Teaching Nonfiction Reading: Phenomenal Lessons Across Content Areas

Nancy Akhavan

nancyakhavan.com
nakhavan@csufresno.edu

Twitter: @nancyakhavan
LinkedIn: in/nancyakhavan

AKHAVAN Nonfiction Literacy Strategies 2014
Nancy’s books
Intro to Informational Text Reading Standards

Online Reading

Technology to Engage

Comprehension Strategies

Write a lesson plan

AKHAVAN Nonfiction Literacy Strategies 2014
Informational text is text that informs.

Nonfiction text is text that is factual.

Today we are looking at both informational texts and other types of nonfiction texts and thinking about how to support students reading.
Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas. (CC 2)

Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text relate to each other and the whole (CC 5)

Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take. (R.8.10)
Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text. (RI 6. 1)

Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably. (RI 5.9)

Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to supporting ideas; provide an objective summary of the text. (R.8.2)
Two Branches of Content Focus

- Literacy Skills
- Content Knowledge
Content Area Knowledge

• Bank of knowledge in a specific domain area.

• Schema of known information.

• Specialized knowledge
Content Learning Strategies

- Engage in multiple opportunities to interact with information.
- Provide ways to remember and recall information.
- Expose students to a variety of subjects and information.
- Develop knowledge.
- Help students own information.
- Provide thinking models.
Six Strategies for Comprehension

- Build and Tap Background Knowledge
- Visualizing
- Making Text Connections
- Comprehension
- Analyze Text Structure
- Summarizing
- Question
ABC Brainstorming

When to Use: When you want to develop student interest in the topic of an article or text. You can use this lesson with Daily Do 1, Preparing to Read.

Tap into prior knowledge by asking students to write ideas from an article or text. To prepare them to notice and retain new information. When you tap into prior knowledge, you activate students’ thinking muscles. A good lesson for activating students’ thinking by conjuring up things they may already know about a topic, this activity is simple. Students work to think of words and phrases associated with the topic and matched to each letter of the alphabet. This strategy comes from Raymond Jones (1998).

Lesson Objective: Prepare for reading by tapping prior knowledge.

Materials Needed: A copy of the selected article for the teacher only; an ABC sheet for each student, or a sheet of paper for students to list the letters of the alphabet.

Grouping: Whole class or individual.

Time: 15 minutes.

STEP 1: Prepare the ABC Sheet
Pass out the ABC sheet, or if using student notebooks or sheet paper, have students list all the letters of the alphabet on the paper leaving room beside each letter to write out a word or phrase.

STEP 2: Identify the Topic
Checking the article you selected, identify the topic for the students. The topic should be broad and general to give lots of room for brainstorming. State the topic in one word or a simple phrase. I highly recommend that you write the topic down on a whiteboard, chart, or projector so that the students can visualize it.

STEP 3: Guide the Brainstorm
Let your students loose with their pencil and the brainstorming sheets! In this step, the students start to fill in the ABC brainstorming sheet, in no particular order. Give them a solid 5 minutes to work on this alone.

STEP 4: Pair
When students seem to lose steam coming up with ideas for the ABC brainstorming sheet, pair them up. Together they can fill in the blanks for letters not yet completed.

STEP 5: Share
Once students have exhausted their bank of ideas to list beside the letters, have them share. Go around the room facilitating the sharing of words and phrases based on the topic and connected to the letters of the alphabet. Remember, be inclusive in your acceptance of the students’ answers. The idea is to activate their prior knowledge, not to assess them on their knowledge of a topic. While their answers should be justifiable in connection to the topic, be flexible and have fun with the activity.
| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M | N | O | P | Q | R | S | T | U | V | W | X | Y | Z |

Available for download at www.corwin.com/nonfictionnow

Source: Adapted from Jones (1996).
Text Structures
Surveying the Text

**Survey the Text**

*When to Use:* When prepping to read. One suggestion is to use this as a lesson for Daily Duo Step 1, *Reading* (see Chapter 5, page 000).

Presley (2002) suggests this activity as a way for students to get a sense of what they are going to read about, to determine a purpose for reading, and to identify important sections of the text based on their purpose for reading.

**Lesson Objective:** Read, examine, and think about the features of a text to set a purpose for reading and try to glean the main idea.

**Materials Needed:** A copy of the text you have chosen to use for the lesson (it needs to have an introduction, a conclusion, headings, and a couple of text features, e.g., graphs, tables, or pictures); or a projector to project the model text, chart paper and markers, and if you choose a chart created from one of the graphic organizers at the end of the chapter.

**Grouping:** Whole class.

**Time:** 15 minutes.

**STEP 1: Pose Guiding Questions**

Pose two or three guiding questions to the class to pique students’ interest and get them thinking about why they are going to read; the questions for this sample lesson come from Neufeld (2005). The questions give students a reason for surveying the text, and hint at what to look for as they survey.

- What does this text appear to be about?
- What are some of the important topics/ideas covered in the text?
- How is the text organized?

To get the class started with the survey strategy, you might say,

“Good readers tend to look over a text before they read it to put their mind around what they are going to read and put their attention on the topic. This is called surveying the text. When you survey something, you are doing an assessment of it; we also call this an appraisal. People do surveys for all sorts of reasons, but mostly they are trying to gather information that will help them understand something. I am going to teach you to do a survey of a text before you read it.”

Then show the students the text you have chosen to use for a model. Make sure it has headings and at least one other text feature, such as a table or graph.

**STEP 2: Read the Title and Major Headings**

Model for students how readers orient themselves to a text. You might say something like this:

“Now that we have some questions to think about and answer, let’s start our survey. First, we are going to read the title and the major headings together.

“Let’s read together. What do you think the text is going to be about, based on the title and headings?”

Lead a brief discussion on this topic, making sure that the students do the talking, not you. Remember, you are working on the students’ thinking and talking skills!”
We are going to look at a web based text and practice surveying the text.
In groups:

What does this text appear to be about?

What are some of the important topics/ideas covered in the text?

How is the text organized?
California's Drought in Two Terrifying Charts

By Karen Weise and Tcho Tuckier  |  February 05, 2014

The Golden State is parched. California’s water reserves typically replenish over the winter, but the current drought is worsening in what’s supposed to be the wettest time of the year.

Almost 9 percent of the state is in "exceptional" drought, the most severe designation from the U.S. Drought Monitor, an interagency report whose classifications are based on measures of precipitation, soil moisture, and other factors. The “exceptional” rating, also known as “D4,” is reserved for dry spells so intense they occur fewer than once in 50 years. It’s the first time California has had any D4 areas since the Drought Monitor was created in 2011.

California’s dry spells have grown longer and more severe

Two-thirds of California’s land is facing “extreme” or “exceptional” drought conditions

100%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Occurs once every</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not dry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D0: Abnormally dry</td>
<td>3 to 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D1: Moderate drought</td>
<td>5 to 10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2: Severe drought</td>
<td>10 to 20 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D3: Extreme drought</td>
<td>20 to 50 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D4: Exceptional drought</td>
<td>50 plus years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Golden State is parched. California’s water reserves typically replenish over the winter, but the current drought is worsening in what’s supposed to be the wettest time of the year.

Almost 9 percent of the state is in “exceptional” drought, the most severe designation from the U.S. Drought Monitor, an interagency report whose classifications are based on measures of precipitation, soil moisture, and other factors. The “exceptional” rating, also known as “D4,” is reserved for dry spells so intense they occur fewer than once in 50 years. It’s the first time California has had any D4 areas since the Drought Monitor was launched in 2000. More than 98 percent of California land is now considered at least abnormally dry.

California’s dry spells have grown longer and more severe

Two-thirds of California’s land is facing “extreme” or “exceptional” drought conditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Occurs once every</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not dry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D0: Abnormally dry</td>
<td>3 to 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D1: Moderate drought</td>
<td>5 to 10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2: Severe drought</td>
<td>10 to 20 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D3: Extreme drought</td>
<td>20 to 50 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D4: Exceptional drought</td>
<td>50 plus years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

GRAPHIC BY BLOOMBERG BUSINESSWEEK. DATA: UNITED STATES DROUGHT MONITOR

California’s reserves are running at an historical low
California's reserves are running at an historical low

Combined, these 40 reservoirs in California can hold more than 8 trillion gallons of water. They currently contain 40 percent less water than in a typical February.

February 2014

GRAPHIC BY BLOOMBERG BUSINESSWEEK. DATA: CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES. For very early years, data for many of the reservoirs is not available.
California’s reservoirs are holding just 39 percent of their combined capacity, when typically they should be 64 percent full by this time in winter. That has prompted the state to do something it’s never done before: At the end of January, officials cut to zero (pdf) the amount of water that local authorities could draw from the series of reservoirs that supply 25 million Californians and 750,000 acres of farmland. Snowpack is at just 12 percent of levels typical this time of year, leaving little hope that the reserves will be replenished soon.

Without deliveries from the state reservoirs, cities are asking residents and businesses to conserve water, Bloomberg News reports. People are prohibited from washing cars, filling swimming pools, and watering lawns during the daytime, and farmers are letting thousands of acres lie fallow. All that, and it’s not even summer.

Weise is a reporter for Bloomberg Businessweek in New York. Follow her on Twitter @iyweise.

Tucker is a graphics intern for Bloomberg Businessweek. Follow him on Twitter @tophtucker.
Question
I know this already:

What are the facts and details about science exploration?

What was interesting, but trivial?

These are questions I have now.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What question did you have before you read this?</th>
<th>What questions did you have at the end, after you finished reading?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If the author were here today, what would you ask him/her?</td>
<td>What information did you learn from this text?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Connect
What do you know about burning fossil fuel?
How do you know this?

Freewrite & turn and talk

Research: Find out something about burning fossil fuel that you and your peers don’t know. (books, internet, text, video)

Write about your findings about pollution and talk with your friends about how what you know now related to greenhouse gases.
Show Me
Creating: Use iBooks or Book Writer App
Visualize
Diagram: A graphic to represent ideas in the text; can include words, figures, shapes, pictures, or drawings.

• Collage: A one-page montage of cut and pasted pictures from magazines, or a digital collage using images from the Internet or a software program.

• PowerPoint presentation: A presentation created with only a few slides, including pictures, photos, diagrams, shapes, or other visual digital images.

• Social media summary: A digital montage of pictures, photos, or words posted to social media sites like Facebook (on a student or teacher page), Pinterest, and Flickr.

• Blog: A short description of the article read and a visual montage of the Big Ideas from the article or text.
Strange sounds to make beauty sounds someone else plays
Summarize
In large - groups (to model):

Use a structured outline for note taking to help students prepare for writing a summary.

Steps:
Read
Question
   What was this text about?
   What did the writer say?
Look Back
Write Notes
The 4 Rules of Summary Writing

• Rule 1: Collapse lists
• Rule 2: Use topic sentences
• Rule 3: Get rid of unnecessary detail
• Rule 4. Collapse paragraphs
A technique of writing about reading where students draw together key ideas in their own words from their writing and capture that thinking on an index card.

Provides students a way to practice summarizing text and gives you a way to quickly assess your students reading comprehension.
Create a Microtheme

Think of the piano tuning article.

Fill up the card with what you know - 3 minutes.

Share with a partner.
There are several ways for working with microthemes:

Assign the class a topic to investigate.

Encourage students to analyze the articles they are reading.

Have students respond to an open-ended question based on a content area.
Web Based Texts
How Students Approach Text Today

With the new literacies and participatory expectations of our students (they are not only consumers, but creators of multimedia text) it is important to understand how readers approach text.
• grazing
• deep dive
• engagement
Grazing

• When students graze they are checking posts, blogs, feeds and texts frequently.

• The information accessed when grazing is sorted so focus can be easily identified and also be easy to process.

• The sources students graze are superficial sources and little mental effort is required to make sense of the information.
Deep Dive

• Students take a deep dive into information when something captures their attention while grazing. The readers may access web sites and texts that provide in-depth information on a topic.

• Deep dive requires different skills than grazing.

• Students need to be able to access information, connect it with prior knowledge, and apply thinking skills to use the information for real purposes.
Engagement

- Engagement refers to the students’ participation with the information.

- Students don’t always engage with this step, but if they are deeply affected by information presented they might:
  - write about it
  - blog about it
  - pass the information along on social networking site
  - or make comments on websites.

- In our classrooms, their connection with engagement could include print based or web based writing.
glogster.com
Multimedia tools - Tablet

Ithoughts HD

Paper S3

ibooks
Multimedia Apps/Sources

- Book Writer
- ibooks
- Paper 53
- Prezi
- Glogster
- iThoughtsHD
- Show Me
- Notability
- Google Docs
Six Strategies for Comprehension

1. Build and Tap Background Knowledge
2. Visualizing
3. Analyze Text Structure
4. Question
5. Making Text Connections
6. Summarizing

AKHAVAN Nonfiction Literacy Strategies 2014
Lesson Planning Tools

A Teacher's Daily Duo Lesson Plan in Progress

Lesson: How to Collapse a List
Unit: Summary Writing
Objective: Substitute a word or phrase for a list of information appearing in text

We've been working on learning to write summaries, and today I want to show you how to take a list of information from a text and shorten it down to a couple of words. This is called collapsing, like when a balloon deflates. We are going to collapse a list to make it smaller.

Connect
When I read a text looking for lists of information, I go through and star parts of the text that I think might be a list. Look at how I did this with this excerpt from a short article on when ancient man started to walk upright. I starred the part right here on what the scientists thought. So, it's a list. (point to the part in the text.) This list tells us about the thinking of the scientists. It's a list—about the 3D statistical analysis of the ancient man's pelvis. This is a long paragraph, but I'm going to shorten it up and write in the margin. Ancient Men will be as early as previously thought. So, I took this long list of information and turned it into a short sentence. This will help me remember the information—and it will help me when I skim my notes to write my summary.

Teach
Now, I want you to work with a partner. Take out one of the texts you've been reading, or check out a section in the textbook—are there parts that looks like a list? Can you collapse that list into a few words? Work on that for a minute or two together.

Give It a Go
I'm going to have a few of you tell us what you worked on with your partner—what did the text say, and how did you collapse it? After we hear from a few of you, we are going to use this technique today while reading our texts to prep for writing a summary. Remember, collapse the lists like deflating a balloon. Make the list small and state it in a few words.

Wrap Up

AKHAVAN Nonfiction Literacy Strategies 2014
Nancy’s books

Teaching Writing in a TITLE I School
Nancy Akhavan

Help! My Kids Don’t All Speak English
How to Set Up a Language Workshop in Your Linguistically Diverse Classroom
Nancy Akhavan

Accelerated Vocabulary Instruction
Strategies for Closing the Achievement Gap for All Students
Nancy Akhavan

The Content-Rich Reading & Writing Workshop
A Time-Saving Approach for Making the Most of Your Literacy Block
Nancy Akhavan

Nonfiction Literacy Strategies 2014