

## Making Connections

Definition: students identify and recall information and experiences that is pertinent to what they are currently reading in three ways:

1. Text to Self: students make personal connections regarding events in text that are similar to real life experience; students see similarities between themselves and characters/people in the text.
2. Text to Text
3. Text to World (Keene, Zimmermann, 1997).

Task Analysis: the reader needs to be able to recall prior knowledge on a given topic.

### Skills Required to Make Text to Self Connections

Fiction	Non Fiction
<p>Events/Plot</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify events in the story</li> <li>2. Recall a parallel or similar event in student's life</li> <li>3. Orally or in writing explain the connection: the character had a nightmare and didn't want to go back to bed; I had a nightmare and did not want to go to sleep.</li> <li>4. Make a generalization/predict an outcome: I bet the character was too scared to go back to sleep.</li> </ol> <p>Characters</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify character's traits, thoughts and or feelings</li> <li>2. Narrate an event in which the student had similar thoughts or feelings or exhibited similar traits</li> <li>3. Show empathy for character</li> </ol> <p>Identify character traits, thoughts or feelings (Refer to inference page)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What the character says</li> <li>• What the character does</li> <li>• What other characters say about the character</li> <li>• What the author says about the character</li> </ul>	<p>Events</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify events in the text</li> <li>2. Recall a parallel or similar event in student's life</li> <li>3. Orally or in writing explain the connection</li> </ol> <p>Notable Current and Historical Figures</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify figure's traits, thoughts and or feelings</li> <li>2. Narrate an event in which the student had similar thoughts or feelings or exhibited similar traits: Christopher Columbus was adventurous when he sailed around the world; I was adventurous when I heard a noise in my backyard and decided to see what had caused it.</li> <li>3. Show empathy for the figure: It was scary, but I did it. I bet Christopher was a bit scared too.</li> </ol> <p>Identify figure's traits, thoughts or feelings (Refer to inference page)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What the figure says/said</li> <li>• What the figure does/did</li> <li>• What other figures say/said about him/her</li> <li>• What the author says about the figure</li> </ul>

## Making Connections

Definition: students relate unfamiliar text to their prior world knowledge and/or personal experience:

1. Text to Self
2. Text to Text: students make connections regarding similar events or between characters/people in various texts.
3. Text to World (Keerie, Zimmermann, 1997).

Task Analysis: the reader needs to be able to recall prior knowledge on a given topic.

### Skills Required to Make Text to Text Connections

Fiction	Non Fiction
<p>Events/Plot</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify events in a story</li> <li>2. Recall a parallel or similar event in another story</li> <li>3. Orally or in writing explain the connection</li> <li>4. Make a generalization, cause and effect statement, or state theme</li> </ol> <p>Characters</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify character's traits, thoughts and/or feelings</li> <li>2. Narrate an event in which a character in a different story displays similar traits, thoughts, and feelings</li> <li>3. Make a generalization, cause and effect statement, or state theme</li> </ol> <p>"He turned to me, and 'Cap,' says he, 'I'll cash in this trip I guess; And if I do, I'm asking that you won't refuse my last request.'" (<i>Holt, Second Course "The Cremation of Sam McGee,"</i> 2003, pg 418).</p> <p>When Sam asked Cap to honor his last request it is a lot like when in the <i>The Dying Cowboy</i>, the dying cowboy asked someone to give him a proper burial. In both poems the people feel obligated to honor these requests because the person is dying. People who are dying often have last requests, like when they make out a will. Most times their last requests are honored.</p>	<p>Events</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify an event in one text</li> <li>2. Recall a parallel or similar event in another text</li> <li>3. Orally or in writing explain the connection</li> <li>4. Make a generalization; state an opinion</li> </ol> <p>The Egyptian people built a civilization on the Nile and the Chinese along the Yangtze River. Throughout history rivers have provided civilizations with means for survival and transportation.</p> <p>Notable Current and Historical Figures</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify figures' traits, thoughts and or feelings</li> <li>2. Narrate an event in which a figure in a different text displayed similar traits, thoughts, and feelings</li> <li>3. Make a generalization</li> </ol>

## Making Connections

Definition: students relate unfamiliar text to their prior world knowledge and/or personal experience:

1. Text to Self
2. Text to Text
3. Text to World: students make connections regarding a world event and events in texts or discuss similarities between people and characters. (Keene, Zimmermann, 1997).

Task Analysis: the reader needs to be able to recall prior knowledge on a given topic.

### Skills Required to Make Text to World Connections

Fiction	Non Fiction
<p>Events/Plot</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify events in a story</li> <li>2. Recall a parallel or similar event that occurred in the world</li> <li>3. Orally or in writing explain the connection</li> <li>4. Make a generalization</li> </ol> <p>A Dutch captain, thinking to protect his cargo, brought aboard his ship not cats but two terriers, dogs trained in the hunting, fighting, and killing of vicious rats" (<i>Holt, Literature &amp; Language Arts, First Course</i> "Three Skeleton Key," 2003, pg.53).</p> <p>This makes me think about how the other day I was walking past a mechanic's garage and they had dogs behind the fence that barked at us when we went by. I have also seen many "Beware of Dog" signs on people's homes. Lots of people use dogs to protect their belongings.</p> <p>Characters</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify character's traits, thoughts and/or feelings</li> <li>2. Narrate an event in which a character displayed similar traits, thoughts, or feelings as that of a person</li> <li>3. Make a generalization</li> </ol>	<p>Events</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify an event in one text</li> <li>2. Recall a parallel or similar event in the world</li> <li>3. Orally or in writing explain the connection</li> <li>4. Make a generalization</li> </ol> <p>Notable Current and Historical Figures</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify figure's traits, thoughts and feelings</li> <li>2. Narrate an event in which a figure in the contemporary world displayed similar traits, thoughts, and feelings as to a figure in a text.</li> <li>3. Make a generalization</li> </ol> <p>The trail blazers were courageous because they risked their lives in order to explore new frontiers. Our astronauts are equally courageous as they explore our solar system. There are always a group of people who will take risks in order to enhance our lives.</p>

## Retelling Fiction

**Definition:** recounting the same story in the student's own words. The student pulls together the various parts of the story, rebuilding and integrating while incorporating his own connections, inferences, questions, and evaluations.

### Task Analysis:

1. Students have to understand how to determine importance in text.
2. Students have to understand story structures.
3. Students have to be able to incorporate previously taught comprehension strategies into their retellings.

Orally or in writing, provide students with examples of a summary and a retelling. Have them discuss in groups how they compare and contrast. Record responses on a large scale Venn diagram or a double bubble thinking map. Based on the elements that they generated on the chart, ask students to define summary and retelling. If needed, clarify for students the significant differences between the two strategies. Say, "When we summarize a story, we only tell its main points whereas when we retell a story we tell the story as we remember it as though the person we are telling it to has never heard the story before." Further explain to students that proficient retellings incorporate many of the other comprehension strategies to illustrate a deeper understanding of the text. Refer back to samples often to offer students concrete examples of how retellings and summaries differ.

Once students exhibit a firm understanding of retellings, teachers can begin by modeling the simplest form of retelling. After reading aloud a well-known predictable fiction text such as *The Golden Touch* (Interactive Reader pg. 298), teachers should demonstrate for students how to use an organizer to record key information that should be included in the retelling (see sample that follows).

Next, teachers should model for students how to retell the story using the organizer as a guide, explaining how the information on the organizer will help them to remember what they need to include in the retelling (see sample that follows).

After the retelling, students should have an opportunity to discuss it with a partner. It is a good idea to have them focus their discussion with questions such as those listed below. Teachers can record these questions on the board so that students are able to refer to them during the discussion or provide pairs with one specific question to discuss. For primary students, teachers can move through these questions as a group, with students first discussing the question with a partner.

Did the retelling...

- include an introduction?
- talk about the main character?
- talk about other characters?
- tell when the story happened?
- tell where the story happened?

- tell about the problem or main goal of the characters?
- include important plot events?
- tell how the problem was solved?
- have an ending?
- have proper sequence?

Students should then share out their observations and provide evidence that supports their assertions. For example, students might say that the teacher's retelling had proper sequence because it had a beginning, middle, and end, and all the events were retold in the correct order.

Following this exercise, teachers might model for students another retelling with the same story that does not have a majority of the above criteria. Such a retelling could look like the following:

"There was a king named Midas who loved gold above all else. One day he is granted the wish of everything he touches turning to gold. He learns he can undo his gift by washing in a river. He is overjoyed until he turns his daughter into gold. He washes himself and saves his daughter."

Following the preceding procedure, have students evaluate the retelling. Students should also discuss similarities and differences between the two retellings.

Once students have had sufficient time to identify the characteristics of an adequate simple retelling, give them the opportunity to practice their own story retellings. Following are a few guidelines to keep in mind when students are learning how to retell:

- Story selection is critical. Texts should be brief and have simple plots. Pattern books, predictable texts and well-known stories are excellent for the beginning stages of retelling. A few examples of texts that work well for teaching retelling are: *The Landlady*, *The No-Guitar Blues*, *Broken Chain*, and *Duncan, Junior*.
- Once students have had sufficient practice retelling simple texts, teachers should then move to fictional texts from the core. If such texts are too lengthy or complex, teachers should limit the amount of text that will be used for the retelling, selecting a meaningful excerpt with which students will find success. Retellings can be done with entire stories, chapters, pages, or paragraphs.
- It is important to reread a text several times before having students retell the story. Hearing the story multiple times enables students to better recall the essential elements of the story for the retelling.
- Students can retell orally or in writing and retelling can be used to foster listening comprehension as well as reading comprehension. Giving students opportunities to engage in both types of retellings will benefit students greatly.

When students have become proficient in simple retellings, they are ready to progress to more complex retellings that incorporate inferences, connections, questions, and evaluations.

Begin by revisiting the initial retelling of *The Golden Touch*. Provide students with a check list of the reading comprehension strategies. Have them use the checklist to monitor the

incorporation of these in the retelling. After rereading the initial retelling, ask students to share any reading comprehension strategies that they noticed. Since students should not have noticed any in the retelling, explain that while the retelling was sufficient as an accurate recounting of the text, it did not reflect a deep understanding of the text. Model for students a second retelling of *The Golden Touch*.

Begin by revisiting the organizer completed for the previous retelling. Using the "think aloud" approach, model for students how to add other reading comprehension strategies to the information. Complete a new organizer with the information (see sample that follows).

The teacher might say, "I remember that the settings included some woods near the King's palace. His daughter Marigold always invited him out there but he never went. I wonder if she felt lonely because her father wouldn't spend time with her. In the movies the children of rich people often act out because their parents are too busy making money to pay attention to them. I bet Marigold was sad and lonely to be in the woods alone. I wonder what Marigold might have done if her father had not turned her into gold first."

Once the teacher has moved through each of the items on the organizer she will then model the new retelling that incorporates other meaning-making strategies. As the teacher retells the story, students will once again use the organizer to take note of the comprehension strategies they hear utilized.

Have students reflect upon the second retelling. Ask them to compare and contrast it from the first retelling on *The Golden Touch*. Have students discuss the comprehension strategies that they noted in the retelling (see sample that follows).

When students have a firm understanding of the difference between the two retellings, begin to have them practice incorporating comprehension strategies into their retellings. Teachers should begin by having students include one specific strategy into their retellings and layer in other comprehension strategies as the students' proficiency increases.

### Simple Retelling of *The Golden Touch*

“Once upon a time there was a rich king named Midas. He loved two things: riches and his daughter Marigold. Marigold was a simple girl unlike her father. She wanted to wear a white dress with only a band of ribbon in her hair. Marigold also loved the outdoors and often played in the woods near their palace. She usually invited Midas to accompany her but he always chose to count his gold instead. One day a stranger named Bacchus appeared. Bacchus was a god and because Midas had helped Bacchus’ friend in return Bacchus offered one wish for King Midas before he rushed from the dismal room filled with glitter and gold. Because of his greed, Midas wished that everything he touched would turn to gold. At first, it was a great gift and he turned his clothes, fork, and chair to gold. But then he tried to eat and was unable to because he turned his food to gold. Marigold came over to comfort him and upon hugging him she too was turned to gold. Midas was devastated. He cried out to Bacchus for help. He begged for Bacchus to take away his golden touch. Bacchus returned and instructed Midas to wash in the river. Midas ran as fast as his feet could take him to the river, turning everything in his wake to gold. Upon washing in the river, the entire river turned to gold and remained that way forever. After washing King Midas returned to Marigold and held her in his arms. Before long his touch returned her to normal. The two ate dinner together. Marigold then asked her father to go to the woods to see the new white anemones in bloom. Together they walked hand in hand through the woods and Midas learned to love nature more than gold. The moral of the story is to be careful what you wish for, you might just get it!”

## Retelling incorporating various reading comprehension strategies.

"Once upon a time there was a rich king named Midas. He loved two things: riches and his daughter Marigold. It seems to me that most kings are like this. Many kings are obsessed with wealth and care little about the people that live in their kingdoms. The king's daughter, Marigold, was a simple girl unlike her father. She wanted to wear a white dress with only a band of ribbon in her hair. This is not unlike most children, who are different than their parents, particularly teenagers. Marigold also loved the outdoors and often played in the woods near their palace. She usually invited Midas to accompany her but he always chose to count his gold instead. This reminds me of how in the nursery rhyme, *Sing a Song of Sixpence* "the king was in his counting house counting out his money" which again reinforces my belief that most kings are greedy and selfish. It must be tough to be the daughter of a king like Midas. She is probably lonely and sad. In the movies, kids of rich parents like Midas who are ignored, often act out. I am surprised that Marigold never rebelled against her father.

One day a stranger named Bacchus appeared. Bacchus was a god and because Midas had helped Bacchus' friend, Bacchus offered one wish for King Midas before he rushed out the dismal room filled with glitter and gold. This should have been a big clue to Midas that gold could not bring about total happiness. To me Bacchus fleeing from the room foreshadowed the grim consequences of Midas' actions. Yet because of his greed, Midas still wished that everything he touched would turn to gold.

At first, it was a great gift and he turned his clothes, fork, and chair to gold which probably made him ecstatic since he would be even richer. But then he tried to eat and was unable to because he turned his food to gold. I wonder if there was any way that he could actually eat, maybe through a straw. Marigold came over to comfort her father and upon hugging him she too was turned to gold. Midas was devastated. He cried out to Bacchus for help. He begged for Bacchus to take away his golden touch. Bacchus returned and instructed Midas to wash in the river. Although I am surprised that he didn't say, "I told you so!"

Midas ran as fast as his feet could take him to the river, turning everything in his wake to gold. Upon washing in the river, the entire river turned to gold and remained that way forever. I bet Bacchus did that so Midas would never forget what had happened. After washing, King Midas returned to Marigold and held her in his arms. Before long his touch returned her to normal. The two ate dinner together. Marigold then asked her father to go to the woods to see the new white anemones in bloom. Together they walked hand in hand through the woods and Midas learned to love nature more than gold. The moral of the story is to be careful what you wish for, you might just get it!"



Setting:

Time: Ancient times

Place: Castle, woods, river

My thoughts: \_\_\_\_\_

Major Characters: Protagonist: King Midas

Important Character Traits: \_\_\_\_\_

Evidence: \_\_\_\_\_

My thoughts: \_\_\_\_\_

Major Characters: Antagonist:

Important Character Traits: \_\_\_\_\_

Evidence: \_\_\_\_\_

My thoughts: \_\_\_\_\_

Minor Characters: Bacchus, Marigold

Important Character Traits: \_\_\_\_\_

Evidence: \_\_\_\_\_

My thoughts: \_\_\_\_\_

Problem: Midas wanted more gold.

Type of Conflict: Man vs. Himself

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My thoughts: \_\_\_\_\_

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Major Events:

Pivotal Plot Points: Bacchius comes to grant him a wish. Midas wishes that everything he touches will turn to gold. Everything does turn to gold. He turns his daughter gold. Cries out to Bacchius for help. Bacchius tells him how to reverse it. He turns his daughter back.

My thoughts: \_\_\_\_\_

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Solution:

Midas goes with his daughter into the woods exhibiting that he has learned that time is more important than money.

My thoughts: \_\_\_\_\_

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Theme:

There is nothing more important than your family.

## Retelling Non-fiction

**Definition:** recounting a text in the student's own words. The student pulls together the various parts of the text, rebuilding and integrating main ideas and utilizing key vocabulary, while incorporating his own connections, inferences, questions, and evaluations.

### Task Analysis:

1. Students have to understand how to determine importance in text.
2. Students have to understand text structures.
3. Students must be able to synthesize information.
4. Students have to be able to incorporate previously taught comprehension strategies into their retellings.

When students have sufficient mastery of fictional retellings they are ready to progress to non-fiction retellings. Autobiographical and biographical retellings usually follow the same structure as the fictional retellings. It is the other types of nonfiction that require students to have an understanding of different organizational text structures.

There are five basic text structures:

- **“Cause and effect**—the author lists one or more causes and the resulting effect or effects.
- **Comparison**—the author explains how two or more things are alike and or how they are different.
- **Problem/solution**—the author states a problem and lists one or more solutions for the problem.
- **Sequence**—the author lists items or events in numerical or chronological order.
- **Descriptive**—the author describes a topic by listing characteristics, features, and examples.”

(Tompkins, 2003, pg. 299)

While teachers can follow the previous procedure outlined for teaching students how to retell fiction texts, the criteria for nonfiction texts differs. Teachers should review and discuss the following elements prior to modeling the simple non-fiction retelling.

Did the retelling...

- Organize information in an appropriate structure?
- Use key vocabulary appropriately?
- Identify a “big idea” learned from the text?
- Identify all the important concepts/facts/ideas from the text?
- Use original wording?
- Give essential details to support the main idea?

(LBUSD 1998)

Retellings for non-fiction texts should begin with a limited amount of text to ensure that students are able to process the information. As with fiction retellings, it is helpful if

students have had an opportunity to hear or read a text more than once before retelling it. Nonfiction retellings are an excellent means of promoting comprehension and recall of nonfiction texts which tend to be more difficult for students to understand. As students develop proficiency with simple nonfiction retellings, they will be ready to move to those retellings that incorporate other meaning-making strategies. Please see sample that follows for examples of the different types of nonfiction retellings.

### Example of Retelling Non-fiction

"All family members worked together to survive during the early years of the colony. Women generally cooked, spun, and wove wool, and sewed clothing. They also made soap and butter, carried water, dried fruit, and cared for livestock. Men spent most of their time repairing tools and working in the fields. They also chopped wood and built shelters" (*Holt, United States History, "The New England Colonies,"* 2006, pg. 44).

#### *Simple Retelling:*

In the early years of the colony, everyone worked together to survive. The women had chores that helped with food like cooking, making butter, drying fruit, taking care of farm animals, and carrying water. They also made things for the home like clothing, spinning and weaving wool, and making soap. The men did outside work like repairing tools, working in the fields, chopping wood, and making shelter.

#### *Complex Retelling:*

When the colony first began everyone had to work together to subsist. This reminds me of when I read about bees. A bee colony is a lot like the English colony. All the bees have an important role for survival just like the people in the Plymouth colony. I noticed that the women had duties that had to do with running the home like making butter, cooking, drying fruit, carrying water, and taking care of farm animals and the men had outside work like making shelter, chopping wood, working in the fields, and repairing tools. This makes me think that gender roles have not changed all that much over the years. While women do go out into the workplace, they still hold a lion's share of the household duties just as the women of the colony did way back then. Perhaps the men's work was more physically demanding. Maybe division of labor was based on strength. Jobs like making clothes, spinning and weaving wool, and making soap don't seem to need as much brawn to do.

## Synthesizing

**Definition:** a new thinking that a reader develops after reading a text. Synthesis requires incorporating the pieces of the whole to formulate an original insight or interpretation. It reflects the overall meaning, important concepts, and themes in the text; it extends the literal meaning of a text to the inferential level (LBUSD, 2000).

**Task Analysis:** synthesizing lies on a continuum of evolving thinking. It runs the gamut from taking stock of meaning while reading to achieving new insight. This strategy involves teaching the reader to stop every so often and think about what s/he has read. Each piece of additional information enhances the reader's understanding and allows him/her to better construct meaning (Harvey, Goudvis, 2000).

Students need to understand that in order to synthesize, they must take in all of the pieces and create a new whole. In *Strategies that Work*, Harvey and Goudvis explain how a kindergarten teacher used baking a cake to convey the idea of synthesis. He gathered all of the materials, put them in a bowl, baked them, and asked students what they had made. When the students responded, "a cake," the teacher transitioned into an explanation of synthesis, "When you read and listen to stories, there are a lot of different parts and characters, but in the end all of those parts come together to make up the whole story, just like this cake" (Harvey and Goudvis, 2000. pg 145).

If students are applying the reading comprehension strategies they are synthesizing in a variety of ways. Below are additional ideas that extend the learning and allow for more creative types of synthesis.

Useful Verbs	Sample Question Stems	Potential Activities and Products
create invent compose predict plan construct design imagine propose devise formulate	Can you design a ... to...? Why not compose a song about...? Can you see a possible solution to...? If you had access to all resources how would you deal with...? Why don't you devise your own way to deal with...? What would happen if...? How many ways can you...? Can you create new and unusual uses for...? Can you write a new recipe for a tasty dish? Can you develop a proposal which would...?	Invent a machine to do a specific task. Design a building to house your study. Create a new product. Give it a name and plan a marketing campaign. Write about your feelings in relation to... Write a TV show, play, puppet show, role play, song or pantomime about...? Design a record, book, or magazine cover for...? Make up a new language code and write material using it. Sell an idea. Devise a way to... Compose a rhythm or put new words to a known melody.

(Dalton, J. & Smith, D. 1986, pp 36-7).

For example:

In *Bridge to Terabithia* the main character, Leslie, dies. For a synthesis activity students could write epitaphs for her tombstone that reflect the accomplishments of her life.

After reading *The Giver*, students could plan their own utopia or write a new final chapter.

After reading "Fossils" from *Science Explorer, Focus on Life Science*, students could make fossils and then do a scientific write-up on it that tells: what kind of fossil it is, what the fossil tells about the area where it was found, and what it tells about the type of living thing that made it.

After reading "The New England Colonies" from *Holt, U. S. History*, students could create a mock interview dialog with Plymouth Rock discussing what life was like for the Pilgrims when they arrived.

After reading *To Kill a Mockingbird*, students could create newspapers incorporating events and facts from the story.

After reading the 6<sup>th</sup> grade unit on Early Humans, students could create an early human survival guide.

In *The Landlady* the bed and breakfast owner poisons and stuffs her guests. For a synthesis activity, students could put the landlady on trial for her crimes.

"Synthesis is about organizing the different pieces to create a mosaic, a meaning, a beauty, greater than the sum of each shiny piece. It is a complex process in which children, even the youngest, engage very naturally every day" (Keene, Zimmermann, 1997, pg. 169).

