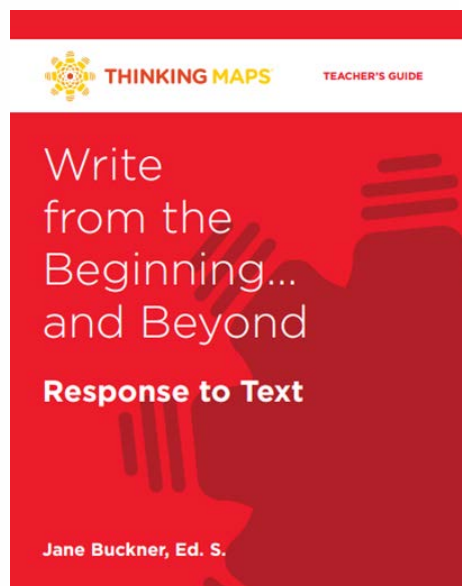


# *Write from the Beginning... and Beyond*

## *Response to Text*

### Preview Packet



### Spiral-bound Training Manual



## RESPONSE TO TEXT

### OVERVIEW

#### § RESPONDING TO TEXT: WHAT IS INVOLVED AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

While responding to literary and informational text is not “officially” included in the types of writing genres, it is most closely aligned with the expository/explanatory genre since the writer explains his thinking about a particular piece of discourse. When the student states an opinion about the text and supports the opinion with textual evidence, he uses the skills of argumentative writing to prove that his opinion/point is a valid one.

Unlike the other types of writing addressed in *Write from the Beginning . . . and Beyond*, responding to literary and informational text requires students to

- comprehend a piece of discourse from the literal to the inferential level, including visual representations (e.g., political cartoons);
- understand what is actually written in the text as well as information that is included in illustrations and other visual images, in addition to what is implied “between the lines;”
- grasp how the information is organized, as well as the effectiveness/impact of the construction on the readers’ understanding; and
- examine the text with an evaluative and critical eye.

Instruction in how to respond to a piece of text, either literary or informational, enables students to understand how different types of discourse are “put together” and provides a scaffold for them in learning how to construct more effective compositions themselves.

Since responding to text relies first on comprehension of the information in the text, educators must be aware of exactly what is involved in this skill of comprehension. Following are some definitions of what it means to “comprehend:”

- “It is the intentional thinking during which meaning is constructed through interactions between text and reader” (Durkin, 1993).
- “It is the construction of the meaning of a written text through a reciprocal interchange of ideas between the reader and the message in a particular text” (Harris & Hodges, 1995).
- “Reading comprehension is thinking guided by print” (Perfetti, 1995).
- “The process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. It consists of three elements: the reader, the text, and the activity or purpose for reading” (Rand Reading Study Group, 2002).

Essentially, reading comprehension involves active mental effort to construct meaning. It is a deliberate thinking process used by readers as they seek to understand what they read.

Good readers use prior knowledge, information in the text, and thinking/reasoning processes to construct new knowledge and understanding. While prior knowledge is either present or it can be provided by the teacher, and the information is readily available through the text, the real challenge for teachers is helping students to develop their thinking and reasoning processes as they tackle any piece of discourse.

This is where Thinking Maps can be beneficial for both the teacher and the students. The maps assist students in putting information in a form that is different from the text and often require students to synthesize and draw conclusions about what they read. Essentially, the use of Thinking Maps can empower students with the ability to paraphrase what they have read. More importantly, Thinking Maps provide a platform for interaction with both the text and other students, thereby increasing the opportunities for understanding.

Most teachers answer the question “Why did you decide to be a teacher?” with a response related to their desire to help students learn. Since the main skill for learning is the ability to read and understand text, it is important for the teacher to help her students get the most out of what they read, including both literary and informational text. When students are taught to respond to text they are demonstrating their understanding to the teacher, which, in turn, allows her to monitor and adjust her instruction.

In order to respond well, one must first comprehend the message that is conveyed...  
in the lines,  
between the lines, and  
through visual representations.

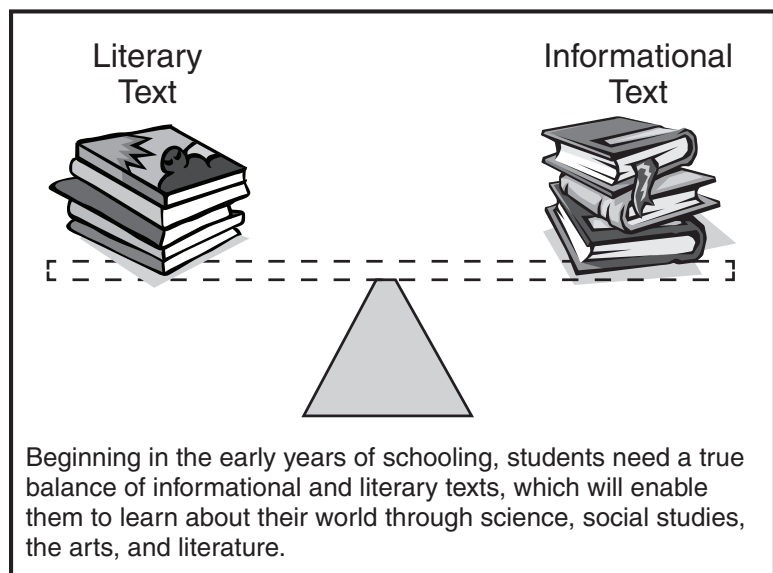


## § WHICH TYPE OF TEXT SHOULD RECEIVE THE GREATEST FOCUS?

Educators agree that there is much to teach and a limited time for instruction. This fact requires teachers to make informed decisions regarding how they use their valuable instruction time in the classroom. They must ask themselves: *Which content areas should receive the greatest focus? How much time should be allotted for each subject? How can I provide balanced instruction for my students? How can I fit this into a schedule that is already packed full?*

In the early grades fictional literary text is the genre that is most prevalent in the classroom, with good reason. Children love this type of text and they often become entranced with anticipation as the teacher reads aloud, adjusting her voice to add to the enjoyment. Story and story structure are familiar to these students as these are what they have experienced in their preschool years. Some teachers in the early grades have not yet discovered the importance and benefit of using informational text with students as a way to help their world grow larger and to spark their curiosity and desire to know more.

Beginning in the early years of schooling, students need a true balance of informational and literary texts. It is in these classrooms that students learn about their world through science, social studies, the arts, and literature. Basic foundational knowledge developed at this level will be essential as students advance through the grades. At least 50% of what students read, hear, and view in the early grades should be informational.



On the other hand, teachers in fourth grade and beyond realize all too well that content-area teaching with informational text represents the majority of their curriculum and that the ability to read and understand this type of text is essential to student success in school. Teachers in these grade levels grasp the necessity of providing basic instruction in comprehending informational texts for their students and, as a result, they can be tempted to minimize reading and responding to literary texts given the limited amount of instruction time provided in the school day.

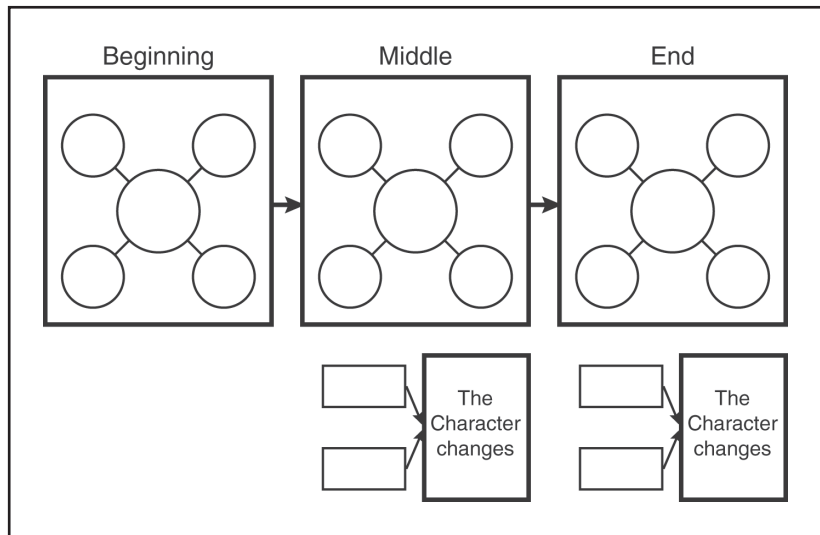
Teachers in these upper grade levels need to understand that literary text is not limited to novels or literary anthologies. Literary text also can be a part of their content-area reading. For example, in social studies the students can engage in reading Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, the Preamble to the Constitution, or actual letters from people who lived through historical events. In science class students can read and analyze profound speeches, editorials, etc., with strong literary qualities that are related to controversial topics in the world of science.

When an age-appropriate balance between literary and informational text is implemented across the grade levels, students will expand their conversations about a common piece of literary text to a common piece of informational text. When providing instruction in both types of discourse the teacher should

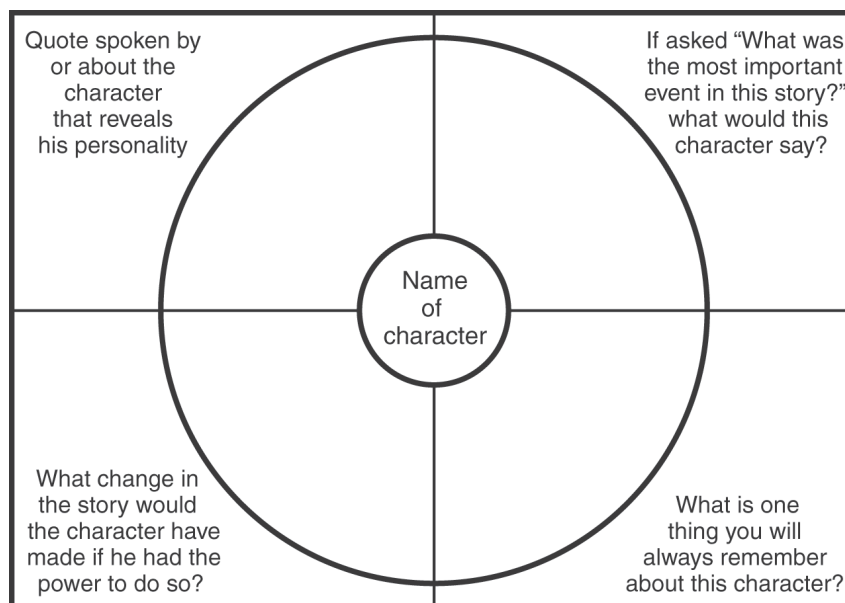
- stress understanding what is written in the lines as well as reading "between the lines;"
- draw attention to how illustrations and visual representations add to the information provided or help to clarify confusing concepts;
- emphasize the use of evidence to make an argument rather than just sharing a personal opinion about what is read;
- focus on building academic vocabulary;
- discuss how the information is organized;
- gradually increase the complexity of texts used in the classroom; and
- use Thinking Maps to synthesize and organize information.

**Activity #2**

Describe how the main character evolved during the story using a Bubble Map inside of a Flow Map. Under each of the last two stages of the Flow Map, create a partial Multi-Flow Map and write the reason(s) or cause(s) for this change. Write the title of the story in the Frame of Reference.

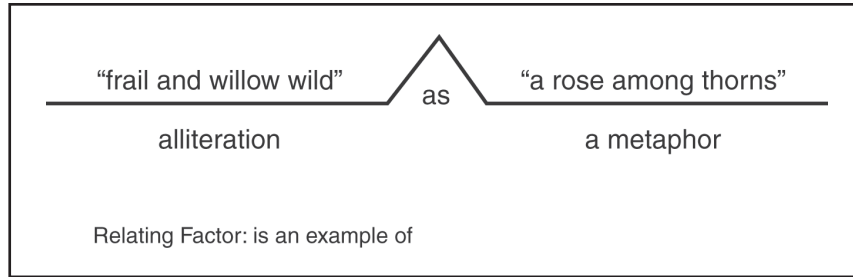
**Activity #3**

Define a character by using a Circle Map and a Frame of Reference. The character is defined by answering specific questions in the Frame of Reference and recording the answers in the Circle Map. The questions in the Frame can be changed to correspond more closely with each particular piece of literary text.



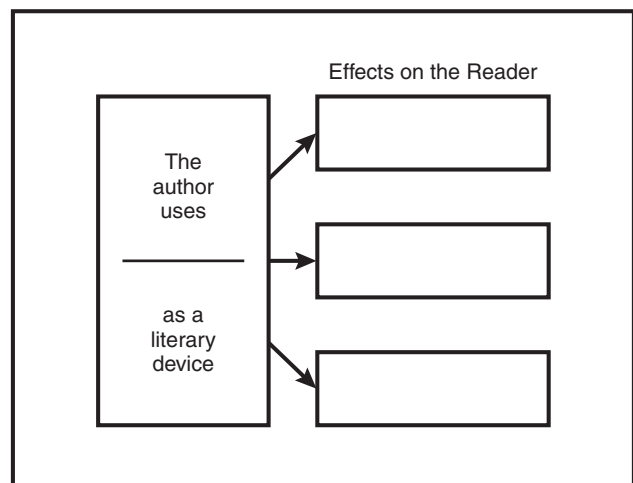
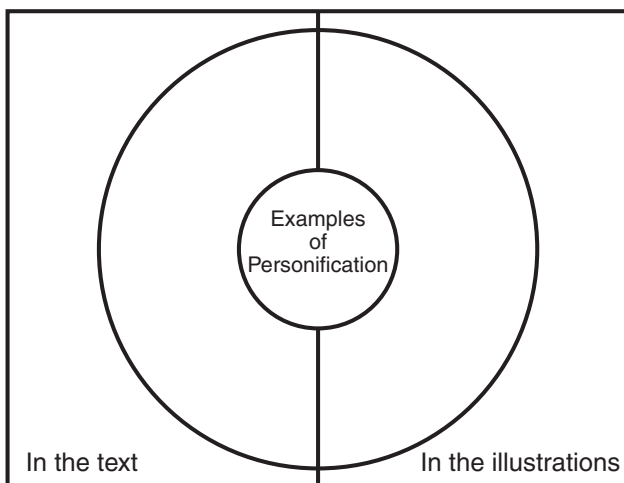
### Activity #15

As students read more extensively and become familiar with several different authors and genres, they will begin to notice certain **literary devices** that are used to create a particular impression on the reader. These include approaches such as similes, metaphors, and personification. A Bridge Map like the one below can be used to record, evaluate, and interpret these devices in a piece of literary text. The title of the text should be recorded in the Frame of Reference.



### Activity #16

The Circle Map and the partial Multi-Flow Map are also useful tools to use when processing the use of literary devices in a piece of text. The Circle Map is used to define a particular type of literary device as it appears in the text and/or the illustrations. The partial Multi-Flow Map is used to record the effects of using a particular literary device within a piece of text.



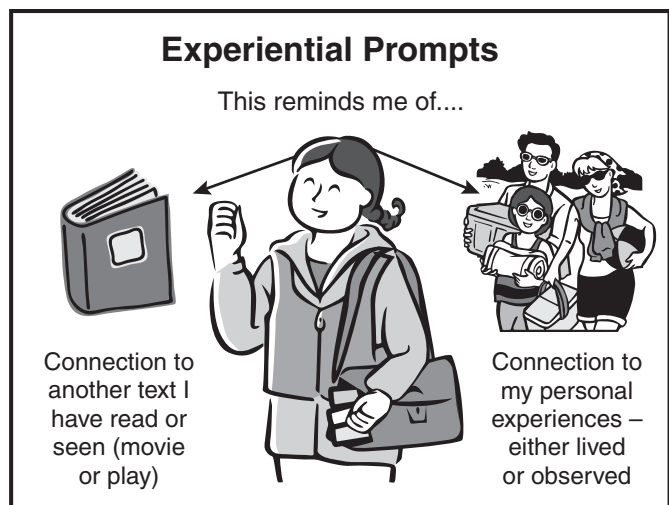
## § TYPES OF PROMPTS USED FOR RESPONDING TO LITERARY TEXT

Instruction in responding to literary text should culminate in the teacher modeling how to write a formal response. Students who have engaged in oral and open-ended response are better prepared for this more rigorous requirement.

There are specific response prompts that can be used to encourage student interaction with the text. These prompts ask readers to think, to feel, to express, to connect, to predict, to interpret, to relate, to clarify, and to become. The prompts require the reader to focus on the characters, the dilemma, the causes, the outcomes, and the implications. After reading a piece of literary text, students can respond to a prompt created by the teacher or one provided by the state or district. The details and events of different stories naturally lend themselves to any one of the five prompt types—experiential, aesthetic, cognitive, interpretive, or clarification—or a combination of the prompt types.

**Experiential prompts** focus on what the reader brings to the reading experience through personal experience and prior knowledge. Students are encouraged to make text-to-life connections, as well as text-to-text connections based on prior readings.

- How does (name of character) remind you of someone you know?
- How does (name of character) remind you of some other character you have met in a book or story?
- How do the events in this story remind you of the events in another book or story?
- Although this story takes place a long time ago, why does it still seem real as we read it today?
- What are the parallels between what happens in the story and current events?
- How can you relate this story to your own life?



## Kindergarten Response to Literary Text Rubric

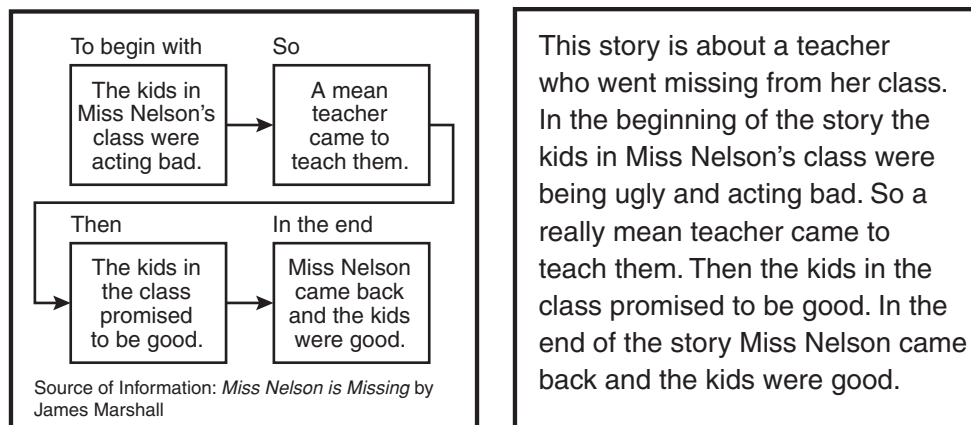
Category for Responding	√	Meets Expectations	Some Evidence of Understanding	Not Yet Present
<b><i>Identifies Title and Author of Story</i></b> Uses name of title and/or author.				
<b><i>Understands Character Attributes</i></b> Identifies character in a story. Describes both physical and personality characteristics. Draws character with details demonstrating those attributes. Adds text to drawings.				
<b><i>Understands Character Actions</i></b> Identifies character motivation and consequences for actions. Evaluates whether action is wise/unwise. Draws character with details demonstrating motivation/effects. Adds text to drawings.				
<b><i>Understands Setting</i></b> Identifies setting details in a story. Draws setting with details demonstrating understanding. Adds text to drawings when appropriate.				
<b><i>Retelling/Summarizing</i></b> Creates a summary that includes beginning, two events, and ending. Includes main characters, setting, and problem/solution.				
<b><i>Text-to-Self Connections</i></b> Connects story to own life orally. Uses a Double Bubble Map to connect life to story in response journal by drawing and in writing.				
<b><i>Text-to-Text Connections</i></b> Finds connections between one story and another. Uses a Double Bubble Map to connect two texts in response journal through drawing and in writing.				
<b><i>Text-to-World Connections</i></b> Identifies lessons learned or message in a story. Demonstrates this message in response journal by drawing and in writing.				
<b><i>Selects Specific Words/Quotes</i></b> Identifies specific words or quotes from a story in response to a question and uses quotes when drawing and writing in a response journal.				
<b><i>Favorite Part</i></b> Identifies favorite part of a story and describes that part orally with elaboration. Draws favorite part of story with details and tells about it in writing.				
<b><i>Relates Like or Dislike for Story</i></b> Orally relates whether or not a story (or story part) was liked and why. Demonstrates this message in drawing with details and in writing.				

## **SUMMARIZING THE PLOT**

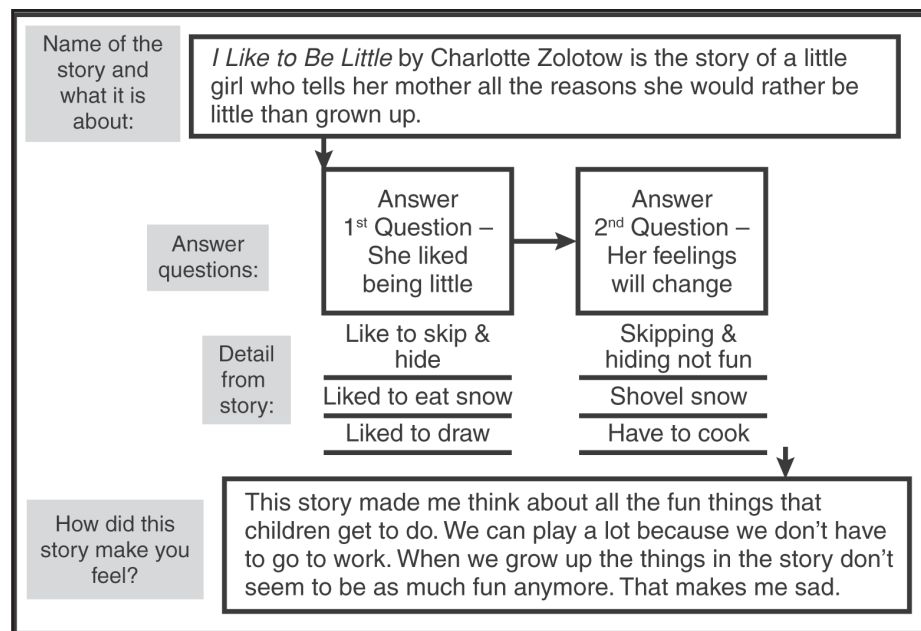
**Summarizing the plot** by retelling the main events in chronological sequence is required for understanding and responding to literature. For this type of response, the students can plan and write using a Flow Map and transition words. An introductory sentence should be used before the student begins the retelling. Following is an example of how to guide students in identifying and summarizing the plot using *Miss Nelson is Missing* by James Marshall.

### **Process for Guiding Response:**

- Before reading the text, the teacher tells the students to listen for what happens in the beginning, the middle, and the end of the story.
- After reading the text, the teacher draws a Flow Map with four or five boxes. She asks the students what happened in the beginning of the story and records an appropriate response in the first box. Then, she asks students what happened in the end of the story and records an appropriate response in the last box of the Flow Map.
- Afterwards, the teacher guides the class in thinking of two or three events from the story that could go in the middle boxes of the Flow Map. She needs to stress keeping the events in chronological order.
- Next, she writes a prompt close to the Flow Map: *What is the story about? What happened in the beginning, middle, and end of the story?*
- Finally, the teacher instructs students to create in their response journals a Flow Map with four or five events from the story, including the beginning and the end, and to write a response to the prompt. It is important for the teacher to remind students that the prompt has two parts: 1) *What is the story about;* and, 2) *What happened in the beginning, middle, and end of the story?*



## Step 2: Create an organizational frame for responding to each part of the prompt question.



## Step 3: Write a response to the prompt using your organizational frame as a guide.

I Like to Be Little by Charlotte Zolotow is the story of a little girl who has a conversation with her mother about being little.

All through the book the little girl tells the mother how special it is to do things like "skipping" and "hiding under tables." She explains that grown-ups do not do these kinds of things. Also, she tells her mother that grown-ups don't draw with crayons, eat the snow, or other fun things that you can do when you are little.

I think that this little girl will change her mind about all these things when she grows up. For example, eating the snow will not be fun when she needs to shovel off the walkway. Adults who skip and hide under tables would look silly so they would not do it. Grown-ups do sometimes like to color but they can't do it for long because they need to cook dinner or mow the lawn.

This story made me think about all the fun things that children get to do. We get to play outside with our friends and spend the night with them. Grown-ups can't do this because they have to work and take care of babies. When we grow up the things in the story will not seem to be as much fun anymore. That makes me sad.

## § MODELING FORMAL WRITTEN RESPONSE TO LITERARY TEXT IN GRADES 4–8

When modeling a formal response to literary text, the teacher should always instruct the students to begin by analyzing the prompt since they need to determine exactly what is being asked and the type of thinking that is involved. Students should construct a map, such as the Tree Map planning frame, to guide them in their thinking.

Once this is done, students need to construct an organizational plan for responding that includes each part of the prompt question. At the simplest level of responding there will be only one main question, while a more advanced response is likely to involve more than one question.

Following is a step-by-step instructional model that teachers can use with their students to scaffold instruction from gathering essential information on the Tree Map planning frame to writing a formal literary response. This model will vary based on the piece of literature used and the complexity of the prompt question.

**Step 1:** Look at all the parts of the writing task. Keep these parts in your mind as you read the story.

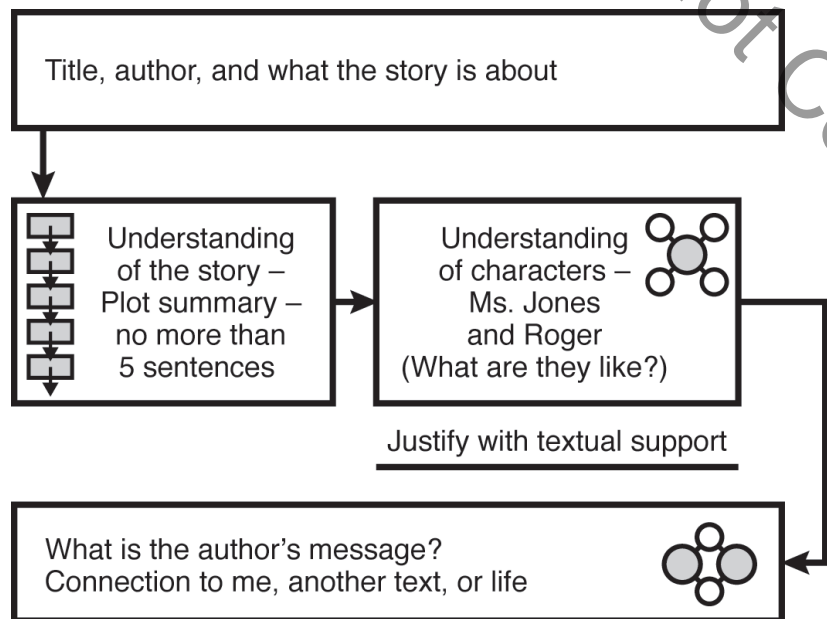
### **Prompt:**

After reading “Thank you, M’am,” write an essay that

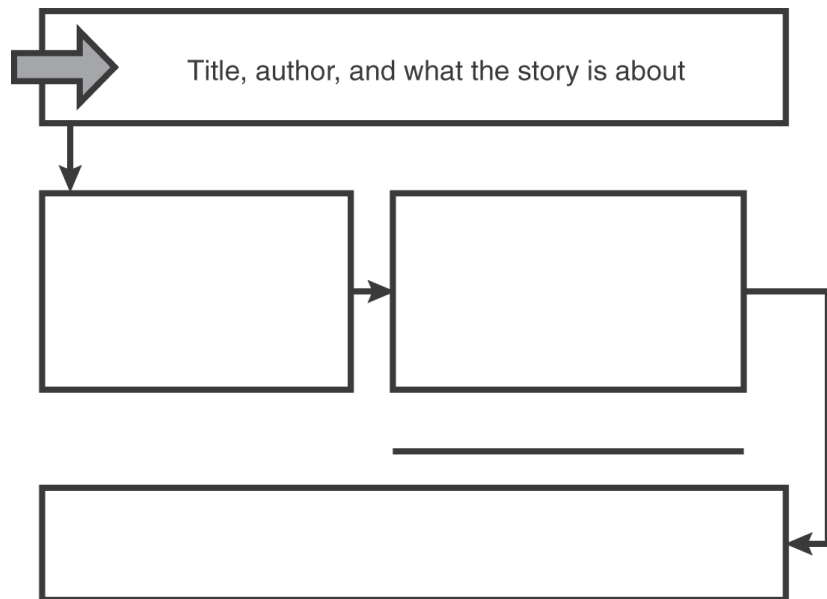
- shows your understanding of the story and the characters. (What are they like and why do they do what they do?)
- shows your understanding of the author’s message. (What does the author want us to learn from the story?)
- makes a connection to your life, to another text, or to the world.

You must justify your thoughts with examples and evidence from the text.

**Step 2:** Plan the organizational structure of your essay. Be sure to include all of the “parts” that are mentioned in the prompt.



**Step 3:** Write an opening paragraph. Be sure to name the piece of literature and to tell what it is about in a “nutshell” statement.



Example of a written response for an opening paragraph:

“Thank You, Ma’am” is a story about a young boy named Roger who tries to steal a purse from Ms. Jones, a hardworking lady who lives in a boarding house. Ms. Jones uses the incident to teach Roger a lesson about life.

## RESPONDING TO

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## INFORMATIONAL TEXT

### § WHAT IS INFORMATIONAL TEXT AND WHY SHOULD IT BE AN IMPORTANT FOCUS FOR INSTRUCTION?

It is often said that we live in “the information age.” Within seconds it is possible to access information about almost any topic from a variety of sources. Some of the sources are reliable, while others may be more slanted or questionable. While the information itself is readily available, the ability to read and comprehend the information often poses a different challenge for students since it requires skills unlike those they use when reading a narrative text. Charts or diagrams, frequently included in informational texts, require still additional skills for interpretation. Therefore, the challenge for students is not just locating the information but comprehending the information and demonstrating their understanding through a written response.

As students advance through the grades the use of informational text is more prevalent, both in the classroom content areas as well as in standardized testing. In the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the distribution of literary and informational passages by grade level reveals that in grade 4 the informational passages are present in 50% of the test items. This increases to 55% in grade 8 and to 70% in grade 12. Other standardized tests report as much as 85% expository text on their middle and high school assessments.

#### Distribution of Literary and Informational Passages by Grade in the 2009 NAEP Reading Framework

- |            |              |                   |
|------------|--------------|-------------------|
| • Grade 4  | Literary 50% | Informational 50% |
| • Grade 8  | Literary 45% | Informational 55% |
| • Grade 12 | Literary 30% | Informational 70% |

Source: National Assessment Governing Board. (2008). *Reading framework for the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office

## Guidelines for Instruction in Responding to Informational Text

Establish the habit of previewing the text with a focus on headings and visual representations.

Look at the following sample expository mathematics textbook page and determine some questions you could use to focus the students for a preview of this page: *How is it organized? What is emphasized? What are the headings? etc.*

### TRIANGLES

A triangle has three sides and is made of straight lines. A triangle may be classified by how many of its sides are of equal length. Or, it may be classified by what kind of angles it has.

#### Types of Triangles by Length

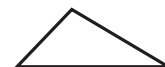
In an **equilateral triangle**, all three sides are the same length. An equilateral triangle is always equiangular (see below).



In an **isosceles triangle**, two sides are the same length. An isosceles triangle may be right, obtuse, or acute (see below).



In a **scalene triangle**, none of the sides are the same length. A scalene triangle may be right, obtuse, or acute (see below).



#### Types of Triangles by Angle

In an **equiangular triangle**, all the angles are equal—each one measures 60 degrees. An equiangular triangle is a kind of acute triangle and is always equilateral.



In a **right triangle**, one of the angles is a right angle—an angle of 90 degrees. A right triangle may be isosceles or scalene.



In an **obtuse triangle**, one angle is greater than a right angle—it is more than 90 degrees. An obtuse triangle may be isosceles or scalene.



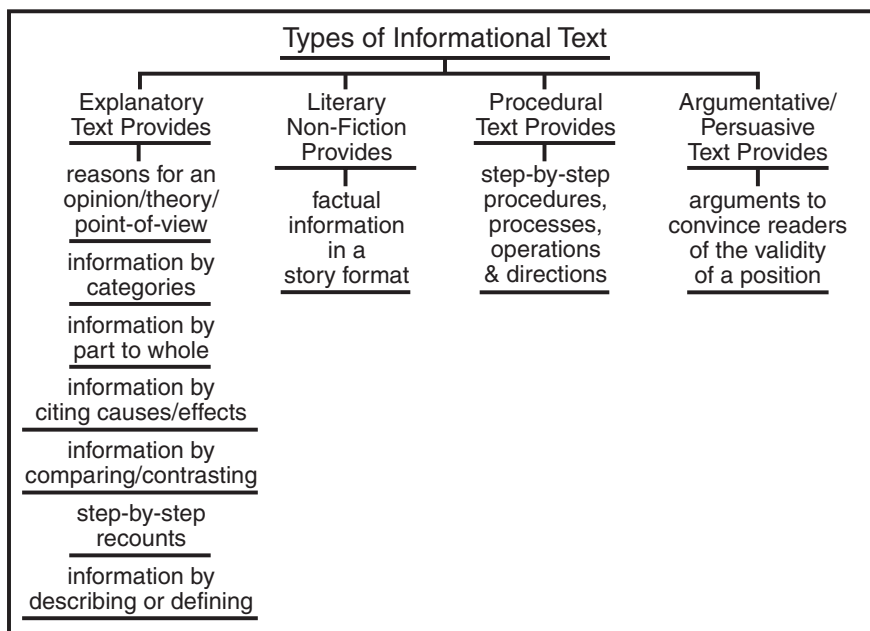
In an **acute triangle**, all angles are less than right angles—each one is less than 90 degrees. An acute triangle may be equilateral, isosceles, or scalene.



## Guidelines for Instruction in Responding to Informational Text

Teach specific text structures/strategies that can be applied to different types of informational text.

Following is a Tree Map with the different categories of informational text, as well as one or more details related to each of the categories. It is obvious from this map that most informational text comes under the category of “explanatory.”

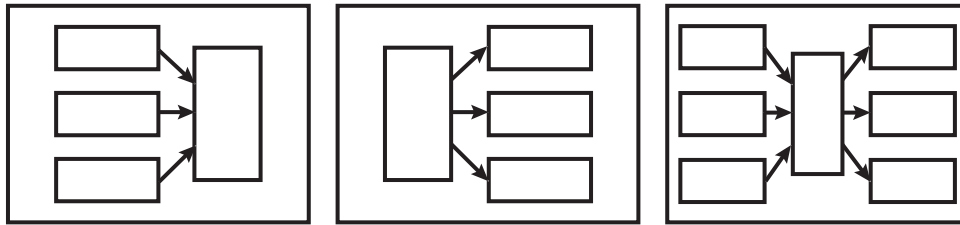


Usually, informational text is tightly structured and once students understand the different types of structures they can use this information to help them anticipate and comprehend the content presented.

In more complex pieces of informational discourse, multiple types of thinking (structures) are used within a single piece of text. Occasionally the text is not organized well and students must process the information and provide their own structure for organizing and understanding.

The manner in which informational text is structured represents the way the writer thought about or processed the information, as well as how he presents the information to the reader.

### *Citing Causes and/or Effects of a Situation*

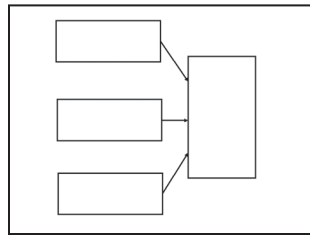


When using this type of structure, the author focuses on an event and cites the causes of the event, the effects of the event, or both the causes and effects of the event.

Paragraphing is constructed as the author moves from one cause/effect to the next; however, the presentation of each cause/effect could involve more than one paragraph.

### Common Organizational Patterns

- Opening paragraph that presents the situation or circumstances – causes with elaboration – effects with elaboration – conclusion
- Opening paragraph that presents the situation and some effects – cause # 1 with elaboration – cause # 2 with elaboration, etc. – conclusion
- Opening paragraph that presents the situation and some of its causes – effect # 1 with elaboration – effect # 2 with elaboration – conclusion
- Opening paragraph that presents the topic or situation – effect # 1 – effect # 2, etc. – conclusion
- Opening paragraph that presents the topic or situation – cause # 1 – cause # 2, etc. – conclusion

**EXAMPLE OF ARGUMENTATIVE/PERSUASIVE TEXT STRUCTURE**

*Validating a Position, Theory, or Point-of-View by Providing Well-Supported Reasons and Countering the Opposing Position*

When using this type of structure, the author either begins with a position statement or belief and provides elaborated reasons for that belief, or cites elaborated reasons first and concludes with a “therefore” statement that states the opinion.

Paragraphing is constructed as the author moves from one reason to the next; however, the presentation of each reason could involve more than one paragraph.

Common Organizational Patterns

- Opening paragraph with stated opinion – reason #1 with elaboration – reason #2 with elaboration, etc – counterargument – conclusion
- Opening paragraph without stated opinion – present opposing view with counterargument - reason #1 with elaboration – reason #2 with elaboration, etc – conclusion with opinion stated

Examples of Text

Chocolate milk should not be served in school lunchrooms. Even though children enjoy this drink, it is not a good choice.

First, chocolate milk contains large amounts of sugar. This means that drinking too much of it can lead to increased weight gain and problems like diabetes in children. We should not serve anything that can harm students in any way.

Also, sweet foods and drinks can decrease the appetite when they are eaten before a meal. Students often drink their chocolate milk first and neglect the vegetables and fruits on their lunch trays. Without the sweet drink, students would be more likely to eat healthier foods first.

Many people argue that some children drink only their chocolate milk for lunch since they do not care for the other foods that are served. Without the chocolate milk, they would have nothing for lunch. It is far better to choose nothing for lunch than to choose something that is harmful to the body.

Let's join together and take a step towards a healthy lifestyle for students and ban chocolate milk from our lunchrooms.

**Ideas for Responding in Journals**

- Draw and/or write one or more important fact(s) you learned from the text.
- Draw and/or write one or more important fact(s) you learned from the illustration.
- Draw the illustration and write the fact in the text that goes with it.
- Draw and/or write how the information in the two texts is the same.
- Draw and/or write how the information in the two texts is different.
- Explain the meaning of a “life cycle” (or any other term) using information from the text.
- Answer the following questions about the text: (write questions)
- What are three questions that you could answer about the topic?
- How is the information on page 4 (picture of caterpillar) related to the information on page 8 (picture of butterfly)?
- Write the reasons the author uses to show that \_\_\_\_\_ (water is important to us).
- Explain what both the author and the illustrator provide in the text. How do they help each other when presenting the information?

### Fourth and Fifth Grade Response to Informational Text Rubric

Category for Responding	√	Meets Expectations	Some Evidence of Understanding	Not Yet Present
Refers to details, examples, & quotes to explain what text says explicitly and to explain inferences.				
Determines the main ideas in a text and explains how they are supported with key details.				
Summarizes a text by providing main ideas and key details.				
Describes the connections, relationships, and interactions between a sequence of ideas and uses the language appropriate to the connection.				
Determines the meaning of general academic and content-specific words/phrases in grade-level or subject-area text.				
Describes the overall structure of events, ideas, and concepts in a text or a part of a text.				
Compares and contrasts the overall structure of two or more texts.				
Compares and contrasts a firsthand and secondhand account of the same event/topic—describes differences in information and focus.				
Analyzes several accounts of the same event or topic and relates likenesses and differences in points of view they represent.				
Interprets information presented orally, visually, and quantitatively and explains how the information contributes to understanding of text.				
Gathers information from multiple sources in both print and digital forms.				
Locates answer to a question or solution to a problem using multiple sources.				
Explains how an author uses reasons to support particular points in a text and identifies which reasons and evidence support which point.				
Gathers and integrates evidence from multiple sources on the same topic in order to speak or write about the topic with accuracy and cohesion.				
Reads and comprehends complex informational texts from a variety of content areas.				