

Strategy 5: Visualizing Information Implementation Guide

Overview

Social studies textbooks are full of charts, diagrams, pictures, illustrations, political cartoons, and maps. These visual aids are placed in textbooks to enhance the learning of the content. In their rush to complete an assignment, students often skip over the visual information that may actually assist them in the comprehension process.

Struggling readers often have difficulty “visualizing” ideas presented in text. Visual information displayed in a social studies textbook can be flipped over and ignored or studied and incorporated. What students *do* with the visual information is the important ingredient to comprehending text.

The more that students are involved in creating the visual image, the more engaged they will be with the ideas in the text. In this activity students will gain practice in using and interpreting visual information.

The Strategy in Action

Students should complete the following steps to practice the strategy. Be sure to pass out copies of Activity Guide 5 before students begin their work.

Step 1: Preview the Text Noting the Visual Information Presented. This information may be in the form of charts, diagrams, pictures, or illustrations. In this case, have students view the image of the school house on the Great Plains. You may either print out the image or have students view it online.

Step 2: Ask How the Visual Information Relates to the Text or Why the Author(s) Included This Information. It is important that students create a link between the text and the visual. Have students note aspects of the image that they think will be described in the passage.

Step 3: Generate Questions Raised by the Visual Aid. For question 2 of the activity guide, students should list two to three questions that arise from the image.

Step 4: Read the Text. Have students read the passage on building communities on the Great Plains.

Step 5: Go back and Review Visual Aids in the Text. In part B of the activity guide, students should evaluate whether the visual accurately displays the most important ideas in the text.

Discussion

Once students have finished the activity, you may want to have a brief discussion with them about the assignment. Encourage students to probe how the visual information in the text aids the reader in comprehension.

Answers to the Student Activity Guide

Part A:

1. Previewing the text, students will notice the picture of students in 1893 in front of a schoolhouse. They may guess that this text has something to do with schools on the Great Plains.
2. Questions may vary, but students may include some of the following:
 - a. Why were the children so serious?
 - b. Were these all the children in the community? How big was their town?
 - c. Who built this schoolhouse?
 - d. Was it used it for other purposes?

Part B:

Students may be able to explain the answers to their questions.

Name: _____ DATE: _____ Class: _____

Strategy 5: Visualizing Information Activity Guide

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

1. Preview the text. List below the visual information accompanying this text. Next, state how this information aids the reader in understanding the text.

2. After studying the visual information with the text, list the questions below that you would like answered.

Part B: Read the text on building communities on the Plains, view the accompanying visual information, and complete the activity that follows.

Building Communities on the Great Plains

Communities were an important part of life on the Plains. Many early settlers found life on their remote farms to be extremely difficult. About her mother's life as a pioneer, Esther Clark explained: "It took [courage] to live twenty-four hours at a time, month in and out, on the lonely and lovely prairie." Farmers developed communities so that they could assist one another in times of need.

One of the first things that many pioneer communities did was establish a local church and a school. Churches served as gathering places for pioneer families. Even small communities made an effort to get schools started. Many communities raised money and ran the schools themselves. One woman

recalled proudly, “They [the school board] and the pupils and I build that school house with our own hands.”

Pioneer schools were usually small one-room buildings where children of all ages learned together in one class. Few children had schoolbooks, and many children went to school only part of the year because they had to help with farmwork. Most teachers in these pioneer schools were young women who made little money.

Frontier families worked very hard to provide a community for themselves and for their children. Through these efforts, more people found the West an appealing place to live and raise a family.

List the type of visual information with the text again and state in what ways it was helpful (or not) in understanding the text.

[add image of school children here. place caption and photo credit below or to side of image. CAPTION: This group of students in Hecka, Montana, posed with their teacher in October 1893. CREDIT (SMALLER TYPE): Library of Congress]