

# Subarea 1: English Language Arts

## Objective 0001

---

### Understands the foundations of reading development.

The following topics are covered under the subject area of Objective 0001:

- Demonstrating knowledge of the developmental progression from prereading to conventional literacy, with individual variations, and analyzing how literacy develops in multiple contexts through reading, writing, and oral language experiences
- Defining phonological awareness and phonemic awareness and analyzing their roles in reading development
- Demonstrating knowledge of concepts about print (e.g., book-handling skills, awareness that print carries meaning, recognition of directionality, ability to track print, ability to recognize and name letters)
- Demonstrating knowledge of the alphabetic principle and analyzing how emergent readers use this principle to master letter-sound correspondence and to decode simple words
- Demonstrating knowledge of a variety of word identification strategies, including use of phonics, use of semantic and syntactic cues, content clues, syllabication, analysis of word structure (e.g., roots, prefixes, suffixes), and use of sight-word recognition
- Analyzing factors that affect a reader's ability to construct meaning from texts (e.g., word recognition, reading fluency, vocabulary development, context clues, visual cues, prior knowledge, and experience)

### Levels of Literacy Development

There is a developmental progression from prereading to the attainment of conventional literacy. Prereading is also referred to as reading readiness and emergent literacy. **Prereading** refers to all the knowledge, skills, and experiences that are the precursors to the attainment of conventional literacy. The development of some aspects of prereading can begin when children are infants and toddlers and learn to associate pleasure with sharing books with their parents or other caretakers. As preschoolers have additional prereading experiences, they develop both the oral and written skills that are necessary to attain conventional literacy. Young children gain the oral vocabulary that will be used in reading texts, learn sentence structure, develop phonological awareness, and learn to tell oral narratives. They also begin to gain exposure to print and learn its various uses. Later, children learn the names and sounds of letters, gain a deeper understanding of story and text structure, develop awareness of print, and learn to use multiple cueing systems to decode print. They also learn the conventions of writing and write, supplementing their knowledge of conventional spelling with invented spelling. Eventually, children master conventional literacy.

All children progress at their own pace in their literacy development. Since literacy is a complex system, it is based on many factors. Thus, it is important that teachers conduct frequent evaluations of emergent readers. Many measures can be used to gauge a student's progression from prereading to conventional literacy. Teachers should assess emergent readers' understanding of how texts work and their knowledge of phonemic awareness, the alphabet, and phonics. Another assessment that is often used in measuring a student's literacy development is the running record. A running record is created by having each student individually read an excerpt from a book while the teacher notes the student's errors.

The development of literacy occurs in multiple contexts in the school, home, and community. It is important in the school context to provide students with reading, writing, and oral language experiences. Balanced literacy models provide students with emerging literacy with a variety of reading, writing, and oral language experiences including read-alouds, shared reading and writing, and guided reading and writing. Some of these activities are done with students individually or in small groups so that they can be adapted to the developmental level of the students. For example, in a lower elementary classroom, some books can be labeled by level so students can easily find books that are "just right" for their reading abilities.

## Phonological and Phonemic Awareness

One of the foundations of reading development is phonological awareness. To read, students must learn that individual sounds can be combined into syllables to form words and that words can be combined to form sentences. **Phonological awareness** is the broad term used for the development of the skills of identification and manipulation of the components of language: sentences, words, and phonemes.

Phonemic awareness is one important component of phonological awareness. **Phonemes** are the individual sounds in words. **Phonemic awareness** is the ability to identify and manipulate the individual sounds in words. Phonemic awareness is often developed through tasks that are done orally because the development of phonemic awareness can occur before students have learned the written alphabetic system. There are five major types of tasks that students must master when developing phonemic awareness. The first of these tasks is to recognize that sets of words have similar sounds. For example, students can learn to identify the rhyming words in a sentence. Second, students can learn to examine a set of words and determine which one has sounds that are not like the others. This is sometimes called an **oddity task**. Third, students can learn how to blend sounds to create words. Fourth, students can learn to divide words into their phonemes (segmenting words) and count the number of sounds in a word. Finally, students can learn how to manipulate the sounds in a word by substituting or deleting one or multiple phonemes. Some students develop phonemic awareness without formal instruction by being exposed to language through participating in read-alouds and naturally developing an understanding of oral language; however, phonemic awareness is also developed through classroom instruction in early childhood classrooms.

Phonological awareness plays a crucial role in reading development. English uses an alphabetic system of writing that is based on the sounds of individual words. Phonological awareness is required for students to benefit from phonics instruction. If students understand the concept that words are composed of sounds, they will more readily be able to begin learning the written letters that are used to represent sounds in print. Phonological awareness is also a prerequisite to learning to spell. As students gain a better understanding of the phonemes in a word, they can use this understanding when they are trying to represent sounds in writing. Explicit, focused, and sequential instruction in phonemic awareness has been shown to increase reading and spelling abilities. Many assessments of beginning reading include measures of phonemic awareness, and it is important for early childhood teachers to monitor their students' growing understanding of phonemic awareness. Some reading difficulties are caused by students' limited development of phonemic awareness.

## Print Concepts

One of the foundations for learning to read is developing an understanding about how text works to communicate a message. Helping students learn concepts about print includes teaching early readers how to handle books, learn the vocabulary that readers use to describe aspects of text, locate and track print, and recognize the letters of the alphabet. While students can develop many of the concepts about print from shared reading experiences, classroom read-alouds, and early independent reading experiences, teachers will also want to explicitly draw attention to certain concepts about print as part of their instruction for beginning readers.

First, students should have many experiences handling books and having books read to them so that they develop book-handling skills. Students need to learn the parts of the book and how to find the front cover and the beginning of the story. Students also need to learn to differentiate between text and pictures. They need many experiences with print to recognize that letters written in different fonts, colors, and sizes all carry meaning.

Second, students need to learn the meta-language that readers use to describe text. One important concept is being able to distinguish between letters, words, and sentences. Students also need to learn the conventions of written English. Two important conventions include leaving a space between words and ending sentences with different types of punctuation. A writing workshop can be a good context for introducing and developing these basic concepts of print through writing mini-lessons.

In addition, teachers can begin to develop the students' understanding of word boundaries by teaching students how to **track print**. One prerequisite skill to tracking print is for students to learn about the directionality of print in English. Beginning readers need to learn that English print begins at the top of the page and is read from left to right. Art projects and movement activities can be used to teach the concepts of top, bottom, left, and right. When teaching students to track text, it is best to begin with very simple books that have one line of text on each page, and then slowly introduce more

complex books. During some shared reading experiences, the teacher can point to each word when she is reading, and the teacher can have student helpers assist with this task.

**Alphabet recognition**, the ability to recognize and name letters, is an essential part of learning to read. While many students begin school able to sing the alphabet song or recite the letters, they will still need additional practice in alphabet recognition. Students need to be able to read and write all the uppercase and lowercase letters of the alphabet and to name letters when they are not in alphabetic order. Teachers can use a wide variety of activities to teach alphabet recognition. For example, many teachers focus on the letters that appear in the names of the students in the class. There are also many alphabet books that can be used with beginning readers. Some students learn best through movement activities or through songs that describe the shape of each letter.

## The Alphabetic Principle

English is an alphabetic language. The **alphabetic principle** is that written letters represent the sounds in words. While there are many irregularities in the system of English writing, more than 80 percent of English words follow regular spelling patterns. Thus, it is essential for emergent readers to master letter-sound correspondence so they can use this knowledge to help decode print.

One difficulty in mastering the English letter-sound correspondence is that English has more than forty phonemes and yet is written with only twenty-six letters. Teachers usually begin their instruction of English letter-sound correspondences by introducing consonant letters such as *m* and *d* and the short vowel sounds, which have only one corresponding sound. Then students can learn to master more complex letter-sound correspondences. For example, emergent readers need to learn that some sounds are written with a combination of two letters such as *sh* (ship) and *oa* (goat). When one sound is written with a combination of two letters, it is called a **digraph**. On the other hand, when two vowels are in one syllable, but both vowels are heard, it is called a **diphthong**. Emergent readers also need to learn that all of the letters in the word may not be pronounced, but these letters may still give us information about how to pronounce other letters in the word or information about the origin of the word. For example, a silent *e* at the end of the word can indicate that the previous vowel is a long vowel (cake). Emergent readers also need to learn that the sounds of English can be spelled in various ways, and if one possible sound for a letter does not match an expected word, they should try other possible sounds that can be spelled using the same letters. For example, the digraph *ow* can stand for the differing final vowel sounds in *mow* and *cow*. When students master these basic letter-sound correspondences, these patterns can be used to practice decoding simple words. Teachers usually begin decoding practice with one-syllable words that follow a **CVC** (consonant-vowel-consonant) pattern such as *bat*. When students have mastered the decoding of basic words, more complex patterns can slowly be introduced.

One necessary skill that emergent readers need to learn to be able to decode simple words is the ability to blend together the sounds for the letters that they are reading. Some students need to practice blending together each sound in a simple word until they are able to recognize that the sounds together make a familiar word. It is especially important that students practice blending consonant clusters at the beginning and end of words. **Consonant clusters** are two consonant letters that stand for two consonant sounds such as *dr* (drive) that are blended together without an intermediate vowel sound.

The use of letter-sound correspondence can be developed by helping students through mini-lessons and shared reading lessons to become more reflective when analyzing words. Beginning readers should be taught to try to determine how many sounds are in an unknown word and to try all of the possible sounds that could be represented by the letters that they see.

## Word Identification Strategies

One important component of reading instruction for beginning readers is assisting learners to develop the flexible use of a number of different word identification strategies. While mastering basic decoding can help students recognize many words, beginning readers also need to be able to use a number of strategies to determine words that are not in their reading vocabularies.

One strategy that students can use to identify unknown words is their knowledge of phonics. One type of phonetically based word identification strategies is the use of word families (**phonograms**). In English, syllables can often be divided

into an **onset** and a **rime**. The onset is formed from the initial consonants in the syllable, and the rime is the vowel and the ending consonants. Students can learn to identify many common words if they learn a small number of frequently used rimes.

Beginning readers should also supplement their knowledge of phonics with the use of a variety of textual cues. When students use **semantic cues**, they are using their knowledge of the world and objects within it to figure out what word would make sense in a particular text. **Syntactic cues** are used when beginning readers use their knowledge of grammar and the parts of speech to figure out a word. From knowledge of the content of other sections of a particular text, students may be able to use **content clues** to figure out unknown words. Teachers can develop students' ability to use a variety of cuing systems by presenting students with texts that are missing a word and having students practice using different cues to guess the identity of the missing word.

As students' reading levels increase, beginning readers will need to read more words that contain two, three, or four syllables. Knowledge of **syllabication** and **word structure** will help students be able to segment words into their syllables correctly. It is useful for students to learn a limited number of highly regular syllabication rules. For example, students can be taught that in most words that end in a consonant followed by *le* (little), the *le* is the final syllable. Students can also be taught to divide compound words (butterfly) into their smaller word parts, and then they can attempt to figure out each part in order to identify the larger word. Students should learn to identify the most common **prefixes** and **suffixes** in English. The inflectional suffixes, those suffixes that provide grammatical information (*ed*, *ing*), are especially important for students to learn to recognize since they are commonly used in texts for beginning readers.

**Sight-word recognition** is also very important because a number of the most common words in the English language have irregular spellings. Many teachers use word walls and flash cards to help students learn to read non-decodable words. The Dolch List is a helpful tool that gives more than two hundred of the words that should be in the sight-word vocabulary of beginning readers.

## Constructing Meaning from Text

It is crucial that beginning readers not only learn how to decode text and recognize words but also develop the ability to construct meaning from the texts that they read.

First, emerging readers need to learn to recognize words easily and develop reading fluency. **Reading fluency** means that students can automatically recognize the words in the text and can read easily without frequently stopping to decode words. Students can develop reading fluency by reading texts in which they can recognize almost all the words. One way to encourage fluency is to give students the chance to read a text several times. For example, some teachers have students select a set of books for the week and have the students practice reading these books independently several times both at school and at home. It is also useful to model fluent reading for students in class read-alouds and through the use of a listening center.

Another crucial element of reading comprehension is the development of a large vocabulary. Many common words in English have multiple definitions, and emerging readers also need to learn the subtle differences between related words. **Vocabulary** can be developed through oral discussions and reading. The use of daily classroom read-alouds is crucial in helping students to develop a larger vocabulary. It is also important that teachers include nonfiction texts frequently in their instruction. These texts contain many domain-specific vocabulary words that emerging readers need to learn. Vocabulary is also an important element to include in prereading activities and discussions. Many teachers use graphic organizers such as word webs or attribute charts to activate and review vocabulary when introducing a reading selection.

Emerging readers should also learn to use **visual clues** and **context cues** to construct meaning from texts. Visual cues are especially important for emerging readers since many beginning level texts are picture books. Teachers can encourage students to use visual cues by taking "picture walks" through the books before reading. In a **picture walk**, the reader looks at the pictures in a text first and tries to predict what will happen in a story or what information will be discussed in a non-fiction text. Then the text can be read, and the predictions can be compared to the text. Various context clues can also assist the reader. Cloze exercises are one example of an activity that encourages students to use context clues. In a **cloze exercise**, a passage is rewritten with some words deleted. Students give suggestions for what words could make sense in the blanks.

The development of extensive prior knowledge and experience will also aid emerging readers in comprehending text. Both academic and practical experiences can add to students' stores of prior knowledge. It is important for teachers to provide many hands-on experiences such as science experiments, real-world problems with math manipulatives, and art projects. Varied experiences such as assemblies, guest speakers, and field trips can also increase students' prior knowledge. It is important that emerging readers learn to activate their schema about a subject before reading. For example, teachers can work with the class before reading to create a K-W-L chart that lists what students know about a topic and what they want to learn. After they have read the text, the class can make a list of what they learned.

## Review Questions

1. Which of the following is NOT a component of phonemic awareness?

- A. Recognize that sets of words have similar sounds.
- B. Blend sounds to create words.
- C. Build up sight-word recognition.
- D. Learn to divide words into segments and count the number of sounds in a word.

The correct answer is **C**. Phonemic awareness is an important component of phonological awareness. Phonemes are the individual sounds in words, and phonemic awareness is the ability to identify and manipulate the individual sounds in words. There are five major tasks that students must master when developing phonemic awareness: recognize that sets of words have similar sounds, examine a set of words and determine which one has sounds that are not like the others, blend sounds to create words, divide words into their phonemes (segmenting words) and count the number of sounds in a word, and manipulate the sounds in a word by substituting or deleting one or multiple phonemes.

2. A first grade teacher invites her students to choose three books on their independent reading levels and to practice reading them several times at home and at school for one week. Why is she doing this?

- A. Emerging readers need to learn to recognize words easily and automatically.
- B. Re-reading books is part of a sustained silent reading program.
- C. Reading a book several times is helpful when the school has a limited library.
- D. None of the above.

The correct answer is **A**. Emerging readers need to learn to recognize words easily and to develop reading fluency. Reading fluency means that students can automatically recognize the words in the text and can read easily without frequently stopping to decode words. Students can develop reading fluency by reading texts in which they can recognize almost all the words. One way to encourage fluency is to give students the chance to read a text several times. It is also useful to model fluent reading for students in class read-alouds and through the use of a listening center.

3. A pre-service teacher watches an in-service teacher read a book aloud to his students. The observer notices the teacher point to each word in the text as he reads the story and then to the picture once he is finished with the text. At the end of the day, the observer inquires about this. What reason does the teacher give?

- A. The teacher is modeling one way in which a text communicates its message.
- B. The teacher is teaching his students concept of word or that words have boundaries.
- C. The teacher is instructing his students in the directionality of print English.
- D. All of the above.

The correct answer is **D**. Teachers can begin to develop the students' understandings of word boundaries by teaching students how to track print. One prerequisite skill to tracking print is learning about the directionality of print in English. Beginning readers need to learn that English print begins at the top of the page and is read from left to right. During some shared reading experiences, the teacher can point to each word when he is reading, and the teacher can have student helpers assist with this task. One way to assess a student's understanding of word boundaries is to have a

student memorize a short passage or rhyme and then ask the student to repeat it (or “read it”) back while pointing to the words. If the student moves his finger from left to right, top to bottom, he understands directionality. In addition, if he points to each word as he repeats the passage, then he has concept of word. The latter is an important step toward conventional literacy.

- 4.** Which of the following is(are) a word-identification strategy(ies)?
- A.** Use of word families (phonograms).
  - B.** Knowledge of syllabication and word structure to segment words into their syllables correctly.
  - C.** Sight-word recognition for commonly used words with irregular spellings.
  - D.** All of the above.

The correct answer is **D**. An important component of reading instruction for beginning readers is assisting learners to develop the flexible use of a number of word identification strategies. While mastering basic decoding can help students recognize many words, beginning readers also need to be able to use a number of strategies to determine words that are not in their reading vocabularies. The above strategies are all ways to teach word identification, along with knowledge of syllabication and word structure. Syllabication and word structure help students learn to segment words into their syllables correctly to divide compound words into their smaller word parts and then figure out each part in order to identify the larger word.

## Objective 0002

### Understands skills and strategies involved in reading comprehension.

The following topics are covered under the subject area of Objective 0002:

- Demonstrating knowledge of literal comprehension skills (e.g., the ability to identify the sequence of events and explicitly stated main ideas, details, and cause-and-effect patterns in a text)
- Demonstrating knowledge of inferential comprehension skills (e.g., the ability to draw conclusions or generalizations from a text and to infer ideas, details, and cause-and-effect relationships that are not explicitly stated in a text)
- Demonstrating knowledge of evaluative comprehension skills (e.g., the ability to distinguish between facts and opinions, to detect faulty reasoning, and to detect bias and propaganda in a text)
- Applying knowledge of strategies to use before, during, and after reading to enhance comprehension (e.g., developing and activating prior knowledge, connecting texts to personal experience, previewing a text, making predictions about a text, using K-W-L charts and other graphic organizers, taking notes on a text, and discussing a text)
- Demonstrating knowledge of methods to help readers monitor their own comprehension (e.g., think-alouds, self-questioning strategies) as they read
- Demonstrating knowledge of various methods for assessing comprehension of a text (e.g., questioning the reader, having the reader give an oral and written retelling, or asking the reader to identify the theme or themes or to paraphrase or summarize the main idea)

### Literal Comprehension Skills

**Literal comprehension** is reading for information that is directly stated in the text. Literal comprehension is an important building block for teaching students how to make inferences and draw conclusions. Literal comprehension skills include the ability to identify the sequence of events, main ideas, details, and cause-and-effect relationship patterns.

**Identifying the sequence of events** is when a student can recognize the order that actions or ideas occurred in a text and can then recall them in chronological order. Teachers should help students recognize time words such as *now*, *before*, *first*, *second*, *third*, *following*, and *since* in fiction and nonfiction. Once teachers have modeled how to recognize the sequence of events and time words, they can hand out stories and ask students to underline words in the text that signal the order of events. Another way to teach sequencing is through a **story walk**, wherein the teacher “walks” through a story, pointing out the order of events as they happened. Another way to demonstrate sequencing is through the use of a **story map**. Teachers should begin by reading a story and writing a sequenced summary on an overhead or the board. Next, using a story map graphic organizer, the teacher places the title, topic, or main idea of the story in the center bubble. Then the teacher draws lines from the center to accommodate the elements of a story in the order that they appeared in the summary: character, setting, problem, and solution. From there, he adds more lines from the secondary bubbles to fill in the details of the story that were included in the summary. Finally, the teacher reviews the organizer with the students. To assess students’ understanding of the sequence of a story, the teacher can have students practice by choosing a story on their reading levels and filling out their own story maps.

To **identify the main idea** of a story at the factual level, the student should look for a **topic sentence**. In nonfiction texts, the main idea is often stated in the topic sentence and only requires the students to recall what they read. Restating the central idea of a story requires higher-level thinking skills. Students have to synthesize and interpret the information presented in the story to arrive at one main idea.

One way to help students identify the main idea of a story is to ask them to use their memories to recall specific **details** from the reading. The type of detail will depend on the question being asked. Teachers ought to assist students in identifying main ideas by practicing with the following: *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *how*, and *why*. For example, a *who* question is asking students to recall a main character, person or animal; *what* is looking for a thing or an event; *where* is inquiring about the name of a place; *when* is requesting information about time; *how* is querying about the way something is or was done; and *why* is soliciting the reasons behind something. Students can practice identifying details by reading a selection and answering the types of questions mentioned above. News articles work particularly well for practicing identifying details.

Finally, recognizing **cause-and-effect** requires an explanation of the causes of events in the story and the outcomes of those events. At the literal level, causal information is explicitly stated in the text; therefore, students rely on their memories to comprehend why certain events happened in the reading. Teachers can elicit information from students by asking questions such as “What made the character do what he did?”

## Inferential Comprehension Skills

Once students have mastered literal comprehension of texts, they are ready for learning **inferential comprehension proficiencies**. Literal readers expect that the text will supply them with all of the information they need to understand the text. It is the teacher’s job to model and teach how to “read between the lines” and infer meaning using what the author has provided. Making inferences requires several reading behaviors: recognizing a pronoun’s antecedent; learning unknown words from context clues; **concluding** or **generalizing** about characters’ beliefs, motivations and relationships; identifying cause-and-effect; and naming the author’s worldview.

Teachers will need to model making **inferences** and then have students practice persistently throughout their education. One way to begin is for the teacher to place a short passage on the overhead and **think-aloud** as he makes inferences about the reading. The teacher should follow up by having students practice the different skills such as reading their own passages or sentences and pointing out **referents** such as the pronoun’s antecedent, defining an unknown word using context clues, or adding **details** to events.

Teachers can also ask questions that require students to make inferences. For example, after reading a short story or chapter, students can infer what the character might do next based on what he has already done or said, or by other context clues provided by the author. Other queries include questions such as “Why did a character do what she did?” and “Why do you think the book/story/chapter is named what it is?” The answers to these questions are not found in the book; instead, students learn to draw conclusions based on what they already know about the characters, setting, events, and other related cues.

Using dramatic activities, the students can practice making inferences. For the sake of time and plot development, writers omit certain events from the text. Students can write the script of a conversation that happened outside the pages of the book. They can also write a missing scene or, at the conclusion of a reading, the “final” chapter using what they have concluded about the setting, characters, and author’s intentions.

## Evaluative Comprehension Skills

Nonfiction texts are often based on an opinion of the author. It is the author’s job to support his or her argument with facts to gain the trust of the reader and increase the text’s reliability. However, in trying to prove a point, many writers use opinions as if they are facts. It is the responsibility of the teacher to show students how to evaluate a text to distinguish between facts and opinions to detect faulty reasoning and discover the author’s bias.

A **fact** is something that has been or can be proven, and an **opinion** is something that is *believed* to be true. For example, it is a fact that soda has sugar in it, but it is an opinion to say that everyone loves soda. It is still an opinion if everyone you asked over the course of a week loved soda. It is impossible to prove that *everyone* in the whole world loves soda; however, if the author states that *he* thinks everyone loves soda, then he is stating a fact. When a writer uses opinions to support an article or book, he weakens his argument, so the text should be read with caution.

Writers, especially advertisers and politicians, use **faulty reasoning** to convince readers to buy their product or vote for their candidate. Faulty reasoning is an argument based on stereotypes, generalizations, loaded words, or opinions. For instance, an advertiser might try to sell a dishwashing detergent that promises to leave your dishes *virtually* spotless. *Virtually* is a **loaded word** because it means that it will not, in fact, leave the dishes spotless. This way the advertiser does not have to say that there will still be spots on the dishes, which will be sure to alienate the consumer. An advertiser might also use a faulty if-then statement: if you do not use this detergent, then your dishes will not be clean. This is an opinion because the company cannot prove that using another detergent will result in unclean dishes. Basing arguments on **stereotypes** also signals faulty reasoning.

To uncover an author's **bias**, students should first identify the writer's argument and then recognize the types of information he or she uses to prove his or her contention. What sources did the writer consult? Are those sources reliable? Does the author rely mostly on opinion or facts to support his or her claim? If a writer uses only one source, how can the source be generalized? What other sources might the author have used? Did the author interview people on both sides of an issue? If not, ask what the author has left out and why. What issues did the author not address? Did the author leave out certain voices and opinions? Often, authors leave out information they fear might weaken their argument. Once a student recognizes the author's bias, then he can decide whether this writer should be taken seriously or dismissed because of faulty reasoning and biased reporting. Armed with this information, students will be less likely to be manipulated and controlled by what they read.

## Reading Comprehension Strategies

According to **schema theory**, students make meaning by using their previous experiences or schemas to understand new ones. For students to comprehend and interpret their readings, teachers must help students activate prior knowledge so the students can use their prior understanding of the world to help them make sense of the new information they will acquire as they read. Without a place to put new knowledge, the students are more likely to misunderstand and forget what they learn.

To activate students' prior knowledge, a teacher can apply a K-W-L strategy. A **K-W-L** chart first asks students to write down everything they already *know* about a topic or book. Next, the student or students list what they *want* to know or find out about the topic before reading. Once the reading is complete, students revisit the K-W-L chart to record what they *learned* as a result of their reading. **Anticipation guides** are other frontloading activities that help students begin to think about the most salient issues that will be addressed in the reading. Anticipation guides are made up of statements about issues or themes in the text that students can either agree or disagree with. The statements should be opinions. For example, prior to reading *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* by Mildred Taylor, students can discuss their opinions on the following statement:

In America, all people are created equal.

Once the class talks about the statements, students read the text to confirm or refute their original decisions. To familiarize students with the vocabulary of the reading, students can perform **word sorts**. There are two kinds of word sorts: closed and open. With a **closed word sort**, the teacher chooses important or unfamiliar vocabulary and creates the categories with which the students will label the words. In an **open word sort**, students must find commonalities among the words and generate categories themselves. By familiarizing students with the vocabulary prior to reading, the teacher activates prior knowledge and anticipates comprehension problems that may arise because of unknown vocabulary.

A strategy for before and during reading is the **double-entry journal**. Double-entry journals help students make **personal connections**; the teacher should first model how to create and keep a double-entry journal. On the left side, the student records quotes from the reading, and on the right side, the student finishes the line, "This reminds me of...". Students can also **code** the text for personal experience. To code for personal connections, the student reads and places a T-S (for text-to-self) in the places where she identifies with some aspect of the text.

Double-entry journals also help students record information from textbooks, fiction, or other informational texts while they read. Students divide their papers in half, folding vertically down the middle. On one side, they record notes, and on the other side, they can do one of three things: react to the recorded selection, question the text, or record where they obtained the information.

**GRTAs**, or guided reading-thinking activities, offer support by engaging students in the reading and improving comprehension of narrative texts. They teach students how to make predictions, focus their reading on confirming or disproving the prediction, and make adjustments in their thinking as they continue to read and predict. Teachers begin by discussing the book title and cover. The class then makes predictions based on the title and cover and records those predictions. The teacher (or the student) asks a focusing question before the students read a particular section of the book. Once they have finished, the class can check the reading against the predictions they made earlier. Students then begin again by making a new prediction. The cycle is repeated throughout the remainder of the book. GRTAs are a form of

scaffolding and should eventually be removed once students have internalized the process. GRTAs are best used prior to and during reading.

The **SQ3R**, a method that stands for survey, question, read, review, and recite, is a nonfiction note-taking technique that students employ during reading. First, students should **survey** the chapter and look for a pattern. They should pay particular attention to chapter and section titles, bold and italicized print, and bulleted information. Once they have discovered a pattern, the students should set up their notes in a manner that reflects the organization. Students then turn the titles and bold print into **questions** using *when, who, why, how, and what*. As the students **read** the text, they answer the questions in their notes. This helps them determine what important information should be in their notes. Next, students **review** their notes until they feel they can **recite** the information without looking at the notes.

Another note-taking technique, the **Cornel Notes Method**, should also be applied to nonfiction texts. This style of taking notes is best for information presented in a linear fashion. The left side of the paper is for recording main ideas, and the right side is for writing down the details and particulars of the main ideas. At the bottom, the student should leave space for a summary of the above notes.

On completion of a reading, students should be encouraged to **discuss** the reading. Three ways in which the teacher can encourage conversation are literature circles, Socratic seminars, and fishbowls. **Literature circles** are peer-led discussion groups organized around a common text. Modeled after adult book clubs, students choose their own reading material, form small (two to six people), temporary groups based on book choice, and regularly meet to discuss their reading. Literature circles provide students time to engage in natural and sophisticated conversations about texts independent of the teacher's direct influence. To provide a support structure for the students, teachers often include role sheets. Each student in the group takes on a role for that book. Roles could include connecting the book to their lives, drawing pictures to visualize the text, creating questions for discussion, summarizing, or looking up unknown vocabulary, to name a few. Teachers act as facilitators, moving around the class, observing their students at work, but never directing their thinking.

A post-reading activity, **Paideia Seminars** work best with older students. They are conversations about texts rich in ideas meant to improve abstract thinking and problem-solving skills. The seminar is never the sole teaching method; preceded by didactic instruction and coached projects, seminars allow students to examine ideas and values in collaboration with others. Ideally, the seminar cultivates diverse communication skills: reading, writing, listening, speaking, and thinking. The seminar also encourages higher order thinking skills such as summarizing, analyzing, synthesizing, comparing, and defending their opinions and those of others. To prepare for a seminar, students must perform a close and active reading of a text, interpret the material, and be able to defend their analysis with textual evidence. Once students have read and marked the text, seminar leaders are instructed to ask only open-ended questions and to ensure that the conversation proceeds smoothly. Participants are taught to listen to the ideas of others, defend their points of view with evidence from the selection, and discuss only the ideas suggested by the assigned reading.

## Self-Monitoring Methods

All readers become distracted as they read; therefore, students must learn how to self-monitor as they read. One strategy for monitoring comprehension is the **think-aloud**. Students get into pairs; one student reads the text, pauses occasionally, and thinks aloud as she tries to make sense of the passage. Meanwhile, the listener takes notes on a piece of paper or a sticky note so the pair can discuss the kinds of reading strategies the reader employs most often and those she does not. For example, after a think-aloud, the reader might find out from her partner that she does not make predictions as she reads. Making predictions is an important habit of effective readers. At the same time, she may also learn that she consistently makes personal connections with the reading. Students can also conduct a silent think-aloud. In this case, when a student pauses to think aloud, instead of sharing with a partner, she fills out a think-aloud sheet with reading behaviors. Students who understand their own reading behaviors are more likely to recognize when they do not understand what they are reading and to adjust using various reading comprehension strategies. Think-alouds also help the teacher assess students' reading habits.

**Say Something** is another during-reading activity that helps students monitor their reading comprehension. Students get into groups of two or three and take turns reading aloud from a text. Each student takes a turn reading, pausing, and *saying something* about what she is reading. Students can make predictions, comment on the plot, ask a question, or

make a connection. Then the partners respond, and a different student reads and continues the say something. Upon completion, students share their observations of the things readers do as they try to make meaning from a text.

Another way students can keep track of their own comprehension as they read is by asking **questions** of the text. Asking questions *prior* to reading sets a purpose for their reading, focuses them, and motivates the students to finish by creating curiosity. Students want an answer to their questions, so they are more likely to grapple with the ideas presented in the text or to work their way through a challenging text. *During* reading, students ask clarifying questions that will need to be addressed either by the end of the reading or by the teacher. Students can write the questions either in the text or on sticky notes so they can return to the questions once they have finished the selection. *After* reading questions help students and teachers track confusion. If students still have questions that are not answered in the text, they might need to make inferences based on what was provided by the author or go to other sources for answers.

## Comprehension Assessment Methods

There are many methods for assessing comprehension of a text: using questions generated by the teacher, having the student give an oral or written retelling, and asking the student to summarize the main idea. Each of these methods will provide the teacher with important information about how well students comprehend what they are reading, insight into the students' reading levels, and what areas in particular need addressing.

Most questioning strategies stem from **Bloom's taxonomy of questions**, based on a set of hierarchically arranged cognitive tasks. Bloom's taxonomy suggests that proper ordering of questions ensures that each step of inquiry learning is properly scaffolded. Teachers will increase understanding by beginning with knowledge and comprehension queries before constructing questions that ask students to apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate.

One strategy that has emerged since Bloom's taxonomy is the **Question and Answer Relationship (QAR)**. Question and Answer Relationships teach readers how to ask questions that require different interpretive strategies. First, students ask "right-there" questions that are literal and can be found in the pages of the book. Next, "think-and-search" questions require students to make inferences by putting different pieces of the book together. "Author-and-me" questions ask the students to make personal connections to the story. Finally, "on-my-own" questions address larger problems suggested by the reading but not necessarily answered within the liminal space of the book, thereby requiring that the students make inferences. Students should practice writing the different kinds of questions to internalize the strategy.

A **written or oral retelling** of a story helps teachers assess a student's reading comprehension level by checking for literal and inferential understanding. First, the teacher must *focus* or initiate a conversation with the student by asking a recall question. The teacher can also ask a *clarifying* question if the answer requires additional explanation or can ask an *extending* question for further information. Finally, if the student responds well to the literal questions, the teacher can *raise* the level of questioning to a higher degree.

During a nonfiction retelling, the teacher should pay attention to the student's ability to restate the main idea, supporting details, organization, and key vocabulary. As the student recounts the organization, the teacher must pay attention for events or ideas that happened chronologically or followed the sequence of the book. Also, it is important that the student use the vocabulary of the passage correctly.

Similarly, a written or oral retelling of a fictional story should contain many of the same elements as nonfiction. Teachers should ensure that the main plot elements are repeated correctly in their correct order. The main characters should be mentioned, as should the conflict and resolution. Students can also restate minor characters and unnecessary information as long as the main story is not affected.

Teachers can assess a student's ability to identify a **main idea** by locating the central problem of the story. Most importantly, asking students to **summarize** the main idea demonstrates a student's understanding of a text. Summarizing involves higher-level thinking skills such as synthesizing and interpreting the information first and then putting the information into the student's own words. If a student has trouble summarizing a text, it usually means that he did not comprehend the reading.

## Review Questions

1. A fourth grade teacher is teaching his students how to code texts using text-to-self (T-S), text-to-text (T-T), and text-to-world (T-W) connections. What is(are) his reason(s) for doing this?
  - A. Making connections to texts helps students better comprehend what they read.
  - B. Coding provides a purpose for reading.
  - C. Coding is a during-reading strategy that keeps students focused and on task.
  - D. All of the above.

The correct answer is **D**. Coding texts serves many functions for young readers. Coding helps students make connections: personal, literary, and social or political. It also provides a purpose for a reading. Young and struggling readers do not know what is “important” when they read; therefore, they tend to focus on everything and become overwhelmed by the content, or in some cases, they will not remember any of the reading because they drifted off task. Coding supplies students with a way to record their thinking as they read and gives the students an objective. Once the class has coded a text, students can then share their connections. This way, the conversation tends to be more student-centered than teacher-directed.

2. A first-grade teacher decides to conduct a mid-year assessment of her students’ reading comprehension. She plans time for an oral retelling of a fictional text. What should she be listening for?
  - A. The main plot elements (characters, conflict, and resolution) in correct order.
  - B. The main plot elements in any order; they just need to be repeated.
  - C. No mention of minor characters or any unnecessary information.
  - D. None of the above.

The correct answer is **A**. Written or oral retellings help teachers assess the reading comprehension of students. The teacher asks a series of questions, and the student should be able to repeat the story, correctly and in order, back to the teacher. It is important for the student to place the plot elements to show his or her understanding of the structure of a narrative. Major characters and events should also be mentioned and vocabulary from the text used correctly. If a student mentions minor characters or superfluous information during a retelling, the teacher should not be alarmed as long as those details do not distract from the main story.

3. A sixth-grade supervisor looks over a test recently given by a new teacher. She notices that all of the questions require students to recall factual information from the book they were reading. The supervisor immediately sets up a conference with the teacher to talk about the make-up of the test. What might be the supervisor’s concern?
  - A. There are many methods for assessing comprehension of a text, and test questions are the worst form of assessment.
  - B. The teacher used a red pen to grade, and the students’ papers look like they are bleeding.
  - C. Knowledge and comprehension questions are low-level cognitive tasks that do not assess high order thinking.
  - D. The supervisor micro-manages her staff.

The correct answer is **C**. There is nothing wrong with asking students to answer questions about a reading. Asking questions helps the teacher assess for reading comprehension and also helps students think critically about the text. By transferring what they have learned from reading to apply the knowledge to a new situation or book, analyze the implications of a character’s actions, synthesize information from the text in a way that makes sense to the reader, or evaluate the literary merit of the book, the student will be working at a much higher cognitive level than by simply remembering names, places and dates. Of course, Bloom’s Taxonomy suggests that proper ordering of questions guarantees that learning is scaffolded to increase comprehension. Teachers should begin by asking knowledge and comprehension questions but not end there. The supervisor will most likely share her knowledge of Bloom’s Taxonomy and help the new teacher improve her question-writing skills for the next assignment.

- 4.** A fifth-grade teacher assigns a Say Something in his class. What is his purpose for applying this instructional strategy?
- A.** A Say Something is an effective method for helping students monitor their own comprehension.
  - B.** A Say Something will reinforce a new reading strategy that has just been taught to improve students' reading comprehension.
  - C.** A Say Something forces students to read and will count as a cooperative learning activity.
  - D.** A and B only.

The correct answer is **D**. Effective readers make connections, use prior knowledge to make sense of new information, apply fix-up strategies, make predictions, set purposes for reading, ask questions, and comment on the content. For many readers, these habits must be explicitly taught and then reinforced before the reader internalizes them. One way to create independent, successful readers is to teach students to monitor their own comprehension. Think-alouds and Say Somethings are useful approaches for teaching self-assessment. In groups of two or three, students take turns reading aloud from a text and then saying something about the reading. The students can either say whatever comes to their mind or apply a reading strategy. At the end, the groups shares its observations of the things the readers do as they read for understanding.

- 5.** Being able to do which of the following is NOT a literal comprehension skill?
- A.** identify sequence of events
  - B.** identify cause-and-effect patterns
  - C.** draw conclusions
  - D.** explicitly state the main idea

The correct answer is **C**. Literal comprehension skills help students learn information that is directly stated in a text. Literal comprehension is an essential building block for teaching students how to draw conclusions. Students must learn how to identify sequence of events, main ideas, details, and cause-and-effect relationships patterns before they can make inferences. There are many ways to teach these important skills: pointing out time words, taking students on a story walk, using a story map, locating topic sentences in nonfiction texts, and asking questions such as *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *how*, and *why*.

## Objective 0003

---

### **Understands and applies reading skills and strategies for various purposes (including information and understanding, critical analysis and evaluation, literary response, and social interaction).**

The following topics are covered under the subject area of Objective 0003:

- Recognizing how to vary reading strategies (e.g., skimming, scanning, in-depth reading, and rereading) for different texts and purposes and for different genres of written communication (e.g., fiction, nonfiction, poetry)
- Applying knowledge of techniques for gathering, interpreting, and synthesizing information when reading a variety of printed texts and electronic resources
- Recognizing how to analyze and assess a writer's credibility or objectivity when reading printed and electronic texts
- Analyzing and interpreting information from texts containing tables, charts, graphs, maps, and other illustrations
- Demonstrating knowledge of strategies to promote literary response skills (e.g., connecting the text to personal experience and prior knowledge, citing evidence from a text to support an interpretation, and using reading logs or guided reading techniques)
- Identifying effective ways of modeling independent reading for enjoyment and encouraging participation in a community of readers (e.g., book clubs and literature circles)

### **Genre-Specific Reading Strategies**

Genre-specific reading strategies will help students better comprehend what they read. Textbooks, for example, have a very different structure than narrative texts. First, a student should **scan** the textbook or article, looking for its organization. Textbooks are often divided into many sections with subheadings. When students recognize the bold headings, they are already cued in to the topic's main ideas. An article, however, has a different structure from a textbook: instead of headings and subheadings, an article will have a thesis statement and supporting paragraphs. It is important for students to identify the author's thesis in the article.

**Narrative texts** include fiction, biography, autobiography, and personal essays. Narratives are organized around a specific structure or plot line: exposition, rising action, climax, and resolution.

**Poetry** contains a different structure than either narrative or nonfiction texts. Poetry uses few words to convey a deep meaning; thus, students should first learn the importance of **rereading** poems because each time they read a poem, its meaning will become clearer and clearer. Students should then pay attention to the title before paraphrasing sections of the poem. They should also look for uses of figurative language such as metaphors, assonance, meter, rhyme, etc.

Once the genre and structure have been established, students should set a **purpose** for a more **in-depth** reading. Providing a purpose for reading helps students determine what is important or what needs further consideration. There are several ways to set a purpose when reading expository and narrative texts.

**Coding** is one way to establish a purpose for nonfiction. Students read and mark places in the text that they find confusing, surprising, fascinating, important, or significant in any other way. The teachers and students should decide on symbols for marking the text. For instance, students can place a question mark by passages or words they do not understand, or they can place an exclamation point by something that surprised them as they read. Coding not only provides a lens through which to read a text but also keeps the students actively interacting with the information and provides a springboard for discussion. Teachers will find it helpful to start by asking students to identify what parts of the reading confused them. Students can immediately identify challenging parts for clarification.

In addition to coding, students can **highlight** repeated words and write summaries after each subsection. Highlighting repeated words helps students locate and remember important facts and details. Using their codes and repeated words,

students can easily write short summaries to synthesize new information, check for understanding, and record information. In expository articles, students should not only highlight repeated words but also look for and underline the thesis.

To help students develop a purpose when reading a narrative text, the teacher can model **skimming** the back of the book or the inside cover to get a feel for the material. Students can also reflect on the title of the book and then construct questions that will provide a purpose. For example, before reading the novel *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, the teacher can model the following inquiry: “Who is Gatsby?”; “Why is Gatsby great?”; and “Is Gatsby the main character?” Once the students have created their own questions and made some inferences, they can read the book to answer their initial queries. Because most authors choose their titles carefully, the students already have a window into the major themes of the book.

Similar to coding expository texts, students should also mark their books when they are confused by unfamiliar vocabulary or a character’s actions. They can also code places in the reading where they made personal connections, connections to other literary works, or connections to larger world issues. Again, coding teaches students to actively interact with their reading and to continually monitor their comprehension. Most readers get distracted when they read; effective readers notice when they have allowed themselves to drift off task and apply fix-up strategies. If a student notices he has not been paying attention to the meaning behind the words, he can **reread** the sections he missed before moving on.

## Information Resource Handling

Today, students use more than printed sources to gather information. In addition to teaching students how to use the table of contents in encyclopedias, differentiate between primary and secondary sources, and keep track of bibliographic information, teachers must also show students how to navigate the Web.

First, students should decide if they will use primary or secondary sources. A **primary source** is a firsthand account of an event. Students can gather information by *interviewing*, *conducting surveys*, or corresponding via *emails* or *letters*. Because primary materials are firsthand accounts, the information needs to be **interpreted** or explained to readers so they understand what information the source provides.

**Secondary sources** are works that have been interpreted by another person who was removed from the event. Gathering information from secondary sources often requires students to use the library. Teachers should work in collaboration with the school librarian and show students *how* to use the school’s library. Students can learn how a library is set up; how to use computers to look up a book by author, title, subject, or keyword; and where they can find reference materials such as encyclopedias.

Teachers and librarians can teach students to pay attention to **bibliographic information** such as publication dates. Students should be aware of when the information was recorded. In many areas, such as science, changes happen every day, so the information the students procured might be incorrect. Students can also learn to write down the source of their information, copyright year, publisher, and city of publication. This will help them later, when they have to create a works-cited page and cite in the body of their paper.

**Encyclopedias** are still valuable resources for gathering information; however, students should only use them as a place to begin their search and not as a be-all and end-all source. Along the same lines, the **internet** is also a valid research tool, but it should be used only when appropriate: to find current information, to find information not found in print sources, to correspond with other people, or to share information with a public audience. The internet can be very frustrating for students who do not understand **keyword searches**. Similar to the yellow pages, a topic may be found under a very different name. Students need time and patience to play around with wording as they surf the Web.

Once students have gathered information by note taking, reading, or researching, they need to **synthesize** what they have read. Students successfully synthesize by integrating their own thinking with what they have read to achieve a new understanding. Summarizing, or retelling the main points in your own words, is a form of synthesis. Students can also use double-entry journals to learn how to synthesize. On the left side of their papers, they can summarize a section of the text, and on the right side write what they think about the text. Synthesizing is cognitively more difficult than simply rewriting or retelling what was read because students must include their own thoughts and opinions, and unlike analyzing texts, in which a reader breaks a text into its parts, synthesis requires using the parts of a reading to recreate a whole with a new perspective.

## Assessing Credibility or Objectivity

First, students should identify the writer's argument and then recognize the types of information he uses to prove his contention. What sources did the writer consult? Are those sources reliable? If a writer uses only one source, how generalizable is that source? If the author interviewed a few people, do his results really represent a large portion of the reading audience? Also, students should check to see if the author has included both sides of the argument. If not, ask what the author has left out and why. What issues did the author not address? Would those issues weaken the argument? For example, if a student is reading an article about a war but only provides the American perspective, the article is clearly biased. The information should then be read with that bias in mind.

Because so many students use the Internet to conduct most of their research, it is imperative that students know how to assess the credibility of a Web site. Unlike research done in the library, where the books have been reviewed by librarians, there is no way of regulating the kind of information that appears on the Web.

First, students must check to make sure the information is **accurate**. If the reader sees incorrect information, the site should be discredited immediately. If, however, the student does not know if the information is correct, he can check the **authority** of the site by checking out the author: Is the author an authority on the subject? What are the author's credentials? Can the reader get in touch with the author? Next, the student should determine the author's bias. Most information is not **objective**; however, that does not mean the site should be discredited. For example, if a student is interested in finding out about the harmful effects of fuel emissions on the environment, a site sponsored by utility vehicles will most likely downplay the negative effects. On the other hand, a Web site sponsored by an environmental group might exaggerate the damage. To get the most accurate information, the reader needs to pay attention to the URL address. If the site is personal (.com), the information is more likely to contain bias. Sites with the URL of .org or .mil are more credible than personal sites because they are sponsored by organizations or the military, respectively. The most reliable information comes from government sites or addresses containing .gov. Education sites (.edu) are also reliable; however, depending on the author, they, too, can contain the bias of the faculty member.

Next, the student should verify that the Web site is **current** or is being kept up with new information as it is discovered. For example, the same student studying the environment should not rely on a site about fuel emissions that has not been updated since 1980. There have been many changes in car design in the past twenty-five years, so the information will not be accurate.

Last, the student should confirm that the author's site contains additional sites and links that work. Did the author **cover** most of the issue by including many perspectives? Can a visitor to the site contact the author or the organization that designed and updates the site? That information is most likely found at the bottom of the site. Teachers should show the students that they can scroll down immediately to see if the author and contact information are included. If not, it is too difficult to determine the credibility of the site, and it may be a good idea to try to find a more reliable resource.

## Visual Representations of Information

Reading does not always consist of decoding words on a page; effective readers should also learn how to read visual representations of information such as tables, charts, graphs, and maps. Visual representations help readers analyze and interpret information about numbers that would otherwise be confusing.

- **Tables** consist of columns and rows to visually organize information so it can be accessed easily. Train schedules are tables that supply passengers with immediate information about times and destinations. The vertical columns consist of destinations, and the horizontal rows contain arrival times. In the beginning of textbooks, a reader can find a table of contents. The column lists the chapter number, and the row, the chapter title.
- **Pie Charts** are visual ways to read information about percentages. A pie chart is a circle or pie representing a whole, and the slices correspond to a percentage of the whole. This makes it much easier for the reader to compare the percentages by seeing the difference in size of the slices. Pie charts are often used when there is a big gap between percentages because the slices will show up unevenly, thus making the point that not everyone is getting their share of the pie.
- **Graphs** are used to show trends and changes over time to draw conclusions and make predictions. Graphs consist of two things: the quantity, or number, and the fixed interval of time over which the numbers were measured. For example, if a teacher wanted to see changes in her students' homework during a school year for the next five

years to see if there is a trend, she might use her class as a sample. On the vertical axis, she would place the number of assignments received at an equal interval from smallest to largest, and on the horizontal axis she would place a fixed interval of time—1 month, for instance. She can then see when her classes in that year are less likely to turn in homework. Like pie charts, graphs are manipulated to sway people’s opinions. The smaller the gap between the quantities being measured, the more dramatic the rise and fall will look.

- **Maps** provide a visual of geographic locations. Because maps are much smaller versions of the real place, they must be read using the tools the mapmaker provides: *orientation*, *scale*, and *legend*. Most scales include a compass to orient the reader. It is not always obvious which part of the map is north or south. To measure the distance between two points, the map will also contain a scale or ruler informing the reader what each inch equals in miles. Using a ruler, a person can figure out the distance between two points. For example, if every inch equals 100 miles and the distance between two points is three inches, then the trip is 300 miles total. The legend explains the symbols on the map. For example, the capital of a city or country is usually marked with a star; cities are marked with a dot. Major highways are often shown as a line, and minor roads as dotted lines.

## Literary Response Strategies

Teachers help student respond to literature by helping students activate prior knowledge. Two methods of activating prior knowledge ask teachers to frontload the reading using **anticipation guides** and **vocabulary word sorts**. Anticipation guides are statements about issues or themes at play that students can agree or disagree with. Once they have considered the statements, they read the text to confirm or refute their original decisions. Objective 0002 discusses anticipation guides and other frontloading activities in more depth.

In addition to activating prior knowledge, students should be introduced to unknown vocabulary. In a **word sort**, the teacher gathers a list of words related to the reading and invites students to group and label the words. As students group and label, they become familiar with unknown vocabulary, recall familiarity with known vocabulary, and gain a sense of the upcoming reading.

Once students have activated their prior knowledge, students should keep track of their thinking while they engage with the text. **Reading logs or journals** help students record their thinking about an idea, thought, personal connection, or passage. Most often, reading response logs invite students to compare their own experiences with the text. Logs can be open ended for older readers to record their thoughts, insights, connections, and feelings. Or teachers can provide structure for younger students. For example, students can take on the persona of one of the characters and respond to the story’s events/people. They can write letters to characters to in order to make personal connections and judgments. Students also respond to questions about the texts’ literary elements (plot, character, setting, conflict, conclusion) provided by the teacher. Students identify setting or protagonist. On a more sophisticated level, students can write in their logs about how the setting functions in the story or the protagonist’s weaknesses create obstacles that need to be overcome by the novel’s completion.

Other activities include writing letters to authors or future readers of the novel, convincing their audience of the books’ worth. To tap into higher order thinking, students should respond to literature by writing book reviews or the traditional book report, focusing on the character, plot, setting, conflict, resolution and an art component such as a new book jacket. Students can also make inferences by wondering “what if” at key moments in the plot.

**Art** and **drama** are less traditional ways of responding to literature. Emergent readers and writers can draw a picture in response to a story and then explain their pictures to the class. Fluent readers and writers may draw/paint/craft a symbolic representation for the books’ themes and conflicts. Keeping a visual diary allows learners to quickly recall incidents from longer novels and chapter books. Visuals are particularly important in teaching students the importance of picturing the people, places, and events in the novel. Filling in graphic organizers such as character webs and plot lines also help students think about literature.

Drama is a useful tool for students when they read and respond to reading. Students take on the persona of a character in the novel and answer interview questions about why she made certain decisions at key points in the text. Drama also teaches students how to make inferences. Since many readers rely on the text to provide all the information, teachers should show students how to “read between the lines” by writing the script of a scene or conversation alluded to, but not written, in the book. Using their imaginations and cues from the story, they can write skits to be performed in front of the class.

**Double-entry journals** are a kind of reading log that varies from task to task, but they are most often designed in the following manner: the left side of the journal is for recording selections of the text that are interesting or confusing to them, and the right side is for documenting the students' thinking about that selection. Teachers can also model a reading strategy, such as making personal connections, and then apply the strategy to a double entry journal. In this case, the left side is for recording passages with which the reader connects, and the right side is for explaining why the reader relates to the quote.

**Collecting quotes** in reading logs and double-entry journals also helps students use evidence from the text to support their interpretations. During class discussion, Socratic Seminars, debates, or expository essays, students learn the importance of defending their opinions with textual proof. As students begin to formulate their opinions of the reading by making personal connections to their prior experiences, they are also learning to record information that will help them support their opinions. When stating an opinion in class, students should learn to cite directly from the text until it becomes a habit.

## Reading for Enjoyment

Assigned reading should not be the only exposure to literature or nonfiction that students receive in school. To foster a life-long passion, teachers should model **reading for enjoyment** in and out of the classroom. There are several ways to encourage participation in a community of readers: book clubs, book talks, DEAR (Drop Everything and Read), independent reading, literature circles, reader's chair, and SSR (Sustained Silent Reading).

**Building a classroom library** is the first step in creating a culture of reading. Students should be surrounded by books that represent varying genres, interests, and developmental reading levels. It takes time to collect copies of books; however, over time, teachers can attend tag sales, write book grants, and run book drives to help diminish the cost.

With a decent library, teachers can implement in-class reading time in the form of **DEAR** or **SSR**. Because students need to read to become better readers, DEAR and SSR are designed to carve out time especially for reading for enjoyment. Teachers can simply designate ten to fifteen minutes of class time for younger readers and twenty for older readers to enjoy reading a book on their independent or instructional level. For younger students, it is best to place desks in groups according to reading level and place a basket of appropriate books in the center for their choosing. This will ensure that a student does not grow frustrated during this time meant for building fluency and enjoyment.

**Book talks** given by the teacher or the student also create a literacy climate in the classroom. Teachers give book talks about an author, a genre, or a theme to create excitement and interest when introducing new books. Student-centered book talks are often called **Author's Chair** or **Reader's Chair**. Reader's Chair invites students to share with their classmates a favorite book they have recently read. The student should meet with the teacher prior to the presentation so the two can go over what the student will say.

Forming **book clubs** is another way to encourage reading for enjoyment. Teachers group three to six students together to read and informally discuss a common read. Because the group meets without much direction from the teacher, it is important that the books chosen for the group are at their independent or instructional reading levels.

**Literature circles** are peer-led discussion groups organized around a common text. Modeled after adult book clubs, students choose their own reading material, form small (two to six people), temporary groups based on book choice, and meet regularly to discuss their reading. Literature circles provide students time to engage in natural and sophisticated conversations about texts independent of the teacher's direct influence. To provide a support structure for the students, teachers often include role sheets. Each student in the group takes on a role for that book. Roles could include connecting the book to their lives, drawing pictures to visualize the text, creating questions for discussion, or looking up unknown vocabulary, to name a few. Teachers act as facilitators, moving around the class and observing their students at work, but never directing their thinking.

Many schools now require **independent reading** in addition to in-class texts. Students choose a book for enjoyment to read at home for credit in school. Depending on the school, students may have to turn in a journal documenting their thinking, present on their books, write a report, or have a parent sign off that their child read for so many hours at home.

## Review Questions

1. A teacher asks his students to code a text for personal, literary, and world connections. Why does he do this?
  - A. Coding texts for personal, literary and world connections helps student relate to the texts they are reading and see how the material connects with other books and world issues.
  - B. Coding texts provides a purpose for students when they are reading.
  - C. Coding texts helps students monitor their comprehension.
  - D. All of the above.

The correct answer is **D**. Coding texts is an important reading skill for beginning and adolescent readers. For one, it provides a purpose for any genre of text: nonfiction, poetry, and fiction. As students read, they look for personal connections, connections to other texts, and connections to contemporary issues. Teachers can use their students' codes as a springboard for discussion and as a way to assess student understanding of the reading. In addition, coding helps students monitor their own comprehension. Coding texts keeps students focused on the task and alerts them when they become distracted.

2. A teacher wants to monitor his students' thinking while they read a difficult text. One way that he is able to observe his students' internal thinking is by
  - A. giving an unannounced reading quiz to check for understanding.
  - B. providing questions that students have to answer at the end of the reading selection.
  - C. inviting students to keep a double-entry journal.
  - D. interviewing the students after each assigned reading selection.

The correct answer is **C**. It is difficult for teachers to know what their students are thinking. One way to make the invisible process of thinking apparent for the student and teacher is by asking students to keep a double- (or triple-) entry journal. Double-entry journals vary from task to task, but they are most often designed in the following manner: the left side of the journal is for recording selections of the text that are interesting or confusing to them, and the right side is for recording students' thinking about that selection. A teacher can then see the parts of the reading that caused the most difficulty and also examine how the student is reacting to or "reading" the text. Teachers can also model a reading strategy, such as making personal connections, and then apply the strategy to a double-entry journal. In this case, the left side is for recording passages with which the reader connects, and the right side is for explaining why the reader relates to the quote. Simply quizzing students or asking them to answer preconstructed questions will not tap into their thinking process. See the review section for an example of a double-entry journal.

3. Students in your class are going to be reading about the Arthur Miller play *The Crucible*. Before teaching the play, you should activate prior knowledge by
  - A. creating an anticipation guide with statements about the major issues in the play.
  - B. building the students' vocabulary by doing a list-group-label.
  - C. doing nothing; you don't want to give away any part of the play.
  - D. A and B.

The correct answer is **D**. Schema theory teaches us that students construct meaning by using their previous experiences or frameworks to understand new experiences. For students to learn about and from the play, teachers should activate their prior knowledge or frameworks about the main issues in the play so students can store and make meaning from the new information. Two methods of activating prior knowledge ask teachers to frontload the reading by using anticipation guides and vocabulary word sorts. Anticipation guides are statements about issues or themes in the text that students can agree or disagree with. Students then read the play to confirm or refute their original decisions. To build a student's vocabulary and activate prior knowledge, the teacher gathers a list of words related to the reading and invites students to group and then label the words.

- 4.** Students are ready to conduct research for their argumentative essays. You have alerted the library that you will need the computers for three periods so students can find information on the Internet to support their opinions. Students should know what about checking the validity of an electronic text?
- A.** If the Web site's address contains ".edu," the information has been supplied by a university, so it is valid.
  - B.** There is no need to check when the Web page was last updated; just because information is old, does not mean it is not useful.
  - C.** If the information is provided by a doctor or government official, it can be trusted.
  - D.** They should scroll down to the bottom of the page to make sure they know who created the Web page and how to get in touch with the page's creator.

The correct answer is **D**. Students need to be reminded that information provided on the Internet has not been reviewed by anyone to ensure its validity. That said, anyone can post anything, true or false, on their Web page. It is therefore important to learn how to critically read Web pages for the writer's credibility and legitimacy. Sites that contain .edu, .gov, or .org are less likely to be biased than .com sites. Students should learn that any site, even one that is from a university, contains bias. Scrolling down to the bottom of the page to ensure the site is being well maintained by people who provide their information is one way to ensure the site is trustworthy. They should also check to see if the links are still active and where the links take the reader. It might surprise them to click on a link and find it leads to a controversial group asking for money.

- 5.** Prior to reading a novel, you decide to try a guided reading-thinking activity (GRTA) with your class. To successfully implement the strategy, you must
- A.** begin by discussing the title of the book and the cover with the class.
  - B.** make predictions about story content.
  - C.** present a focusing question and then allow students to read a section of the text so they can answer the question.
  - D.** All of the above.

The correct answer is **D**. Guided reading-thinking activities offer support by engaging students in the reading and by improving comprehension of narrative texts. They teach students how to make predictions, focus their reading, and make adjustments in their thinking as they continue to read and predict. Teachers begin by discussing the book title and cover. The class then makes predictions based on the title and cover. The teacher and the students should record their predictions. The teacher (or the student) asks a focusing question before the students read a particular section of the book. Once they have finished, they can check the reading against the predictions they made earlier. Students then begin again by making a new prediction.

## Objective 0004

### Understands processes for generating, developing, revising, editing, and presenting or publishing written texts.

The following topics are covered under the subject area of Objective 0004:

- Applying knowledge of prewriting strategies (e.g., brainstorming, prioritizing and selecting topics, including clustering and other graphic organizers)
- Identifying effective techniques of note taking, outlining, and drafting
- Revising written texts (e.g., formulating topic sentences, reordering paragraphs or sentences, adding transition words and phrases, and eliminating distracting sentences) to improve unity and logical organization
- Editing written work to ensure conformity to conventions of standard English usage (e.g., eliminating misplaced or dangling modifiers, eliminating sentence fragments, correcting errors in subject-verb agreement and pronoun-antecedent agreement)
- Editing and proofreading written work to correct misspellings and eliminate errors in punctuation and capitalization
- Applying knowledge of the uses of technology to plan, create, revise, edit, and present or publish written texts and multimedia works

### The Writing Process: Prewriting Strategies

Writing is a process; as such, it is the teacher's responsibility to explicitly teach students the stages of the process. Even though every student has his own method, most tend to follow a certain progression from pre-writing to editing. Teachers should expose students to a variety of prewriting strategies and allow them to choose which one works best for them.

The first step in the writing process is **brainstorming**. When brainstorming, the students are allowed to contribute anything related to the topic. A teacher can conduct class brainstorms by *listing* students' thoughts as they are volunteered or by putting students in groups to share their thinking. For a more introspective brainstorm, the teacher can allot a certain amount of time for the class to free write their thoughts as they come to their minds. The idea behind brainstorming is to not place boundaries on or censor thinking.

A more teacher-directed brainstorm, the **K-W-L**, builds on students' prior knowledge and natural sense of curiosity to generate research topics. A K-W-L chart first asks students to write down everything they already *know* about the topic. Next, the student or students list what they *want* to know or find out as a result of the research. Once the research paper is completed, students revisit the K-W-L chart to record what they *learned* as a result of their work.

Once ideas have been shared, the class can move on to the next step: **narrowing and selecting topics**. To narrow the topic, teachers can employ a number of visual strategies using **graphic organizers**. Graphic organizers provide a visual way for students to "envision" or see the internal order of the paper. **Clustering** is one kind of graphic organizer that helps students narrow topics. Students place the topic in the middle of the page. For example, in an English class, students might be writing about an author's life and influences. Students use the branches to narrow the topic (i.e., childhood, schooling, family life, literary influences, etc.). Then students continue to branch off of each branch until they feel they have exhausted their topics. Finally, students select one of the narrower topics under one of the branches to write their papers.

Depending on the type of paper, Venn diagrams, outlining, mapping, and diagramming offer students a vehicle for **organizing their writing** graphically. **Venn diagrams** can be used for a compare and contrast paper. **Outlining, tree mapping, and diagramming** are essentially the same. For some students, the traditional outline, using Roman numerals, is confusing. For visual learners, mapping and tree diagramming are preferable. Once students have brainstormed, prioritized, narrowed the subject, and organized their ideas, they are ready for the next step in the process: drafting.

## The Writing Process: Note Taking, Outlining, and Drafting

**Note taking** is an important skill for students and presents many challenges. Students are not sure how to set up their notes, determine what is important, and use the notes to study or prepare for a research paper.

The **SQ3R** method of note taking addresses the above three issues. SQ3R stands for survey, question, read, review, and recite. First, students should **survey** the chapter and look for a pattern. They should pay particular attention to chapter and section titles, bold and italicized print, and bulleted information. Once they have discovered a pattern, the students should set up their notes in a manner that reflects the organization. Students then turn the titles and bold print into **questions** using *when*, *who*, *why*, *how*, and *what*. As the students **read** the text, they answer the questions in their notes. This helps them determine what important information should be in their notes. Next, students **review** their notes until they feel they can **recite** the information without looking at the notes. This method works particularly well with textbooks.

**Double-entry journals** also help students record information from textbooks, fiction, or other informational texts. Students divide their papers in half, folding vertically down the middle. On one side they record notes, and on the other side they can do one of three things: react to the recorded selection, question the text, or record where they obtained the information. **Learning logs** are an effective way for students to maintain a daily record of lessons for reference and review.

Another note-taking technique, the **Cornel Notes Method**, is commonly used in secondary schools and colleges. This style of taking notes is best for information presented in a linear fashion. The left side of the paper is for recording main ideas, and the right side is for writing down the details and particulars of the main ideas. At the bottom, the student should leave space for a summary of the above notes.

Note taking for a research paper is often taught using **annotated index cards**. The cards have different purposes. There are index cards for *summarizing* something read in a book for a quick reference of the author's main ideas. *Thesis* cards are for writing down the author's opinion about the subject the student is researching. A student can keep a *critical* note, reacting to the thesis, or a *question* index card for any new questions that emerged from the reading.

Note taking takes many forms; the teacher should model different styles of note taking. For visual learners, notes can come in the form of graphic organizers such as tree diagrams, concept maps, and Venn diagrams.

**Outlining** also takes on many shapes. As mentioned above, students can outline using Roman numerals. The main topic is Roman numeral one (I), and the supporting information for the topics is labeled from letters of the alphabet (A, B, C), and so on. Again, graphic organizers provide visual styles of planning.

When the information is gathered and put into outline form, students then **draft** their papers. Students simply need to sit down and write their papers by following the organization from their outlines. During the drafting process, students should not begin revising and editing. They should put their thoughts on paper as best they can and know that writing is recursive; they will eventually revisit their first draft for editing.

## The Writing Process: Revising Written Texts

Once students have brainstormed, outlined, and drafted their essays, the next stage in the writing process is **revising**. During the revising phase, students check their drafts for unity, coherence, organization, and structure. At this point, the writer needs to be willing to move around paragraphs, eliminate distracting sentences, fix transitions, and rewrite topic sentences for clarity.

**Topic sentences** are surprisingly difficult for young writers. A common mistake students make when writing topic sentences is to state a fact and not an opinion. If a topic sentence is simply a truism, the paragraph tends to ramble on and lose an inner structure. For example, a student might write about Holden Caulfield, the protagonist in Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*, "Holden has a sister." The topic sentence is a statement, not an opinion. The student does not need a paragraph to explain, analyze, or evaluate. Instead, he will mostly likely write a plot summary of the story instead of proving his thesis. The transition to the next paragraph then becomes discordant. If the student changed the topic sentence to an opinion, "Holden feels, much like a catcher in the rye, he must protect his sister from failure," he has a natural need to explain, analyze, or evaluate Holden's attitude toward his sister. When revising, students can check their papers for two things: topic sentences that are statements instead of opinions and paragraphs that are simply plot summaries.

Another common error in essays involves **reordering sentences** and **paragraphs**. Students often use the writing of the draft to formulate their ideas. As such, the last sentence in each paragraph tends to be the topic sentence. Students need to be willing to check their papers for instances when the reader must wait until the end to figure out what the writer is saying. Also, without transition words or clear organization, a student’s paper might jump from idea to idea. In that case, the student cuts the paper into paragraphs and plays around with the order until there is a clear logic to the presentation of the ideas. The student can do the same with sentences in a paragraph.

Once students feel they have an organized, coherent essay, or are in the process of revising for a more organized and coherent essay, they can add **transition words** and **transition phrases** to their papers. Transition words include words like *however*, *moreover*, and *similarly*, and transitional phrases comprise expressions such as *on the other hand*, *along the same lines*, and *in contrast*. Transition words and phrases signal the reader that the topic is either staying the same or changing. For example, if a student is writing a compare and contrast essay on the causes of the Civil War, he will need transition words and phrases as he moves from one side of the argument to the other. For instance: “The north felt justified outlawing slavery; *however*, the southern plantation owners thought their livelihood depended on free labor.” Jumping from one idea to another without smooth transitions confuses the reader and weakens the writer’s argument.

Last, as the students reread their drafts, they should be aware of **distracting sentences**: sentences that are unnecessary, worded poorly, or filled with jargon. One way to catch distracting sentences is to give the draft to an outside reader and have that reader mark or highlight any sentences that the reader needed to read more than once. If the reader stops in the middle of a paper to reread a sentence for clarity, the reader loses track of what he was reading, which is an indication of a poorly written sentence. Also, students can look for redundant or unnecessary sentences, that is, a series of sentences essentially making the same point.

Revising an essay takes time and practice; however, it is imperative that students learn how to read their papers with a critical eye and are willing to make changes. Once they compare their initial drafts to their modified drafts, they will see for themselves the importance of revising.

## The Writing Process: Editing Written Texts

The last phase of the writing process is **editing**. Editing also involves revising; however, editing is done on a micro level. During editing, students check their work for English usage such as grammar, syntax, punctuation, and mechanics. This requires students to know some basic conventions of print: independent and dependent clauses, modifiers and appositives, subject-verb agreement, and pronoun-antecedent agreement.

Once a student has drafted a written text and revised for organization and unity, he should read carefully for usage errors. One common error in usage occurs when a student does not place a phrase or clause modifier as close as possible to the words they modify. When this happens, the sentence is very confusing to the reader and is said to have a **misplaced modifier**. For instance, the sentence “Hungry from the marathon, chocolate cake sounded good,” contains an example of a **dangling modifier** because the phrase *hungry from the marathon* does not sensibly modify *chocolate cake*. The chocolate cake isn’t hungry, the person who ran the marathon is. To fix the sentence so the modifier does not *dangle*, or exist without a word to modify, the student can add some words for the phrase to modify: “Hungry from the marathon, *the runner thought* chocolate cake sounded good.” To teach students to identify dangling modifiers, share examples with the students to show them the silly unintended meanings they convey.

To help students avoid **sentence fragments**, teachers need to show how fragments do not express complete thoughts. That is, they are not sentences that can stand on their own; therefore, the fragment should remain in the sentence of which it is a part. Also, it is important to remind students that a sentence consists of a subject and a verb and communicates a complete thought: “She went to the store.” The subject of the sentence is *she*, and the verb is *went*. “After the winter formal.” is an example of a sentence fragment. The sentence does not contain a verb and is therefore a sentence fragment. The next example is not as obvious: “The people going to the opera.” The sentence does have a subject—*the people*—and a verb—*going*; however, a verb ending in *-ing* cannot stand on its own without a **helping verb** to form a **verb phrase**: “The people *were* going to the opera.” If a student is left wondering what happened next, it is a good indication that the thought needs to be completed. Once students check for subjects, verbs, and verbs ending in *-ing*, they can easily fix the sentences.

**Pronoun-antecedent agreement** causes problems in writing, especially because there is not a gender-neutral third-person pronoun in the English language other than *they*. For example, in the following sentence, notice how the writer tries to use *they* as a pronoun for one person to avoid using the universal *he*: “When a *student* does not turn in homework, *they* risk a failing grade.” The subject (which is also the antecedent in this instance) is singular (*student*), but the pronoun is plural (*they*). The sentence can be fixed by changing either the subject/antecedent to reflect more than one student (“When *students* do not turn in their homework . . .”) or the plural pronoun to a singular pronoun (“. . . *she* or *he* risks a failing grade”). Writers should also use a singular pronoun with the words *anybody*, *anyone*, *each*, *either*, *everybody*, *everyone*, *neither*, *nobody*, *no one*, *one*, *somebody*, *someone*. (Ex: “If *anyone* calls about the party, tell *him* or *her* that the time has been changed to 1:00.”)

When editing a paper for **subject-verb agreement**, students should check to make sure the verb agrees with the subject. Singular subjects use singular verbs, and plural subjects use plural verbs. Case in point, the following example shows subject-verb agreement because the verb changed when the subject changed: “*She* was late for the party, but *we* were also late.” Even if the phrase before the verb is plural, a singular subject still takes a singular verb: “The *teacher*, as well as the parents, *was* proud of her students.” Because whatever in commas can be removed, the sentence is essentially about a teacher being proud of her students (“The teacher was proud of her students.”).

Some words that cause confusion include *anybody*, *anyone*, *each*, *either*, *everybody*, *everyone*, *neither*, *nobody*, *no one*, *one*, *somebody*, and *someone*. These words require singular verbs. *Both*, *few*, *many*, and *several*, however, take a plural verb. (Ex: “*Both* the mother and the father *were* in attendance at the teacher conference.”)

**Compound subjects** also cause some uncertainty. Subjects joined by *and* necessitate a plural verb; subjects connected by *or* or *nor* require a singular verb. To make matters more complicated, when a sentence contains both a singular and a plural subject coupled by *or* or *nor*, the verb should agree with the nearest subject: “Either the parents or the son *is* telling the truth.” If the sentence was changed, it would read like this: “The son or the parents *are* telling the truth.”

Editing requires knowledge of grammar, sentence structure, and subject, verb, and noun usage. It takes time and practice to become a proficient editor. Continually applying the writing process will aid in instilling the importance of editing.

## The Writing Process: Proofreading Written Texts

Errors in punctuation most often happen because of ignorance of the rules. Despite the fact that commas do indicate pauses, there are times when a colon also indicates a pause. Students need to learn the rules governing punctuation and apply them often in their writing. The more often students use, recognize the misuse of, and discuss their decisions for using certain punctuation, the more likely they will be to use punctuation correctly.

Punctuation tells the reader *how* to read the sentence. For example, the following sentence is very confusing without punctuation because the reader does not know when to pause.

Ex: The teacher a veteran of the profession for thirty years decided to retire and travel to the following places Venice Italy Munich Germany and Madrid Spain.

With commas, a colon and a semi-colon, the sentence becomes very readable.

Ex: The teacher, a veteran of the profession for thirty years, decided to retire and travel to the following places: Venice, Italy; Munich, Germany; and Madrid, Spain.

Punctuation is also essential to the intended meaning of a sentence. For instance, the next sentence conveys a very different message than the one that follows it.

Ex: A woman without her man is nothing.

Punctuation can change its entire implication:

Ex: A woman: without her, man is nothing.

Once students understand how important punctuation is to writing, they are ready to learn the rules and apply them accordingly.

## Commas

There are many uses of the **comma**: to separate items in a sequence, two or more adjectives describing a noun, or two independent clauses joined by one of the conjunctions: *and*, *but*, *nor*, *for*, or *yet*. They also set off nonessential information and introductory words, phrases and clauses.

- Commas separate items in a sequence.

Ex: I try to improve my vocabulary by reading, writing, and incorporating new words in my daily conversations.

- Commas separate two or more adjectives describing a noun.

Ex: It was a beautiful, sunny day.

An easy way to check if a comma should be included is to place the word *and* between the adjectives; if the sentence makes sense, the commas stay. (It was a beautiful and sunny day.)

- Commas are used to separate two independent clauses joined by one of the conjunctions: *and*, *but*, *or*, *nor*, *for*, or *yet*.

Ex: I wanted to call in sick, but my students were counting on me.

- Commas are used to set off nonessential information in a sentence. That is, the clause or phrase does not need to be in the sentence for the sentence to make sense.

Ex: Mrs. Johnson, my favorite teacher, is absent today.

Without the appositive, *my favorite teacher*, the sentence can still stand on its own.

- Commas set off introductory words, phrases, and clauses.

Ex: Yes, I would love a piece of chocolate cake. No, I would not like a piece of vanilla.

Ex: In the middle of the night on Tuesday, I got a craving for chocolate cake. [more than one prepositional phrase in the beginning of the sentence]

Ex: While I was home sick, I made a chocolate cake for my students. [adverb clause]

Ex: Hungry from the marathon, I decided to treat myself to a piece of chocolate cake. [participial phrase]

- Commas are also needed after dates, addresses, and titles.

Ex: October 22, 2005

Ex: New York, New York

Ex: My son, Joe Smith, Jr., just earned his Ph.D.

## Semicolons

**Semicolons**, for the most part, are optional. They can be used between two independent clauses or can break up a series of items in a list when the items themselves contain commas.

- Semicolons separate two independent clauses.

Ex: I love to read literature; I love to read nonfiction, too.

- Semicolons break up a series of items in a list containing commas.

Ex: There are so many things I love about New York: I love the theater; Times Square; the musicals *Rent*, *Phantom of the Opera*, and *Fiddler on the Roof*; and the Greek, Italian, and Cuban restaurants in Queens.

- There is only one time when a semicolon is essential to the sentence. A sentence requires a semicolon when two sentences are joined by the following conjunctions: *however*, *hence*, *consequently*, *therefore*, *otherwise*, *furthermore*, *moreover*, *accordingly*, *nevertheless*, *for example*, *for instance*, *that is*, *besides*.

Ex: The teacher did not prepare for today's lesson; consequently, the students were not well behaved.

## Colons

A **colon** means "note what follows" before a list or a long statement or quotation and indicates a dramatic pause.

- Colons are used before a list.

Ex: I plan on bringing the following items on vacation: lotion, my camera, sandals, and many books.

- Colons are used before a quotation.  
Ex: Sojourner Truth challenged racism and sexism when she appealed to a crowd of suffragettes: “Ain’t I a woman?”
- Colons indicate a dramatic pause.  
Ex: There was only one thing left to do: tell the truth.

## Apostrophes

**Apostrophes** are used to indicate a possessive in a singular noun, time or quantity, the omission of figures in dates, omission of letters, plurals of letters, and plurals of words.

- Apostrophes indicate a possessive in a singular noun.  
Ex: The teacher’s class is on a field trip.
- Apostrophes indicate possession with time or quantity.  
Ex: Last week’s field trip was to the Bronx Zoo.
- Apostrophes indicate the omission of figures and dates.  
Ex: The graduating class of ‘05 will always remember their senior year.
- Apostrophes indicate the omission of letters.  
Ex: I s’pose if she pays for it, he’ll agree to let them go.
- Apostrophes are used with plurals of letters.  
Ex: While we are at the Bronx Zoo, mind your p’s and q’s.
- Apostrophes are used with plurals of words.  
Ex: Before we enter the zoo, we should read the do’s and don’t’s.

## Hyphens

**Hyphens** are used to join two or more words serving as a single adjective before a noun (NOT after the noun), to form a compound number, to avoid an awkward combination of letters, to form words with some prefixes and suffixes, and to divide words at the ends of lines of printed text.

- Hyphens are used to join words serving as a single adjective before a noun.  
Ex: Please pass me the chocolate-covered peanuts.
- Hyphens are not needed when the adjectives follow the noun, as in the following example.  
Ex: Are those peanuts chocolate covered?
- Hyphens are also necessary in compound numbers.  
Ex: forty-two
- Hyphens are used to avoid confusion or an awkward combination of letters.  
Ex: When the rule about backpacks was tabled, all of the students re-signed the petition. (Without the hyphen, the sentence reads as if the students gave up or resigned from petitioning.)
- Hyphens are used with the prefixes *ex* (meaning former), *self*, *all*; with the suffix *elect*; and between a prefix and a capitalized letter.  
Ex: ex-wife, self-assured, mid-October, all-inclusive, mayor-elect
- Finally, hyphens divide words at the ends of lines. The breaks should only be between syllables.  
Ex: Using a hyphen can be very tricky because there are so many rules to follow.

## Dashes

The **dash** is a more dramatic pause than the comma, but it is less formal than the colon. A dash can show breaks of thought in a sentence, introduce a list of items, or end an unfinished sentence.

- The dash shows a break of thought in a sentence.  
Ex: The teacher—who’s also my neighbor—gave us too much homework.
- The dash is an informal way to introduce a list of items.  
Ex: My teacher said that there were three things we could not bring to the zoo—bananas, gum, and nuts.
- The dash ends an unfinished sentence.  
Ex: I went to give the monkey a banana, and I got—

## Using Technology to Research and Write

Technology provides numerous tools for enhancing student learning. Students use the computer and computer software programs to help them **plan** papers, generate ideas, and begin organizing their thoughts. Cutting and pasting also lends itself well to **revising** and **editing**. Student writers save time cutting and pasting the order of the paragraphs, sentences, or ideas when using computers. Once students are finished with their work, they can **publish** their work online for a much broader audience. Research suggests that writing for an authentic audience, as opposed to the teacher, results in better writing.

Students can also use technology to conduct research. It is particularly imperative for the teacher to show students how to evaluate a Web site (see also Objective 0003, “Assessing Credibility or Objectivity”). Because there is no way of regulating the information on the Web, legitimate sites are often one click away from questionable sites. Students should learn not to trust everything they read on the Internet. The students need to ask themselves the following questions before they choose to use the site in their research.

- Who is the author of the site?
- What are the author’s credentials?
- When was the Web site updated?
- What is the author’s bias?
- Can the author be contacted?
- Do the links work?
- What domain does it come from? (i.e., government, education, personal, or nonprofit)

Once the students finish their research, they can use technology as a vehicle to share their work via **multimedia works**. PowerPoint enhances a project or report by using music, visuals, speech downloads, or video excerpts.

## Review Questions

1. A teacher wants his students to read a chapter from the Social Studies textbook and take notes. The best way to teach the students how to take notes in a way that encourages independent thinking is to
  - A. create a formal outline on the board using Roman numerals and instruct students to use this linear format when reading the chapter.
  - B. pass out a teacher-invented graphic organizer (one that reflects the chapter’s organization) and have students fill in the organizer as they read the chapter.
  - C. teach students to first peruse or survey the chapter and look for an organization or common pattern (i.e., section headings, bold captions, italicized sections, etc.). Then, elicit from the students different ways of organizing the chapter (i.e., formal outlines, graphic organizers, clustering, creating questions out of the topic headings, etc.) to allow for choice.
  - D. tell students to read the chapter and answer the questions at the end to test their understanding of the material. If they cannot answer the questions without looking back in the text, they should reread the chapter.

The correct answer is **C**. Note taking is an important skill for students to master. Students do not always know what is important to write down and what is not. One way to help students decide what is important is to teach them how to set a purpose before reading and how to produce their own note taking method appropriate for their specific purpose. As the students read for information, their purpose becomes filling in the outline or organizer. Teachers can certainly construct an outline for the students, particularly when first modeling the process; however, students become dependent on the teacher doing the thinking. After modeling the process of surveying a chapter and showing or eliciting from the students different ways of visually organizing the information, the teacher should allow the students to decide for themselves which method best suits their purpose and learning style. Visual students will most likely opt for a graphic organizer. Simply asking students to answer the questions at the end will not help them when they are conducting research online or using reference materials or other non-fiction texts. (Note: Middle and high school students will be able to decide their own note-taking method. Younger students will need more guidance; students should receive as much support as is necessary for their developmental levels.)

- 2.** A teacher has just completed a set of essays. To her frustration, the essays are a mess: students clearly have no understanding of topic sentences, organization, or transitions. The teacher should
- A.** not grade the papers. Instead, she should take out her red pen and fix all of the mistakes. It takes her days, but at least the students will be able to see what they did wrong so they do not make the same errors next time.
  - B.** remain calm. She should then decide what are the most glaring and/or important errors the students made. Next, she must design mini-lessons using the students' work to teach or reteach the components of an essay, one at a time. Once the lessons are completed, students apply their understanding of the writing process to their first drafts.
  - C.** continue to teach her curriculum and make individual appointments after or before school to tutor her students on the writing process.
  - D.** move on. Some students submitted well-written, well-organized papers. Not every student excels in expository writing. The other students will pick up more points during the creative writing unit.

The correct answer is **B**. If students make glaring mistakes in their writing, it means one of two things: either they never learned how to write an expository essay complete with a thesis, topic sentences, transitions, and a conclusion, or they were exposed to the process but did not internalize it. Either way, the students need to be retaught the process and given more opportunities to practice. To make it more personal, students can use their own work. By allowing students to revise their papers, the teacher hands over the responsibility to the students and reinforces the notion that writing papers is a recursive process. There are many ways to help students understand the writing process. The teacher can show the difference between fact and opinion when teaching the topic sentence, or she can have students cut out the sentences in the paper and then have a partner place the sentences in a logical order, similar to a puzzle. This way, students learn the importance of internal logic. Next, students can apply transition words and phrases. Simply marking the paper will only frustrate the students. Use the essay as a formative assessment; let their misunderstandings drive your instruction.

- 3.** Your school has just won a technology grant. You volunteer to be one of the classrooms to receive the computers, promising to incorporate technology into your writing curriculum. The principal checks in now and again to assess your use of the new computers. Every time the principal observes, the students are using class time and word processing to type their weekly essays. The principal is disappointed. What are some of the uses aside from word processing and typing for the computers in your classroom?
- A.** Students can use the computer and computer software programs to help them plan papers, generate ideas, and begin organizing their thoughts.
  - B.** Cutting and pasting makes the job of revising much easier for writers. Students learn the importance of inner logic and coherency by cutting and pasting the order of the paragraphs, sentences, or ideas in an outline much easier than if they tried the same process using a paper and pencil.
  - C.** Thanks to the Internet, there are hundreds of online publishing sites for young, student writers. Research suggests that writing for an authentic audience improves student writing.
  - D.** All of the above.

The correct answer is **D**. Technology in the classroom does not mean word processing only. While having a spell checking tool does help writers edit their papers, technology provides many more options to enhance student learning. Students can use the computer and computer software programs to help them plan papers, generate ideas, and begin organizing their thoughts. Cutting and pasting also lends itself well to revising and editing. Rather than growing frustrated by the many rewrites that papers require, young writers save time cutting and pasting the order of the paragraphs, sentences, or ideas. Once students are finished with their work, they can publish their work online for a much broader audience. Research suggests that writing for an authentic audience improves student writing and makes the process more meaningful. In addition to aiding in the writing process, computers and technology allow for students to create multimedia presentations of their work. Students can present their research using PowerPoint or enhance a project using music, visuals, speech downloads, or video excerpts.

- 4.** Part of the curriculum requires you to teach the research paper. You assigned the paper on a Monday and gave the students until Wednesday to collect materials from the Internet, library, and classroom materials. To your disappointment, on Wednesday, half of the class brought in no materials, and the other half brought too much. What could you have done differently to help the students generate and narrow topic ideas?
- A.** Made the assignment less broad so the students would know where to start or where to end: Do you want students to choose one side of a controversial issue? Do you want students to research a topic related to the content they are studying? Begin by defining the purpose and intent of the assignment.
  - B.** Helped students narrow a research topic by inviting a class brainstorm. Students can free write, list ideas, or complete a K-W-L.
  - C.** Helped students visually organize their ideas using outlining, mapping, or tree diagramming.
  - D.** All of the above.

The correct answer is **D**. Writing is a process. The teacher’s job is to teach and model that process. Prewriting is the first and most important step in guaranteeing a focused paper; however, before students begin prewriting, teachers should provide some limitations. There are many different kinds of papers—compare and contrast, argumentative, informational, and analytical—all requiring different methods, processes, and skills. Once you have provided some boundaries, help students to narrow the topic further by inviting a class brainstorm. Students can free write, list ideas, or complete a K-W-L. It is important to remember that anything is allowed during a brainstorm. Brainstorms help jog students’ previous knowledge and may spark a new interest. Once ideas are available, students can group and organize their own ideas. Graphic organizers provide a visual way for students to “envision” or see the internal order of the paper. Depending on the type of paper, Venn diagrams, outlining, mapping, and diagramming offer students a vehicle for such a task.

- 5.** A teacher committed to teaching the writing process, you carve out time for regular writing workshops. You and your students are at the editing stage of your argumentative essays. You should
- A.** instruct students to get their independent reading books while you take a quick look through their papers for incorrect usage.
  - B.** explain that today’s editing workshop is dedicated to subject-verb agreement. Students can use highlighters, colored pens, or underlining to mark the subjects and verbs in their own or their partner’s papers. Readers will then check for agreement.
  - C.** tell students to reread their papers, looking for any grammatical, stylistic, or mechanical errors.
  - D.** take students to the computer lab so they can run their drafts through grammar- and spell-checking tools.

The correct answer is **B**. Students should be responsible for their own editing. It is not enough to simply tell the class to reread their papers and “edit” for usage, however. First, the teacher should use students’ initial drafts to assess their areas of greatest weakness. For example, the above example presupposes that students’ papers reveal many errors in subject-verb agreement. Next, the teacher provides instruction in correcting subject-verb agreements before allotting time for students to apply what they have learned to their own writing. This way, students are learning to conform to conventions of standard English in an appropriate context. With practice, students will learn to keep an eye out for concurrence with their subjects and verbs.

- 6.** The teacher finds that students are misusing semicolons in their papers. He can either tell the students to stop employing them or teach the students
- A.** that semicolons are used to join two independent clauses separated by the conjunctions: *however, hence, consequently, therefore, otherwise, furthermore, moreover, accordingly, nevertheless, for example, for instance, that is, and besides.*
  - B.** that semicolons join two independent clauses that are closely related.
  - C.** that semicolons clarify sentences with many commas by breaking them up.
  - D.** all of the above.

The correct answer is **D**. For the most part, the semicolon is an optional punctuation mark; however, it helps writers clarify long sentences with many commas. A semicolon must also be used when two independent clauses separate the following conjunctions: *however, hence, consequently, therefore, otherwise, furthermore, moreover, accordingly, nevertheless, for example, for instance, that is, and besides.* Semicolons help writers create more sophisticated sentences, which reflect more sophisticated thoughts.

## Objective 0005

### Understands and applies writing skills and strategies for various purposes (including information and understanding, critical analysis and evaluation, literary response and personal expression, and social interaction).

The following topics are covered under the subject area of Objective 0005:

- Analyzing factors a writer should consider when writing for a variety of audiences and purposes (e.g., informative, persuasive, and expressive), including factors related to selection of topic and mode of written expression
- Recognizing how to incorporate graphic representations (e.g., diagrams, graphs, and time lines) into writing for various purposes
- Applying knowledge of skills involved in writing a research paper (e.g., generating ideas and questions, posing problems, and evaluating and summarizing data from a variety of print and nonprint sources)
- Identifying techniques for expressing point of view, using logical organization, and avoiding bias in writing for critical analysis, evaluation, or persuasion
- Demonstrating knowledge of strategies for writing a response to a literary selection by referring to the text, other works, and personal experience
- Demonstrating awareness of voice in writing for personal expression and social interaction

### Factors to Consider Before Writing

Prior to writing a paper, students must take purpose, audience, topic, mode, and point of view into consideration.

When writing to inform, students should choose a subject of personal interest and present facts in a clear manner. Because the audience is most likely the teacher, classmates, or both, the correct form for sharing the information is an **expository** or five-paragraph essay, working deductively from the main idea to the facts supporting the paper's focus. Using the traditional essay form, students begin with a **thesis statement**, follow up with **supporting paragraphs**, and end with a **conclusion**. Because of the formal manner in which the paper is written, **third-person narration** is necessary, along with a formal voice. Students should avoid slang, contractions, and idioms in a formal essay.

Writing to persuade, however, begins with a **problem**. It is the job of the writer to convince her readers to think a certain way about the issue. Persuasive essays work best when the student chooses a contemporary and controversial issue. The writer chooses a topic about which she feels passionately and **gathers facts** to support her opinion. Once the information is gathered, the student presents the ideas in the form of a paper. Similar to informational writing, the correct mode for organizing the information is using **academic writing**. In this case, the writer begins by identifying her position on the issue. Next, she addresses the other side and anticipates any objections that side may have with the writer's position. Then the writer offers a solution and restates her opinion in the conclusion. The writer should use a formal voice; however, she can choose to use **first person** because the idea is not to remain neutral but to pick a side and persuade the audience.

Writing for expression, conversely, is not about convincing or informing. Creative writing satisfies students' needs to express themselves through the use of their imaginations. The writer does not necessarily have an audience in mind, though some modes of expression such as plays are meant to entertain large audiences. Other forms of expression may be private or intended for one other person, such as a love poem. Because there are many modes of expression, point of view, topic, and voice will vary. Poems, for example, may take on the shape of a **haiku**, a **ballad**, or **verse**. Fiction also comes in different genres such as science fiction, historical fiction, mystery, and fantasy.

One way for students to analyze the factors that go into writing for different purposes and audiences is by modeling the process, assigning different kinds of writing, and using a **RAFT (Role, Audience, Format, Topic)**. Students choose the point of view from which they want to write and then must keep in mind **audience, form/mode, and topic**. Depending on the student's level of readiness, teachers can fill in as many parts of the RAFT as they feel necessary. An example follows:

<b>Role</b>	<b>Audience</b>	<b>Format</b>	<b>Topic</b>
Student	Board of Education	Persuasive Essay	Why the school should abolish homework
Playwright	Children	Dialogue	
Student	Next year's kindergarten class.	Letter	How to survive kindergarten

## Incorporation of Graphics

Graphic representations express complex information in the form of pictures. What might take several pages to explain can be summed up in a diagram, graph, or time line. As a result, graphic representations help writers show information that would otherwise be too difficult or cumbersome to include in a paper. Students ought to learn how and for what purpose to use different graphics in their writing.

- **Graphs** are one kind of graphic representation and, depending on the writer's purpose, come in one of four forms: line, pie, bar, and stacked bar. *Line graphs* are used to illustrate change over time. A writer might use a line graph in a report about the changes in first grade reading test scores using a new literacy program. The amount of time or number of years is placed on the horizontal line equidistant from one another and the subject (in this case, testing scores) is found along the vertical line. After years of data collection, the writer draws a line showing the increase or decrease over time to see if the literacy program is producing positive results.

*Pie graphs* help writers show proportions and relationships to other portions of the whole pie. If a student is writing a report on what proportion of the school population takes the bus compared to those who ride their bikes, walk or get a ride, he can use a pie chart.

*Bar graphs* are similar to line graphs in their setup; however, bar graphs should not be used to show changes over time. Instead, bar graphs show how things compare at one given time. For example, schools often use bar graphs to track a money-raising competition for charity among different grade levels. The vertical line illustrates the amount of money being raised, and the horizontal line indicates the different grade levels. Students who are writing or presenting information that requires comparing different places, things, or amounts might benefit from a bar graph. The students may also want to consider using a *stacked bar graph*, which provides even more information because it compares parts within the bars.

- **Diagrams** show readers how things are constructed, how things work, or both. For example, if a student is presenting or writing about smoking and its effects on the lungs, he would include a *picture diagram* of a healthy lung and label its parts. Then he can incorporate a diseased lung and label the parts of the lung that have been damaged by smoking. In order to not confuse the reader, a diagram does not have to show all the parts of the subject; it is left to the discretion of the writer to label only those parts that are being highlighted or discussed. Alternatively, *line diagrams* help readers see how things work. Using lines, pictures, and words, a writer can provide a visual of how the heart pumps blood through the body, for example. Line diagrams are most often found in informational essays.
- **Time lines** situate the subject of the paper within a historical context. A student writing about a historical event, such as the Suffrage Movement, might include a time line to show when the movement started and what was happening at that time. Such a time line graphically demonstrates the amount of time and effort it took the women and men involved and all that happened in between. Ultimately, it provides a reference point for when and where things occurred.

## Writing Research Papers

Research papers begin with a question or a deep, personal interest in a subject. As such, the first step in the research process is to pick and narrow down a subject. Students begin to **generate ideas and questions** by *brainstorming*. Brainstorming can include *journaling*, *free writing*, or using *graphic organizers*. Graphic organizers help students in this stage of writing. K-W-L charts and clusters are the two most common types of prewriting organizers. The K-W-L works by reviewing the student's prior knowledge on a subject to find missing information. Thus, in the first column, the student indicates what he Knows, and in the second, what he Wants to learn more about. Once the student has finished

the research, he fills out the third column, which indicates things Learned during the course of the research. See Objective 0004 for more about K-W-Ls.

Clustering is another way teachers help students generate ideas and questions for research. Students write the subject in the middle of the page and circle it. Then, for the next three to five minutes, students cluster, or write words or ideas associated with the main subject. Students can also branch off of the ideas that emerged from the central subject. Once the initial cluster is finished, students scan the cluster for an idea that interests them. They should then free write for a few minutes to see if an idea emerges from their writing.

In addition to prewriting, students should learn to **pose problems** for research. Research requires problematizing a subject and looking at the subject from different perspectives. Students can keep a notebook and jot down things they wonder about or questions that come up in class or arise during their reading. For example, if a student asks a particularly interesting, open-ended, and complex question during a history lesson, the student can jot it down in his notebook. When it is time to teach the research process, the notebooks are a place to begin asking questions and posing problems. Also, a teacher can bring up a topic and ask students to journal about the topic from as many perspectives as possible to complicate the topic and help students begin to see that there are many sides to an issue.

Once students have narrowed their topics and posed a problem to be researched, they will need the research skills to find answers to their questions. **Evaluating and summarizing data from print and nonprint sources** is the next step in this process.

It is imperative that students learn that not all sources are credible or accurate. Learning how to evaluate the sources will ensure that they do not use faulty or biased information in their research papers. When evaluating print sources, students should ask, Who is the author? Is the author an authority on the topic? What sources does the author use to defend his argument? Does the author address both sides of the problem? Is the information accurate and current?

Similarly, nonprint sources, such as the media, photographs, art, and music, also contain bias and need to be evaluated for their credibility. Movies, for example, are often influenced by popular opinion and therefore tend to sensationalize issues and historical events. If a student is writing a research report on Native Americans, he cannot rely on the film *Dances with Wolves* to be his primary source of information. The movie is only one person's vision of life for Native Americans during the nineteenth century. It is important to verify the accuracy of the film by reading oral histories of Native Americans and nonfiction texts and by analyzing cultural artifacts.

Because so many students use the Internet to conduct most of their research, it is imperative that students know how to *evaluate* the credibility of a Web site. Unlike research done in the library, where the books have been reviewed by librarians, there is no way of regulating the kind of information that appears on the Web. Objective 0003 provides a detailed description of evaluating websites.

**Summarizing** data is an important part of the note-taking process. Students learn how to summarize information through the use of annotated index cards. When summarizing, students use as few words as possible to write down, in their own words, the main points of the article or chapter. Summarizing data will save the students' time because they do not have to reread their sources as they approach the drafting stage of the research process; and because writing summaries necessitates students putting the information into their own words, the skill also acts as a check for understanding.

## Credibility and Objectivity Enhancement

When writing for critical analysis, evaluation, or persuasion, students ought to use a third person point of view. Third person suggests objectivity, which will give the student's argument more credibility. The first person point of view is best kept for editorials, personal expression, autobiography, and fiction.

Presenting an argument or opinion **logically** requires the writer to make a claim, support it with credible evidence, address all sides of the issue, and propose a practical and realistic conclusion. With this in mind, a student's paper should begin with the writer's **argument** or **claim**. Before proceeding, the writer must keep in mind the audience and explain or define any confusing words or ideas for clarification. Next, the writer must provide plenty of **evidence** from reliable sources to support his opinion and must also anticipate objections. Objections are best addressed by making some **concessions** before discrediting opposing viewpoints and finding weaknesses in their arguments. For the penultimate paragraph, the writer suggests a solution and then ends the paper once again with his claim.

To avoid bias, the writer must be careful not to emulate some of the misleading techniques some writers use to persuade and misinform. One way to avoid being discredited is by using **qualifiers**. For example, a student should not make the following claim: *Teachers give too much homework*. If there is a teacher in the school who chooses not to give homework, the student's statement is easily questioned. By using a qualifier, however, the student makes the statement more difficult to dismiss: *Some teachers give too much homework*.

Students should also look out for **broad generalizations** in their writing. The above example is also an illustration of a broad generalization. One cannot really make the claim that *all* teachers give too much homework; therefore, the statement is false. Along the same lines, it is dangerous to use an **oversimplification** in an essay. For example, maintaining that homework would be eradicated if students never misbehaved is an oversimplification. Things are usually not as uncomplicated as they seem.

Using **either/or** thinking is another instance of bias in writing: *Either teachers start giving homework every night or students will graduate middle school unprepared*. Again, the claim this writer is making oversimplifies the issue, so it can be easily rejected. **Half-truths** ought to be avoided as well: *Homework takes up too much time; therefore, today's kids don't know how to play and have fun*.

Just as readers need to be aware of bias in what they read, writers need to be careful of bias in their analyses, research reports, and persuasive essays.

## Writing Literary Responses

Strategies beginning teachers use when teaching literary response include making personal and text connections. Students should refer to specific quotes or examples from the text that support their feelings, ideas, and interpretations. There are two kinds of responses: literary and personal.

**Literary responses** ask students to analyze or interpret a text, using specific examples from the reading to support their opinions or theses. Without support, their arguments do not hold any weight with the reader. The number of references depends on the teacher or audience; however, it is best to make at least three references to the text or other works. Once the student learns the importance of using specific and relevant quotes (that is, quotes that defend his position), the next step necessitates knowledge of the **Modern Language Association (MLA)** and its rules for citing from a literary work.

According to MLA, an **in-text citation** (a citation included in the body of the paper), involves the author's last name, followed by a space and the page number where the quote is found. For example, if I quote from page 14 of a book written by Mildred Taylor, I would need to cite as follows: (Taylor 14).

At the end of the paper, the student writer includes a **works-cited** page. Again, the student should refer to the MLA format, which calls for an alphabetical-by-last-name list of the references, the titles of the texts, the publishing cities and states, and the copyright date. The following is an example of a works-cited page.

Anderson, Laurie Halse. *Speak*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1999.

Students need to consult an MLA book or Web site when citing articles, movies, and other text to adhere to MLA conventions and to avoid plagiarizing.

**Personal responses** to literary works include journals, letters to authors, personal essays, book reviews, and double-entry journals. In cases such as these, students make personal connections to a reading by referring to an instance, situation, conflict or character to which they can relate. Double-entry journals reinforce the importance of making text-to-self connections. On the left, students record quotes or examples from the book, and on the right side, they write about their personal feelings or connections. If, for example, a student is asked to personally respond to *Stargirl* by Jerry Spinelli, the student might relate a time in her life when somebody performed a random act of kindness or remember when she did not feel as if she fit in. Again, the student should be instructed to find specific quotes or examples that would support the connection or reference.

## Voice Awareness

**Voice** is an important component in writing for personal expression and social interaction. Voice is the distinctive style, form, content, and diction of a particular writer. In other words, it is what makes a person’s writing unique. Oftentimes, when a writer has a strong voice, a reader can identify the writer simply by reading a passage from one of the writer’s books.

Unlike writing for information, understanding, critical analysis, and literary response, writing for personal expression should be subjective and informal. Students can use the pronoun “I,” slang, colloquialisms, and dialect. Writing with a clear voice, however, means staying away from flowery language, jargon, clichés and euphemisms.

One way to help students find their voices is through different kinds of writing prompts that elicit strong emotions from the writer. For instance, the students can write about a time when they were really angry about something. Students might also write using their “voices,” share the writing without revealing the author, and find out if their classmates can find their writing.

Writing for social interaction includes writing letters, notes, postcards, invitations, and email messages. Social writing can be either formal or informal, depending on the purpose and occasion. Teachers can help students learn how to write for social interaction in many ways. Students might write formal invitations to their parents or guardians, inviting them to a showing of a completed project or class play. Students can also learn about other cultures and practice writing letters to pen pals in other countries. Finally, students or teachers who travel over vacations could send postcards to the class.

One style of writing does not fit all audiences, purposes, or forms. Different kinds of writing require different styles, voices, and processes. It is important that teachers help students understand and apply various writing skills and strategies for different aims.

## Review Questions

1. A fourth grade class is reading *Out of the Dust* by Karen Hesse. The teacher wants students to make personal connections to the text. She can help students by introducing which strategies?
  - A. Keeping a double-entry journal, recording instances in the book that remind the students of people or events in their own lives.
  - B. Writing a letter to one of the characters in the book; the letter can include advice, reassurance, or a warning.
  - C. Coding the text for personal connections and then writing a personal essay about the connections the student made.
  - D. All of the above.

The correct answer is **D**. Students will better comprehend what they are reading if they can make personal connections to the text. To illustrate the importance of making connections, teachers should demonstrate different strategies for responding personally to a literary selection. There are several ways to show students how to refer personally to literary selections: double-entry journals, letters, personal essays, coding, and book reviews. Double-entry journals require students to record direct quotes or specific instances from the text before making a direct connection. At a later time, in a class discussion or for a personal essay, the student can use his double-entry journal for a reference. Coding teaches a similar skill; however, the student codes passages for text-to-self (T-S) connections on sticky notes or the text itself. Again, these can be used as a reference during a discussion or for a writing assignment, such as a book review. In a letter to a character, the student ought to refer to specific instances in his life that the character in the book can relate to. By identifying, writing about, and referring to specific instances in the world of the text and their own lives, students will learn that making personal connections is a practice of a successful reader.

- 2.** A teacher wants to help her students understand how to apply different writing strategies for various purposes. She should
- A.** tell all students to always use a third person point of view because it is the most unbiased and professional.
  - B.** only teach the five-paragraph expository essay because it is the format students will need when they go to high school and college.
  - C.** model and assign different writing assignments throughout the year, exposing them to the different purposes, audience, and forms for which writing is used.
  - D.** do all of the above.

The correct answer is **C**. In many classrooms today, teachers are asked to focus on only one type of writing: the expository essay. While useful for academic writing, there are many other forms available for expression, persuasion, or social interaction. It is essential for students to understand that not all writing is the same. This is particularly important because students will have different strengths and interests. Creative writers often feel confined by the structure of an academic essay, while others may panic at the thought of writing a poem. One form should not be stressed over another; instead, each one should be taught, used, and understood.

- 3.** During a unit on the persuasive essay, a teacher creates several mini-lessons on avoiding bias in her students' papers. She should include what in her lessons?
- A.** A lesson on the importance of qualifiers in persuasive writing.
  - B.** A lesson on misguiding language, such as half-truths, generalizations, if/then statements, and oversimplifications.
  - C.** A lesson on the importance of disclaimers at the beginning of their final drafts.
  - D.** A and B only.

The correct answer is **D**. Because the purpose of a persuasive paper is to convince the reader to feel a certain way about a specific topic, it is important that writers use many credible examples to prove their points. Arguing one side of an issue is implicitly biased; nevertheless, the writing itself must remain fair and balanced. There are several techniques the writer should either use or avoid. Using qualifiers in the paper is a safe way to circumvent making broad generalizations that can easily be refuted. Along the same lines, students and teachers must be aware of oversimplifications, half-truths, and if/then statements. Before these can be avoided, however, they must be taught. Once the students can recognize bias in others' texts, they can find it in their own.

- 4.** A teacher uses a RAFT in his class and chooses to leave the Audience section blank for the students to fill in. What is his purpose in doing so?
- A.** To allow students to have fun writing creatively because it's a rainy Friday.
  - B.** He wants students to practice choosing the correct audience for various writing purposes while they practice writing to increase fluency.
  - C.** This is a good way to get the class started on a persuasive essay.
  - D.** All of the above.

The correct answer is **B**. It is important to have a purpose for writing instruction. Although research shows that writing frequently for brief periods of time increases fluency, writing should be focused. Teachers can have a journal entry on the board for when students enter the class or begin a new topic; students can write to show their understanding of a lesson; students can also write for expression, persuasion, information, or critical analysis and evaluation; or students can write to help generate a research topic. RAFTs provide structure and purpose in many ways. One way they aid in writing instruction is by highlighting the factors writers should consider when writing for a variety of purposes, such as point of view, audience, form, and topic. When assigning a RAFT, it is essential that the teacher point out the reasons behind the choices writers make before drafting their essays.

5. A student is writing an informative essay on the makeup of the human heart. Which graphic representation would you suggest he incorporate into his writing?
- A. A *picture diagram* of the heart with its various parts labeled.
  - B. A *pie chart* to represent the amount of work a heart does compared to the other organs in the body.
  - C. A *time line* for a reference of when the heart beats.
  - D. None of the above. Graphic representations distract from writing.

The correct answer is **A**. Graphic representations help writers express composite information in the form of visuals. What might take several paragraphs to explain can be summed up in a chart, graph, or time line. For that reason, the teacher should suggest a picture graph to accompany the paper so that as the reader learns about the many parts and functions of the heart, he can follow along by looking at the labeled representation. Successful readers create pictures in their heads to better comprehend the reading; a graphic representation aids in comprehension by providing the picture for the reader.

## Objective 0006

---

### **Understands skills and strategies involved in listening and speaking for various purposes (including information and understanding, critical analysis and evaluation, literary response and expression, and social interaction).**

The following topics are covered under the subject area of Objective 0006:

- Recognizing appropriate listening strategies for given contexts and purposes (e.g., interpreting and analyzing information that is presented orally, appreciating literary texts that are read aloud, and understanding small-group and large-group discussions)
- Analyzing factors that affect the ability to listen effectively and construct meaning from oral messages in various listening situations (e.g., using prior knowledge, recognizing transitions, interpreting nonverbal cues, using note taking, and outlining), and applying measures of effective listening (e.g., the ability to repeat instructions or to retell stories)
- Analyzing how features of spoken language (e.g., word choice, rate, pitch, tone, and volume) and nonverbal cues (e.g., body language, visual aids, or facial expressions) affect a speaker's ability to communicate effectively in given situations
- Recognizing how to vary speaking strategies for different audiences, purposes, and occasions (e.g., providing instructions, participating in group discussions, persuading or entertaining an audience, or giving an oral presentation or interpretation of a literary work)
- Applying knowledge of oral language conventions appropriate to a variety of social situations (e.g., informal conversations and job interviews)

### **Developing Listening Strategies**

Students need to learn that there are different levels of attention when listening to someone speaking. People listen differently when they are listening to a lecture than when listening to a friend give an account of his day. Listening to a presentation requires the listener to eliminate distraction and focus on the presenter or presenters. The listener should also have appropriate writing materials and jot down key words or phrases to use for analysis. The student needs to listen to the entire presentation before attempting to analyze the message.

When listening to an informal conversation, the student needs to learn to focus on the speaker and the information that is being presented without trying to formulate an answer. The listener can and should pause before responding. One can be both a listener and a speaker in the conversation.

When listening to someone reading a literary selection, students need to clear their minds and focus on the speaker's voice, change in vocal expression (e.g., tone, volume, pitch, and so on), and recognize the elements of the particular genre or work being read such as rising action in a short story, imagery in a poem, and point of view in nonfiction. Listening to a tape recording of a children's book teaches students the importance of vocal expression and will keep young students' attention. Teachers should always provide a listening purpose and practice reading the selection before delivering.

When listening in small groups, students learn to demonstrate respect by listening when another person is speaking, taking time to process the information, respecting differences of opinion, and responding in a nonconfrontational way.

It is somewhat harder to focus in large groups because of the increase in distractions and the longer wait time before responding. Usually in large groups, there are more listeners than speakers. In large groups, the teacher needs to ensure that students are taking turns and rotating the opportunity to speak. The teacher should also try to encourage dialogic, or two-way, discussion among students as opposed to monologic, or one way (usually teacher-directed), discussion.

Other listening strategies include choral reading and sing-alongs. Choral readings require students to listen for their cue to speak and then read orally, often using vocal expression to convey the tone of the piece.

## Factors in Effective Listening

**Prior knowledge** helps listeners construct new meanings; therefore, speakers must begin by assessing what the students already know about the topic being presented or discussed. Making analogies is one way to activate prior knowledge. For example, if a presenter is talking about snow to students who have never seen it, he can say that it feels cold like ice, looks like cotton, and is soft like feathers. If the speaker finds that the audience knows quite a bit about the topic, he does not have to review before moving ahead.

Another factor that affects a student’s ability to listen effectively is awareness of **transition words and phrases**. Teachers need to give students experience in recognizing key transitional words and phrases such as *on the other hand*, *however*, *consequently*, *first*, *second*, *third*, *finally*, and *in conclusion*. Listeners will learn to pay particular attention when a speaker says “in sum” or “most importantly” or “on the other hand.” Pauses are also important; they often indicate a transitional point in an oral presentation.

Reading **nonverbal cues** such as facial expressions (frowning, smiling, scowling), gestures (thumbs up or down), body language (closed stance, hands on hip) will also help the listener construct meaning. When reading nonverbal cues, one needs to be aware of his own interpretation or understanding. Nonverbal cues are not universal, and what is considered polite in one culture may offend a listener in another culture.

To retain information and construct meaning, students should learn the importance of **note taking** during an oral presentation. **Outlining** skills will help the listener, especially for longer presentations. The teacher needs to provide an outline format or graphic organizer for students to systematize incoming information. Graphic organizers include webs, tree and Venn diagrams, and T-charts, to name a few.

The teacher needs to construct assessment tools to provide opportunities for students to practice **repeating instructions** and **retelling stories**. Oral retellings allow the teacher to assess students’ reading comprehension and ability to listen effectively. For more information on retellings, see Objective 0002.

## Factors in Effective Spoken Communication

Speakers must tailor word choices to the cognitive level of the audience and suitability to the subject. For example, a presenter speaking about bullying should choose words that convey the seriousness of the subject matter. The presenter should also not use jokes to get the point across. Audience is also important in terms of the rate at which one speaks. An astute speaker will adjust the rate at which he presents information if he is speaking to a large audience, an older audience, or a younger audience. First-time speakers should demonstrate that they should slow down when speaking to a large audience. Students will be nervous, which will cause them to speak faster.

Speakers must also keep in mind volume (speaking more loudly or softly), pitch (higher or lower), and tone (angry, melancholy, fearful). One can use a combination of these to convey emotion, emphasis, or meaning change. The teacher can model the importance of using the features of spoken language by the same story using different pitches, tones, and volumes so the students can see the effects of these features of spoken language. Then students can practice it themselves.

Body language and facial expressions can add emphasis to the speaker’s message. If the speaker is speaking about something serious, such as the effects of a devastating tsunami, then he should not smile during the entire presentation. If a speaker wants to signal confusion, he can shrug his shoulders. Again, the teacher can teach the importance of body language and facial expressions by using them deliberately and pointing out their effectiveness in conveying meaning.

Teachers need to teach students how to use visual aids such as charts, graphs, and computer presentations, keeping in mind position timing (when to bring it in), and clarity of the visual. For example, when using PowerPoint, it is best to be succinct and not use many words on each slide. Too many words on a slide become difficult for the viewer to read and will take away from the speaker. The slides should be in addition to, and not a repetition of, what the speaker is saying.

## Varying Speaking Strategies

Before providing instructions, it is imperative that the speaker preplan by keeping in mind the **audience**, the **purpose**, and the **occasion**. First, assess the students’ background knowledge on the topic. For example, if a speaker is instructing

a class on how to create a slide show, he should first find out the audience's level of computer literacy. Then, break down the operation into discrete steps and adjust the delivery to the audiences' understanding.

When speaking in **discussion groups**, students must learn to demonstrate respect by listening when another person is speaking, taking time to process the information, respecting differences of opinion, and responding in a nonconfrontational way. They need to learn to take turns and not talk over one another. Students should address the person to whom they are responding rather than the teacher. Students will default to the instructor. It will take practice for students to learn how to talk to each other and not the teacher.

**Literature circles** are peer-led discussion groups organized around a common book. Literature circles provide students time to engage in natural conversations about texts independent of the teacher's direct influence. As such, literature circles also offer occasions for students to practice speaking in group situations.

When **persuading** or **entertaining**, students should learn to use a carefully placed joke, pausing, body language, and facial expressions. Students should be taught the difference between an appropriate joke and a stereotype or put-down. In a persuasive speech, speakers should learn to use only information that supports their position or to eliminate information that supports the other side. In addition, the speaker must vary voice when speaking about the different sides, use repetition, and end with the one piece of information the speaker wants the audience to take with them.

When giving an **oral presentation**, the presenter should first determine the needs of the audience, decide on visual aids, determine which features of spoken language to use, and refer to information earlier in the presentation. Then the presenter should decide if he wants to emphasize anything and use repetition or dramatic pauses at particularly important parts. Most importantly, the speaker must learn to practice so he does not read straight from the paper but speaks extemporaneously, instead.

Students must use accents, voice, tone, or quality when giving their own **interpretation of a literary work**. Again, practice is important. **Reader's theater** is a common instructional strategy used by teachers to instill the importance of practice before giving an oral interpretation of a literary work. Teachers assign a section of the short story or chapter to different students the night before they will read them aloud to the class. The students practice their parts for homework just like actors practice their lines for roles. Reader's theater also helps students with fluency because students reread the same selection many times. It is therefore a helpful tool for both beginning and advanced readers.

## Communicating to Various Audiences

An effective oral communicator recognizes the differences in audience makeup. The speaker must vary the rate of speed for people of different ages, commands of the language, and background knowledge. The speaker should consider diction and word choice. Many of the words students use in their daily conversations are colloquial and may be lost on people of different ages and cultures. The speaker must also take into account how different age groups may interpret nonverbal cues. For example, when young students are speaking to a much older audience, they might want to take off their hats as a sign of respect.

The speaker needs to be aware of cultural differences. For example, in Asian cultures, continual eye contact is a sign of disrespect, yet in American culture, continual eye contact is a sign of respect. Gestures often do not translate from one culture to another and can, in fact, be detrimental. Simply waving to a person from another culture can signify something derogatory. Therefore, researching the culture of the audience prior to speaking can prevent any unintended miscommunications.

Some disabling conditions may impose difficulty in verbal communication. It is therefore important to teach students other ways to communicate nonverbally—through writing, for example.

## Applying Oral Language Conventions

All students need to learn the importance of appropriate and inappropriate language conventions. Oral language conventions change according to the context in which people are speaking. For example, when we talk to our friends, we tend to be more casual and use **informal language** such as slang and colloquialism and even made-up words. When talking to someone in authority, however, the speaker will change his speech to a formal manner. In a **job interview**, a person should talk more formally; that is, conforming to conventional grammatical rules such as subject-verb agreement, consistent verb tenses, and noun-pronoun agreement.

## Review Questions

1. A fourth grade teacher wants to teach the features of spoken language. She decides that students will practice reading their favorite books to a kindergarten class. What must the students keep in mind as they practice?
  - A. Audience.
  - B. Book topic.
  - C. Volume, rate, tone, and pitch.
  - D. All of the above.

The correct answer is **D** because audience, purpose and occasion dictate the rate, tone, and volume of the speech. In this case, the fourth-graders must keep in mind that their audience is much younger than they are; therefore, the book they choose should appeal to the kindergarten students. Next, the speaker must be careful not to talk too fast. The young readers will want to look at the pictures and listen at the same time. If the reader is too fast, the young students will not have enough time to process the information. If the fourth-grade reader is going to read to the whole class, he will need to practice reading loudly and changing his pitch and tone according to the events in the book. Prior to reading their selected books, the students should practice with each other or with the teacher. Practicing will help the readers' fluency and will help them anticipate any words they are not familiar with or cannot pronounce.

2. A sixth-grade class is assigned a major research project; each student is supposed to research a different country in Africa. It is the student's job to report to the class about the country's people, places, major events in history, cuisine, or anything else the student feels is interesting about that country. To celebrate the completion of the project and the various African cultures, the teacher has allotted three days at the end of the project for the students to present their findings using PowerPoint. Besides suggesting a time limit on the presentations, what should the teacher do to prepare for the presentations?
  - A. Teach the students how to use visuals to enhance, and not distract from, their presentations.
  - B. Hand out a graphic organizer that will help students take notes on their classmates' presentations.
  - C. Supply a grading rubric that includes points for practicing prior to presenting.
  - D. All of the above.

The correct answer is **D**. Students today make use of the computer and other technology more than ever. It is not rare for a student to give a PowerPoint presentation instead of simply using a poster from which to speak. It is important when using technology that teachers explain or model how to use it effectively. Visuals should not distract from the speaker. The speaker should use PowerPoint slides to repeat major ideas or to jog the speaker's memory of his speech; therefore, he must limit the number of slides and the number of words on each slide. The pictures and lettering should be large enough for the whole class to see from their seats. Because the PowerPoint acts as an outline for the speaker, the speaker will also need to practice the speech several times until it can be done with little help from outside sources. Also, during the presentations, the students should be held responsible for listening to and learning from one another. There are many ways to teach listening skills; one way is by providing a graphic organizer for the students to fill out and turn in at the end of the speeches.

3. A third-grade class is reading an in-common text. The teacher wants to read the book aloud. The teacher also wants to provide opportunities for the students to read, but research shows that when students take turns reading out loud, reading comprehension decreases. The teacher should
  - A. get a book on tape. It's best if the students do not read out loud at all. Actors know how to apply the features of spoken language.
  - B. use the reader's theater strategy and assign parts of the story for students to practice.
  - C. use literature circles. At least students get to talk to each other once the chapter has been read out loud by the teacher.
  - D. not worry about reading comprehension. This is a lesson in reading in front of an audience of their peers.

The correct answer is **B**. Although research does show that when students read out loud, in a prescribed order, their reading comprehension decreases, students should still be given chances to present oral readings of literary works. Applied to fiction, reader's theater has been shown to increase comprehension and oral presentation because the students practice their parts the night before. Rereadings increase a reader's fluency and word recognition. Once the students know how to pronounce all of the words, they are free to apply the features of spoken language such as pitch, volume, rate, and tone. Students will feel more prepared and enjoy listening to their classmates' interpretations of their characters.

## Objective 0007

### Understands and applies techniques of literary analysis to works of fiction, drama, poetry, and nonfiction.

The following topics are covered under the subject area of Objective 0007:

- Analyzing the similarities and differences between fiction and nonfiction
- Demonstrating knowledge of story elements in works of fiction (e.g., plot, character, setting, theme, and mood)
- Applying knowledge of drama to analyze dramatic structure (e.g., introduction, rising action, climax, falling action, and conclusion) and identifying common dramatic devices (e.g., soliloquy and aside)
- Applying knowledge of various types of nonfiction (e.g., informational texts, newspaper articles, essays, biographies, memoirs, letters, and journals)
- Analyzing the use of language to convey style, tone, and point of view in works of fiction and nonfiction
- Recognizing elements of poetic text (e.g., meter, rhyme, scheme, stanza structure, alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia, and figurative language) and analyzing their relationship to the meaning of the text

### Fiction versus Nonfiction

There are more similarities than differences between fiction and nonfiction. Both genres are trying to get at the “truth” using different types of writing. Fiction writers believe in using imagination and creative license to reveal a truth about life or the human condition. They feel it is easier to get at the truth by using figurative language, invented storylines, and other literary devices. On the other hand, nonfiction writers claim that by retelling events as they occurred, they are revealing *the* truth and not *a* truth. More simply, nonfiction, except short stories and novels, is all prose writing.

- **Fiction** is written for one of two purposes: to entertain or to instruct. Some people choose to read for pleasure or as an escape from reality. Others read fiction for its educational quality. Fiction teaches by allowing the reader to learn vicariously from the character’s experiences, tragedies, and triumphs.
- **Nonfiction** is written for a variety of purposes: to inform, describe, persuade, report, or entertain. Types of nonfiction include autobiographies, biographies, essays, letters, memoirs, journals, and newspaper articles.

### Story Elements in Fiction

Fiction follows a sequence of events known as the **plot structure** or **plot line**, which includes the exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and conclusion (or denouement).

The author of a story reveals necessary information about the characters in one of two ways: through **direct** or **indirect** characterization. With **direct** characterization, the author narrates the character’s traits: what the character wants and the character’s strengths, weaknesses, values, fears, passions, or any other unique characteristic. **Indirect** characterization, however, requires the author to reveal the character through indirect means such as by what the characters says, does, and thinks and by what other characters say about him or her.

There are two kinds of characters: **flat** (static) and **round** (dynamic). A flat character remains unchanged throughout the story. A round character is complex; that is, she contains contradictions in her personality. The round character also changes to some degree as a result of the action in the story. Most **protagonists** are dynamic characters and evolve by the plot’s resolution. The **antagonist** is the character who plays opposite the protagonist. The antagonist can be a person, place, or thing. In other words, the antagonist can be a mountain or the Atlantic Ocean; it does not necessarily have to be a person. In some cases, the antagonist can be the protagonist herself. Authors sometimes use **stock** characters or stereotypes such as the evil villain; the mad scientist; or the tough, rugged detective. These characters usually augment a story; a good writer creates a protagonist that is more complicated and full of inconsistencies, similar to humans themselves.

The context (place or time) of the story is called the **setting**. The setting has many functions: setting the mood or atmosphere, particularly in gothic novels and mysteries; helping define the characters; generating the conflict in genre fiction such as Westerns, nature adventure stories, war novels, and detective novels; and grounding the dialogue. The plot of the story often comes out of the character's conflict with the setting, as in the case of the play *The Crucible*. Puritan society's attitudes, fears, and religious beliefs initiated the witchcraft trials. The plot would have taken a different course if the play took place in a contemporary setting.

**Theme** is the main idea or issue explored in the story through the use of fictional characters and situations. Authors use stories to seek answers and insights into the human condition. Common themes include love, hate, revenge, jealousy, friendship, power, and the triumph of the human spirit, to name a few. Readers should ask themselves as they read: What is the author trying to say about human nature? What insights about humanity are revealed in this text?

The **mood** sets the tone or atmosphere. The mood can **foreshadow** events to come, as in the case of *Julius Caesar*, when a terrible storm portends the death of the leader at the hands of his best friend, Brutus. The mood of a comedy can be described as happy, while the mood for a mystery is often ominous or gloomy.

## Dramatic Structure and Devices

The **exposition** or **introduction** introduces the reader to the setting, main characters, and any background information that will lay the groundwork for the conflict. The **rising action** begins with a conflict: events or complications between two conflicting forces that will eventually lead to climax and resolution of the story. Conflict can occur between two characters (**person vs. person**), between a character and the setting (**person vs. nature**), or between the main character and him- or herself (**person vs. self**). The first two conflicts are often referred to as **external conflicts**; the third is frequently labeled an **internal conflict**. The rising action then leads to the **climax** of the story. The climax is the turning point in the story when the complication comes to a head. Following the conflict is the **falling action**, or the events in the story that result from the conflict and lead the reader to the resolution. The resolution, or **denouement**, reveals the ending of the story, ties up any loose ends, or both. When the resolution of the story is not revealed, the story can be called a cliff hanger. It is then up to the reader to make an educated guess how the story ends.

Because plays are written to be seen and heard, **dramatic devices** help to move the plot along by providing necessary background information and the characters' inner thoughts and feelings. Examples of dramatic devices are discussed below.

An **aside** is a short speech made by an actor in a play and can only be heard by the audience. A **soliloquy** is also a speech made by an actor on stage to reveal what the character is thinking and feeling. In a sense, the character is "thinking out loud" to him- or herself so that the audience knows what is going on in the character's head. The main difference between an aside and a soliloquy is that the latter is performed alone. In Elizabethan drama, the **chorus** recites the prologue and epilogue and every so often comments on the events of the play; otherwise, the chorus is a group of people who sing or narrate, in union, a particular part of a drama. **Comic relief** is a funny or amusing scene used to relieve tension in a tragic literary work. The gravedigger scene in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is an example of comic relief.

## Types of Nonfiction

An **autobiography** is the story of someone's life as written by that person. Most often, people choose to write their own autobiographies to share with the world how they overcame obstacles and achieved their goals. **Memoirs** are similar to autobiographies in that they are accounts of a person's experiences. Unlike an autobiography, however, a memoir does not follow strict chronological order and focuses more on public aspects of the writer's life. For example, the memoirs of an army general might focus only on his time engaged in battle and not on his childhood. **Journals** are personal records of a person's daily life. They tend to be less personal than a **diary** and more chronological. **Letters** are correspondence from one person to another. They, too, tend to be less intimate than diaries because the audience is someone besides the writer. Letters can be formal, as in an invitation to a wedding, or informal, as in a letter written from a soldier to his or her parents.

A **biography** is the story of someone’s life as written by someone else. Biographers choose to write about a person for any number of reasons: to celebrate a great leader, to understand the motivations behind someone’s actions, or simply to give an account of the triumphs and tragedies of everyday people. It is important to remember that even though biographers thoroughly research the facts about their subjects, the final product reflects the biographer’s interpretation of those facts.

An **essay** is a work of nonfiction in which an author expresses her opinion about an issue. Essays can be either formal or informal. There are four kinds of essays: narrative, expository, descriptive, and persuasive. A **narrative essay** is written in story form. For example, a personal narrative is a story about a significant incident in the writer’s life. An **expository essay** presents information to explain the author’s viewpoint on a topic, event, or concept. In a **descriptive essay**, the author describes a person, place or thing. For instance, a writer might choose to describe a beautiful view, touching scene, or decorative landscape. Finally, a **persuasive essay** tries to convince or persuade the audience to accept or consider an opinion or a particular course of action.

**Informational texts** provide factual information to the reader. Informational texts include newspaper articles, instructional manuals, textbooks, and study guides.

## Style, Tone, and Viewpoint

**Style** refers to the author’s word choice or diction, phrasing, sentence structure, tone, and use of figurative language. Essentially, style is an author’s distinctive way of writing. For example, Zora Neale Hurston’s writing style reflects her background as an anthropologist. She infuses local color into her novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by using the dialect and speech patterns of Floridians. The **tone** is the author’s attitude toward the subject matter and the audience. Shakespeare’s comedies, like *Much Ado about Nothing*, take on a humorous tone; an expository essay about the holocaust, however, would convey a serious or dark tone.

**Point of view**, or the author’s choice of narrator for a story, is an important element of both fiction and nonfiction writing. In a fictional piece, the story is told from one of three viewpoints: first person, second person, or third person. **First-person narration** means that the story is being told from the perspective of one of the characters in the story; it is easily recognized by the use of the pronoun “I.” It is a limited point of view because the reader is privy only to the same information as the character-narrator. Readers should ask themselves if the narrator is *reliable* or *unreliable* or biased in his or her description of events and characters. **Second-person narration** is not very common. It involves the narrator speaking directly to the reader by using the pronoun “you” as in the case of the novel *A Small Place* by Jamaica Kincaid. With **third-person or omniscient narration**, the narrator is located outside the story and can report on events in the story happening in different places to different characters. In this sense, it is not limited to one character’s perspective, so the narrator can be more objective. When a third-person narrator reports the events from only one character, it is identified as **limited third-person narration**.

Nonfiction writers write from either the first or third person. First-person accounts tend to be more subjective and, many believe, biased. Narrative and persuasive essays are examples of first-person point of view. Third-person accounts are considered more objective because the writer includes or reports only the facts. Newspaper articles, expository essays, and textbooks use third-person narration. It is important to note that both first- and third-person narration contain an element of bias.

## Elements of Poetry

Poetry makes use of figurative language to express deep meaning with fewer words than prose. **Figurative language** is a metaphorical way to compare two unlike things, people, or ideas in a way that communicates new insights and original thinking. Simile, metaphor, personification, and hyperbole are examples of figurative language.

A **simile** compares two unlike things using *like* or *as*. Shakespeare’s sonnets are full of figurative language. Sonnet number 60 contains a simile in the first line: “Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,/So do our minutes hasten to their end.” Shakespeare’s narrator is comparing the limited time that the lovers have together to the ocean’s end, where the water meets the shore. **Metaphors** are quite similar to similes; they both compare two fundamentally

unlike things. With metaphors, however, the comparison is implied. Robert Frances compares life to a dog in “The Hound.” He begins the poem with the line, “Life the hound.” If he were to start the poem with the line, “Life is like a hound,” then it would become a simile. When writers give inanimate objects, concepts, or animals humanlike qualities, they are using **personification**. If a bed were to talk and call out to its owner, it would be personified. **Hyperbole** is exaggeration to get at the truth as the writer-speaker understands it. When we say we are dying of thirst, most often, we simply mean we are extremely thirsty.

Poets also make use of **sound devices**, or the techniques used to enhance the sound of poem when it is read out loud. Sound devices include alliteration, assonance, consonance, onomatopoeia, repetition, rhyme, and meter.

**Rhyme**, or rime, is the repetition of the accented vowel sound and all successive sounds. An **internal rhyme** occurs when the rhyming words are within the same line, and an **end rhyme** when both of the rhyming words come at the end of the line. Robert Frost’s poem “Fire and Ice” uses end rhyme. **Rhythm** or **meter** give the poem its structure and produce a musical effect when read orally because of the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables.

**Meter** provides the poem with its rhythm. In metrical poetry, called **verse**, accented language is arranged to occur in equal distance. The reader can tap his or her feet to the accented words and pick up on the poem’s meter, much like the beats in music. This suggests how the poem should be read.

In every word of more than one syllable, one syllable is **accented**, or given more emphasis than the **unaccented** syllable(s). For example, we pronounce the word *bridal* by placing more weight on the first part of the word: *bridal*. On the other hand, we stress the second syllable of the word *undone*: *undone*. Prose also contains accented and unaccented language; however, unlike poetry, the accents occur randomly.

Sophisticated readers of poetry will scan a poem and measure its verse. Verse is measured using **foot**, **line**, and **stanza**. A foot contains one accented syllable and one or two unaccented syllables. A line is measured by its number of feet, and a stanza by a group of lines whose meter occurs repeatedly throughout the poem. Most often, a curved line is used to indicate an unaccented syllable, and a horizontal line to specify a stressed syllable.

Feet are measured by the placement of the accented syllable: **Iamb** (or iambic) describes a foot with the accent on the second syllable: *undone*. **Trochee** explains a foot with the accent on the first syllable: *bridal*. Words with more than two syllables can be called **Anapest** (or anapestic) or **dactyl** (or dactylic). The former word’s first two syllables are unaccented, as in *in-ter-view*; the latter is formed when the first syllable is accented and the second two unaccented, as in *supercharge*. When both syllables are accented, it is labeled **spondee** (or spondaic), as *suntan*.

Lines are named according to the number of feet they contain: **monometer** (one foot), **dimeter** (two feet), **trimeter** (three feet), **tetrameter** (four feet), **pentameter** (five feet), **hexameter** (six feet), **heptameter** (seven feet), and **octameter** (eight feet). Shakespeare’s plays are most often written in **iambic pentameter**, which means that each line contains five feet, and each foot consists of an accent on the second syllable. Iambic pentameter often beats like a heart, making a *ta-dum, ta-dum* sound.

**Assonance** is a musical sound device created when there is **repetition** of similar vowel sounds followed by different consonant sounds. For example, in the poem “That Night When Joy Began” by W.H. Auden, the lines “But morning let us pass./And day by day relief/Outgrew his nervous laugh,/Grows credulous of peace” showcase the use of assonance. The words *pass* and *laugh* share similar vowel sounds, as do *relief* and *peace*. Along the same lines, **alliteration** is the repetition of similar initial consonant sounds to create a pleasant sound or to emphasize the words where repetition occurs. For instance, in the poem “Nothing Gold Can Stay” by Robert Frost, he writes, “Nature’s firs green is gold,/Her hardest hue to hold.” *Green* and *gold* and *Her, hardest*, and *hold* all share similar beginning consonant sounds. The repetition of ending consonant sounds is called **consonance**. “The Turtle” by Ogden Nash employs consonance: *decks* and *sex* and *turtle* and *fertile*.

Other examples of sound devices consist of **onomatopoeia**, or a word or group of words that sound much like the meaning of the word. *Buzz* and *swish-swash* sound much like the things that they describe.

## Review Questions

1. A writer chooses fiction to recreate his experience in a major world war because
- A. he does not want to tell the truth.
  - B. he feels that using literary and creative license will allow him to get at the “truth” of what happened better than nonfiction.
  - C. he does not really remember and does not want readers to obtain false information.
  - D. nonfiction requires more research than he is willing to do.

The correct answer is **B**. Fiction does come from the imagination; however, fiction also contains elements of truth. A writer may invent a story straight from the mind or from real life experiences. Either way, the writer wants to explore or discover a truth about life or the human condition. The above author may have chosen to use fiction to explore the horror of war because simply retelling the events as he remembers will not effect a visceral response in the way enhancing it will. Also, it is important to note that fiction writers also research their topics as extensively as nonfiction writers. For example, the above writer will most likely read personal correspondence, study geography, and interview living witnesses as part of his story about surviving World War II. Without some level of accuracy, the story would lose credibility.

2. When teaching about story elements, it is important to ensure students understand that the setting may function
- A. as mood or atmosphere.
  - B. as characterization.
  - C. as conflict.
  - D. as all of the above.

The correct answer is **D**. Setting has an important purpose in fiction. Too often, students think setting is superfluous and decorative and that it does not necessarily *do* anything. It is not enough for students to name or identify the setting; they should also understand how it affects the characters and fuels much of the plot. Conversations about setting should include questions such as: To what extent are the characters products of their environment? How would the plot change if the story took place in a different setting? What obstacles does the setting create for the protagonist? What is the relationship between the setting and the plot? Once the students have explored the setting, have them write settings of their own. Should they begin a love story with an ominous sky? Is it appropriate for a sunny day to start a murder mystery? By writing their own stories, they will begin to read as writers and understand that the elements of a story make it what it is.

3. Students should understand that for writers, metaphors
- A. are another literary device invented to confuse and frustrate readers.
  - B. allow the writer to communicate new insights, original thinking, and unfamiliar ideas or experiences by comparing two fundamentally unlike things, people, or ideas.
  - C. are comparisons of two unlike things using *like* or *as*.
  - D. are all of the above.

The correct answer is **B**. Metaphors help writers communicate an idea or experience foreign to many of their readers by comparing the idea or experience to something more familiar. In Holocaust literature, for example, writers use metaphors to convey the horror of loss and fear in a way that readers, most of whom were not part of the genocide, will understand. Although many of us did not live through such a horrific event in history, readers can still associate with feelings of terror, grief, hunger, and loss. Metaphors also permit writers to use their writing to discover new insights and ideas. They are powerful tools for students to recognize and use in their own writing.

- 4.** An English class is studying *Macbeth*. The teacher tells the students to pay particular attention to Lady Macbeth's soliloquy in Act I. What is the most appropriate reason the teacher gives?
- A.** Lady Macbeth is a major character in the play because she is married to Macbeth.
  - B.** Shakespeare is a genius, and everything he writes should be analyzed and understood meticulously.
  - C.** Because soliloquies reveal a character's inner feelings and thoughts, Lady Macbeth's private speech will provide the audience valuable insight into her motivations and future actions.
  - D.** *Macbeth* is such a dark play that Shakespeare included soliloquies to add an element of humor and relieve tension.

The correct answer is **C**. Soliloquies are an important part of Shakespearian dramas because most characters are driven by universal human emotions such as greed, jealousy, love, ambition, and hate, to name only a few. In much of drama, intent is not always made obvious to the viewer because the character's actions suggest the opposite of the character's intention. Thus, much of the dialogue between characters on stage contains subtext: they say one thing but mean another. These private speeches, then, provide the audience with the real reasons behind what drives the characters to act on their emotions. Soliloquies are Shakespeare's way of providing his audience with needed knowledge to understand the play, plot, and characters.

- 5.** During a unit on nonfiction, a teacher asks students to read and write persuasive essays to
- A.** locate an author's argument or opinion on a specific topic or issue.
  - B.** learn how to express their own opinions about a specific topic or issue using a strong thesis statement and specific examples to defend their arguments and persuade their readers.
  - C.** learn how to read critically and resist manipulation by locating an author's opinion on a specific topic or issue.
  - D.** learn all of the above.

The correct answer is **D**. Persuasive essays provide a teacher with an opportunity to teach critical thinking, reading, and writing skills. Students learn how to read critically by first locating the author's opinion, reading the reasoning behind the opinion, and then deciding for themselves if they choose to be persuaded by the text. Newspaper articles, advertising, commercials, and op-ed pieces all try to persuade readers to think and behave in a certain way. Resisting manipulation by a well-developed essay is an important literacy skill. Teachers should also use persuasive essays as models for students to learn how to write their own essays and speeches. Persuasive essays teach students to craft an argument (thesis), anticipate criticism, provide relevant examples, and write powerful conclusions.

## Objective 0008

### Demonstrates knowledge of literature, including literature from diverse cultures and literature for children/adolescents.

The following topics are covered under the subject area of Objective 0008:

- Demonstrating awareness of ways in which literary texts reflect the time and place in which they were written
- Demonstrating awareness of the ways in which literary works reflect and express cultural values and ideas
- Recognizing major themes and characteristics of works written by well-known authors
- Demonstrating knowledge of important works and authors of literature for children and adolescents
- Analyzing themes and elements of traditional and contemporary literature for children and adolescents

### Time and Place Awareness

It is important when teaching a literary text to provide background information on both the author and the time period in which the book was written. Without an understanding of the author’s background and environmental influences, many of the references and themes of a novel will be misunderstood. In addition, **schemata theory** suggests that comprehension is reliant on incorporating new knowledge with prior knowledge. For students to retain any new information from a text, they need to be reminded of and taught more about the place and time in which the book was composed.

For example, to fully appreciate the novella *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, a reader needs to know that she was writing at the turn of the twentieth century in America. During this time, medicine was used as a form of social control. Thousands of upper-class women were diagnosed with “hysteria” and prescribed bed rest. Women’s so-called weak nervous systems were used as an excuse to bar women from traditionally male spaces such as higher education and politics. Gilman, herself, was recommended bed rest to her own detriment. Instead of curing her of “hysteria,” the isolation sent her into a deep depression, similar to that of the protagonist in the story. *The Yellow Wallpaper* was written in reaction to the debilitating medical practices of the time.

Context also plays a seminal role in understanding the play *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller. On the surface, the play appears to be about the Salem witchcraft trials that took place during the late seventeenth century. In fact, the play acts as a metaphor for the “witch hunts” of the 1950s. Students need to understand the climate of fear during this time of McCarthyism and the House on Un-American Acts Committee to fully comprehend Miller’s motivation for writing the play.

Mildred Taylor’s works also reflect the time and place in which they were written. To completely value Taylor’s award winning novel, *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, students should study the Great Depression and its effects on southern African-American landowners. The events in her novel were inspired by the devastation caused by the racist environment stimulated by slavery and the Reconstruction.

Providing background information ensures that students will more fully comprehend an assigned literary work. Historical references, colloquial language, unfamiliar vocabulary, and subtext have the potential to confuse and frustrate readers. Students cannot understand the bravery of Atticus Finch’s decision to defend Tom Robinson in *To Kill a Mockingbird* if they do not understand Southern race relations during the 1930s. Teaching students the ways in which texts reflect the time and place in which they were written is fundamental to enriching their reading experiences.

### Cultural Values and Ideas Awareness

It is the job of an English teacher to show her students how literary works reflect and express cultural values and ideas so they can better understand the story and learn to appreciate and celebrate other cultures.

As part of frontloading a text, the teacher’s job is to immerse the students in the novel’s culture. For example, the novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, by Zora Neale Hurston, reflects African American cultural tropes. The reader will find instances of call and response, playing the dozens, and dialect, all of which developed from a mix of American and

African heritage. Along the same lines, An Na's novel *A Step from Heaven* reflects the cultural values of Korea and one father's inability to incorporate his cultural beliefs and values when he brings his family to the United States.

It is particularly important when teaching a novel from another culture not to judge the culture based on the reader's own values and ideas. The idea of multicultural literature is to expose, understand, and celebrate people who might not be similar to the reader. It is also beneficial for students to find similarities with other cultures. In any good piece of literature, there will be elements that are universal to all people. It is these universals that connect all human beings.

## Themes and Characteristics in Children's Literature

Major themes and characteristics in children's literature include the following:

### Children's Literature

#### Animals

Kathi Appelt *Oh My Baby, Little One*

Sarah Weeks *Without You*

Jonathan Emmett *No Place Like Home*

Amy West *In the Rain with Baby Duck*

#### Bugs

Eric Carle *The Very Busy Spider*; [other titles by Carle] *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*; *The Very Lonely Firefly*; *The Very Quiet Cricket*

Melanie Gerth *Ten Little Lady Bugs*

Susan Hood *Caterpillar Spring, Butterfly Summer*

#### Colors

Tomie dePaola *Art Lessons*

Denise Fleming *Lunch*

Sheila Hamanaka *All the Colors of the Earth*

Mary O'Neill *Hailstones and Halibut Bones*

#### Family

Karen Magnuson Beil *Grandma According to Me*

Siobhan Dobbs *Grandpa Bud*

Robert Munch *David's Father*

Jillian Wynot *Mother's Day Sandwich*

#### Feelings

Karen Beaumont *I Like Myself*

Mem Fox *Whoever You Are*

Harriet Lerner and Susan Goldner *Franny B. Kranny, There's a Bird in Your Hair*

#### Food

Eric Carle *Pancakes, Pancakes*

Laura Joffe Numeroff *If You Give a Moose a Muffin*; [other titles by Numeroff] *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie*; *If You Give a Pig a Pancake*

#### Multicultural

Sally Bahous *Sitti and the Cats: A Tale of Friendship*

Hanna Heritage Bozylinsky *Lala Salama: An African Lullaby*

Trish Cooke *So Much*

Ann Grifalconi *Fly Away Girl*

Susan Jeffers *Brother Eagle, Sister Sky*

Faith Ringgold *Tar Beach*

J. Steptoe *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters*

Jeanette Winter *Follow the Drinking Gourd*

## Sea Life

Debra Frasier *Out of the Ocean*

Steve Metzger *Five Little Sharks Swimming in the Sea*

Andrea and David Wojtowycz *Commotion in the Ocean*  
by Giles

Ashley Wolf *Baby Beluga*

## Adolescent Literature

### Adventure/Mystery

Laurie Halse Anderson *Fever, 1793*

Robert Cormier *The Rag and Bone Shop*

Lois Sacher *Holes*

### Historical Fiction

Julia Alvarez *Before We Were Free*

Laurie Halse Anderson *Fever, 1793*

Esther Forbes *Johnny Tremain*

Karen Hesse *A Time of Angels*; [other titles by Hesse]  
*Out of the Dust*; *Witness*

Walter Dean Myers *Fallen Angels*; [also by Myers] *The Glory Field*

Gary Paulsen *Nightjohn*; [also by Paulsen] *Soldier's Heart*

Jane Yolen *The Devil's Arithmetic*

### Realistic Fiction

Avi *Nothing but the Truth*

Judy Blume *Deenie*; [also by Blume] *Tiger Eyes*

Robert Cormier *The Chocolate War*; [other titles by Cormier] *The Rag and Bone Shop*; *We All Fall Down*

Chris Crutcher *The Crazy Horse Electric Game*; [other titles by Crutcher] *Ironman*; *Whale Talk*

S. E. Hinton *The Outsiders*

## Seasons and Weather

Eric Carle *Little Cloud*

Lois Ehlert *Leaf Man*

Elizabeth MacDonald *The Very Windy Day*

Barbara Seuling *Winter Lullaby*

Sarah Weeks *Hurricane City*

Charlotte Zolotow *Naomi Knows It's Springtime*

Victor Martinez *Parrot in the Oven: Mi Vida Loca*

Walter Dean Myers *Fallen Angels*; [other titles by Myers]; *Monster*; *Slam!*; *Somewhere in the Darkness*

An Na *A Step from Heaven*

Lois Sachar *Holes*

Paul Zindel *The Pigman*

## Science Fiction/Fantasy

Madeleine L'Engle *A Wrinkle in Time*

C. S. Lewis *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*

Lois Lowry *Gathering Blue*; [other titles by Lowry] *The Giver*; *The Messenger*

Jane Yolen *Dragon's Blood*

## Multi-Cultural

Julia Alvarez *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*; [also by Alvarez] *When We Were Free*

Nancy Garden *Annie on My Mind*

Victor Martinez *Parrot in the Oven: Mi Vida Loca*

Walter Dean Myers *The Beast*

An Na *A Step from Heaven*

Mildred Taylor *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*

Jacqueline Woodson *Miracle's Boy*

## Important Works and Authors for Children and Adolescents

The following are important works and authors for children and adolescents.

### Children's Literature

Jan Brett *The Mitten*

Norman Bridwell *Clifford, the Big Red Dog*

Janell Cannon *Stellaluna*

Eric Carle *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*; [other titles by Carle] *The Very Busy Spider*; *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*; *The Very Lonely Firefly*; *The Very Quiet Cricket*

Margaret Wise Brown *Goodnight Moon*

Roald Dahl *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*; [also by Dahl] *Witches*

Dr. Seuss *Green Eggs and Ham*; [other titles by Seuss] *The Cat in the Hat*; *Oh, the Places You'll Go*; *The Lorax*

Philip D. Eastman *Are You My Mother?*

Mem Fox *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge*

Bill Martin, Jr. *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What do you see?*

Tomie dePaola *Art Lessons*; [also by dePaola] *Strega Nona*

A. A. Milne *The Complete Tales of Winnie the Pooh*

Robert N. Munsch *Love You Forever*; [also by Munsch] *The Paper Bag Princess*

Laura Joffe Numeroff *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie*; [other titles by Numeroff] *If You Give a Moose a Muffin*; *If You Give a Pig a Pancake*

Peggy Parish *Amelia Bedelia*

Marcus Pfister *The Rainbow Fish*

Watty Piper *The Little Engine That Could*

Beatrix Potter *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*

Don Freeman *Corduroy*

Ezra Jack Keats *The Snowy Day*

Hans Augusto Rey *Curious George*

Jon Scieszka *Math Curse*

Maurice Sendak *Where the Wild Things Are*

Shel Silverstein *When the Sidewalk Ends*

Margery Williams *The Velveteen Rabbit*

Chris Van Allsburg *Jumanji*; [also by Allsburg] *The Polar Express*

Judith Viorst *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*

E. B. White *Charlotte's Web*

### Adolescent Literature

Avi *Nothing but the Truth*

Louisa May Alcott *Little Women*

Judy Blume *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*; [other titles by Blume] *Deenie*; *Tiger Eyes*

Robert Cormier *The Chocolate War*; [other titles by Cormier] *The Rag and Bone Shop*; *We All Fall Down*

Chris Crutcher *The Crazy Horse Electric Game*; [other titles by Crutcher] *Ironman*; *Whale Talk*

Karen Hesse *A Time of Angels*; [other titles by Hesse] *Out of the Dust*; *Witness*

S. E. Hinton *The Outsiders*

Madeleine L'Engle *A Wrinkle in Time*

C. S. Lewis *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*

Jack London *Call of the Wild*; [also by London] *White Fang*

Lois Lowry *The Giver*; [other titles by Lowry] *Number the Stars*; *A Summer to Die*

Walter Dean Myers *Fallen Angels*; [other titles by Myers] *Monster*; *Slam!*; *Somewhere in the Darkness*

An Na *A Step from Heaven*

Gary Paulsen *Nightjohn*; [also by Paulsen] *Soldier's Heart*

R. L. Stine *Haunting Hour: Chills in the Dead of the Night*; [also by Stine] *Nightmare Hour: Time for Terror*

Jane Yolen *A Devil's Arithmetic*

Paul Zindel *The Pigman*

Laura Ingalls Wilder *Little House on the Prairie*

## Themes and Elements in Childrens' and Young Adult Literature

Young adult literature has a very useful place in the middle school English classroom. Students can easily relate to the characters and issues present in YA novels; therefore, they make excellent bridges to more difficult, adult literature. For instance, teachers can first introduce a novel such as Mildred Taylor's *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, which deals with racism, powerlessness, and family, prior to reading a text by Alice Walker, Zora Neale Hurston, or Toni Morrison, all of whom write about many of the same issues. Also, young adult novels are of high interest to young readers because they can relate to the problems and issues in the life of an adolescent: fitting in, conforming/peer pressure, growing up, identity formation, rebellion, and dealing with death or unwanted pregnancy.

Another characteristic common to YA novels is the absence of parents. That is, the action of the story unfolds in spaces free from parental influence. This way, the young narrator and supporting characters learn how to navigate life for themselves. Facing their challenges alone helps excel the growing-up process. As such, the settings of YA novels include, but are not limited to, day and boarding schools, social events, summer camps, and vacations.

Young adult fiction includes a variety of subjects and ethnic groups. Today's authors write about everything from drugs and rape to homosexuality and abuse. No subject is off limits. Famous authors such as Jacqueline Woodson, Chris Crutcher, and Jane Yolen confront interracial coupling, suicide, and the Holocaust in their novels for young adults. It is important to note that despite the heavy subject matter, most young adult literature ends optimistically and quickly. The plot unfolds in a matter of weeks or months in young adult novels.

Children's literature tends to be more explicitly educational than young adult literature. Children's books teach their young readers about the seasons and the weather, animals and bugs, food, colors, family, and feelings. In addition, it has become increasingly multicultural in the past thirty-five years. Today, subjects include stories about different religious and cultural traditions in works such as *Brother Eagle, Sister Sky* by Susan Jeffers, *Follow the Drinking Gourd* by Jeanette Winter, *Fly Away Girl* by Ann Grifalconi, *Lala Salama: An African Lullaby* by Hanna Heritage Bozylinsky, and *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* by J. Steptoe.

## Review Questions

1. A teacher provides background knowledge on the life of Jane Yolen, a map of Germany and the surrounding countries, and information about the time period before teaching the novel *The Devil's Arithmetic*. Why is the teacher doing this?
  - A. Activating prior knowledge will help students store and organize new information from the book.
  - B. Literary texts reflect the time and place in which they were written.
  - C. Providing background knowledge about literary texts enable students to better comprehend the novel, retain and remember information, make inferences and predictions, and fill in missing pieces.
  - D. All of the above.

Option **D** is correct because literary texts do reflect the time and place in which they were written. Background knowledge enriches the reading experience for students. Without an understanding of the author's background and environmental influences, many of the references and themes of the novel will be misunderstood. In addition, schemata theory suggests that comprehension is reliant upon incorporating new knowledge with prior knowledge. For students to retain any new information from a text, they need to be reminded of and taught more about the place and time in which the book was composed.

- 2.** A teacher wants to adopt a book—Karen Hesse’s *Out of the Dust*—for the sixth grade curriculum. What reason should he not provide the local school board?
- A.** Young adult literature provides a bridge to more difficult texts dealing with the same themes.
  - B.** Young adult literature motivates reluctant readers because it deals with relevant issues and topics, is fast paced, and ends optimistically.
  - C.** Young adult literature builds fluency, exposes students to different places and cultures, and connects with adolescent readers.
  - D.** Young adult literature is usually shorter than adult texts and does not take too much time away from more serious, canonical texts.

The correct answer is **D**. Today’s young adult literature is more than a quick read. Young adult literature has many educational benefits in an English classroom. Teachers can and should use YA novels for several important reasons. It deals with contemporary and universal themes in the lives of teenagers. Students connect with the literature and are therefore more motivated to read. Young readers learn how other teens have faced obstacles such as fitting in, dealing with family trauma, and forming an identity. Young adult literature also helps struggling readers in two ways: it builds fluency and provides a connection to more difficult reading material. For some students, reading adult literature is a frustrating experience. To help students with reading comprehension, teachers must first aid in building reading fluency. One way to increase fluency is to have students read books on their independent reading levels. Finally, using historical fiction such as *Out of the Dust* will also teach students about the Dust Bowl.

- 3.** Which of the following are important authors of literature for children and young adults?
- A.** Gary Paulsen, Robert Cormier, Chris Crutcher, Jane Yolen, Lois Lowry, Walter Dean Myers, Jacqueline Woodson, Tomie Dipaulo, and Eric Carle.
  - B.** Arthur Miller, Virginia Wolf, Charles Dickens, John Steinbeck, Ernest Hemingway, Emily Dickinson, Leo Tolstoy, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, and Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley.
  - C.** None of the above.
  - D.** All of the above.

The correct answer is **A**. Although adolescents today read adult literature in school, the authors listed in group **B** were not writing for a young audience. Young adult novels are narrated from an adolescent point of view, unlike Miller’s play *Death of a Salesman*, told from the point of view of Willie Loman, a father and business man. Also, young adult literature deals with issues related to coming of age, such as fitting in at school and falling in love for the first time. Virginia Wolf’s themes of feminism, depression, and establishing herself among the British literati were not written with teenagers in mind.

- 4.** An educator teaching *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*, by Julia Alvarez, and who wants to demonstrate the ways in which the novel reflects cultural values and ideas of Latina-Americans should
- A.** research unfamiliar cultural references, vocabulary, and foods to better understand the text.
  - B.** invite a Puerto Rican immigrant and her first-generation American daughter to class so the two can share their values, beliefs, and experiences.
  - C.** have students interview relatives, friends, or members of the community about intergenerational cultural conflict.
  - D.** All of the above.

The correct answer is **D** because for students to appreciate and understand the way Julia Alvarez’s novel expresses the conflict between Puerto Rican mothers and their Americanized daughters, teachers need to provide learning opportunities centered on cultural conflict. There are many ways to approach such a task. Teachers and students can study Puerto Rican culture prior to or in conjunction with reading the novel. Teachers should also take advantage of community members, especially first-generation Puerto Rican Americans. Students will not only better comprehend the story but will also learn to celebrate cultures different from their own.