



TEXAS LITERACY INITIATIVE



# Cognitive Strategies and Making Connections



## Step 2

Give the strategy a name.

Example:

Today we are going to learn a comprehension strategy called "making inferences."

## Step 3

Define the strategy, how and when it is used, and how it helps with reading.

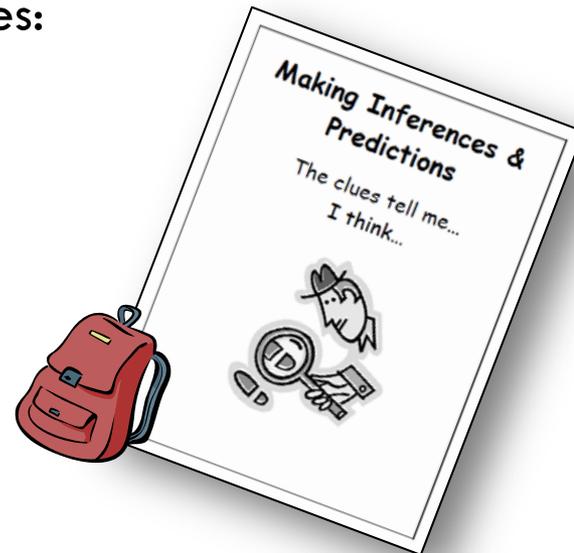
Example:

The strategy we're talking about today is called "making inferences." Sometimes the author doesn't tell us everything, but leaves hints to help us figure things out. When we make inferences, we use clues from the text and our background knowledge to figure something out.

# Step 4

Give students touchstones, such as a hand gesture or visual representation, to help them remember the strategy.

Examples:



# Step 5



Handout  
#4

Think aloud, using the strategy in a variety of contexts.

Example:

Hmm, I'm inferring that this boy is very responsible. He tells Mr. Crawford what he's done without making excuses. That tells me a lot about his character. I know from my background knowledge, that when someone takes responsibility for what they've done, they ask what they can do to make it better. The author doesn't tell us he's responsible, but we can use the clues in the text and our background knowledge to infer that the boy is responsible.

## Step 6

Engage students by providing meaningful opportunities for them to share their thinking during the reading. Practice shared application with planned discussion prompts.

Example:

Let's think for a moment. Can you infer how young Abe feels about this book? How do you know that? ...



Turn and talk with your partner about how Abe feels about this book.

## Step 7

Scaffold practice, providing opportunities for students to use the strategy while reading with the teacher's support and monitoring.

Example:

Read the next two paragraphs on your own and think about the inferences you have to make to answer this question:

Why does Susan B. Anthony say there will be a rebellion? Jot down the clues you use to infer the answer to the question.

## Step 8

Provide accountability measures for students when using the strategy independently.

Example:

When you are reading today, place a sticky note in the text when you make an inference. Be ready to share the clues from the text and the background knowledge you used to make that inference.



## Build? Or Activate?

### **Building Background Knowledge**

- Students know little or nothing about a topic
- May take place 1-2 weeks before reading
- Takes 3-4 exposures, no more than 2 days apart

### **Activating Background Knowledge**

- Students have some knowledge of a topic
- Takes place directly prior to reading
- Takes 2-10 minutes





For new information to become part of memory students need:

- 3-4 exposures
- No more than 2 days apart



**Week prior to reading:**

**Monday:** Read aloud a short article from social studies text about Texas Annexation.

**Tuesday:** Brainstorm a chart of the problems facing the Republic of Texas .

**Wednesday:** Show a map of the three regions of the United States as it applies to sectionalism. Discuss where Texas falls?

**Friday:** Quick review of what we have learned about Texas annexation.

(Nuthall, 1999).





## Making Connections

“We are turning out lots of superficial readers. They look and sound competent. They read smoothly and retell what they’ve read with some detail, but they are unable to go further – to discuss why characters behave as they do, to give a concise summary, to discuss the theme or big ideas, to talk about the author’s purpose.”

(Routman, 2003)





# Why Teach Making Connections?



Students are expected to:

- 6.3(C): Compare and contrast the historical and cultural settings of two literary works.
- 6.3(B): Analyze the function of stylistic elements in traditional and classical literature from various cultures.
- 6.10(D): Synthesize and make logical connections between ideas within a text and across two or three texts representing similar or different genres.
- Figure 19(C): Monitor and adjust comprehension (e.g., using background knowledge ...);
- Figure 19(F): Make connections (e.g., thematic links, author analysis) between and across multiple texts of various genres and provide textual evidence.





# Introducing Cognitive Strategies

## Strategy Instruction

### Direct – Explicit – Systematic

Gradual Release of Responsibility

1. Use a real-world example to create a context (anchor lesson).
2. Give the strategy a name.
3. Define the strategy, how and when it is used, and how it helps with reading.
4. Give students touchstones, such as a hand gesture or icon, to help them remember the strategy.
5. Think aloud, using the strategy in a variety of contexts.
6. Engage students by providing opportunities for them to share their thinking during the reading. Practice shared application with planned discussion prompts.
7. Scaffold practice, providing opportunities for students to use the strategy while reading, with teacher support and monitoring.
8. Provide accountability measures for students while using the strategy independently.

**Ongoing Assessment** may include informal assessments such as anecdotal records, observations of class discussion, portfolios, projects, student records of thinking (post-it notes, drawings, and writings), as well as formal assessments.

### Cognitive Strategy Lesson Planning

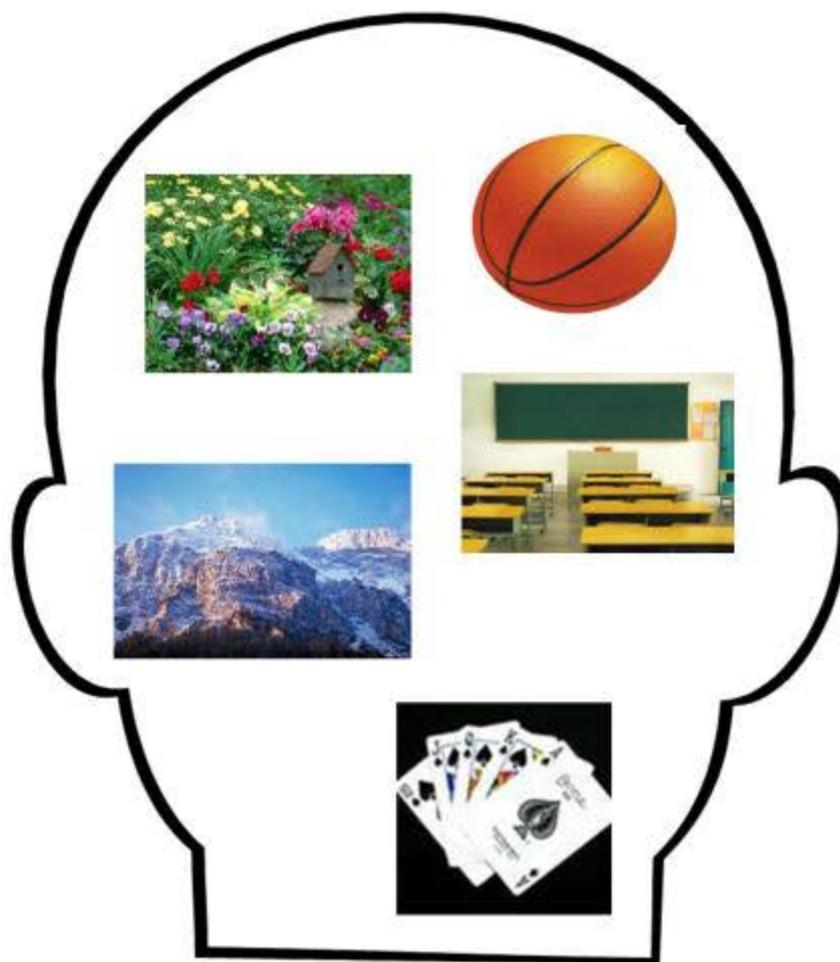
Title of Text \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Step 1</b> Use a real-world example to create a context.	Anchor lesson:
<b>Step 2</b> Give the strategy a name.	"Today, we are going to learn a strategy called
<b>Step 3</b> Define the strategy, how and when it is used, and how it helps with reading.	Strategy definition:  How it helps us comprehend:
<b>Step 4</b> Give students touchstones.	Model hand gesture, explain strategy poster, and refer to anchor lesson.





# My Background Knowledge



# Anchor Lesson for Making Connections

- Have students create their own background knowledge poster or represent their background knowledge some other way
- For example, students create a head shape (bust) out of clay and then tape the thought clouds to toothpicks so that they can stick them into their clay heads. They then present to the entire class where you can lead the discussion afterwards and compare/contrast and make connections to the other students
- Think, Turn, Talk: How does this hands-on activity reinforce the anchor lesson for Making Connections? What ideas do you have to help your students understand the concept of Making Connections and record them for Step 1



## Step 1: Anchor Lesson

Use a real-world example to create a context.



Record what you will do for Step 1 on your orange Cognitive Strategy Lesson Planning Card.

Cognitive Strategy Lesson Planning	
Title of Text _____	
<b>Step 1</b> Use a real-world example to create a context	Anchor lesson: _____
<b>Step 2</b> Give the strategy a name:	Today, we are going to learn a strategy called _____
<b>Step 3</b> Define the strategy, how and when it is used, and how it helps with reading:	Strategy definition: _____  How it helps us comprehend: _____
<b>Step 4</b> Give students touchstones	Model hand gesture, explain strategy poster, and refer to anchor lesson. _____

© 2013 Texas Education Agency / The University of Texas System





## Teaching the Strategy (Steps 2-4)

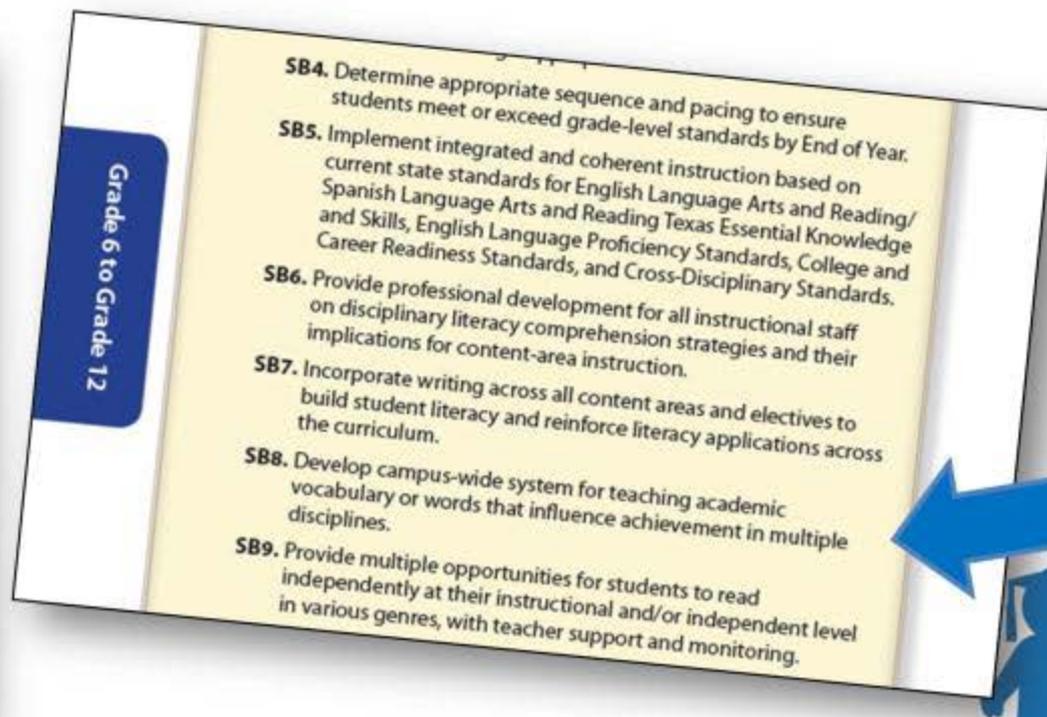
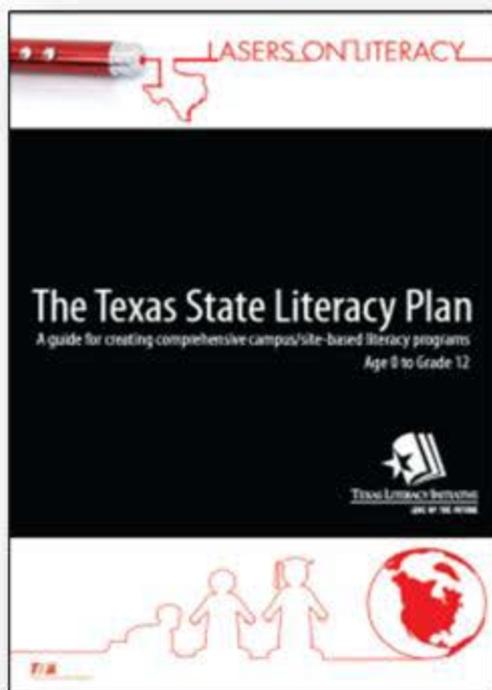
Strategy Instruction		
Direct – Explicit – Systematic		
<b>Responsibility</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Use a real-world example to create a context (anchor lesson).</li><li>2. Give the strategy a name.</li><li>3. Define the strategy, how and when it is used, and how it helps with reading.</li><li>4. Give students touchstones, such as a hand gesture or icon, to help them remember the strategy.</li></ol>	<b>Ongoing Assessment</b>





## Step 2: Give the Strategy a Name

“Today we’re going to learn a strategy called Making Connections.”





## Step 3: Tell Why and How it is Used



### Strategy Definition:

“We are going to learn how to use our background knowledge to help us understand what we are reading. When something in the text reminds us of something we know, we call that making a connection.”

### How it helps us understand:

“When we make connections while reading, it helps us understand and remember the text better.”





## 3 Types of Connections

### Text-to-Self:

“Connections between the text and the reader’s experiences and memories. The more experiences and memories a reader has about a topic, the easier the material is to read.”



(Tovani, 2000)





## 3 Types of Connections

### Text-to-Self:

- What does this story remind you of?
- Can you relate to the characters in the story?
- Does anything in this story remind you of anything in your own life?

<http://www.readwritethink.org/professional-development/strategy-guides/making-connections-30659.html>





## 3 Types of Connections

### Text-to-Text:

“Connections the reader makes between two or more types of texts. The reader may make connections relative to plot, content, structure, or style.”

(Tovani, 2000)



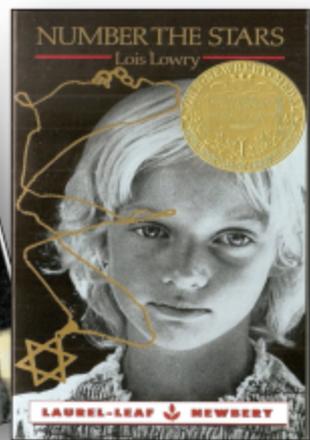
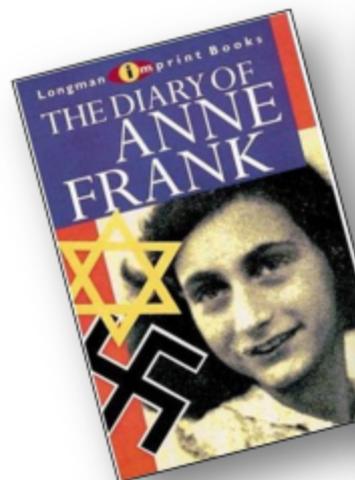


## 3 Types of Connections



### Text-to-Text:

- What does this remind you of in another book you have read?
- How is this text similar to other things you have read?
- How is this text different from other things you have read?



<http://www.readwritethink.org/professional-development/strategy-guides/making-connections-30659.html>





## 3 Types of Connections

### Text-to-World:

“Connections the reader makes between the text and what he knows about the world (facts and information).”

(Tovani, 2000)

“A connection between the text and something that is occurring or has occurred in the world.”

(IRA/NCTA, 2003)





## 3 Types of Connections



### Text-to-World:

- What does this remind you of in the real world?
- How are events in this text similar to things that have happened in the world?
- How are events in this text different from things that have happened in the world?



[http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/c/columbine\\_high\\_school/index.html](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/c/columbine_high_school/index.html)



## Tips (Steps 6-8)

- Introduce text-to-text and text-to-world connections when most students are able to make text-to-self connections.
- Allow students to make connections to non-print texts (i.e. movies, video games, television, and music).
- Use graphic organizers to chart relationships between texts.





## Keep In Mind ...

Making Connections is the foundation for many of the other cognitive strategies good readers use. It is important that students have a good understanding of background knowledge, and how they use their background knowledge to make connections during reading.





“Background knowledge is a repository of memories, experiences, and facts. When information is read in isolation and not connected to existing knowledge, it is forgotten and deemed unimportant. Calling on existing knowledge and experiences is crucial if readers are to assimilate new information.”

~ Cris Tovani

