

ELA Strategies for Grades 7-12

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Instructional Strategies

Final Word

This protocol is designed to help students understand the meaning of a text, particularly to see how meaning can be constructed and supported by the ideas of others. After the presenter shares their thinking, interesting similarities and differences in interpretations will arise as other students share their thinking without judgment or debate. The presenter listens and may then change their perspective, add to it or stick with original ideas without criticism. This protocol is especially helpful when people struggle to understand their reading.

Procedure:

1. Have each group select a time keeper and facilitator.
2. Students may read the same text or read different texts on a common topic. Text selection is critical.
3. Students read silently and annotate text. They mark passages for discussion so they can quickly locate them later. To promote critical thinking, design prompts for the discussion that ask participants to include reasons for selecting a particular passage and evidence that supports a point.
4. Presenter shares a designated number of passages and their thinking.
5. Students comment on what was shared in less than 1 minute each.
6. Presenter gets the Final Word, sharing how their thinking evolved after listening to others or re-emphasizing what was shared.
7. Follow steps 4-6 with each additional student taking the presenter role.
8. Debrief content. Discuss how hearing from others impacted your thinking.
9. Debrief process. What worked in our discussion? What were some challenges? How can we improve next time?

Assessment Strategies

Carousel Brainstorming

The class is split up into groups of four to five students. Each group gets their own chart and colored marker. The idea is to have each group write down what they know about a topic or possible answers to an open-ended question. Place a time limit on each group and when the time is up, have each group pass their chart along to another group, or move to the next chart.

Students must read what the other groups have recorded for answers and then add to the list. They can also circle or highlight answers they feel hit the mark or add question marks to answers they feel missed the mark. When the charts have been viewed by each group, they can be reviewed as a class and used by the students to write essays that note relationships, make comparisons, or summarize information. Be sure to walk the classroom while the charts are being completed and note engagement levels for student understanding, which can be used to adapt instruction accordingly.

Transfer the Concept

Ensure student understanding isn't restricted to one medium. Suppose you have recently taught how to identify protagonists and antagonists in novels. Watch a clip from a show, movie, or perhaps an advertisement, and see if students can identify the heroes and villains.



Classroom / Time Management Strategies

Student-Choice

Giving student real choices in the classroom — having to do with the material they study, the assignments they complete, the peers with whom they work, and so on — can boost their engagement and motivation, allow them to capitalize on their strengths, and enable them to meet their individual learning needs. Give them a voice in decisions. In a system that can be a flood of top down, let your classroom be one that allows voices to trickle up! We have, in our very classrooms, the brains that will solve the problems of tomorrow, but to give them training means we have to give their neurons a chance to solve the problems of today. Student choice builds ownership in the learning allows students to display their learning in the way that they feel best represents their knowledge and enforces true differentiation.

The resources listed are provided as options and examples.

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