

Advanced Story Map Instruction

Description: Students are taught to use a basic 'Story Grammar' to map out, identify and analyze significant components of narrative text (e.g., fiction, biographies, historical accounts).

Reserve at least a full instructional session to introduce this comprehension strategy. (For effective-teaching tips, consult the guidelines presented in "*Introducing Academic Strategies to Students: A Direct-Instruction Approach*").



Materials:

- Overhead transparencies of short stories or other narrative texts, transparency markers
- Student copies of *Advanced Story Map Worksheet*, and practice narrative passages (optional) or reading/text books

Preparation:

- Prepare overheads of sample narrative passages.

Intervention Script:

1. Introduce the concept of a Story Grammar to students and preview main elements. (Refer to the *Advanced Story Map Worksheet* as a guide.) Tell students that a Story Grammar can help them to better understand a story's characters and events.
2. Set aside at least four successive instructional days to introduce the major components of the Story Grammar: (A) Identifying important characters and their personalities and motivation, (B) Identifying main problem and significant plot developments, (C) Noting characters' attempts to solve problems, and (D) Identifying a narrative's overarching theme.

Interactive Instruction: Make the instruction of each story component highly interactive, with clear teacher demonstration and use of examples. 'Think aloud' as you read through a story with the class to illustrate to students how you arrive at your conclusions. Elicit student discussion about the story. As you fill out sections of the *Advanced Story Map Worksheet* on the overhead, have students write responses on their own copies of the worksheet.

3. **Error Correction:** When students commit errors, direct them to the appropriate section of the narrative to reread it for the correct answer. Use guiding questions and modeling as necessary to help students to come up with an appropriate response.
4. After students have been introduced to the key Story Grammar elements, the group is now ready to use the Grammar to analyze a sample narrative passage. Have students

read independently through a story. Pause at pre-determined points to ask the group key questions (e.g., “Who is the main character? What is she like?”). After discussion, encourage students to write their answers on the *Advanced Story Map Worksheet* while you fill out the same worksheet as an overhead. Give specific praise to students for appropriately identifying Story Grammar elements.

5. When students are able to use the Story Grammar independently, have them read through selected stories and complete the *Advanced Story Map Worksheet* on their own. Check students' responses and conference individually with those students requiring additional guidance and support.

Tips:

Edit student creative writing using the Story Map Worksheet. Students can use the *Advanced Story Map Worksheet* to check the structure of stories that they have written. Peer editors can also use the worksheet to give feedback to students about the clarity of their story structure.

Consider the Story Grammar as a tool for analyzing historical narratives . Many historical accounts are structured as dramatic narratives—with central characters taking part in key events. Students can productively use elements of a Story Grammar to analyze these historical narratives.

Troubleshooting:

Students do not seem motivated to use the Story Grammar framework. To make a Story Grammar analysis more inviting, consider screening a video of a popular movie or television program. At key points, stop the tape, have students complete relevant sections of the *Advanced Story Map Worksheet*, and discuss the results. This exercise can be highly motivating and also makes clear to students that a Story Grammar is a universal tool that help us understand narratives presented in any medium.

Some students do not appear to be successful in using the Story Grammar independently. Pull aside individuals or small groups of students who might be having similar problems mastering the Story Grammar. As you read together through a story, have students “think aloud” the strategies that they follow to identify Story Grammar elements. If you discover that a student is using a faulty approach (e.g., rotely selecting the first character named in the story as the main character) you can gently correct the student by modeling and demonstrating more appropriate strategies.

References:

Gardill, M.C. & Jitendra, A.K. (1999). Advanced story map instruction: Effects on the reading comprehension of students with learning disabilities. *The Journal of Special Education, 28*, 2-17.

Advanced Story Map Worksheet (Adapted from Gardill & Jitendra, 1999)

Student: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

Story Name: _____

1. Who is the central character? _____

2. What is the main character like? (Describe his/her key qualities or personality traits).

3. Who is another important character in the story? _____

4. What is this other important character like? _____

5. Where and when does the story take place? _____

6. What is the major problem that the main character is faced with? _____

7. How does the main character attempt to solve this major problem? _____

8. What is the twist, surprise, or unexpected development that takes place in the story?

9. How is the problem solved or not solved?

10. What is the theme or lesson of the story?

