Reading to Enrich Comprehension:
A Strategy for Enriching Understanding and
Encouraging Personal Response

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Introduction
This strategy was developed with the help of one of my students, who was having a difficult time passing the quizzes that I gave based on daily reading assignments. I interviewed the student to determine the source of his difficulty and how I could help him.

He explained that he read the assignments each night, but his difficulty was "Getting ideas from my head to the (quiz) paper." Further discussion disclosed that he used a system of reading the assignment, then thinking of questions to ask himself about the reading. When I asked if he wrote these questions down on paper, he answered "No, I keep them in my head." I then suggested that writing these questions down on paper would help him remember what was important in the reading. With this thought in mind, the student and I developed a single page "Reading Comprehension" Thinksheet, which could help him understand what he read.

Step 1: Identifying the Strategy
The goals of this strategy are to enrich the students' reading comprehension, reinforce understanding of several literary terms, and encourage students to personally respond to the literature they are reading.
Step 2: Model the Strategy

Familiarize the students with the “Reading Comprehension” Thinksheet by handing out a copy for them to use. Discuss the literary terms and how the students can respond on the sheet or on a separate piece of paper. After verifying that everyone knows how to use the “Reading Comprehension” sheet, have the students read a short piece of literature utilizing this tool. When the students have completed the short reading and the sheet, discuss and reinforce.

Step 3: Scaffolding the Strategy

Break students into small groups of three or four and assign them to quietly read a piece of literature in class using the “Reading Comprehension” sheet to take individual notes. When the reading is completed, instruct the students to discuss their respective notes with the other members of their group. After allowing students time to discuss the ten parts of the sheet, ask a selected team leader from each group to present the major points of their discussion to the entire class. Assure that all students are ready to work independently.

Step 4: Providing Additional Practice

Continue to assign the “Reading Comprehension” sheet in conjunction with all pertinent reading assignments. Stress the importance of this sheet by using it as the basis for discussion of the literature being read.

Conclusion

This strategy is appropriate for all grade levels, with necessary revisions, that will help students think about and comprehend what they are reading. This can be a useful tool for high school students who are preparing for Session Two, Part A of the ELA exam, which emphasizes reading comprehension and use of literary devices.

Suggestions for Adapting the Strategy in other Grades or Content Areas

There is allowance for flexibility on this “Reading Comprehension” Thinksheet, since the current literary terms could be substituted for other terms more appropriate for the literature being studied. It could also be revised to accommodate science or social studies terms.
Thinksheet

READING COMPREHENSION NOTES

Title: ____________________________

1. Characters –

2. Setting –

3. Plot –

4. Mood –

5. Point of view –

6. Theme –

7. Conflict –

8. Most important scene in the chapter –

9. How did you feel after reading the chapter?

10. Other notes not covered above –