STRATEGIES FOR READING FACTUAL TEXTS
Strategies for reading factual texts
August 1997

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Curriculum Directorate

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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book outlines the work of a number of teachers involved in teaching students about how to read factual texts. It offers practical strategies developed by teachers and designed to support students as they learn to read these texts.

The book is organised into the following sections:

Background

• explains the links between this book and the Department of School Education’s State Literacy Strategy, in particular Teaching Reading: A K-6 Framework

Context

• explains the way in which the strategies have been grouped

Organisation

• demonstrates ways in which the strategies were actually used in classrooms, the processes followed, the teachers’ reflections and student work samples.

Using this book

The strategies detailed in this book can be incorporated into a classroom literacy session particularly in modelled reading, guided reading and reading activities. They can also be introduced when students are learning how to read and write in all key learning areas.

The book can be used for teachers’ personal reading and reflection and as a basis for grade or collegial group discussions and staff development.
BACKGROUND

The Department of School Education’s State Literacy Strategy highlights the need to provide students with explicit instruction and opportunities to develop the skills, knowledge and strategies that will enable them to read and write successfully for a variety of purposes. The Literacy Strategy stresses the need for classroom reading programs to reflect a balance of activities that encourage students in both learning to read and reading to learn at all stages of schooling.

It is with these principles in mind that this book has been assembled. The book is a result of the recent work of a group of classroom teachers K-6 who were concerned with the need to teach their students how to read and write factual texts across all learning areas. This book maps the attempts of these teachers to model and guide students’ reading experiences through an exploration of the structures and features of a range of factual text types that required students to use, analyse and respond to text.

The strategies in this book are intended to assist with developing students’ reading skills, including their understanding of the concepts of the text. The texts that were used to generate the work samples were matched to students’ instructional levels.

*Teaching Reading: A K-6 Framework* details in its pathway of reading development (pp 14-15) the observable markers that teachers should expect to see in their students as they grow in reading competence. This pathway indicates that students should be exhibiting evidence about their understanding of the differences, purposes, patterns and organisational features of factual texts right from the early years of school. It also strongly suggests the need for teachers to actively and explicitly model and guide their students towards a range of understandings about factual texts from an early age. These understandings include the knowledge that:

- **Factual texts**
  - Convey meanings
  - Are written for specific purposes e.g. to inform, instruct, explain
  - Are different from literary texts
  - Are constructed by people about real phenomena
  - Should be evaluated in relation to the effects of audience, context and purpose
  - There are different kinds of factual texts
  - There are different patterns and organisational structures in different types of factual texts
When using the strategies, teachers need to be aware of two important considerations.

Firstly, the strategies are intended to support the stages of a generic teaching and learning cycle in which the teacher:

- models strategies appropriate to text and purpose
- highlights issues related to particular texts
- jointly works with students to assist their mastery of the strategies
- assists students to use the strategies independently.

Secondly, although the strategies in the book are presented without the documented support of other teaching and learning activities, each strategy was taught as an integral part of a unit of work. As well, it is intended that each strategy can be further used and adapted to meet the needs of students at different stages of reading development.

An insight into the context in which some of the strategies were used can be found at the beginning of each strategy outline under the heading: How I used this strategy with my class. Here the teacher describes the context of the strategy and also the student group involved. The teacher reflects on the use of the strategy under the heading: My thoughts on the strategy.
The strategies contained within the book have been grouped around the three major concepts of building field knowledge, interacting with texts and responding to texts.

**Building field knowledge**

brainstorming, categorising, predicting, developing a visual text outline and introducing key words

**Interacting with texts**

reading for a purpose, directed silent reading, using key words and comparing written text and visual text.

**Responding to texts**

cloze, note-making, ordering information, retelling and recognising the writer’s viewpoint.

**Building field knowledge**

This group of strategies includes:

- brainstorming
- categorising
- predicting
- developing a visual text outline
- introducing key words.

Although these strategies can be used at any stage throughout the learning cycle or at any time during a unit of work, they are particularly valuable in providing support for students early in a learning sequence as they encourage students to:

- recall and draw upon their existing knowledge about information contained within a text or a text type being studied
- use their background knowledge to predict the meaning of the text
- examine other aspects of the text that will assist understanding i.e. key words, visual representations, titles.
**Interacting with texts**

This group of strategies includes:

- reading for a purpose
- directed silent reading
- using key words
- comparing written text and visual text.

These strategies are used to engage students in negotiating the meaning of the text. They require students to:

- read with specific intention
- identify the purposes contained within texts.

**Responding to texts**

This group of strategies includes:

- cloze
- note-making
- ordering information
- retelling
- recognising the writer’s viewpoint.

These strategies direct students towards making meaningful responses to the factual texts read. When involved in these activities students are required to:

- synthesise understandings gained
- consider texts from different perspectives
- retell the meanings of texts from their own perspectives
- demonstrate overall understandings of the sequence and meaning of texts.

For the purposes of this book, the word *strategy* is used to describe the process through which teachers and students work to make the factual texts they are reading more accessible and hence more meaningful.
The teacher’s reflection will provide an opportunity for teachers using the strategies to consider the insights offered and the ways in which they might use or adapt each one to meet the needs of their students.

Similarly, students’ work samples have been included to give an indication of the way in which some students have worked through or responded to the suggested worksheets provided throughout the book.
BUILDING
FIELD
KNOWLEDGE
**Brainstorming**

Brainstorming is a means of activating and recording information about current knowledge, range of vocabulary and perceptions of a given topic. This information can include vocabulary, questions, known facts, predictions, links and ideas.

Brainstorming can be done individually or in groups by listing all that is known about a particular topic or idea. You can act as the scribe to assist in listing all contributions quickly and accurately. It is important to list all contributions offered without making comments, judgements or expressing opinions about any contribution. You can return to the lists at a later time to make judgements on the suitability of the information gained.

Brainstorming can be recorded on chalkboards, overhead transparencies, whiteboards or butcher’s paper, or individually, using post-it notes or cards (refer to categorising).
**Floorstorming**

One way of brainstorming is the technique known as *floorstorming*. In this technique the teacher needs to prepare a collage of pictures related to a topic to be studied e.g. the Great Barrier Reef: pictures of islands, sea life, leisure activities, flora, fauna.

Place blank A3 paper and stimulus pictures on the floor. Have groups of children look at the pictures and, on the blank paper, record words or phrases that describe something in the pictures. Note that each group does not have to have the same pictures. A variety of pictures on the same topic can often elicit broader responses.

After groups have listed everything that they want, ask them to examine the words and challenge words and ideas, cross out similar words and ideas, and classify the words into broad terms.

*Asking one child to scribe the group’s response allows for the free flow of ideas.*
Categorising

Categorising, also referred to as classifying, is a means of organising items of information by grouping or linking them according to attribute, category, theme or other common feature.

Information could be derived from brainstorming sessions, individual or group reading or research, surveys, lists provided by the teacher or viewing activities.

One method is to use the post-it notes or cards from a brainstorming session. After categorising, the students can be encouraged to give grouped items of information a heading or descriptor.

Students are encouraged to give headings to their grouped information.

One way of organising the information collected is to prepare a concept map.

A concept map allows students to record and organise their existing knowledge about a topic.
How I used this strategy with my class

Prior to this session, the students and I jointly constructed a concept map. This led to the students organising and recording their own concept maps to show their existing knowledge about a topic before engaging in further reading and research.

In pairs or small groups the students:

- brainstormed their knowledge about types of natural disasters
- chose one of the disasters and recorded their knowledge about it in the form of a concept map
- were allowed to add to their concept map throughout the unit.

While students were working, I continually directed and extended the students’ thinking through questioning.

My thoughts on the strategy

I found that constructing concept maps allowed the students to activate their background knowledge and link it to the new information that they were finding through their research. It also gave them a purpose for reading and promoted an enthusiasm for more focussed reading.
Predicting

Predicting involves readers or viewers considering what they expect a text to contain or what might happen next in a text. The stimulus for predicting could be a title, a picture or reading or viewing part of the text.

Prediction activities involve students in activating prior knowledge, motivating interest and enthusiasm and recognising a purpose for reading.

Before they read or view a text, tell students the title and ask them to predict what the text might be about. Then show students the cover and, through discussion, encourage them to confirm or revise their predictions. If using a book, ask students to predict the subject matter before referring them to the contents and index pages to confirm or revise their predictions.

Teaching explicitly about prediction encourages students to understand that they already have valuable information in their heads about the ideas to be found in texts and that bringing these understandings to the surface will assist their search for meaning.

Predicting is a valuable strategy for providing opportunities for students to evaluate whether the text fulfilled their expectations.

### Predicting Stage 3

**How I used this strategy with my class**

I used this strategy with a Stage 3 class. The activity I chose involved the students making predictions about what was going to be presented as newsworthy on “Behind the News”, a media text.

The students, in pairs:

- discussed and listed during the week what they thought would be in the program, using field knowledge that they had gained in previous lessons and from experiences outside school
- decided what news items were the most “newsworthy” and therefore likely to be in the program
- chose one news item and discussed how it might be presented e.g. inclusion of live footage, use of maps, interviewing the people involved, etc.
- watched the program, listening for and checking off any similarities.

**My thoughts on the strategy**

The activity was enjoyable for students and encouraged awareness of news issues and involvement in the “Behind the News” program. It resulted in active discussion about the way in which some of the news items were handled. I felt it made them more critical about the presentation of the program and showed them the myriad decisions that need to be made during the production of a current affairs program.

Predicting before viewing helped the students to listen for and identify headlines and key points. It also led into other lessons involving questioning and questionnaire-type responses.
What's newsworthy this week?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What I heard on the radio</th>
<th>What I saw on television</th>
<th>What I read in newspapers or magazines</th>
<th>What I heard people talk about</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don't listen to radio.</td>
<td>Elvis Presley</td>
<td>Elvis Presley</td>
<td>Olympic Games.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Police getting their hair shaved.</td>
<td>Wood Royal Commission</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Olympic Games</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

List five news items in order of their importance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Reason why it is important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. anniversary of death of Elvis</td>
<td>famous person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Olympic Games</td>
<td>rising costs—lot of money.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Police hair cuts</td>
<td>raising money for charity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Choose one item of news you predict might be in Behind the News and briefly list ideas about how they might present it.

Elvis Presley—
filmclips of the highlights of his life
interviews with famous people who knew him
interviews with fans.
How I used this strategy with my class

I used a work sheet with my class before reading them a book on natural disasters. In an effort to activate their existing field knowledge, I asked students to predict what the book might be about.

In groups the students:

- discussed their expectations
- recorded their expectation of the topics covered in the book, using the title and front cover as a reference
- compared their expectations with information in the text by skimming the text.

My thoughts on the strategy

I found that asking students to predict was effective as it allowed the students to share information and build on their existing field knowledge before referring to the book. Reading the book to confirm their predictions gave them a specific purpose for reading.

They were highly motivated when they found that information in the text matched their predictions.
**How I used this strategy with my class**

I used this work sheet with my class when they were studying different written and visual texts. The work sheet is a pre-reading activity to establish the field knowledge and to allow for future text comparison.

In pairs the students:
- were orientated to the idea of seeking information from a text about “Dangers to wildlife”
- discussed the issue
- recorded their predictions
- read the text.

**My thoughts on the strategy**

When the students used the work sheet they tended to generalise. This then led them to research the text for more specific details, to support or add to their generalisations.

It also allowed me to see what existing field knowledge individual students had. This enabled me to structure future activities to cater for individual needs.

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**Pre Reading Activity 1**

Name: Katherine

Predict the dangers your group thinks could threaten wildlife when people change the natural environment.

1. Animals (could) will lose their homes
2. Some animals will starve
3. Species will become endangered or extinct
4. Pollution
5. Nets can kill sea life
6. Insects die from different poisonous sprays and gases
7. Natives (kille) killing tigers in other countries.
Developing a visual text outline

A visual text outline is a representation of the visual aspects of a written text. These visual aspects include diagrams, flow charts, illustrations, graphs, timelines, etc.

By focusing on the elements of the visual text, a visual text outline makes students aware that information is contained not just in written text.

To complete a visual text outline, the reader starts at the beginning and works through the book, making a list of the types of visual texts included and what they are about. For example, a book about Anzac Day might have a visual text outline of the first few pages that looks like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Map</td>
<td>Europe during World War 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Poster</td>
<td>Conscription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Photograph</td>
<td>Soldiers leaving Sydney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Map</td>
<td>The Middle East.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A completed visual text outline can be used as a summary of the text and as an easy reference guide to locate information.

Teachers can ask questions about information contained in the visual text.
Introducing key words

To prepare students for reading or viewing it is necessary to familiarise them with any words from the text that might hinder their understanding. These words may include terms specific to the topic or grammatical features which are important in making links between ideas e.g. “Later on ...” in recounting, “On the other hand...” in discussing, or “Nevertheless...” in arguing.

When key words are introduced it is essential to ensure that they are presented in meaningful contexts i.e. the meaning intended in the text. Students need to understand not just the dictionary meaning of a word, but the concept it conveys within the text.

There are several ways of introducing key words. These include:

• Prior selection by the teacher of vocabulary which is treated separately through examples and discussion to develop understanding of meaning.
• Identification of unfamiliar words by students by, for example, brainstorming, skimming and scanning, discussion, viewing, etc. These words are then discussed or placed within contexts which clarify their meaning.
• Cloze activities which provide opportunities to place key words in context.
• Vocabulary prediction, where students identify new or unfamiliar words in the text and attempt to clarify their meaning from the surrounding text.
• Definition matching activities, where students match key words with given definitions. This is most effective where words and definitions are written separately on cards and can be physically manipulated by students.

Incorporating key words in class or individual spelling lists assists students to read and use the words independently.
Introducing key words

How I used this strategy with my class

I introduced the work sheet to my class to encourage them to focus on words from a text that they found new or difficult.

The students were asked to use the sheet to:

- scan the text to locate words whose meanings they were unsure of
- read the sentence containing the word, and sentences on either side of it if needed, to see if the context gave clues to the word’s meanings
- attempt to write their own meaning
- locate the meanings in a dictionary.

My thoughts on the strategy

Many students found it difficult to make attempts at meanings from the word’s context in a sentence. I have since spent time explicitly modelling this with small groups of students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERESTING WORDS CHART</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Word</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>luxuriant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>canopy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lianas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>species</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>infestation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pollinate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>percolate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTERACTING
WITH
TEXT
**Reading for a purpose**

Students need to have an understanding of the purpose for reading and viewing particular texts before they commence. Teachers can assist students to clarify the purpose of reading by asking the questions:

*Why are you reading this text?*
*Are you reading for enjoyment, to retell, to answer questions, to gain information?*

Once a purpose for reading is established, students can be directed about which method of reading will best achieve that purpose. These methods for reading include:

- **skimming**: reading to gain an overall understanding of the content of the text
- **scanning**: reading to locate specific information
- **re-reading**: reading to confirm meanings and understandings, and to clarify details.

*Having a purpose for reading will assist students to choose the most appropriate method of reading.*
Reading for a purpose

How I used this strategy with my class

Before I introduced this activity the students had brainstormed and therefore identified what they already knew about the topic. I used this activity to promote enthusiasm for active reading.

Individually or in small groups the students:

• were assisted to formulate questions about their topic by using such words as *why*, *how*, *who*, *where* and *what*
• discussed and listed questions that needed answers
• read parts of the book to locate answers to their questions.

My thoughts on the strategy

I found that the questions raised during the strategy became the guide for further research by students. The questions were displayed prominently on a classroom chart for the students to refer and add to. It was interesting that some students offered information that they knew to help answer other students’ questions and suggested resources that they had come across.
How I used this strategy with my class

I designed this work sheet as an activity during reading. It followed an activity where students predicted the content of the text.

In pairs the students:

• read the text to themselves
• referred to the work sheet
• discussed the text
• recorded the supporting points.

My thoughts on the strategy

During the activity the students could only generalise about the role of the illustrations. A follow-up lesson could be to take the visual text in isolation and elicit as much information from it as possible, and then refer this back to the written text. (See Developing a visual text outline, p. 16).

During reading - activity 2

Name: ____________________

What are each of the dangers to wildlife developed to support the author’s argument?

1. destruction of their habitat
2. feral animals killing them
3. tamed animals eating their food
4. food given to them by people

What role do the illustrations play?

They showed the things talked about. The picture looked sad and made me feel sorry for the animals and angry.
**Directed silent reading**

Directed silent reading allows students to practise identifying and locating important information in a text through questioning directed by the teacher. Using a big book, or another form of shared text e.g. an overhead transparency, a set of small books, or a video, you can direct attention to a particular section of the text and ask a prepared question which focuses on key information. The students read or view the section silently to locate the answer.

Answers are clarified and shared through discussion with the teacher and group members. This allows the teacher to observe and monitor students’ understandings before treating the next section of the text.

As this strategy requires a high level of concentration by students, it is suggested that each session be limited to 10–12 minutes in duration.
Using key words

Students can use key words to assist them to gain access to the meaning of a text. This could involve scanning the text to locate the section where the key word is used or re-reading these sections in order to clarify the meanings.

This strategy would be successful only where students had previously been introduced to the key words (refer to *Introducing key words*, p. 17).

When they are reading, some students find it supportive to have available the key words and definitions treated earlier so that they can easily refer to them if they need to.
Comparing written text and visual text

In factual texts information can be conveyed in the written text and in the visual text. Looking closely at the visual text and comparing it to what is written on the page allows students full access to all information included by the author. It also allows students to make judgements about the suitability of the visual text used and connections between the visual and written texts.

Comparing written and visual text Stage 3

How I used this strategy with my class

I used this strategy with my class to reinforce with students the concept that the visual information provided in texts is linked to written text and carries meaning vital to understanding.

With a copy of a visual from a text, students worked in pairs to:
- discuss the content of the visual
- list understandings about the information contained in the visuals.

The class then:
- combined understandings gained on a jointly constructed class chart or overhead transparency
- listened as the text was read aloud
- cross-referenced information gained from visual and written text forms.

My thoughts on the strategy

This strategy worked well and encouraged students to apply these comparisons in their own written texts to enhance their work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information I have learned from observing the visual text:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Lot of men were bandaged and wounded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Old fashioned boats in a bad state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pictures are black and white</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Men are dirty and look tired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Some men have hard hats to protect them</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information I have gained from the written text:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Men were sick from disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There was not enough water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Food was poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Soldiers had to be educated? executed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Help had to come from the sea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hundreds of men were sick every day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Did the written text and visual text complement each other?
How? Yes. They did.

The pictures helped explain the writing. It means more when you see it rather than just read it. I didn’t know some of the things were in the pictures.
RESPONDING TO TEXT
**Cloze**

Cloze is an activity in which parts of the text are covered or deleted. Students are required to complete the missing parts of the text, using clues which the existing text provides. Cloze requires students to predict appropriate words which maintain the text’s meanings. This may not necessarily be the exact words of the original text.

When constructing a cloze it is useful to leave the first and last sentence intact. This provides a context for students. Deletions might include technical terms, grammatical items such as reference links, verbs (for tense and subject–verb agreement) and structural features of texts, such as a step in a procedure. The deleted words may be provided separately to assist those students requiring support.

Skills can be developed in students to assist them in completing cloze activities successfully. These skills include:
- skimming to get an overall idea of the text
- scanning for clues to indicate meaning
- re-reading and reading on to check predictions, and
- a final re-reading to ensure meaning is consistent across the whole text.

**Stage 1**

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**How I used this strategy with my class**

I designed this cloze activity to encourage readers to use a range of effective strategies to construct meaning while reading. In our study of the solar system, students were learning about the moon, so I chose an extract about moon facts from a longer piece of text. The extract had already been read and discussed and the deletions were chosen to encourage children to use semantic and grammatical clues to make the replacements.

Students were:
- asked to complete the deletions and encouraged to read on, predict, re-read, and use contextual clues to make meaningful substitutions
- encouraged to discuss and share their attempts and then re-read the whole text for overall meaning.

**My thoughts on the strategy**

A careful choice of deletions was necessary to ensure that there were clues in the remaining text that allowed the students to make meaningful substitutions.

I felt that the activity was successful because the piece of text chosen had been studied and knowledge of the field had been adequately built up.

I had to continually encourage the students to re-read and then make a substitution that made sense, ensuring that a better, more appropriate word was not available.
Moon Facts to Amaze You

- The Moon is less than a third the size of our Earth and is approximately 384,000 kilometres away from it.
- It is a totally silent world.
- It has no air or wind or water.
- Maps of the Moon show it as having seas. These, however, are not what they seem; they are great plains of hardened lava, the left-overs of ancient volcanoes. The dark patches are the low-lying “seas”.
- The brightest areas of the moon are the highlands, which catch the full light of the Sun. The highest of them, the Leibnitz Mountains, rise to about 10,000 metres — even higher than our Mount Everest!
- The Moon has thousands of vast craters all over its surface — some are hundreds of kilometres across.
- When you look at the Moon from the Earth, you can see dark and bright patches on it. This pattern of light and dark has sometimes been called the man in the Moon . . . but him out one night soon!
Note-making

Note-making involves extracting and recording the main ideas of a written or media text in an organised and systematic way. Its purpose could be to assist understanding, to identify key concepts, to plan speaking or writing, to assist recall of information or to express ideas clearly and succinctly.

Teachers can develop students’ note-making skills by:
• providing opportunities for students to practise skimming, scanning and identifying key words
• posing key questions prior to reading and viewing
• providing a scaffold or work sheet for the notes
• modelling the process of extracting information and recording ideas in clear and succinct language.

### Note-making Stage 1

**How I used this strategy with my class**

I designed this activity sheet for a Year 2 class. Its purpose was to assist students to examine a text in order to locate specific information.

The text was examined briefly, as students had to skim the text to get a general understanding of the content. General discussion took place about the ideas contained in the text, with clarification of the main focus of each section of the text.

To develop scanning skills, specific questions were posed for the students to answer. Students located words and phrases that gave a short answer to the question and recorded them. The next day the sheets were returned to the students and they were asked to write a sentence which answered the question, using the words and phrases from their short answer.

The students:

• examined the text briefly by skimming the content
• discussed ideas in the text and clarified the main focus of each section
• scanned the text to locate and record short answers to questions posed
• wrote a sentence which answered the question.

**My thoughts on the strategy**

The activity sheet for guiding note-making was effective in helping my students:

• confirm or refute ideas gained from skimming
• locate the short answer to questions posed
• locate, identify and record the answers to questions requiring longer, more detailed answers.
**TOPIC:** Planets

**QUESTION:** How many planets are there?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short answer</th>
<th>Long answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9 sun</td>
<td>There are 9 planets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There is one sun.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOPIC:** Planets

**QUESTION:** What does Venus look like?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short answer</th>
<th>Long answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a star</td>
<td>The planet named Venus looks like a star.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note-making Stage 3

How I used this strategy with my class

Over a period of three to four weeks I had deconstructed a number of information reports with my students. We looked at the general structure and the main language features.

Jointly we constructed a framework for them to write their own information report on an animal of their choosing.

The students:

• located texts that contained information on their animal
• used the framework to record main words and phrases
• wrote a first draft from their notes
• jointly edited their draft and published their report.

My thoughts on the strategy

An understanding of the structure of information reports was invaluable in showing the students how they could locate and record information in a logical, organised way. It focussed their reading and gave them the structure for taking notes.

I can see that I can extend this to taking notes for other text types e.g. historical recounts.

Title:  **CHIMPANZEE**

**General:** What type of animal is this?

**Statement:**
- /intelligent /
- /hairy /
- /lively /
- /Strong /
- /wise /
- /mammal /
- /Fast /
- /Closet /
- /realised /
- /understand 70% of what were saying/quadrupedally

**Description:** What did it eat?

- /Fruit /
- /Orange /
- /Africa /
- /slamming /
- /Ape /
- /monkey /
- /antelope /
- /berry /
- /50 years/water/skirmish/lives

- /Small truces/tired/261 days/using sticks
  as tools

**Description:** What was its parts?

**Behaviour:** What was its size, height, weight?

- /1.5m / 1.7m / 45-50kg / two legs / two arms / two hands / one head / one body / two eyes

Unedited notes taken using structural headings as a guide
The chimpanzee is an intelligent and lively creature. They are our closest relatives. They understand 70% of what we are saying. On the ground chimpanzees walk on four legs. The chimpanzee is a mammal and it is extremely fast swinging through trees. The chimpanzee lives for 40 - 45 years.

The chimpanzee has two legs and two arms. The chimpanzee is very strong especially with his hands to push away big rocks and heavy things. His height is 1.7m. His weight is 45 - 80kg. They are very hairy all over except for the feet and the hands.

They eat all kinds of fruit. The chimpanzee lives in Africa. They catch their prey by slamming it on the ground and hanging by a branch from a tree. They are known to eat small antelopes. They protect themselves from cheetahs and other predators by throwing sticks and twigs at them. They are usually very calm animals. It takes 202 - 261 days for a chimpanzee to have a baby.
**How I used this strategy with my class**

I chose this note-making framework to help my students identify and extract relevant information from the text.

As they were reading, I helped students to summarise and record ideas through the use of guiding questions that focused their research.

Individually or in pairs students:

- skimmed the text looking for the main words identified to help answer the guiding questions
- recorded ideas both visually and in note form as they read.

**My thoughts on the strategy**

The framework was helpful as students used the guiding questions to focus on the parts of the text that contained specific information related to their question. This encouraged them to skim the text to locate words related to the question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question: How do balloons fly?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>main words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>float with the wind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>light material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>filled with gas that is lighter than air</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>filled with hot air</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Answer:** Balloons are made of light material. They lift off the ground because they are filled with hot air or a gas that is lighter than air.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question: What are gliders?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>main words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aircraft without engines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wings that are shaped like a bird's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thermals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>currents of warm air</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Answer:** Gliders are aircraft without engines. They have light wings that are shaped like a bird's wings. They stay in the air by being lifted up by currents of warm air.
Ordering information

Ordering information involves:

- anticipating the structure of the text by using knowledge of the text type e.g. if it is a recount, information is likely to be ordered chronologically, with key words being time words and phrases and dates
- identifying key points e.g. events, facts, opinions or steps, pertinent to the reader’s needs
- sequencing these points in order to enhance understanding of text content.

Ordering information

Stage 2

How I used this strategy with my class

Students were shown a video on Dame Nellie Melba after having had various texts about her read to them.

The purpose of the strategy was for students to pick out key events of her life from the text and list them in point form on a timeline. The students then placed these on a grid in chronological order with the facts written in sentences.

My thoughts on the strategy

Some students needed support to locate the relevant information and to develop the concept of chronological order. Previous experience in note taking helped the students formulate the information into short points.

The value of the activity became apparent when students wrote their own biographical recount on a famous Australian. Many used both the timeline and the grid to support their writing.
Retelling

Retelling involves either viewing or reading and then recalling the significant parts of the text in a logical way.

Retelling can be:
• written e.g. a book review
• spoken e.g. an oral report on a video
• visual e.g. drawing a series of visuals to show the sequence of an explanation
• performance e.g. miming the life-cycle of a butterfly.

It is important that students revisit the original text to confirm or modify their retellings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retelling</th>
<th>Stage 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>How I used this strategy with my class</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I used this strategy with my class, who were in the middle of a unit of work on natural disasters and showed an interest in a report about volcanic activity in Iceland.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The work sheet was designed to allow them to gain information from a newspaper article on the topic.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The students in pairs:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• anticipated the content of the article</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• discussed the structure of the text</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• scanned for key words and underlined these</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• read the text</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• visually recorded information from the text.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>My thoughts on the strategy</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Though the students had existing field knowledge about the topic, they found it difficult to translate their knowledge into other forms. A teaching point could be to take the visual text only and elicit as much information as possible about it, and then refer this back to the written text.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Title of text: Meltdown in Iceland.

A statement about the topic: The Loki Volcano erupted in Iceland.

Concluding statement about the topic: Farmers have evacuated and all airlines have been banned from the area.
Recognising the writer’s viewpoint

Recognising the writer’s viewpoint is a way of assisting students to determine how the writer’s attitudes and values are reflected in the text and how these attitudes and values might influence them as readers or viewers.

Recognising the writer’s viewpoint involves identifying opinion, bias and point of view in a text.

In written texts these can be revealed through examining:

- the choice of words used
- the visuals that accompany the words
- the information included
- the information not included, and
- the tone used by the writer.

In media texts these can be revealed through examining the use of lighting, camera angles, music, editing choices, dialogue and methods of acting and directing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recognising the writer’s viewpoint</th>
<th>Stage 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>How I used this strategy with my class</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I used a series of questions to prompt discussion in the classroom about an advertisement aimed at children e.g. fast food, games or toys. The questions were framed to get students to try to identify the purpose of the text and how its particular features assist in achieving this purpose.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After reading and discussing the advertisement, particularly looking at visual features, such as use of animation and colour, the following questions were discussed:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Who do you think the advertisement is written for?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Why do you think so?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What does the advertisement tell you about the product?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>My thoughts on the strategy</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My intention was for the students to begin looking at how the advertiser uses things which would appeal to children to persuade them to buy or use a product. Most students were easily able to identify the features which would appeal to them. However, establishing what the advertisement actually told about a product needed careful questioning to elicit answers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With an older Stage 1 class I transcribed their responses and students were able to discuss why they thought the advertisement told only particular things about a product and perhaps omitted other information.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recognising the writer’s viewpoint

Stage 3

How I used this strategy with my class

I used this work sheet with my class to allow students to begin identifying who would write this factual text and the purpose for writing it. It allowed students to explore issues of audience.

The work sheet also asks students to take the text and improvise, with attention to audience and point of view.

In pairs, students:

• discussed the work sheet points
• wrote to the points (i) and (ii).

In pairs, or as individuals, students:

• wrote the improvised paragraph
• shared the works aloud.

My thoughts on the strategy

I found that some students needed assistance with the expository writing. I did a joint construction with this group.

Name: Elizabeth

(i) Who would write this exposition? Why?

Vets, RSPCA. Vets might because they care for (and) animals and so does the RSPCA.

A normal person because they might want to

might love animals and might want to inform

people how to look after them.

(ii) Where would you expect to see this text?

On a vet wall, train station boards, schools, lamp posts, post offices, shopping centres and newspaper

Could this text be rewritten to argue that it’s dogs and cats that suffer in our environment? Yes!

Write a sample paragraph.

Yes! Because dogs and cats were introduced into Australia so they don’t know their environment. People dislike them and they get taken to the pound and put down. So I think they suffer in a way because they can’t cope in the wild.
Recognising the writer’s viewpoint  

**How I used this strategy with my class**

Prior to the lesson we discussed what constitutes fact or opinion. Students were given sentences to sort into fact or opinion categories. They were then asked to make up a sentence stating a fact and then, using the same sentence content, rewrite it as an opinion.

I decided to show the class a video on government in early Australia. The lesson began by brainstorming what the program might be about. We then watched the program in its entirety. After a brief discussion of the main points students watched the program again and took notes of “important” information. Students then worked in groups to amalgamate their notes.

Students worked in pairs with the work sheet to:

- jot down the main points
- decide on whether each point was a fact or an opinion
- record any other topic information that they had, either from their own experiences or previous lessons.

Pairs joined into groups of four and discussed:

- why they decided if the point was a fact or an opinion
- what clues in the program supported these decisions
- why they thought some information was included and other information was left out.

**My thoughts on the strategy**

This strategy raised an awareness that we cannot take everything on face value. When the students wrote their own fact or opinion sentences, an issue arose in relation to what the difference is between opinion and fiction. Most students thought that if it wasn’t a fact then it must be made up. It required a lot of discussion to arrive at definitions of fact, opinion and fiction.

From the information that students wrote as not being included in the program it became obvious that the field building activities completed earlier in the unit were worthwhile. However, whilst students could identify that the program was one person’s point of view, many found it difficult to identify specifically why certain information was omitted.

It was interesting to note that in ensuing discussions on current affairs topics, students spontaneously questioned other students on whether what they were saying was fact or opinion.
TITLE: _____________________________

What information did the program give you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information</th>
<th>was it Fact</th>
<th>or Opinion?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1786—Arthur Phillip made Governor of NSW</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW was a penal colony</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Governor's authority was supreme</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governor did not have to listen to advice from</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anyone NSW was not democratic by today's standards</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

List any information you know that wasn't included in the program.

The law systems of the Aboriginal peoples—no mention of Aboriginal culture in the text
How individual people felt about laws

In a group discuss:
• How did you decide if it was fact or opinion?
• How did the program lead you to decide this?
• If you know information was missing, why do you think it wasn't included?