

ABC Brainstorm

Rationale:

The key to reading comprehension is to access a student's background knowledge on the topic being studied. Wouldn't it be helpful to know what information the student brings to the classroom when a teacher prepares for a lesson? What does the student already know about the Civil War? South America? Or poetry? The idea behind this reading strategy is very simple, but it's an effective way to activate prior knowledge.

Steps:

Try to think of a word or phrase associated with the topic, matched to each letter of the alphabet. What has the student heard others say about it? Has he/she read other things that talk about the same topic? Has he/she seen television programs or movies about the ideas that the reading covers (or heard radio broadcasts)? Remember that in brainstorming, anything goes! For instance, the letter "A" for the topic of "topics taught in school" could be atlas, advertising, arithmetic story problem, almanac, alphabet book, art critique, article, alphabetized list, album cover, Accelerated Reader book, Accelerated Reader quiz, annual report, application form, audio cassette insert, award winning book, author's biography, alliterative passage, archival document, apple pie recipe, asparagus seed package, adolescent novel, action book, adventure story, architectural magazine, astronaut's story, awfully funny pun, etc.

How to Use the Strategy:

This strategy can be used as a pre-reading activity (as described above). It could be used during a reading strategy that teachers and students build together as they learn more of the related content. And, it could be used as a post-reading strategy after the students complete a unit of study. They can revisit the original ABC list and expand upon it. The choice is up to the instructor on when he/she best feels it would be appropriate.

Ideas for Assessment:

Once you have finished brainstorming, go through the results and begin evaluating the responses. Some initial qualities to look for when examining the responses include:

- Concepts/ideas relevant or key to the content/topic at hand.
- Looking for any answers that are repeated or similar.
- Grouping like concepts together.
- Eliminating responses that definitely do not fit.
- Discuss the responses with the class—focus on how responses show understanding of the content/topic at hand.

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A	B	C
D	E	F
G	H	I
J	K	L
M	N	O
P	Q	R
S	T	U
V	W	X
Y	Z	