

Strategy 8: Activating and Using Prior Knowledge Implementation Guide

Overview

Strong readers know that asking questions and thinking about ideas while reading helps them understand and remember text. Students who begin reading a text with no preparation and no thought about the topic at hand can often complete an assignment, but do not seem to remember much about what they read. One useful method for helping students over this hurdle is by using the KWL+ strategy. KWL stands for What I Know, What I Want to Know, and What I Learned.

The Strategy in Action

Students should complete the following steps to practice the strategy. Be sure to pass out copies of Activity Guide 8 before students begin their work.

Step 1: Fill Out the First Two Columns of the KWL Chart. That is, students should write down everything they know for sure about the topic. Then, have them write down everything they want to know about this topic in the middle column. Students are identifying what they know for sure and what they think they know about a topic. There is no set of correct answers, but misconceptions or wrong information can be flagged for further discussion. What students want to know should be phrased as questions. If they construct these two columns individually, they can then work with small groups to elaborate on their lists. For this activity, students should write down everything they know about Australia and everything they think they know or want to know about Australia.

Step 2: Read the Text. Have students read the selection about the natural features of Australia.

Step 4: Fill Out the Learned Column. Once students have finished reading, have them complete the third column of the chart. Students should work in small groups to elaborate on their answers.

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 what they learned compared to what they knew or thought they knew before they read. As an extension, you may guide students in using what they learned to construct a concept map and then write a summary of what they now know about the topic.

Answers to the Student Activity Guide

Part A: Answers will vary, but students may list the following as things they know or what to know: Australia is big and hot; Aborigines were the first people in Australia, the Olympics took place in Sydney; kangaroos live in Australia.

Part B: Answers may vary, but students should capture the main ideas of the reading such as that Australia is the only country that is a continent; Australia has three regions, the Eastern Highlands, the Central Lowlands, and the Western Plateau. Artesian wells are in the Central Lowlands and provide much of the water for watering sheep; Australian mountains are very old; in the west there is a plateau that is large and flat.

Name: _____ DATE: _____ Class: _____

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Part A: This is the KWL chart. Write down all the things you know for sure about Australia and all the things you think you know or want to know about Australia BEFORE you read the text.

Australia		
What I Know	What I Want to Know	What I Learned

Part B: Now read the text. Once you have finished reading, go back and fill in the Learned column on the KWL chart.

Australia

Australia is the world's smallest, flattest, and lowest continent. In addition, it is the only country that is also a continent. The country sometimes is called the Land Down Under because it lies south of the equator. Seasons there are

reversed from those north of the equator. For example, when it is winter in the United States, it is summer in Australia.

Australia has three main landform regions. These are the Eastern Highlands, the Central Lowlands, and the Western Plateau.

The Eastern Highlands are a system of ridges, plateaus, and valleys in the eastern part of Australia. They include the Great Dividing Range. This range stretches along the eastern coast and includes the island of Tasmania. It divides Australia's rivers into those that flow eastward and those that flow westward. Australia's one main river system, The Murray-Darling, flows westward from the range.

Australia's highest mountain is in the Great Dividing Range. It rises just 7,310 feet (2,228 m). This tells us that Australia is very old. Erosion from wind and water has lowered the continent's mountains over millions of years.

The Central Lowlands are flatter and lower than the Eastern Highlands. The Central Lowlands include the Great Artesian Basin, Australia's largest source of underground water. Artesian wells dot this area. Artesian wells are those in which water rises toward the surface without being pumped. The groundwater comes from rain falling on nearby mountains. As the amount of groundwater increases, some is pushed to the surface. Much of the well water here is of poor quality, so it is used mostly for watering sheep.

Farther west is the Western Plateau, which covers more than half of the continent. The treeless Nullarbor Plain stretches along the southern edge of the plateau. This plain is the flattest large area on any continent.