

Writing Across the Curriculum

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Introduction: Writing Across the Curriculum

What is it?

Teachers across the disciplines use [writing-to-learn](#) and [writing-to-demonstrate-knowledge](#) to enhance the learning of students in all disciplines.

Basic Principles of Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC)

In response to the need of students to learn content using a variety of strategies and their need to practice writing in a variety of contexts, many teachers have adopted the strategies associated with WAC. The following principles underlie WAC:

- Writing promotes learning,
- Integration of writing and the writing process promotes student participation, a diversity of student voices, and engage students as critical thinkers while promoting their texts as important resources and thinking tools,
- Effective writing instruction integrates disciplines,
- Opportunities to write in every class develops good writers,
- Using writing as part of instruction can be used in every classroom,
- Only by practicing the thinking and writing conventions of an academic discipline will students begin to communicate effectively within that discipline.

What's In It For Teachers and Students?

Including writing in instruction has short and long-term benefits. In the short term, students and their teachers are better able to appraise how well they grasp information and where deeper elaboration of key concepts is needed. Students are able to take small pieces of content and analyze it for patterns and connections. In the long run, students who use writing as a technique to learn content have their skills as thinkers developed. Organization, summary, and analysis of content become easier for students, producing richer understandings. Students become more practiced at using writing to communicate their learning and thinking.

Writing is used to initiate discussion, reinforce content, and model the method of inquiry common to the field. Writing can help students discover new knowledge—to sort through previous understandings, draw connections, and uncover new ideas as they write.

Writing-to-Learn activities encourage the kind of reflection on learning that improves students' metacognitive skills. The key to effectively using writing activities in every subject lies in matching the right activity to the learning situation. As you select writing strategies, ask yourself, "How well suited is this task for the objective the students are learning?" "Does this strategy fit my students' abilities and needs?" "Will this strategy complement the way my students will be assessed on the content later?"

Assigned writing in all classes and courses helps students keep their writing skills sharp. Students become better readers, thinkers, and learners in a discipline by processing their ideas through writing. Writing assigned across the curriculum also helps students prepare for the day-in and day-out communicative tasks they'll face on the job, no matter what the job is. Equally important, students need to learn how writing is used within a discipline. Utilizing many different kinds of writing assignments gives students practice with a variety of disciplinary forms and conventions.

So why assign writing in your classes? Students will learn more content and will leave your classroom better prepared to face thinking and communication challenges:

- To communicate information,
- To clarify thinking,
- To learn new concepts and information,

To engage in types of writing practice that will enhance students' future academic and work opportunities.

Definition: Writing-to-Learn

A [writing-to-learn](#) strategy is one that teachers employ throughout and/or at the end of a lesson to engage students and develop big ideas and concepts.

Writing-to-learn fosters critical thinking and learning. It is writing that uses impromptu, short/informal writing tasks designed by the teacher and included throughout the lesson to help students think through key concepts and ideas. Attention is focused on ideas rather than correctness of style, grammar or spelling. It is less structured than disciplinary writing.

This approach frequently uses journals, logs, micro themes, responses to written or oral questions, summaries, free writing, notes, and other writing assignments that align to learning ideas and concepts.

Definition: Writing-to-Demonstrate-Knowledge

A [writing-to-demonstrate-knowledge](#) assignment is one that teachers employ when they assign reports, essays, persuasive writing letters and papers, and research papers.

When writing to demonstrate knowledge, students show what they have learned by synthesizing information and explaining their understanding of concepts and ideas. Students write for an audience with a specific purpose. Products may apply knowledge in new ways or use academic structures for research and/or formal writing.

Examples include essays that deal with specific questions or problems, letters, projects, and more formal assignments or papers prepared over weeks or over a course. Students adhere to format and style guidelines or standards typical of professional papers, such as reports, article reviews, and research papers. These should be checked before being submitted by the student for correctness of spelling, grammar, and transition word usage.

Preface: Writing Across the Curriculum – Social Studies

Writing: An Important Element in Learning Social Studies

Teachers of social studies are faced with the task of assisting students in the acquisition of important knowledge, concepts, and skills. The knowledge, concepts, and skills learned in social studies and other classes will ultimately enable students to become responsible and active citizens.

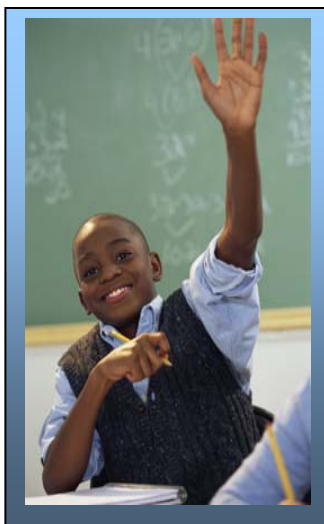
Effective instructional strategies are always sought after and writing strategies can be useful for the teacher of social studies from Kindergarten to Grade 12. Well designed strategies such as the ones demonstrated in this online document, can engage students as critical thinkers who have the ability to integrate knowledge from a variety of topics and disciplines.

This online document was created as a sample of writing across the curriculum strategies which can be applied to the social studies classroom. They include strategies to assist students in mastering the skills of summarizing, analysis, reflection, and evaluation among others. While these strategies will assist students in becoming better writers, the main focus of these strategies is to assist students in a deeper understanding of social studies. The importance of these strategies is that they promote deep understanding of the knowledge, content, and skills of the social studies discipline being taught.

Each strategy includes a quick definition of the strategy and what it does. In addition, each page has instructions on how to implement the strategy and an example of how it could be used in the social studies classroom. This online guide is not exhaustive. Each of the strategies included can be investigated further by interested teachers. All of the Strategies have been researched and found effective.

It is our hope that teachers of social studies in grades 3 to 12 will give careful consideration to each of these proven strategies, and add them to their repertoire of effective instructional strategies.

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Writing-to-Learn: Social Studies

What is it?

A writing-to-learn strategy is one that teachers employ throughout and/or at the end of a lesson to engage students and develop big ideas and concepts.

Strategy: GIST- Generating Interactions between Schemata and Texts

GIST (Cunningham 1982) is a strategy designed to help students learn to write organized and concise summaries. Summaries *restate only* the author's *main ideas*, omitting all examples and evidence used in supporting and illustrating points. For students who are at a loss as how to put a reading into their own words, GIST can be used as a step by step method.

What does it do?

When students summarize paragraphs of text in "their own words" they are a step closer to making the information their own. Bloom identified summarizing as a method to increase comprehension.

How to implement:

The teacher should begin with modeling the technique by coaching the class through a paragraph. After modeling assign a reading for students to do independently.

	1) Read the first sentence and summarize its contents in fifteen words or less.
	2) Read the second sentence and summarize the <i>two</i> sentences in fifteen words or less.
	3) Read the third sentence and summarize the <i>three</i> sentences in fifteen words or less.
	4) Continue until the paragraph is read.
	5) Then summarize the entire paragraph in fifteen words or less.

Writing-to-Learn: Social Studies

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Strategy: Introduction to a Famous Person

Writing an introduction utilizes the RAFT writing strategy. Students (the ones making the introduction) must identify the role they are taking, and then prepare the introduction (**f**ormat) of the person based on the **a**udience, and when and where they are making the introduction (**t**opic).

What does it do?

Requires students to apply, analyze, and synthesize information.

How to implement:

The teacher assigns student pairs the Role, Audience, Format (in this case *an Introduction*), and Topic. Teachers should model the strategy by creating an appropriate introduction by coaching the class through the elements. Working in pairs, students should then write an appropriate introduction to the person they were assigned. Here is an example from United States history: A Populist leader (**r**) speaking to a Populist/Democratic audience (**a**) making the introduction for the guest speaker-candidate William Jennings Bryan (**f**) at a political rally during the campaign for President of 1896 (**t**).

“My friends I have the honor of presenting to you one of Nebraska’s finest citizens, a man who knows the heart of the farmers and working men and women across this great land. A man not afraid to take on the conspiracy of the “gold bugs” whose one aim is to keep themselves wealthy and preventing honest families from making a living. A man who has already distinguished himself at his young age in the Congress of the United States by fighting against the repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act. My good friends I present to you our next President of the United States of America William Jennings Bryan.”

Writing-to-Learn: Social Studies

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Strategy: Learning Logs

Students use a spiral notebook, three-ring notebook or other convenient booklet that is specified for impromptu writing assignments to assist students in their learning of content information. Students write whenever the teacher thinks that writing will be beneficial. Students might write at the beginning of class to access their prior knowledge about the topic to be studied or to generate ideas related to the objectives of the lesson. They write during the lesson to reinforce ideas or organize their thinking. End of class writing often helps students consolidate their thoughts, (express concerns, or raise issues and problems that need to be clarified or explored further).

The teacher monitors student writing by walking the aisles conducting “spot checks.” These informal walks provide the teacher with information about what needs to be reviewed or needs more emphasis during instruction on that day or in upcoming lessons. Effective routines such as beginning the day or class period with a learning log prompt or using timed writings in which students are given specified limits assist students with their writing. The teacher should choose 2-3 exemplary entries to project as models for the class. These may be considered exemplary because they use the emphasized content vocabulary or because they demonstrate praiseworthy evidence of understanding.

What does it do?

Learning logs require students to paraphrase, summarize, and apply knowledge. The learning log also can provide a jumping-off point for projects and other writing assignments to demonstrate knowledge in essays, reports, and PowerPoint presentations.

How to implement:

Consider using the following instructions when learning logs are used before a lesson.

- Summarize the previous day’s learning.

- Identify what is known about today's topic. Predict what will be taught and learned today based on what you know.
- Write questions that you would like to have answered about today's topic. Explain why.
- Explain why your homework task gave you difficulty or was easy.
- Describe uses for what you learned yesterday in real life settings.

Consider using the following ideas when learning logs are used during a lesson to document learning as it is taking place.

- At logical points during the lesson, pause to have students write a paraphrase of the concepts being presented.
- Stop to check comprehension. Have students write down one thing that is puzzling about the discussion or reading.

Consider using the following instructions after the lesson when using learning logs to consolidate thinking, reflect, apply, and review what has been learned.

- Ask students to compare the concept with a previous concept learned.
- Ask students to summarize the lesson using the key vocabulary.
- Ask students to provide an explanation of the most difficult part of the lesson.

Ask students to write questions and answers at two specified levels and then label the types of questions: 1) literal questions (fact based), or 2) inferential questions ("why" questions).

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Strategy: List-Group-Label

Using their texts or a selected reading, students list words important to a topic, then students group and label words.

What does it do?

Assists students with moving from specifics to concepts or big ideas by looking for similarities in words on the word list and deciding where to place words.

How to implement:

peace	Britain	delegates	govern	Samuel Adams
Thomas Jefferson	British Colonies	King George	Colonial leaders	
Declaration of Independence		Parliament	Continental Congress	

Students use their textbooks or vocabulary encountered from a learning experience (viewing a DVD, reading or viewing a primary source document, completing online research, etc.) to generate a list of words important to the topic. This should be done as a class or in small cooperative teams. Using their lists, students work in cooperative teams to group words together that have similar characteristics (e.g., revolutionary leaders). Each cooperative team then shares their groupings with the class by explaining their decisions. Finally, the teacher takes a group and label generated by one of the cooperative teams and asks students to add more examples to the group, challenging the class to come up with non-examples as well.

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Strategy: Microthemes-Summary

Microthemes are short writings on 5"x8" note cards or a piece of paper that size. The student responds to a teacher-assigned topic. Microtheme writing requires students to plan their writing carefully because their space is limited. An alternative point of view must be objectively explained in microtheme writing.

What does it do?

Typically microtheme writing is described as "a little bit of writing preceded by a great deal of thinking." Students are challenged to summarize a topic, argument, or theme, and objectively state an alternative point of view.

How to implement:

Assign a topic to the entire class with a rubric for scoring. Students may not change the amount of space - 5"x8" on which they have to write, or if you choose, word process their answer. Teachers should debrief the assignment by using note cards that reflect an understanding of the assignment and that identify the needed or important elements. This is particularly important for the first time this type of writing-to-learn strategy is used.

Here is an example of a topic assignment and answer - What is meant by the concept of a (free) market system? What would opponents to this economic system say is wrong with a country using the market system?

A market system is the free exchange of goods and services between buyers and sellers with little or no government control. In a market system, individuals make the decisions that guide the direction of the economy. The forces of supply and demand are the key factors involved. Critics would say that many services such as roads, libraries, and centers for disease control are necessary in a modern country, but could not efficiently be provided by a free market system. In addition, without government controls the production of food and drugs could not be regulated. Critics would say matters of national security and safety should not be left to supply and demand.

Writing-to-Learn: Social Studies

What is it?

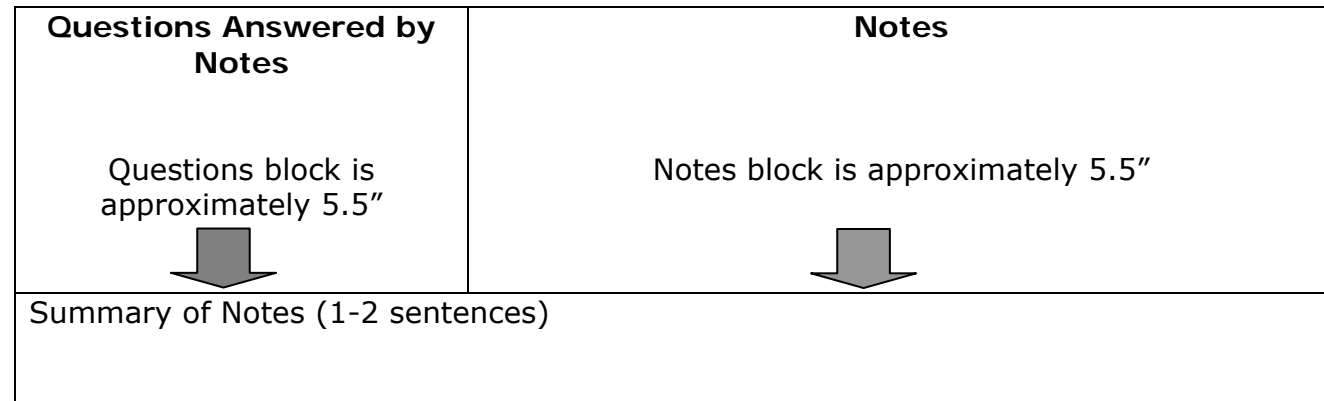
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Strategy: Note taking-Cornell System

A format for taking notes that uses boxes. It requires students to process material as they are learning it by formulating questions, summarizing, and analyzing. Students can draw lines or simply fold notebook paper to form the blocks.



What does it do?

Assists students in understanding and remembering what they read or view. Helps students make connections, develop questions, and analyze what they have read, viewed, or learned.

How to implement:

Students use the right side of the organizer to take notes while viewing, reading, or listening. After the note taking session is completed, students read through the notes and develop questions that the notes would answer. Finally, students summarize the main idea(s) in one or two sentences. After their notes are complete, students share and discuss their notes with other students.

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Strategy: Question-Answer Relationship (QAR)

QAR is a way of describing for students that there are four types of questions and possible places for finding answers to those questions. Pearson and Johnson (1978) described the four types of questions as textually explicit (literally stated in the text); textually implicit (suggested or implied by the text); and script implicit (in the reader's background knowledge or "script" inside the reader's head). These are known as *Right There*, *Think and Search*, and *On Your Own* type questions.

What does it do?

Assists students in identifying the "type" of question they are encountering, so they will employ the correct skills to find an answer. This technique reinforces students ability to comprehend and retain knowledge by using the strategic reading habit of applying their background knowledge and experiences to infer answers and make connections to other knowledge.

How to implement:

After reading, viewing, or listening, students work in small groups to write questions in the three categories about the material just presented. Students should trade questions with another group, answer them, and then give feed back on the categorization of the questions they answered.

Writing-to-Learn: Social Studies

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Strategy: Quick Writes

Quick Writing is a motivating, pre-reading activity that prepares students for reading new material or reviewing material in preparation for understanding new information to be read.

What does it do?

Provides the teacher with information about students' prior knowledge about a subject. Also helps students self-assess their own pool of information, as well as monitor their own understanding.

How to implement:

Quick Writes can be used for any area being studied and adapted to the reading ability of the students.

1. Begin by asking students to respond in writing to a question that relates to material that has already been explored or a new curriculum topic to be taught.
2. After the students have written down their answers to the questions posed, ask the students to share their ideas. These are written down on the blackboard or overhead.
3. The teacher can then determine the prior knowledge of the class before introducing a new unit or to determine their level of understanding of material already taught.

Writing-to-Learn: Social Studies

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Strategy: RAFT – Role, Audience, Format, and Topic

RAFT is an acronym for a structured technique used to guide student writing. RAFT assignments are used to demonstrate a student’s knowledge using a defined point of view. This strategy requires students to write using an assigned format to an audience other than the teacher.

What does it do?

Students must use analysis, synthesis, generalization, and evaluation of information and the points of view of others to credibly write using the assigned format.

How to implement:

RAFT writing assignments are written from the viewpoint of a selected person. RAFT can be used to begin or conclude a unit. At the beginning of a unit, a RAFT writing assignment can assess the students’ background knowledge. At the end of a unit, it can be used to summarize the main ideas and concepts. The strategy guides students to think from the perspective of others, to consider how to tailor writing for different audiences, and to vary formats according to the purpose for the writing.

Students use the acronym to think through and plan their writing:

R- stands for the **Role** of the writer. Who or what are you?

A- stands for the **Audience**. Who are you addressing?

F- stands for **Format**. What form will the writing take: letter, editorial, diary, memo, etc?

T- stands for **Topic** and **strong verb**. What will you write about? Why?

This is an example of a writing assignment in Michigan studies:

Write a speech for a Michigan senator speaking to the Michigan senate in 1956 that supports the construction of the Mackinac Bridge. Below is a chart of some roles and audiences to assist you with creating a RAFT writing assignment.

RAFT Roles and Audiences

ad agencies	community leaders	minority groups	rock stars
administrators	competitors	monarchs	sales persons
admirers	confidantes	movie stars	scientists
arbitrators	critics	museums	senators
artists	crooks	news anchor	senior citizens
athletes	custodians	newspaper editors	settlers
businesses	customers	NATO	significant others
cabinet members	(professional)	older students	social leaders
cartoonists	dancers	Olympic Committee	state departments
caretakers	the deceased	organizations	stores
caricatures	delegations	other classes	students
case study subjects	dignitaries	parents	supporters
castoffs	diplomats	past and present	talk show hosts
casualties of war	doctors	politicians	teachers
catastrophe	drama clubs	pen pals	theatres
caucuses	ecologists	philanthropists	think tanks
CEOs	economists	policy makers	travel agencies
chairpersons	editors	political parties	TV characters
chambers of	grass roots	POWs	TV stations
commerce	leadership	presidents	unions
champions	historians	professors	universities
characters from	historical figures	publishers	victims
texts	homesteaders	radio stations	visionaries
charities	the homeless	reformers	war heroes
classical musicians	hospital patients	relatives	the wealthy
clergymen	journalists	representatives	writers
client	lawyers	researchers	younger students
colleges	lobbyists	restaurants	
commanders			

Examples of RAFT Formats

acceptance letter	how-to book	personal	science fiction story
advertisement	human interest	correspondence	series
advice	story	personal narrative	science notes
apology	inaugural speech	photo essay	scripts
application	internal dialogue	photos and captions	sermon
autobiography	inquiry	placards	ship's log
biography	interviews	play	short story
book jacket	invitation	poetry	simulated memoir
caption	job description	posters	sketches
cartoon	jokes	position statement	skits
commercial	journals	PowerPoint	slogans
complaint	legal brief	presentation	song
confession	letter to the editor	prayer	sonnets
congratulations	letters	prediction	sound tapes
contest entry	limerick	profiles	tall tale
conversation	list	promotional	technical advice
dialogues	magazine	prophecy	technical manual
diary entry	marriage proposal	protest	telegrams
dictionary entry	memoirs	public statements	telephone dialogue
dramatic	math notes	public notice	travelogue
monologues	memos	radio play	TV script
editorial	message to the	radio script	undercover report
epitaph	future	recommendation	wanted poster
essay	metaphors	rejection	war communiqué
eulogy	minutes of meeting	reminiscences &	warning
expense account	monologue	memories	"Who Done It"
farewell	mystery	report	will
fax message	news story	requests	written debates
fiction	nomination speech	resignation	yearbook
film flyers	novelette	resume	YAL book
graffiti	obituary	reviews	
	observation papers	riddles	
	pamphlets	rules and	
		regulations	

Examples of Strong Verbs

appreciate
berate
boast
brag
convince

criticize
debate
demand
entertain
entreat

inform
object
offer
pacify
persuade

plead
praise
refute
warn
whine

Writing-to-Learn: Social Studies

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Strategy: Reading Response Journal

Journals have successfully been used as a means for students to express their thoughts, feelings, and reactions about reading.

What does it do?

Journals help students think about and reflect on what they read. They assist students in discovering what they know, in asking questions, in confidently sharing their observations and opinions, and in clarifying their understanding. Journal entries provide the teacher with an opportunity to assess students' comprehension and critical-thinking abilities.

How to implement?

- Students are instructed to always write down the date, title, author, chapter, and page of the text to which they are responding.
- Students meet the expectations set for completing one or more thoughtful responses during reading or homework time.
- Responses are usually at least one page in length; however expectations may vary based upon abilities of students.
- Carefully crafted prompts must align with learning goals. Find or create prompts and activities that help students respond in ways meaningful to them. The more engaged students are in the writing, the more assessment information that can be gleaned about what students know, think, and can do.
- In the beginning, the teacher models the strategy by using his or her own response journal.
- Some options include:
 1. Making predictions about what will happen next,
 2. Explaining why the student liked or disliked the text,
 3. Writing a personal reaction to the text,
 4. Using graphic organizers,
 5. Taking notes,
 6. Recording imagery associated with the reading,
 7. Recording vocabulary and/or definitions.

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Strategy: Skimming and Scanning

Requires the student to overview the chapter or section to be read and use the text features (titles, headings, subheadings, captions, bolded words, lists, charts, graphs, photographs, and visuals) to create two lists: *Impressions and Questions*, and *Quick Facts*. The purposes of skimming and scanning are to create a context for reading and to activate prior knowledge.

What does it do?

Previewing text is critical to understanding it. Skimming and Scanning enables students to practice the skill of scanning text prior to reading, and to locate the portions of the text that fits their purpose for reading while previewing the text to organize information.

How to implement:

Assign a portion of the text to Skim and Scan. Students should use a two column organizer to preview the chapter for *Impressions and Questions* and *Quick Facts*.

<i>Impressions and Questions</i>	<i>Quick Facts</i>

Students work in pairs to skim and scan the assigned reading, ending by discussing what they believe the chapter will be about. Using their organizer, students should record quick factual information they learned by skimming and scanning, and questions and impressions about the text.

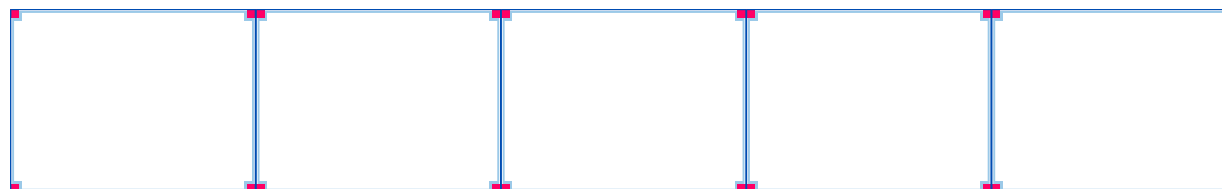
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Strategy: Strip Stories (story board graphics)



After students participate in an activity (inquiry, reading one or multiple texts, research online, watching a DVD or play), they are given a finite number of boxes to sequence and retell the important elements of the activity. Each box should include a thought or speech bubble.

What does it do?

Engages students in sequencing, using cause and effect reasoning, synthesizing, and identifying main or big ideas. Using a limited amount of boxes forces students to choose only the most important elements of the experience.

How to implement:

The age and ability of the students will affect how the strip story is completed. One box could be completed after each segment is read or experienced, or the strip story could be constructed all at once as a way of checking for understanding at the end of the experience. After the students' strip stories are completed, they should be used as the basis for small group discussion. After the discussion is concluded, each student should write a paragraph about the main idea of the experience.

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Strategy: Summarizing

Requires students to use their own words to explain the concepts, ideas, or narrative around which the lesson was built. A summary provides the most important points of the text. It should be brief (short). Furthermore, the summary should be written as much as possible in one's own words. It should contain only the main ideas and does not include explanations or examples.

What does it do?

Requiring students to restate the main idea(s) in "their own language" builds understanding and surfaces misunderstandings and misconceptions. It also helps students make their own connections, and raise questions about the reading or learning experience.

How to implement:

The teacher should model with the class the process of writing a summary on the board. Working in pairs, students should then create a summary of an assigned reading using the main points listed below:

1. Before beginning a summary, identify the main points of the text.
2. Underline/highlight and/or take notes on the text.
3. Write a sentence which includes the author's main idea or purpose for writing the text or creating the experience. To do this, identify the topic (subject of the reading, listening or acting [role playing or simulation] activity) and then identify what the author says about the topic. This sentence is the topic sentence (main sentence) of your summary.
4. Use your own words. If the author's words are used, use quotation marks and give the page number.
5. Give the major supporting information which the author gives to explain the main idea.

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Strategy: Thinking Maps to Outlines

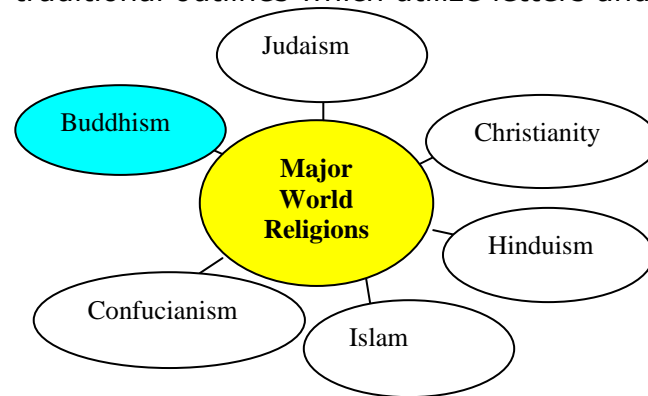
A structured thinking map and an outline accomplish the same goal but use two different formats - one formal and one less formal. Thinking maps, the less formal of the two, uses circles and lines to show relationships, while outlines show them through the systematic use of letters and numbers.

What does it do?

The use of structured thinking maps and outlines start with the topic and branch to main categories and subcategories. This work requires students to locate main ideas, support information, interpret, generalize, paraphrase, differentiate, and categorize.

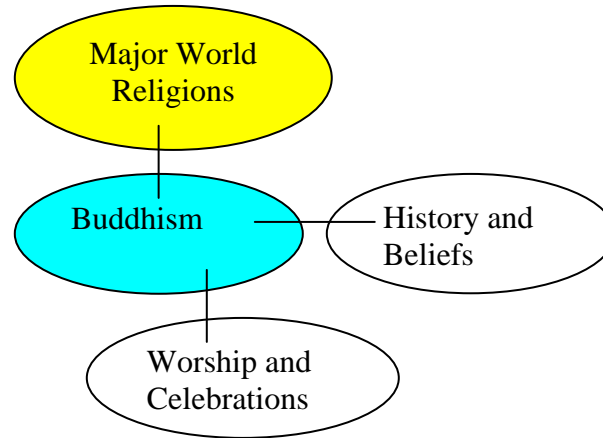
How to implement:

Teacher instruction will be necessary for both structured thinking maps and more traditional outlines which utilize letters and numbers.



Major World Religions	
I.	Christianity A. History and beliefs B. Worship and celebrations
II.	Hinduism A. History and beliefs B. Worship and celebrations
III.	Islam A. History and beliefs B. Worship and celebrations
IV.	Judaism A. History and beliefs B. Worship and celebrations, etc.

Structured thinking maps begin with the traditional circle mapping procedure and continue as students determine what subtopics will be included. In the example provided the student will be creating an outline for the major religions of the world. The thinking map first identifies the major world religions they have been taught and then the subtopics. In this example, the same subtopics (this will not always be the case) will be explored for all six religions. An example of how this will look is presented here:



Writing-to-Learn: Social Studies

What is it?

Writing-to-learn

fosters critical thinking and learning. It is writing that uses impromptu, short, or informal writing tasks, designed by the teacher, which are included throughout the lesson to help students think through key concepts and ideas.

Strategy: Word Bank

Writing from a word bank is a strategy used from the earliest grades. Students write a paragraph utilizing words that the teacher has pre-selected.

What does it do?

Requires students to use the concepts and ideas around which the lesson was built. Using a defined set of words assists students to make connections while focusing on the vocabulary of the unit of study.

How to implement:

The teacher selects a set of related words. Then students use the word bank to create a paragraph which summarizes what they have learned and connects the words in a meaningful way.

elevation	oxygen	mountains	altitude
climate	atmosphere	The Andes	adapt

Some people who live in the Andes Mountains must adapt their lives to living at a high altitude. The elevation of the mountains affects both the climate and the density of the oxygen.

Writing-to-Demonstrate-Knowledge: Social Studies

What is it?

Instructional technique that guides a learner through the selection of a topic, understanding of the purpose, drafting, editing, revising, and "publication" of a finished work.

Strategy: Process Writing

Teachers guide students through the ongoing phases of planning/prewriting, drafting, revising, editing (proofreading and correcting), and publishing (sharing by some means). Stages are interactive. Students move back and forth between stages. Changes made in one area may require returning to a step already completed.

What does it do?

Engages students in generating, capturing, and organizing ideas, writing a rough draft, finding ways to improve the text, attending to spelling and grammar in the draft, and publishing.

How to implement:

As students engage in writing to demonstrate knowledge, we often expect the writing product or project to go through the stages provided below:

- **Prewriting** (brainstorming) is considered the most crucial of the stages. Writers get ready to write by deciding on a topic, identifying an audience and purpose, determining the appropriate form for the piece, and gathering ideas and data. Students often ask themselves: What should I write about? What do I already know? Where can I find more on the topic? Who is this being written for? What do I want my audience to know?
- **Drafting** (composing) provides an opportunity for demonstrating and applying knowledge in a final product. However, during this stage students let their creativity flow. They should write without being concerned about the mechanics of spelling, punctuation, or grammar and with an awareness that their first drafts are not finished products. Any draft can continue to be improved. Students put ideas on paper, revise as they write, and seek reactions or responses from other students. The strategy often entails producing multiple drafts.
- **Revising** helps students clarify and shape meaning as well as organize their writing. The student is encouraged to rethink, add, substitute, delete and move words and ideas around as they rework content and polish their pieces. Authors read their writing in

pairs, writing circles, and in conferences with their teacher. Listeners respond by noting what they liked best and by making suggestions for improvement. The response is aimed at clarifying confusions about the intent of the message and text. The writer chooses whether or not to incorporate suggestions or ignore them. They ask: Does it say what I wanted it to say? How can I make it clearer? How can I convey my message more effectively? What is missing? What needs to be deleted? Does the text need to be reordered? Does the paper make sense?

- **Editing** is the stage in which the student takes another look, polishing the piece by attending to surface errors. Students are guided to understand that errors can interfere with meaning and distract readers from understanding the message. Students proof their work using checklists and rubrics. They check for capitalization, complete sentences, grammar, paragraph structure, punctuation, spelling, and vocabulary.
- **Publishing** is complete when the text satisfactorily meets reorganization and editing requirements. A high standard should be set for content and mechanics.

Writing-to-Demonstrate-Knowledge: Social Studies

What is it?

When **writing-to-demonstrate-knowledge**, students show what they have learned by synthesizing information and explaining or applying their understanding of concepts and ideas. Students write for an audience with a specific purpose. Products may apply knowledge in new ways or use academic structures for research and/or formal writing.

Form/Format: Essay Writing

An essay is a piece of writing, usually from an author's personal point of view. Essays are non-fiction writing that support thesis statements. They conform to all rules of grammar and punctuation.

What does it do?

Essay writing provides opportunities for students to develop their ideas about a topic, express a point of view, or persuade the reader to accept their thesis. To write an essay, a student must use skills of analysis, synthesis, summary, and evaluation.

How to implement:

Students should know where on the continuum of writing formality their teacher's expectations are for the essay they are assigned to write. Some common differences are:

Formal	Informal
Third person point of view Never uses contractions Has a serious official sound Factual	May use first person Contractions are acceptable More like a conversation More emotional

Teachers should provide students with guidelines for essay writing. A sample of guidelines commonly used are:

1. Develop a limited topic which is well defined and debatable and that has more than one side.
2. The writer must understand other sides of the position so that the strongest information to counter the other side can be presented.
3. Develop the statement of position. The topic sentence cannot be a fact as facts cannot be debated. The statement should direct readers to follow the writer's logic towards a specifically stated conclusion.

4. In preplanning the essay, generate and then use at least three reasons that support the position. Introduce these in the same introductory paragraph.
5. Reasons introduced in the opening introductory paragraph should be the topics of paragraphs in the body of the paper. They should be supported with additional separate facts.
6. The body of the essay uses specific evidence, examples and statistics rather than generalizations or personal opinions. Each topic sentence has been introduced in the introduction. Additional sentences closely relate to the topic and the sentence before it.
7. Use adequate transitions between paragraphs so that the reader follows the writer's logic.
8. Clearly redefine the topic and restate the most compelling evidence, remembering that this is the last chance to be convincing. Do not introduce new material in the conclusion.

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Form/Format: Persuasive Civic Writing

This type of persuasive writing is very specific. It is writing focused on an issue of public policy and is intended to persuade public policy makers and other citizens to adopt a particular position. Persuasive civic writing is modeled in the editorial sections of newspapers and magazines across the United States. It is considered to be an important skill for all citizens.

What does it do?

Persuasive civic writing requires that students study the facts and then use their knowledge and values to formulate a position. Reasonable people with access to the same knowledge will often disagree on the correct course of action based on their own personal and political values. Persuasive civic writing requires students to use their ability to interpret and synthesize information, analyze and evaluate credible arguments, and develop a position.

How to implement:

Review with students the framework used by many editorial writers.

1. Clearly state and support your position.
2. Use factual information to support your position.
3. Support your position with data.
4. Use a core democratic value to support your position.
5. Acknowledge a reasonable argument someone with an opposing viewpoint might make and refute it.

Practice persuasive civic writing with questions of public policy on issues that reasonable people would hold opposing views.

Writing-to-Demonstrate-Knowledge: Social Studies

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Form/Format: Report Writing

Usually shorter in length and scope than a research paper, a report describes and summarizes the findings of an individual or group following a systematic inquiry or an examination of a series of incidents, conversations, studies, interpretation or observations. The purpose of the work is to persuade or inform an audience using factual material.

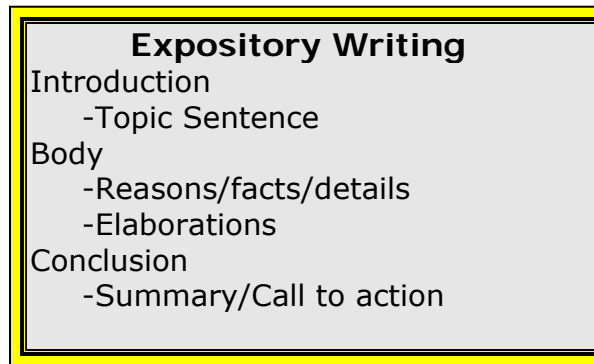
What does it do?

To record research, decisions and/or events, to record progress on a task, to inform or persuade an audience with factual material. Using a predetermined format, the report requires students to define, apply and analyze information. Synthesizing, summarizing, and evaluating information are skills needed in report writing.

Characteristics:

Teachers recognize the following common elements:

- Teacher-selected topic,
- Writing which requires: prioritizing, summarizing, generalizing, paraphrasing, or sequencing,
- Writing which uses the expository structure.



- Statement(s) or bibliography on how, and from where, the information was gathered using accurate citations and references, including footnotes and endnotes

- Topical or chronological development
- Inclusion of paraphrasing/indirect speech and quotes
- A summary which can be provided at the beginning (an abstract) or at the end (conclusion)
- For longer written reports, an organization that includes a title, headings, subheadings, and table of contents

How to implement:

Instruction in report writing is necessary to prevent rambling or plagiarized assignments. It should include:

- Gathering information and taking notes,
- Creating the introduction,
- Supporting the body with evidence and examples,
- Summarizing the main points in a conclusion,
- Citing resources and web sites.

The student or teacher identifies a topic to be explored and reported on. An organized search is planned and conducted by a student or a group of students. The group summarizes their findings and takes the writing through the writing process using a rubric or checklist to define quality. Students must pay attention to both the accuracy of their content and the mechanics of good writing. The traditional framework for expository writing includes an introduction, body, and conclusion. Students should include a bibliography of books, web sites, and other resources.

Writing-to-Demonstrate-Knowledge: Social Studies

What is it?

When **writing-to-demonstrate-knowledge** students show what they have learned by synthesizing information and explaining or applying their understanding of concepts and ideas.

Form/Format: Research Report

The research report is an informational text produced as part of a research project. It summarizes the intent, process, sequence, and content of research, provable findings, and conclusions. Research preceding the report is completed through a systematic inquiry into a subject or problem in order to discover, verify, or revise relevant facts or principles relating to that subject or problem. Credible reporting requires credible research questions and procedures.

What does it do?

Provides an opportunity for students to demonstrate their comprehensive knowledge of a topic in a structured format.

How to implement:

It is necessary for students to receive instruction on the following topics prior to writing a research report.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Selecting a topic• Narrowing the topic• Asking questions about the topic• Gathering information• Taking notes• Creating a position or thesis statement• Creating the <i>introduction</i>• Supporting the <i>body</i> with evidence and examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Summarizing the main points in the <i>conclusion</i>• Avoiding plagiarism• Outlining or mapping to create organization• Citing works and web sites• Critiquing the credibility of websites and web authors• Prewriting the first draft• Revising• Editing the final draft
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Writing-to-Demonstrate-Knowledge: Social Studies

What is it?

When [writing-to-demonstrate-knowledge](#), students show what they have learned by synthesizing information and explaining or applying their understanding of concepts and ideas. Students write for an audience with a specific purpose. Products may apply knowledge in new ways or use academic structures for research and/or formal writing.

Form/Format: Using Narrative Writing to Demonstrate Knowledge

The narrative writing basic format is beginning, middle, and end using character, settings and plot. The goal of this type of writing is to demonstrate knowledge learned about individuals, events, causes, and consequences.

When to use it?

When used to demonstrate knowledge, the narrative writing format can reveal students' knowledge of nuances of character. It also lends itself to rich descriptions of place and time. It is effectively used when the personalities, talents, and leadership capabilities of real-life people are important to understanding the topic or when the setting is unique. Writing in this way requires empathy on the part of the student. The details of the story assist the student in analyzing the actions of the individuals.

Characteristics:

Narrative writing in social studies is characterized by being:

- Written in first or third person,
- Telling a story using character, setting, and plot,
- Using dialogue,
- Organizing events sequentially, but may include flashbacks or flash-forwards,
- Demonstrating factual accuracy.

How to Implement:

Use when the topic has strong characters, a strong timeline or setting which is significant and rich in detail (e.g., autobiography, biography, historical memoir). When using this type of writing in social studies, students should work together to create:

- a "story" of importance and accuracy,
- vivid depiction of characters and setting by "showing" the reader the setting or individual(s) using descriptive words,
- presentation of the events in clear and chronological order.