

During Reading

Coding Text

DESCRIPTION

A quick way for students to become conscious of and to record mental responses to their reading is to use a simple coding system. For example, if a student, while reading, notices a connection to another unit in your course, to another subject, or to something in her life, she jots a C in the margin; if she's confused, she writes "Huh?" Students may add brief phrases or comments explaining their thinking. If the book belongs to the school, or if the teacher wishes students to be able to spot their notations quickly during class discussion, the codes can be placed on the post-it notes we described in the previous strategy.

WHY USE IT?

If students are not accustomed to thinking actively as they read, they need to make conscious efforts to do so, but not so intrusively as to totally interrupt the flow of their reading. Symbols help students remember a strategy, notice when their thinking has followed it, and then very briefly note the spot in the text where that thinking occurred. If we want students to think more deeply as they read, we need to provide explicit mechanisms for them to do this, rather than just exhort them to "really think about this material."

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Here is a set of codes, called INSERT (Interactive Notation System for Effective Reading and Thinking), that teachers have found very useful:

✓	Confirms what you thought	???	Confuses you
✗	Contradicts what you thought	*	Strikes you as very important
?	Puzzles you	→	Is new or interesting to you

Be sure to introduce just one or two symbols at a time and demonstrate for students when and how they might use them. Then ask kids to share their coded responses later, when they discuss or work with the reading.

You can invent your own coding system that matches the subject matter at hand. Stephanie Harvey and Ann Goudvis use codes widely to teach each of the seven thinking strategies that they describe in their book, *Strategies That Work* (Stenhouse 2000). A sampling of their codes:

R	Reminds me of...	A	Questions answered in the text
T-S	Text-to-self connections	D	Questions that could be answered through discussion
T-T	Text-to-other-text connections		

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis. 2000. *Strategies That Work*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse; Joseph Vaughan and Thomas Estes. 1986. *Reading and Reasoning Beyond the Primary Grades*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon (for the INSERT system).