

Literacy Activities

For 6-12

Social Studies

Anticipation Guides

Anticipation Guides prepare students for reading new material and/or listening to introductory lectures over new material. This activity is particularly useful when you are preparing to teach content that students may already know about—and may have some misconceptions about! The beauty of the AG is that it begins by having students state what they already think about the topic and then gives them an opportunity to revise their thinking. The questions on the AG make students more focused readers of the text. AGs also require students to cite evidence to support their original or new position on the facts presented in the text. After completing an AG, students have excellent notes over the material. AGs help students learn to take better notes by having them not only write down main ideas but also evidence for those ideas.

- Begin by converting the most important information from the text into short statements. These statements should challenge preconceived ideas and pique student interest in the material. Next, present the statements to students—either on a screen or board (for them to copy) or on a prepared handout. Give students a response option (Agree or Disagree).
- After students complete their responses, you might have a class discussion of their responses or have students discuss their responses in small groups. You could even poll the class for answers and give percentages of agreement/disagreement for each statement. (These percentages can later be compared with correct answers.)
- Now the students are ready to read the material, watch the video, or hear the lecture. As students interact with the material, they should be trying to determine whether their pre-reading responses were correct, adjusting their initial responses as needed. They should also gather evidence to support both their correct and incorrect responses. Students may read in small groups (perhaps the same group with whom they first discussed pre-reading responses) or individually.

After students complete the AG, begin discussion by asking what surprised students. Ask students to share before and after responses as well as their explanations. As students discuss their final responses, the instructor can address any confusion or misunderstanding students still have.

Fisher, Douglas, William G. Brozo, Nancy Frey, and Gay Ivey. *50 Content Area Strategies for Adolescent Literacy*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2007. Print.

Anticipation Guide for the United States Bill of Rights

Directions before reading: Show me what you already know about your rights as an American citizen. Read the statements below and indicate whether you think the statement is true or false in the Before Reading column. Compare your responses with someone sitting next to you after you complete your responses.

Directions after reading: After reading information related to each statement, decide whether you still think it is true or false. Cite the sources and information that support your final answer.

Statement and Support	Before Reading		After Reading	
	True	False	True	False
1. Police must read the Miranda Rights to anyone placed under arrest.				
Support and Source:				
2. The right to own firearms can be restricted for some citizens.				
Support and Source:				
3. There are no restrictions on a citizen's freedom of speech.				
Support and Source:				
4. All defendants have the right to be released on bail.				
Support and Source:				
5. There are circumstances when a person can be tried more than once for the same crime.				
Support and Source:				
6.				
Support and Source:				

Conclusion:

Opinionnaires

Opinionnaires give teachers an opportunity to discover student attitudes about a topic preceding instruction on the topic. The opinionnaire differs from the Anticipation Guide since it has no correct answers. The Anticipation Guide is best when students have misconceptions about a topic; the Opinionnaire is appropriate for topics that are open to debate. In fact, opinionnaires can stimulate a good deal of debate the first day you introduce the topic. Encourage your students to revisit their opinionnaire as they explore the topic in class, revising their opinions or adding to their reasons. Indeed, the opinionnaire could be expanded to include space for note-taking as students read articles and find more support for their positions.

To create an opinionnaire, begin by listing no more than 10 statements. You want your students to have time to think about each statement and their opinions. You do not have to ask them to include reasons for their positions, but those reasons do require them to think about their positions. You may want to have students identify themselves only by class period to encourage authentic responses.

You may follow the opinionnaire with a debate in class, selecting one or two of the statements for discussion of students' positions.

Follow the opinionnaire with a selected article or primary source document for the students to read. The reading should relate to the statements in the opinionnaire, but it should also provide new information that may challenge student thinking. After the reading, students will be ready for more discussion—and ready to appreciate some of the complexity of the topic.

The following opinionnaire is adapted from Fisher, Brozo, Frey, and Ivey.

Fisher, Douglas, William G. Brozo, Nancy Frey, and Gay Ivey. *50 Content Area Strategies for Adolescent Literacy*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2007. Print.

Opinionnaire for the United States Bill of Rights

Name _____

Period _____

Directions: Read each statement below and indicate whether you agree (A) or disagree (D). Write your reason for your opinion below each statement. There are no "right answers."

_____ A society is safest when its laws are strictly enforced.

Your reason:

_____ All citizens have a right to bear arms so they can protect themselves.

Your reason:

_____ In times of war, the military should be able to use private property.

Your reason:

_____ Free speech should be protected, even when what is said is against the government.

Your reason:

_____ There are crimes for which a criminal should be put to death.

Your reason:

_____ Police should not be required to obtain a search warrant in order to seize evidence against a criminal.

Your reason:

Exit Slips

Having students complete an Exit Slip at the end of class gives them some time to reflect on the day's lesson before rushing out into the chaos of school hallways; however, thoughtful Exit Slips also give you a tool for determining how well students understand what you and they think they have learned in class. The information on an Exit Slip gives you an instant snapshot of understanding, enabling you to effectively begin class the next day by addressing misconceptions and confusions. The key to gathering useful information is asking useful questions. You also want to mix it up—if you use the same questions every day (What did you learn today?), students will respond thoughtlessly. Ask interesting questions, and hold students accountable for writing thoughtfully. You can grade these with a very quick check. Points should not come for “correct” answers; points should come for answers that reveal students who are thinking about the material.

Fisher, Brozo, Frey, & Ivey (2007) identify three categories of Exit Slip questions:

1. Prompts that document learning
 - a. The three most important things I learned today are . . .
 - b. Today I changed my mind about . . .
 - c. What I would tell someone else about what I learned today is . . .

2. Prompts that emphasize the process of learning
 - a. Two questions I have about what we did in class today are . . .
 - b. I am confused about . . .
 - c. What I would like to learn next is . . .
 - d. I feel pretty confident with my understanding of . . .

3. Prompts to evaluate the effectiveness of the instruction
 - a. The thing that helped me pay attention most today was . . .
 - b. The thing that helped me understand most today was . . .
 - c. Something that did not help me learn today was . . .

I think you can also use them to have students give a progress report on their work, particularly if they are working in groups.

The key to Exit Slips is a quick turnaround. You need to read them the day you take them up and address any problems the next day.

Fisher, Douglas, William G. Brozo, Nancy Frey, and Gay Ivey. *50 Content Area Strategies for Adolescent Literacy*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2007. Print.

Close Reading

As Social Studies students begin reading primary texts, they will need reading skills they may not be accustomed to using when reading their social studies textbooks. To read historical speeches, diaries, and letters requires reading like a literary critic. Close Reading exercises are a staple of the study of literature, teaching students to pay attention to the literary elements of text that convey a writer's attitude toward a topic.

A close reading can be performed on individual texts, but to help students see the importance of paying attention to the literary elements of primary source documents, select two passages that offer distinct perspectives on the same topic. When students are first learning close reading, short passages are best. You might use this activity before students read longer texts, particularly if the texts present various perspectives on the same topic.

Step 1: Gathering data

Give each student a copy of the text, and instruct them to read with a pencil, pen, or marker moving: underlining, highlighting, and writing questions as they move through the text. They should note any words or phrases that seem important, that surprise them, or that they do not understand. They can use a simple set of symbols (question marks, exclamation marks, plus and minus marks) or write comments as they read.

Step 2: Making observations about the data

Instruct students to examine the words and phrases they have annotated in the passages. What unusual language do they see the authors using in each text? How do these words shape the reader's response to the topic? Why did each writer make the writing choices he/she made?

Step 3: Interpreting the data

After thinking about the data and considering the choices made by each writer, students are ready to make a statement about each author's perspective or about the devices each writer employs to influence the audience. To support these statements, students will have evidence in their annotated copies of the texts.

Close Reading is an activity that can take students from reading to writing. As they find the most important features of the text, they also theorize about the meaning of the text. Reading text closely, finding the most important element in texts, and interpreting the text are processes that prepare students to formulate thesis statement and support their positions with evidence—the essential features of good interpretive writing.

The basic concepts of the close reading can be adapted in a number of ways. The following reading guide from Bruce Lesh takes the basic concept of close reading to help students analyze multiple perspectives in a set of articles about Nat Turner.

Nat Turner's Rebellion: Evaluating Historical Opinions

Use the following worksheet to record information from the various primary and secondary sources. When deciding the term that best describes the document's position regarding Nat Turner, consider *hero*, *villain*, *fanatic*, *religious*, *insane*, *leader*, *manipulative*, *brave*, etc.

<p>Source 1: John W. Cornwell—"The Aftermath of Nat Turner's Insurrection"</p> <p>Adjectives</p> <p>Quote</p> <p>Term</p>	<p>Source 4: <i>The Richmond Whig</i></p> <p>Adjectives</p> <p>Quote</p> <p>Term</p>
<p>Source 2: Herbert Aptheker—<i>American Negro Slave Revolts</i></p> <p>Adjectives</p> <p>Quote</p> <p>Term</p>	<p>Source 5: <i>The Richmond Inquirer</i></p> <p>Adjectives</p> <p>Quote</p> <p>Term</p>
<p>Source 3: William S. Drewry—<i>The Southampton Insurrection</i></p> <p>Adjectives</p> <p>Quote</p> <p>Term</p>	<p>Source 6: Thomas R. Gray—<i>The Confessions of Nat Turner</i></p> <p>Adjectives</p> <p>Quote</p> <p>Term</p>

Lesh, Bruce.

History Events Chart

One of the staples of most social studies textbooks is the timeline. Historians look at timelines and see connections between and among the events displayed on the chart. However, students are more likely to see the events discretely, without thinking about how each might be connected to others. The history events chart helps students make connections between and among significant historical events.

A History Events Chart can be a great tool for reviewing a historical period at the end of a unit. It could also be used for students brainstorming before writing essays on how a series of events affected one another. Teachers might use this chart with significant events already specified; they could also have students select what they see as the most significant or interconnected events from a timeline. The selected events should be arranged chronologically.

The following example has numbered rows that provide space for students to record traditional information about each event: Who, What, Where, When, and Why. However, the most important information will appear in the rows labeled "Relation" where students must explain how the events are connected. The Conclusion at the end (an optional feature) engages students in reflective thinking about the implications of the evidence they have presented on the chart and the connections they have made.

History Events Chart

EVENT	WHO?	WHAT?	WHERE?	WHEN?	WHY?
1.					
Relation:					
2.					
Relation:					
3.					
Relation:					
4.					
Conclusion:					