



Framework for Strategic Reading in the Content Areas

Traits of a Strategic Reader

Working with a group of K-12 teachers, we set out to investigate these questions.

- Reading is thinking, but what type of thinking?
- Does each reading task require the same level of thinking?
- What are overarching qualities teachers look for in a strategic reader?
- What language describes the overall qualities of a strategic reader so that teachers can teach those qualities to their students, helping them to understand what creates a reader?

Early on a connection was made with Bloom's Taxonomy; a classification system for describing the processes of thinking. If reading is thinking, will the levels of thinking in Bloom's Taxonomy represent various levels of thinking when reading?

Based on that assumption, four major qualities of a strategic reader were extracted from the taxonomy and labeled "traits of a strategic reader." A trait can be defined as a characteristic or a quality of the reader. The four reading traits were identified in *Capturing All of the Reader Through the Reading Assessment System (Billmeyer, 2001)*. They are:

- Reading the Lines for Recognition
- Reading Inside the Lines for Meaning
- Reading Between the Lines for Application
- Reacting Beyond the Lines for Creation

Literacy scholars Luke and Freebody (1999) state that a passage does not convey a neutral message nor is it bias free; rather it represents a particular point of view. Reading in all content areas should be tied to the world of work and to larger societal issues as students interact with text. Luke and Freebody emphasize that a critical reader must be proficient as:

- Code Breaker
- Meaning Maker
- Text User
- Text Critic

Luke and Freebody's emphasis on developing critical readers closely matches the traits of strategic readers. Becoming a critical reader or becoming a strategic reader demands four types of thinking when reading and reacting to text. Each trait is related to the other traits, yet possesses a distinct purpose.

Attributes of a Strategic Reader

The four traits (listed above) individually incorporate attributes of a strategic reader. While a trait is inherent to the way meaning is constructed, an attribute is a learned behavior. Attributes can be thought of as specific reading skills or critical thinking skills; how a person thinks in order to interact with text. The reading attributes are extracted from years of research comparing successful and struggling readers. Successful readers use a vast array of reading attributes, such as questioning, inferring, and identifying bias. As students become strategic readers, they demonstrate mastery of reading attributes within the four traits.

Outlining the Traits and Attributes

This section explains each trait, cites specific reading attributes appropriate for narrative (*N*) or informative (*I*) text, and provides an instructional example. One could argue that all traits are applicable in both narrative and informative text. These distinctions are meant to indicate primary use. For a complete listing of the reading attributes within each of the four traits see *Capturing All of the Reader Through the Reading Assessment System* (Billmeyer, 2001).

Reading the Lines for Recognition - "Code Breaker"

When Strategic Readers read silently or orally they decode the words, recognize the genre, and make use of the symbols, patterns, and text features. These acts build the foundation for comprehension and call upon the following attributes:

- Reads known words automatically (*N/I*)
- Uses known words to figure out unfamiliar text (*N/I*)
- Attributes meaning to symbols (*I*)
- Decodes words using phonetic and structural analysis (*N/I*)
- Recognizes genre (*N*)
- Distinguishes organizational patterns of text (*I*)
- Distinguishes story elements (*N*)



- Overviews and makes use of text format and features (maps, charts, graphs, illustrations, pictures, and styles of type) to gain meaning (*N/I*)

Reading Inside the Lines for Meaning - "Meaning Maker"

Strategic Readers reflect on their own processing skills while reading. When readers are aware of and use reading strategies, they are able to monitor their understanding before, during, and after reading. Strategic Readers strive to achieve fluency and comprehension. The following attributes are applied:

- Learns new meanings for known words (*N/I*)
- Establishes purpose for reading (*N/I*)
- Builds on prior knowledge (*N/I*)
- Asks questions before, during, and after reading (*N/I*)
- Checks predetermined predictions during reading (*N/I*)
- Creates visual images during reading (*N/I*)
- Draws conclusions from text (*N/I*)
- Reflects on own reading process (*N/I*)



Use of Symbols for High School Music Performance

A high school music teacher teaches students about the following music symbols: key signature, meter or change of meter, repeat signs, tempo marking, and dynamic marking. As students prepare to sing musical selections for a performance, they are instructed to examine the entire selection for the music symbols.