

CHOOSING TEXTS FOR COMPREHENSION STRATEGY INSTRUCTION

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| Purpose | Trainers, coaches, and lead teachers are encouraged to use this tool to provide in-service training on teaching comprehension strategies. This tool will help content area and English teachers consider dimensions of text when selecting reading for introducing comprehension strategies and for classroom practice of comprehension strategies. |
| Materials | None |
| Media | None |
| Topic | Adolescent Literacy |
| Practice | Comprehension Strategies |

Choosing Texts for Comprehension Strategy Instruction

Teacher Trainers might use this checklist to help teachers choose text for use in *introducing* new comprehension strategies to their students

1. If a teacher wants to teach finding the **main idea**:
 - select an *expository* text, not a narrative one
 - select an expository text that has a clear identifiable main idea and not a text in which the main idea is implicit
 - the text needs to be easy to read and on a topic that is familiar
 - there should be helpful verbal cues in the text that could assist the reader, words like "in summary," "the most important point is," etc.
 - move to longer, more difficult texts over time.
2. If a teacher wants to teach students to **summarize**:
 - whether using a narrative or expository text, begin with a text that is easy and on a familiar topic.
 - a. if using an expository text:
 - begin with a paragraph or two, not a long text
 - use texts that have clear main ideas and topic sentences
 - use texts that are transparent, make sense and stay on topic
 - b. if using a narrative text:
 - the summary can follow a story map problem/resolution structure
 - do not begin with a book or novel, start with something simpler like a short story
 - move to longer, more difficult texts over time.
3. If a teacher wants to teach students to **ask questions**:
 - begin with an instructional level text, not too easy and not too hard
 - begin with a text on a topic that is unfamiliar to students
 - for narrative texts, begin with short stories
 - for expository texts, begin with newspaper articles or short pieces from adolescent magazines
 - move to longer, more difficult texts over time.

Teacher trainers might use these forms to have teachers compare texts for *practicing* comprehension strategies in the classroom

Choosing Expository Text for Strategy Instruction

| Some features of text to consider: | Text 1 | Text 2 | Text 3 |
|--|--------|--------|--------|
| <p>Reading level</p> <p>Appropriate for students' level?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> not too easy or too challenging not too many new concepts average sentence lengths are appropriate | | | |
| <p>Interest</p> <p>Engaging, rich, interesting topics? (e.g. biographies, true stories, science mysteries, controversies)</p> | | | |
| <p>Non-text features</p> <p>Visual features like photographs, illustrations, drawings, charts?</p> | | | |
| <p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> index, table of contents? headings, boldfaced terms? clear main ideas and topic sentences? built-in questions to guide students before/during/after reading? easy to segment for group or partner discussion? | | | |
| <p>Vocabulary</p> <p>Key terms defined?</p> | | | |
| <p>Content</p> <p>Prior information or background knowledge assumed?</p> | | | |
| <p>Teacher support</p> <p>(e.g. teacher manual suggests comprehension strategy activities, think alouds, text discussion set-up, references for other resources)</p> | | | |

Choosing Literary Text for Strategy Instruction

| Some features of text to consider: | Text 1 | Text 2 | Text 3 |
|--|--------|--------|--------|
| <p>Reading level Appropriate for students' level?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • not too easy or too challenging • average sentence lengths are appropriate | | | |
| <p>Interest Engaging, rich, interesting to adolescents (consider how students can connect to text)</p> | | | |
| <p>Literary features</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-defined characters • Interesting themes or conflicts | | | |
| <p>Content Prior information or background knowledge assumed?</p> | | | |
| <p>Vocabulary Amount of new vocabulary?</p> | | | |
| <p>Teacher support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accompanying material for teachers with suggestions for instruction • Availability of related material in other media (e.g. website, film, media) | | | |