



Literacy Connects

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Marking Text: A reading comprehension strategy

Reading comprehension is a complex interactive process. Good readers use their experiences and knowledge about the world, their understanding of vocabulary and language structure, and appropriate reading strategies to create meaning. Helping struggling readers understand this complexity is problematic because the interaction between text and reader is not visible. *Marking Text*, a during-reading strategy, promotes the development of active reading skills by requiring students to record their thoughts, connections, and wonderings while reading. “Marking text helps readers pay attention and remember what they read (*I Read It But I Don’t Get It*, Tovani, 2000).”

1. Introduce codes that elicit an internal dialogue between the text and the students. As students read, they mark the code next to the passage and write down their connections, questions, or predictions. Following are a few examples of comprehension codes:
 - BK—this code indicates a connection between the text and the student’s life. A typical BK code might be followed by a written response that begins, “This reminds me of....”
 - !—this code denotes an “ah-ha” moment a student has while reading the text. A typical “!” code might be followed by a written response that begins, “Wow...,” or “I never realized that....”
 - ?—this code indicates a question the student has while reading the text. A typical “?” code might be followed by a written response that begins, “I wonder....”
 - P—this is a prediction code used to make a prediction about what a student thinks might happen next. A typical “P” code might be followed by a written response that begins, “I predict that....”
2. As with any new strategy, *Marking Text* should first be modeled whole class using *The Think Aloud* (See Literacy Connects #1 for *The Think Aloud*). Using a short piece of text that the whole class can see, thoroughly discuss the code you have chosen and your thinking while reading. Write the code next to the paragraph or line that you are discussing; end by writing a brief summary of your thoughts.
3. Give students a short, accessible piece to mark on their own. If the text is too hard, students will have difficulty using the strategy. It is important that students not only mark the code as they read, but also document their thinking, so they can discuss their thoughts once they’ve finished. Be careful not to assign too many codes at once. Begin with one; once students are comfortable using the first code, add the second and so on.

If you are unable to mark in your books, sticky notes work well; they can be removed from the text and are small enough for jotting down a few ideas for each code. Another way to write on text is to cover a page with a clear overhead transparency and use overhead markers to code thinking. You might also consider photocopying a text for students to code.

Marking Text will help create independent readers who are responsible for and aware of their own reading comprehension.

Visit the RPDP website (www.rpdp.net) for a complete selection of *Literacy Connects*.