Getting Ready to Read: Previewing a Text

MATHEMATICS

A well-designed textbook, website or other print resource has a variety of elements or features that are applied consistently to help the reader locate and use the material. Some texts have more of these features, and clearer cues, than others do. Previewing a course text can help students to identify the text features and use them efficiently.

Purpose

- Learn how to navigate subject-specific textbooks and resources.
- Examine the layout and features of a particular text, and how to use it.

Payoff

Students will:

- become familiar with different course texts and resources (print and electronic).
- use strategies for effectively previewing and locating information in different texts, using the table of contents, indices and/or navigation bar.

Tips and Resources

- Most informational texts use a variety of visual, graphic and text features to organize information, highlight important ideas, illustrate key concepts, and provide additional information. Features may include headings, subheadings, table of contents, index, glossary, preface, paragraphs separated by spacing, bulleted lists, sidebars, footnotes, illustrations, pictures, diagrams, charts, graphs, captions, italicized words or passages, boldface words or sections, colour, symbols, and icons.
- In a mathematics textbook, the lesson title tells the reader the learning focus of the lesson, subheadings are often used to identify the parts of the lesson that are for learning and the parts that are for practising. Accompanying diagrams, calculations, and tables are alternate forms of mathematics information, that are integral to the meaning of the whole mathematics text.
- For more ideas, see teacher resource, *Suggested Prompts for a Text-Features Search.*

Teaching Reading in Social Studies, Science, and Math, pp. 266-269
Beyond Monet, pp. 94, 105
Cross-Curricular Literacy: Strategies for Improving Secondary Students' Reading and Writing Skills, pp. 20-21
Cross-Curricular Literacy: Strategies for Improving Middle Level Students' Reading and Writing Skills, Grades 6-8, pp. 28-29, 42-43.
Reaching Higher video

Further Support

- Provide students with a copy of a course-related text that has all of the visual and graphic features (e.g., diagrams, charts, illustrations, captions, maps, headings, titles, legends) removed or blanked out. Ask students to scan the text and suggest what the blanked-out sections might be. Have students read the body of the text and summarize the information. Ask students to identify the parts of the text that they had difficulty reading, and suggest what additional features would help them to navigate and understand the text better. Alternatively, provide students with a copy of a course-related text showing the text features only, without the body of the text. Discuss what information they can gather from the features and what predictions they can make about the content. Note the connections among the features of a text, the words, and how they help readers understand the content.
- Encourage students to preview the features of a text before they read for content. Have partners share their previewing strategies.
- Have students create text search prompts for other course-related materials.

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What teachers do	What students do
Before • Select a subject-related textbook, Website, or print or electronic resource. • Create a text search handout. Use ten to twelve prompts to guide students to particular features of the text (e.g., "List the major topics in this textbook." "Locate information about integers." "Where would you find a review of each chapter?" "What symbol tells you that you need a graphing calculator?") See Teacher Resource, *Suggested Prompts for a Text-Features Search*. • Read the prompts out loud, if needed.	• Ask clarifying questions about the prompts and the task. • Read the task prompts and note the features of text that might be useful in completing the task.
During • Ask students to work in pairs to complete the search within a specific time frame. • Have partners share their findings with another pair.	• Read and respond to the prompts. Record findings. • Share and compare findings. Use cooperative group skills to complete the task.
After • Discuss which items were easy and which items were challenging to find. • Ask students which features of text were very helpful and not very helpful, and which features should be added to the text. • Ask students to use the text features to complete a relevant reading task.	• Identify the easy and challenging prompts. • Identify the features of text they used and explain how they helped or hindered their task. • Use the text features appropriately to complete the reading task. Make connections between different texts, noting the features that are common to many texts and subject areas, and those that are unique to a particular text or subject area.

Notes

Teacher Resource

Suggested Prompts for a Text-Features Search

1. Using the Table of Contents, find the chapter number for the topic _____.
   (e.g., ratio and rate, statistics and probability, exponents)

2. In the Index at the back of the text, find and list all the pages that deal with _____.
   (e.g., integers, line of best fit, surface area)

3. On page _____, what is the purpose of the coloured box?
   (e.g., highlights the key ideas of the section)

4. On page _____, what is the purpose of the icon beside question _____ ?
   (e.g., indicates that the use of a graphing calculator or spreadsheet is required)

5. Where would you go in the textbook to quickly find a definition for _____?

6. Where would you find the answer to question _____ on page _____?

7. In Chapter Two, which page reviews skills needed for the mathematics in this chapter?

8. Turn to page _____. How does the textbook review the concepts of the chapter?

9. Which page has the “Review Test” for Chapter Four?

10. Open the text to page _____. What does the word “cumulative” mean?
    (e.g., cumulative review).

11. On page _____, what is the purpose of the **boldface** type?

12. Name the topic for the Chapter Problem in Chapter Five.

13. Where would you go in the textbook to quickly find information on _____ ?
    (e.g., Geometer’s Sketchpad®, graphing calculator, spreadsheet)