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Skill 1.2: Interpreting, paraphrasing, and comparing various types of texts, including fiction, poetry, essays, and other nonfiction

In order to interpret the meaning of various types of texts, the reader has to bring prior knowledge to the reading. This prior knowledge includes such things as:

- ◆ Personal feelings, attitudes and knowledge about reading, in general, and the topic
- ◆ Language – grammar, idiomatic expressions, dialogue, and word and sentence construction
- ◆ Purpose – the purpose of the text, which can be explicit or implied and determining the author’s purpose
- ◆ Format – understanding the format of the text, which can be different according to the type of text
- ◆ Expectation of Content – The student brings an expectation to the text depending on what they think the content of the text will be about

It is important to understand what the various literary terms mean when referring to types of texts. Once readers are familiar with the various types of literature, they can name them and be able to tell how they are the same and how they are different.

- ◆ **Prose fiction** refers to literature about imagined people, places and events. Its purpose is to stimulate the readers’ imagination and communicate the author’s view of the world. Short stories are prose fiction being made up of the same elements, such as plot, characters, setting, point of view, conflict and theme. Novels are longer short stories with more characters, a more complex plot and often more than one point of view. A novel often has several sub-plots, which are related to the main plot, but which the reader does have to keep separated in order to understand the full story.
- ◆ **Prose non-fiction** is literature about real people, places and events. This category includes such types of texts as essays, diaries, articles, editorials, letters, speeches, biographies and autobiographies. There is a

Main verbs can be classified as being *transitive* or *intransitive*, *stative* or *dynamic*, *linking* and *regular* or *irregular*.

- A *transitive verb* is an action verb that requires one or more objects. In the sentence, “Aaron saw the car”, saw is a transitive verb with car as the object. Without the object, simply stating “Aaron saw” would not be a sentence because it doesn’t express a complete thought.
- An *intransitive verb* does not need an object to help complete its meaning. In the sentence “Babies sleep”, there is no need for any object after the verb to help complete the thought. Sleep is an intransitive verb.
- A *linking verb* conveys a state of being, such as “was, were, is, be” etc. It doesn’t express any action.
- A *dynamic verb* describes an activity, which can begin and finish, such as the verb “play”.
- *Stative verbs* usually refer to a condition that is static or unchanging. “Hate” and “believe” are examples of this type of verb.
- *Regular verbs* change tense by simple adding “ed” to change from the present to the past. For the verb “talk”, you simply add “ed” to change it to the past tense – talked.
- *Irregular verbs* require changing the complete spelling of the word or no change in the word at all to denote a change in tense. For the verb “teach”, in order to show past tense, the word changes to “taught”. “Sit” and “burst” are two examples of verbs where there is no change in the spelling of the word in any tense.

Phrases and Clauses

A phrase is a group of words that has either no subject or predicate. A clause is a group of words that has either a subject or a predicate. To tell the difference between the two, you can test the group of words to see if it can stand alone as a sentence.

There are four types of phrases:

- **Prepositional phrases.** These phrases can be used as adjectives or adverbs.
- **Infinitive phrases.** These phrases consist of an infinitive (the verb preceded by “to” as in “to dance”). They are commonly used as nouns, although they can be used as adverbs and adjectives.
- **Participial phrases.** These phrases begin with a participle (a verb with “ing” added to it) and are adjectives formed from verbs, such as screaming like a banshee.
- **Gerund phrases.** These phrases begin with a gerund, which is an –ing word derived from a verb, but used as a noun.

Types of Clauses

- **An independent clause** can stand alone. The conjunctions, and, but, or, nor, neither, yet, for, or, and so are used to join independent clauses in a sentence.
- **A dependent clause** looks like an independent clause, but it usually begins with a relative pronoun or a subordinating conjunction. The use of subordinating conjunctions depends on the nature of the sentence. The following offers examples of when to use subordinating conjunctions to join clauses.

Time: before, after, when, until, while, as soon as, as long as.

Place: where, wherever

Purpose: so that, in order that, so

Cause: because, since

Condition: if, unless, provided that, except

Contrast: although, though, even though, despite, in spite of

Skill 3.3: Knowledge of various tools and response strategies for assessing student writing, e.g., peer review, portfolios, holistic scoring, scoring rubrics, self-assessment, and conferencing

A middle school teacher needs to have a repertoire of various tools and strategies for assessing student writing. It is not in the students' best interests to grade all writing and use this to help determine the final grade. In writing, formative assessment is much better than summative assessment. Formative assessment is ongoing offering the students constructive criticism to help them improve and develop as proficient writers. Also, students do not grasp a concept as soon as you introduce it and will need lots of practice over a long period of time in order to internalize the concept. Some of the various tools for assessing student writing include:

Peer Review

Peer review refers to having students assess each other's writing before they pass it in to the teacher. In order for this type of assessment to be effective, students need instruction in offering constructive criticism for each other. They also need guidelines to follow when reviewing a classmate's writing. The specific guidelines teachers develop for their students to use will depend on the nature of the writing assignment. However, there are some general suggestions to use in creating these guidelines.

Overall Parameters of the Writing

- Does the writing address the aspects of the assignment? In other words, does the writing fulfill the nature of the assignment?
- Is the main idea of the writing clearly stated and maintained throughout?

Structure of the Writing

- Does the opening capture the reader's attention and hold it throughout?
- Are there transitional words and phrases used to connect ideas in the writing?
- Are the ideas divided into paragraphs?
- Do the paragraphs contain a beginning sentence, a middle sentence and an ending sentence with the topic sentence easy to distinguish from the rest?
- Are all the sentences and paragraphs clearly connected to the topic of the writing?
- Does the closing synthesize the main idea?

Holistic Scoring

The word “holistic” means looking at the whole instead of each separate part. It means looking at a piece of writing done by the student and evaluating it in its entirety to see if it meets a standard. This method of assessing writing is closely aligned with the use of **scoring rubrics**. These rubrics set the criteria for grading a student’s work according to specific categories. In assessing writing according to rubrics, the teacher has a chart with numbers from 1-5 or 1-4 for each facet of the evaluation. In writing, this means the teacher will evaluate for organization, mechanics, voice, sentence structure, word choice and clarity of ideas. This is known as the Six Traits of Writing. An example of a scoring rubric for student’s writing is:

Content

Content describes how effectively the writer establishes a purpose, selects and integrates ideas, includes details to support, develop and/or illustrate ideas and is aware of the reader.

Level 5

The writing is clear, highly interesting and has a strong focus. The details are relevant and support and enhance the central theme of the writing.

- ▶ There is a strong knowledge of the topic. All details and ideas have a purpose and are clearly related to the central idea.
- ▶ There are important details included of which the reader would not have prior knowledge or may overlook.
- ▶ The details enhance and support the main idea to give the writing a balance .
- ▶ The content is controlled and the ideas are developed in a way that is appealing to the reader.
- ▶ The ideas are shaped and connected to each other.

Level 4

The writing is clear, focused and interesting. There are relevant and purposeful details and they help clarify the ideas.

- ▶ The writer shows a fair knowledge of the subject with most of the details and ideas demonstrating purpose and relation to the central idea
- ▶ There are important details included of which the reader would not have prior knowledge or may overlook.