Supporting Students in Complex Texts

CRITICAL QUESTIONS and INSTRUCTIONAL SCAFFOLDS for teacher consideration.

Why are students reading this text?

- Learn or explore a concept.
- Analyze or evaluate an argument.
- Engage in the imagined world of the author.
- Understand/explore humanity.

INFORMATIONAL

- Is the author's PURPOSE subtle or difficult to determine?
  Provide a guiding question for reading.
  VIDEO EXAMPLE LINK: https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/tff-audio-edu-quotes/permit-
- Does the STRUCTURE of the text make it difficult to determine the main idea(s)?
  "Get the Gist in Baby Steps."
  VIDEO EXAMPLE LINK: https://youtu.be/4m4GX5Ozu
- Is the LANGUAGE dense, unfamiliar, and content-specific?
  Teach decoding strategies for vocabulary.
  VIDEO EXAMPLE LINK: https://news.npr.org/orig/933568
- Is the text difficult to understand because of complex SENTENCE STRUCTURE?
  Teach students to unpack complex structures.
  VIDEO EXAMPLE START (@ 2:25)
  https://npr.org/4733568
- Does understanding the text require significant BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE?
  Use a word sort to access background knowledge and create connections to text.
  VIDEO EXAMPLE LINK: https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/reading-silver

NARRATIVE

- Are there several layers and levels of MEANING?
  Use "interrupted passages" to focus students on one layer at a time.
  VIDEO EXAMPLE (START @ 1:40)
  https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/analyzing-author-choices-nea
- Is the LANGUAGE complex, figurative or unfamiliar?
  Use the "shift" method to tease out symbolic and figurative meanings.
  VIDEO EXAMPLE LINK: https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/sift-method-analyze-literature
- Is the SENTENCE STRUCTURE complex, often containing multiple thoughts or concepts?
  Break down the sentence to its basic parts, isolating meaningful chunks.
  EXPLANATION BEGINS ON PAGE 22
  https://teaching.channel.org/videos/sift-method-analyze-literature
- Does the text assume the reader's EXPERIENCE AND CULTURAL/HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE of the topic?
  Preview the text, exploring social, cultural and historical contexts.
  VIDEO EXAMPLE LINK: https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/teaching-slavery

- Where is the BALANCE between text complexity and task?
  Layer less complex texts to support more complex texts.
  VIDEO EXPLANATION: https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/layering-text-complexity
  Weave context, texture and fulcrum texts in a unit of study.
- Does the text require significant BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE?
  Use a word sort to access background knowledge and create connections to text.
  VIDEO EXAMPLE LINK: https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/reading-silver

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