

Strategy 2: Understanding Text Implementation Guide

Overview

When students understand how text is structured, they stand a better chance of remembering what they have read. The general structure of the text may vary from a story, to an explanation, to a quotation from a speech. In this activity, students will become more familiar with two aspects of understanding text (structure and signal words) while reading.

The Strategy in Action

Students should complete the following steps to practice the strategy. Be sure to pass out copies of Activity Guide 2 before students begin their work. Steps 1–4 should be completed before the reading, and Step 6 is to be completed after the reading.

- Step 1: Survey the Text.** Have students scan the text and note the general purpose of the text.
- Step 2: Identify the Signal Words.** Have students circle transition words in the text. Some students may prefer to highlight photocopied pages of text or attach “sticky” notes to help them locate the transition words. Or, they may simply generate a list. Whatever the vehicle, students need to identify the signal words present in the text.
- Step 3: Identify the Structure of the Text.** Individually or in a small group, students should discuss what they think the main structure of the text may be (cause and effect, compare and contrast, description, problem and solution, and sequence or chronological order). They would ask themselves: “What kind of thinking will be necessary to understand the information in the text?” and “How would I best display the information after reading?”
- Step 4: Predict the Main Idea of the Passage.** Using what students know about the signal words and the structure of the text, have them write a sentence stating what they think the main idea of this passage may be.
- Step 5: Read the Text.** Have students read the passage on Squanto.
- Step 6: Revisit the Main Idea Prediction.** After reading, students should go back to their prediction of the main idea of the passage. They may then use a graphic organizer to display the information, write a summary, or in some other way organize what they have read.

Discussion

Once students have finished the activity, you may want to have a brief discussion with them about the assignment. Encourage students to probe why they did or did not get close to the text’s actual meaning. You may want to ask students what they think they could do to improve their ability to make

predictions about a text's main ideas by using structure and signal words before they read.

Answers to Student Activity Guide

Part A

1. Students should mention that the purpose of the text is to talk about Squanto.
2. Signal words include: *born, shortly thereafter, eventually, after, when, soon, because, then, when, and died.*
3. This text structure is a simple sequence, but does contain a cause/effect relationship in paragraphs 4 and 5.
4. Squanto—and his life

Part B: Answers will vary as students look back at their earlier predications.

Name: _____ DATE: _____ Class: _____

Strategy 2: Understanding Text Activity Guide

Part A: Answer the following questions BEFORE you read the text.

1. Scan the text. What do you think is the text's purpose?

2. Circle or highlight all the signal words you find in the text. Write them below.

3. What is the main structure of the text? (Hint: cause/effect, compare/contrast, problem/solution, or sequence).

4. What do you think the main idea of this text is? (Hint: list the topic and 3–5 more words that elaborate on that topic—this is probably the main idea.)

Part B: Now read the text. Once you have finished, answer the question that follows.

Squanto

The English colonists who arrived in America found a land of wilderness populated by American Indian tribes. Although some tribes were hostile, many Indians befriended the new settlers and tried to help them learn about living on unfamiliar land and other important survival techniques. One of the American Indians who helped the Pilgrims was a man named Squanto.

Squanto was born sometime around 1590. He was a member of the Pawtuxet tribe, who lived along the coast of Maine. In 1605 Squanto was probably captured and taken to England by George Weymouth. He returned to America in 1615 with Captain John Smith's expedition to New England. Shortly thereafter, Captain Thomas Hunt kidnapped and sold Squanto and about 30 other Indians into slavery in Spain.

Squanto eventually escaped from slavery and made his way to England. Once there he worked for John Slany, treasurer of the Newfoundland Company. After traveling to Newfoundland and then back to England, Squanto piloted Captain Thomas Demer's expedition to New England in 1619. He left the expedition before it reached Cape Cod, Massachusetts, and made his way back to the home of his tribe. When he arrived, he found that his entire tribe was dead, probably victims of smallpox, which had been brought to the Americas by the English.

Squanto went to live with the Wampanoag tribe, who lived about 40 miles from his home, near present-day Plymouth, Massachusetts. When the Pilgrims arrived in 1620, Squanto befriended them. He was introduced to the Pilgrim leaders by Samoset, an American Indian leader. Squanto soon became a guide, interpreter, and helper to the English colonists. He helped the Pilgrims negotiate a treaty with the Wampanoag tribe and their chief, Massasoit. The treaty of mutual assistance lasted almost 40 years.

Because Squanto did not really have a home or tribe of his own, he spent a great deal of time with the Pilgrims. He taught them how and where to plant their corn and how to find the best places for fishing.

Squanto began to make enemies among the Indians because of his close friendship with the colonists and because he pretended to have the power to spread the smallpox plague. Then, in the spring of 1622, he stated falsely that Massasoit was going to betray the Pilgrims. When the Wampanoag chief learned of this incident, he demanded that Squanto return to the tribe to be punished. Eventually, Squanto made peace with the Wampanoag.

In November 1622, while acting as a guide and interpreter on Governor Bradford's expedition around Cape Cod, Squanto fell ill with a fever. He died at Chatham Harbor on Cape Cod within a few days.

Now check to see if your prediction about the main idea you made before reading was correct. Revise it below if necessary.
