



Purpose:

As experienced readers, we automatically question as we read, but inexperienced readers need to have this habit reinforced or even taught entirely. The strategy presented in this lesson is designed to help students develop and refine the questioning process that all good readers engage in when they read a non-fiction text. By questioning a text before, during, and after reading it, they are able to comprehend it more fully and develop their ability to read critically. Teaching them to use annotation to ask those questions, helps make the process visible and automatic for them as they become more sophisticated readers. The strategy is presented in a very basic form here, with suggestions for adaptations based on the ability and experience level of the class.

Description of Activity:

This lesson is designed for use with freshmen in a 2 or 3 level curriculum reading any expository, non-fiction text (essays, magazine or newspaper articles, lab reports, journals, speeches, etc.) Adaptations to the strategy follow that can be used with more sophisticated or less sophisticated readers and as students build more confidence with this reading strategy.

Specific Goals:

1. Teach students the kinds of questions to ask before, during, and after reading an expository text and how to use annotation to ask those questions.
2. Give them practice at the process by reading a short essay in small groups in class.

Procedure:

1. Arrange students in groups of two or three. Present them with the short expository text to be used in class. It should be something that can be completed in the scope of this lesson.
2. Ask students to PREVIEW the text by doing some or all of the following:
 - Reading the title
 - Reading the information given about the author
 - Identify the source and date of publication
 - Read any boldface elements, sidebars, pullouts, or illustrations
3. PREDICT (*What's the author going to say?*)
Students should make annotations in left margin that make some predictions and ask questions based on their previewing. Students might address some of the following...
 - What does the title make me expect about the subject of the text?
 - What will be the author's point of view on the subject?
 - How will this relate to what I already know?
 - What does _____ mean?
4. Share annotations with the class and model process on overhead or projector.
5. READ (*What's the author saying?*)
Students should read the essay making annotations in right hand margin and underlining. They should be looking solely for two things:
 - What claims is the author making?
 - What evidence is offered to support those claims?
6. Share annotations with the class and model process on overhead or projector.
7. EVALUATE (*Is what the author says true or false?*)

Students should make annotations at the end of the essay, briefly addressing their thoughts now that they have heard the author's claims and evidence:

- Am I convinced by the author's argument?
 - How did the text compare to my expectations of it?
 - Is the evidence presented persuasive?
 - What counter arguments can I see to the author's argument?
 - Is there important evidence that the author is leaving out?
 - What questions would I want to ask the author if she were sitting in class with us?
8. Share annotations with the class and model process on overhead or projector.

Homework Assignment:

Assign a text of similar length and difficulty level to be read independently at home following same procedure.

Checking for Understanding:

Monitor progress as students work. Use modeling process on overhead to monitor and refine use of the strategy.

Reflection:

When students enter class the next day, ask them to spend five minutes addressing the following on the back of their homework:

1. What do I like about this annotation process?
2. What do I feel unsure about in this annotation process?

Discuss students' answers to these questions and review the homework to reinforce the process.

Adaptation for Different Levels:

This activity can be varied to help struggling readers and to challenge sophisticated readers:

- **Struggling Readers:**
 - Present this first lesson by modeling the entire process on the overhead. Just have them listen to the teacher go through the process and copy her annotations on their own copy of the text. A second text can then be attempted on which they are allowed to attempt the process a bit more independently.
 - Frame the process as three simple questions that they are looking to answer:
 - What's the author going to say?
 - What's the author saying?
 - What do I think about it?
 - Create a chart that provides more space to write down their annotations. Three columns could be for "predictions", "claims", and "evidence" with a box at the bottom for recording their concluding evaluations of the author's argument.

- Sophisticated Readers:
 - Fishbowl Discussion: Ask a small number of students to sit in a circle in the middle of the room. Give them five to ten minutes to discuss the article. During this time they are only allowed to ask questions and not allowed to answer them. Students on the outside of circle listen and add to their own annotations. This could be done at the Predicting stage or at the Evaluation stage.
 - Interview the Author: Have one student pose as the author and allow other students to question her. The “author” would have to address their questions based on the text that she “wrote” and explain the evidence that she gave to support her claims.