

Writing in the Margins: *Six Strategies at a Glance*

This table provides six strategies that help readers understand texts. While making connections, clarifying information, or doing other work defined on this page, write down your thoughts in the margins of the text, on sticky notes, or in your Cornell notes.

<p>Visualize</p> <p>Visualize what the author is saying and draw an illustration in the margin. Visualizing what authors say will help you clarify complex concepts and ideas.</p> <p>When visualizing, ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does this look like? • How can I draw this concept/idea? • What visual and/or symbol best represents this idea? 	<p>Summarize</p> <p>Briefly summarize paragraphs or sections of a text. Summarizing is a good way to keep track of essential information while gaining control of lengthier passages.</p> <p>Summaries will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • state what the paragraph is about • describe what the author is doing • account for key terms and/or ideas
<p>Clarify</p> <p>Clarify complex ideas presented in the text. Readers clarify ideas through a process of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Pausing to clarify ideas will increase your understanding of the ideas in the text.</p> <p>In order to clarify information, you might:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • define key terms • reread sections of the text • analyze or connect ideas in the text • paraphrase or summarize ideas 	<p>Connect</p> <p>Make connections within the reading to your own life and to the world. Making connections will improve your comprehension of the text.</p> <p>While reading, you might ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does this relate to me? • How does this idea relate to other ideas in the text? • How does this relate to the world?
<p>Respond</p> <p>Respond to ideas in the text as you read. Your responses can be personal or analytical in nature. Thoughtful responses will increase engagement and comprehension.</p> <p>Readers will often respond to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interesting ideas • emotional arguments • provocative statements • author's claims • facts, data, and other support 	<p>Question</p> <p>Question both the ideas in the text and your own understanding of the text. Asking good questions while reading will help you become a more critical reader.</p> <p>While reading, you might ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the author saying here? • What is the author doing? • What do I understand so far? • What is the purpose of this section? • What do I agree/disagree with?

Pausing to Connect: Questions and Methods

"Pausing to Connect" is a reading strategy that helps readers gain deeper understandings of the texts they read. Skilled readers will often pause to make connections within a text. They will ask questions such as:

- What do I understand so far? What don't I understand?
- What information does the author need to clarify?
- Why has the author repeated this word?
- How does this term or phrase connect to what the author is arguing?
- How does what I just read connect to the above paragraph or section?
- What is the author trying to get me to think about here, and here?
- What is the author doing in this paragraph?
- What is the author's purpose?
- How has this section or paragraph helped my understanding of the text as a whole?

Readers pause to connect ideas within different types of texts for different reasons. The following section describes some of the reasons why readers pause to connect ideas within textbooks, nonfiction, and fiction.

Textbooks

Readers pause to connect ideas within textbooks to:

- clarify information.
- connect the visual aids to the words on the page.
- summarize ideas that have been presented.
- investigate how titles and subtitles relate to the surrounding text.
- make various other connections while reading.

Non-fiction

Readers pause to connect ideas within non-fiction to:

- clarify information.
- explore how words or terms are being used.
- investigate relationships between language and meaning.
- analyze how one paragraph is related to another.
- read images, charts, graphs, and other visual aids being offered.
- synthesize an author's claims.
- investigate the types of evidence being used to advance the argument.
- make various other connections while reading.

Fiction

Readers pause to connect ideas within fiction to:

- clarify plot points, character motivation, relationships, and/or setting.
- explore literary devices and features.
- trace the actions of one character or review the actions of many characters.
- analyze author's use of diction and its effect on tone and mood.
- identify repetitions, metrical feet, or rhyme schemes in poetry.
- make various other connections while reading.