

Evaluation

Definition: Students reflect upon and make judgments about the texts that they read.

Task Analysis:

1. Students must be able to process what they read.
2. Students must understand how to express opinions.
3. Students must be able to support judgments.
4. Students must see a value for reading.

When students evaluate a text they are formulating opinions about what they have read. This comprehension strategy enables people to further their understanding of a text through judgments supported by text evidence.

Ask students to reflect upon the purpose of reading. Create a list of the many reasons that we read. Next, have students discuss their feelings about reading. Ask them to think about such things as why they read or don't read, what they prefer to read, and what makes a text interesting and valuable to them. Allow students to express their thoughts and opinions and dialogue about their differences. Encourage students to offer support for their judgments through examples of texts. Teachers should also offer their own honest opinions, so as to enable students to see they too have feelings about reading. Make a graph of genre preferences.

Provide students with a short nonfiction passage.

“For thousands of years, fierce Mongol Warriors threatened China from the north. In 221 B.C. the Chinese began to build a thousand-mile-long wall to protect their farms and cities from the Mongols. Over the centuries, the wall crumbled. Other walls were built but the raids still went on.

“In A. D. 1449, the Mongol army grew much stronger. More and more Chinese soldiers were killed. After one devastating defeat, a young Chinese emperor, Zhu Qizhen, was kidnapped by a Mongol prince. When news of the kidnapping reached the Chinese government, the people were seized by fear. Too weak to fight back, they decided to build a stronger wall. The building of the Great Wall, the last long wall, went on for the next two centuries” (*Houghton Mifflin, Triumphs, “The Great Wall,” 2003, p.392*).

Using shared reading, read the text.

Model for students how to evaluate using the “think aloud” approach:

“Nonfiction is not usually something that I find to be entertaining. I prefer to read fiction, mostly mysteries, but this passage was great. I love reading about different countries and cultures. I find it so interesting to learn how people do things differently. I particularly like reading about ancient civilizations, because I love to learn about the past and see how things changed over time. I have always been fascinated by the Great Wall of China, so this passage was of particular interest to me. I liked the way the author made me feel the emotions of the

Chinese through her words. I could sense the fear of the Mongols that motivated the Chinese to build the wall. The most interesting part of the passage was reading about the kidnapping because I learned that this was the turning point for the Chinese that caused them to put forth the effort to build the Great Wall that we know today. I had no idea that there were other walls before this one that did not last. Nor did I know that it took about 200 years to build.”

Invite students to share, in table groups or partners, their evaluations of the text. Provide them with prompts to facilitate discussion and metacognition. For example:

- I liked (disliked) this passage because...
- My favorite (least favorite) part of the passage was.....because.....
- I liked (disliked) the way the author.....
- If I had written this passage I would have....because...
- If I could add one thing to this passage I would add.....because...
- I thought this passage was better than (another text) because...
- I wish the author had (hadn't).....because...
- The most interesting part of this passage was....because...

Once students have had enough time to discuss in partners or groups, have them share their evaluation discussions with the whole group. Compare responses.

Following this, have students read a fictional text excerpt and complete the same procedure. Add the following prompts for discussion to enable students to make comparisons between the two texts:

- I like this text more (less) than the nonfiction text because...I think this author did ... better (worse) than the other because...
- I wish the author of the fiction (nonfiction) text had ...like the other author because....
- I prefer reading fiction (nonfiction) texts because...for example in

When students have had sufficient practice, teachers can then offer them a variety of methods to evaluate texts. Such examples might include survey questions, graphs, and editorials. Students might enjoy creating report cards for texts such as the one below.

Subject	Grade	Comments
<p>Illustrations</p>	<p>B</p>	<p>This section had some great illustrations and diagrams. I particularly liked the diagram of the crayfish and the table that compared the largest arthropod groups. However, I think that it would have been nice to see diagrams of the most common arthropods side</p>

		by side to visually see the comparisons.
Interest Level	A	I found this section to be quite fascinating. I was shocked to find that lobsters, ants, and spiders are all in the same phylum. It was neat to learn about the different kinds of arachnids. I never knew that a tick was an arachnid or that a pill bug was a crustacean!
Comprehensibility	B+	While this section was fairly easy to understand, I got confused sometimes keeping track of all the different arthropods and their characteristics. The section on the exoskeleton was a little more complicated since it discussed chitin and molting which were two concepts with which I was unfamiliar.
Information	A	I thought that this section had a lot of good information. It was really cool learning about how some spiders like the tarantula "run down" their prey and how their venom turns the prey's tissue into mush that they later suck up through their hollow fangs.
Overall	A-	I really enjoyed this chapter. I learned some things that I never knew such as the fact that crustaceans undergo metamorphosis. This is a section that I will remember for a long time. I have already started

		sharing information from it with my family and friends.
--	--	---

Science Explorer, Focus on Life Science, "Arthropods," 2001, pg. 404-411.

Once students become adept at evaluating a variety of texts as a whole, they can begin to make evaluations about significant characters, people, events, ideas, or decisions within a text. At the conclusion of a piece, teachers present students with a question that requires them to make an evaluation on a given topic. Just as with evaluating texts, teachers can give students various ways to illustrate their evaluation. Such examples might include the formerly presented ideas, debates, poems, letters, or graphic organizers. Regardless of the method of delivery, students should always be required to support their evaluation with evidence from the text. The following are a few such examples of evaluation.

Example 1:

Question:

Do you agree with the theory of the asteroid impact causing the mass extinction of the Cretaceous period?

Assignment:

Write a poem that depicts your evaluation of this theory.

Response:

Roses are red
Violets are blue
Asteroid theory's quite great
So think this you too.

It makes perfect sense
For without sun things can't live
Dust clouds blocked the sunlight
No warmth could sun give

Plants died on earth,
Plant eaters too
Without any food
There wasn't much they could do.

Similar things have happened
Like when volcano ash blocked the sun

The year without a summer
Snow when August had just begun!

I learned in Science
That all life on Earth relies
On energy from the sun
Thus asteroid theory is wise!

(*Science Explorer, Focus on Life Science*, "A Trip Through Geologic Time," 2001 pg. 184-196).

Example 2:

Question:

Was Fausto right in his decision to give the twenty dollar reward to his church?

Assignment:

Create a conversation with Fausto that reflects your evaluation of his decision.

Response:

Maxine: Hey Fausto! What's going on?

Fausto: Well, I just got back from giving my church a twenty dollar donation.

Maxine: Why did you give them twenty dollars?

Fausto: You see Maxine...I got the twenty dollars because I lied about where I found a lost dog. I told the people that I found the dog near the freeway. They were so grateful that their dog had been saved from certain death, that they gave me twenty dollars. I just felt bad, like I didn't deserve the money.

Maxine: Did you need the money for something important?

Fausto: Sort of. I really want a new guitar and my family can't afford to buy me one.

Maxine: So why didn't you keep the money then?

Fausto: I told you. I felt really bad. It seemed like I didn't deserve to have it because I lied.

Maxine: That's silly! They would never even know. Is there any way that you could get the money back? Where did you leave it?

Fausto: I put it in the collection plate and so they have it counted already. Besides, it still feels wrong.

Maxine: Well, if it was me and someone gave me twenty dollars, I would keep it. You found their dog. It's not like you stole their dog and then asked for money. You didn't ask for the reward. They gave it to you.