Wint Rong." *After: Nineteen Stories of Apocalypse and Dystopia*. Eds. Ellen Datlow & Terri Windling. New York: Hyperion, 2012. Print.

Madrigal, Alexia. "Almost Human: The Surreal, Cyborg Future of Telemarketing." *The Atlantic*. 20 December 2013. Web.

Mali, Taylor. "Totally like whatever, you know?" Taylor Mali. Web.

McMullan, Erin. "Wolf and the Bear." *Truth Perceived: Perspectives Through Canadian Nonfiction*. Eds. Dr. Geraldine Balzer, Katherine Kristalovich, & Ann Varty. Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 2012. Print.

Nye, Naomi Shihab. "The Art of Disappearing." Undertow Magazine. Web.

Poe, Edgar Allan. "The Cask of Amontillado." *XRoads Virginia*. Web.

Rabinowitz, Abby. "The Elf Diaries." *Guernica*. 19 December 2013. Web.

Rees Brennan, Sarah. "Fair Heart." *After: Nineteen Stories of Apocalypse and Dystopia*. Eds. Ellen Datlow & Terri Windling. New York: Hyperion, 2012. Print.

Remlinger, Paula Jane. "Love, Pathos, and Electronics." *Modern Morsels: Selections of Canadian Poetry and Short Fiction*. Eds. Dr. Janet E. McIntosh, Sue Schleppe, and Alex White. Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 2012. .

Schine, Cathleen. "Dog Trouble." *The New Yorker*. 5 January 2004. Web.

Sheehan, Julie. "Hate Poem." At Poetry 180. Web.

Simone, Alina. "Over the Verranzo, Into the Shadows." *The New Yorker*. 27 July 2011. Web.

Stelloh, Tim. "Behold! The Heartbreaking, Hair-Raising Tale Of Freak Show Star Julia Pastrana, Mexico's Monkey Woman." *BuzzFeed*. 12 December 2013. Web.

Swinn, Nathan. "Lunch is On Me." *Truth Perceived: Perspectives Through Canadian Nonfiction*. Eds. Dr. Geraldine Balzer, Katherine Kristalovich, & Ann Varty. Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 2012. Print.