

Text Lookback

Description: Text lookback is a simple strategy that students can use to boost their recall of expository prose by looking back in the text for important information.

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 (100-200 word) passages from expository text and teacher-prepared text and lookback/think questions, transparency markers
- Student copies of expository text passages and text-lookback /think questions

Preparation:

- Create at least 3 lookback questions and one think question for each expository text passage selected

Intervention Script:

1. Introduce the text-lookback strategy by telling students that people cannot always remember everything that they read. If we read an article or book chapter, though, and are asked a ‘fact’ question about it that we cannot answer, we can always look back in the article to find the information that we need.
2. Describe for the class the difference between lookback and think questions. An example of an explanation that you might use is:

“When we are asked questions about an article, sometimes the answer can be found directly in the article and sometimes it cannot be found directly.”

“Lookback questions are those that tell us that the answer can be found right in the article. For example, if a question uses phrases such as in the article or in the author’s words, these phrases would be clues that the question is a lookup question and that we can find the answer in the article. “

“Think questions are those that ask you to give your own opinion, beliefs, or ideas. Our answers to these questions are based on our own ideas or thoughts about the topic. For example, if a question uses phrases such as in your opinion or what do you think, these phrases would be clues that the question is a think question and that the answer cannot be found in the article. “

3. Read aloud through the sample expository passage. Then read the series of 4 text-lookback/think questions to the class. As you read each question, highlight for students the word clues that indicate whether the question is a think or text-lookback question.
4. Tell students that they must reread carefully to find the answer to a text-lookback question. However, they can save time by first *skimming* the article to get to the general section where the answer to the question is probably located. To skim, the student should:
 - read the text-lookback question carefully and underline the section that tells the reader what to look for (e.g., “What does the article say are the five most endangered species of whales today?”).
 - look for titles, headings, or illustrations in the article that might tell the reader where the information that he or she is looking for is probably located
 - look at the beginning and end sentences in individual paragraphs to see if that paragraph might contain the desired information.
5. “Thinking aloud”, demonstrate for students how to skim the example article to locate efficiently the answer to each text-lookback question.
6. Present additional example articles with text-lookback questions and monitor student mastery of the technique. Assign students to use the strategy independently when, under your supervision, they can distinguish reliably between think and text-lookback questions and are able to find the answers to text-lookback questions in the text.

Tips:

Have Students Write Text-Lookback Questions for Assigned Reading. For homework, encourage students to compose several challenging text-lookback questions based on their assigned reading. Use these questions later for class review.

References:

Garner, R., Hare, V.C., Alexander, P., Haynes, J., & Vinograd, P. (1984). Inducing use of a text lookback strategy among unsuccessful readers. *American Educational Research Journal*, 21, 789-798.