

Reading Toolkit: Grade 7 Objective 2.A.6.e

Standard 2.0 Comprehension of Informational Text

Topic A. Comprehension of Informational Text

Indicator 6. Read critically to evaluate informational text

Objective e. Analyze additional information that would clarify or strengthen the author's argument or viewpoint

Assessment Limits:

Information that would enhance or clarify the reader's understanding of the main idea of the text or a portion of the text

Connections between the main idea and information not included in the text

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Lesson Seeds

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Activities

The teacher will provide students with an informational text. Both teacher and students will read the text, and the teacher will state the main idea of the text for students. Next, the teacher will indicate a portion of the text and offer students some choices of information that might help a reader better understand that portion of the text. The teacher and student will discuss the choices and decide upon the piece of information that would most help a reader and why that piece would be more helpful than the other choices. With repeated practices, students should ultimately be able to identify the main idea themselves and determine without a set of choices what information would clarify a student's understanding.

The teacher will provide students with an informational passage about a topic which while appropriate is not a familiar one. The teacher and students should read the passage together the first time, and the teacher should identify the main idea for the students. Next, students should reread the passage and use sticky notes to mark portions of the passage about which there is not full understanding. From a list of informational aids provided by the teacher, students must select one and explain how adding this aid to the text would help a reader's understanding. Ultimately, a student should be able to identify the main idea him/herself and determine without the use of a list the information most likely to help a reader understand the text.

The teacher will provide students an informational text from which all informational aids have been removed. Students will be directed to read the text and as they read record any questions they have about the content of the text. Next, the teacher should provide students with the original text, which contains the informational aids. Then students should read the original version to determine if the informational aids answered their questions. If their questions were answered, students should be able to discuss the importance of informational aids to their understanding of a text. If their questions were not answered, students should suggest additional aids that would enhance their understanding of the text.

After reading an informational selection, students will complete a chart like the one below.

Topic	Information Learned	Questions I Still Have

In small groups, students will discuss their chart and compile a chart of the information that would have been helpful in clarifying the text. Each of these charts should be displayed in the room, and students can take a "gallery walk" to read each group's suggestions and place a check mark beside those with which they agree. A final class discussion will consolidate those informational pieces that if added to the text would assist a reader's understanding.

Clarification

Reading Grade 7 Indicator 2.A.6

To show proficiency of **critical evaluation of informational text**, a reader must form a number of judgments about a text. To begin this process a reader must preview the text and its features and combine that information with prior knowledge to set a purpose for reading. During and after reading, the evaluation of informational text requires a reader to **determine the content of the text, the role of text features, text elements that make that text a reliable source, the author's opinion, argument, or position, the effectiveness and purpose of the author's word choice, and the effectiveness of the author's style**. A full evaluation of an informational text requires attention to each of these elements.

To begin a critical evaluation of informational text, a reader must use prior knowledge and preview the text to establish a purpose for reading. Once a purpose is established, that is followed by a close reading of the text. Next, a reader must judge how well the text provides information for the stated purpose for reading. Then a critical reader should be able to verbalize or scribe an explanation or analysis of the text by focusing on specific sections of that text and detailing how that **information meets or does not meet a stated purpose for reading**.

If that purpose is not met, a critical reader should be able to **identify those pieces of information that are needed to fully construct meaning**. Additional information may include more details within the text, more text features, or adjustments to the organizational pattern or existing text features. To determine what is required for meaning, a critical reader should closely read the existing text and then assess the degree to which the text meets a reader's purpose. A reader should note particularly the organizational pattern of the text and see how well that pattern helps a reader construct meanings from important ideas in the text. Those gaps in information that make it difficult for a reader to construct meaning signal the types of additional information that are needed.

The **analysis of informational text for reliability** is an important aspect in the text's critical evaluation. A reader must first discern how much of the text is factual. Once the factual information is isolated, judgments about its accuracy are necessary. A reader should access information about the author and his/her credentials as a means of assessing the passage's reliability. Depending upon the subject of the text and how current the information is also a reliability factor. When available, a reader can access other texts on the same subject to see if there is a consistency in the information. Finally after looking at multiple texts on the same subject, a reader can determine if the initial text contains the same information as the subsequent texts or if the initial text presents information not contained in the others. A discrepancy in information could point to an inaccuracy in a text or to a more current source of information.

Once reliability has been established, a reader should carefully note elements of text that address the **author's argument or produce clarity of the author's position on the topic**. Additionally, a reader should be attuned to **elements of bias** in the author's presentation of material. After reading is complete, a reader must implicitly understand the stated or implied main idea of the text. From that basis of understanding, a reader should look at the construction of the author's argument, noting any evidence of bias in the argument and looking for a fair treatment of opposing views on the topic. At that juncture a reader should be able to judge the impartiality of the material or the inclination of the author to present a single view of the topic. Based on that text evidence, a reader can make a critical decision about the text's fullness or limits of use to him/herself.

After a reader knows how useful a text might be, a determination can be made about what **additional information could help a reader construct meaning from the text**. Active reading skills will allow a reader to note a stated or implied main idea in the text. Then a reader can identify additional information that would add to, clarify, or strengthen their understanding of the text or the author's viewpoint. A reader's suggestions for additional information could include, but not be limited to

- Text features such as bulleted lists, captions, graphics, italicized or bold print etc.
- Information to address readers' questions that were not answered in the text
- Context clues, footnotes, or glossed words to help a reader understand unfamiliar words and phrases

A critical evaluation of a text also demands that a reader detect **words that authors use to affect a reader's feelings**. A critical reader can determine a reason for the author's word choice and the response the author wished to evoke. At the center of any persuasive text is a strong opinion, and authors use words to their advantage to create a strong emotional appeal to a reader. Repetition, rhetorical questions, hyperbole etc...all have the power to sway a reader's perceptions. A critical reader is aware of the power of words and examines this word choice to discern the author's tone. For example, a critical reader should be able to discern the difference in tone between "The hero was brave as he flew into the battle alone." from "The pilot was foolhardy flying into battle without cover." A critical reader must also note the portion of text where repetitions occur and determine why an author would wish to draw attention to that portion of text. Critical readers are aware of these elements and should be able to determine if they enhance an author's viewpoint. Finally critical readers should isolate elements that are used purely for emotional appeal and are not supported by fact.

Ultimately a critical reader should be able to **analyze an author's style** which is how an author uses language to relay ideas. An author's particular style has a direct effect upon the meaning of a text. For example, authors may use formal language to convey the seriousness of material or informal language to address the entertainment value of a topic. Or an author may use an informal style with a serious topic to evoke a particular response and cause a critical reader to consider why an author would not match style to topic. That disconnect between style and topic has a critical effect upon construction of meaning. A critical reader should also note how the author forms and uses sentences. The constant use of long, involved sentences or short, choppy sentences or a combination of both can alert a reader to a variety of emphases within a text. An author might use this stylistic formula to draw attention to a particular idea or to diminish the effect of an idea. Using sentence fragments is another way authors can achieve those same effects. Finally a critical reader should be aware that how the author uses language, makes choices about words, and constructs sentences that are planned so that a critical reader can develop insight into the author's intended meaning of a text.

Public Release #1 - Selected Response (SR) Item

Handout(s):

- Tackling The Trash

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Read "Tackling the Trash" and answer the following question. What could the author have done to explain why Chad was so successful at raising money for his project?

- A. Provide a picture of the used houseboat that was named "The Miracle"
- B. Describe the cities where Chad hosted his community-wide cleanup days
- C. Include direct quotations from people who donated money for the clean-up
- D. List the community groups and organizations Chad approached to ask for donations

Correct Answer:

C

Handouts

Tackling The Trash

By Jill Esbaum

¹In May of 1997, Chad Pregracke came home from college for summer vacation. As usual, he was disgusted by the junk that littered the riverbanks of the Mississippi near his hometown of East Moline, Illinois. But this time, instead of wondering why someone else didn't clean it up, he decided to tackle a few miles of shoreline himself.

With only a flat-bottom boat, a wheelbarrow, and a sturdy pair of gloves, he motored up and down the river. Whenever he spotted trash, he pulled to shore and picked it up. When his boat was full, he took the load to a landfill. Chad even took pictures of the junk he hauled away. "I thought it might be fun to see how much I could pick up," he says.

³Soon the riverbanks near his hometown were litter-free. And Chad was hooked. "I really enjoyed it," he says. "I could see the results day after day. It made me feel good to help my community." So he kept going, sleeping under a tarp each night.

But Chad's money was disappearing fast. Food, gasoline for his boat, landfill charges, and film costs were gobbling up his resources. He wondered if others would help support his cleanup.

⁵First Chad talked to government agencies like the National Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. While happy about his work, they didn't have much money to donate.

So Chad called area businesses. He explained about growing up beside the river, the mess it had become, and his determination to clean it up. Most companies wouldn't help either. But finally one company decided to lend a hand. Chad got his first small grant and the encouragement he needed to find others to help as well.

⁷Chad began visiting other companies in person and found that his careful record keeping paid off. People couldn't help being impressed by his enthusiasm, or by the pictures of the junk he'd already hauled away. The next year, Chad received enough money to finish his summer's work with several volunteers to help him. In two years he raised enough money to buy two more boats and hire five helpers for the next summer.

In 1998, Chad's goal was to clean 1,000 miles of shoreline. Beginning in northern Iowa, he and his crew slowly worked their way south. Their final destination was St. Louis,

**What has Chad taken out of the rivers?
Here is a partial list of what he's pulled out as of July 2001.**

- 13 air conditioners
- 8 anchors
- 348 bottles of antifreeze
- 18 duck decoys
- 3 baby pools
- 968 buckets
- 287 refrigerators
- 1,109 55-gallon steel drums
- 27 bicycles
- 40 barbeque grills
- 430 feet of steel cable
- 90 boat bumpers
- 75 water heaters
- 307 chairs
- 171 coolers
- 2 swing sets
- 49 sinks
- 72 TV sets
- 55 life jackets
- 4,870 car tires
- 28 garbage cans
- 14,240 pounds of metal
- 223 milk crates
- 46 washing machines
- 56 stoves
- 350 propane tanks
- 28 toilets

Missouri. Along the way, Chad had to receive permission from each town to pile his junk in a parking lot or field. When he finished each area, he trucked the trash to the nearest landfill.

⁹As the hot summer wore on, the work became more difficult. The farther south they traveled, the more trash littered the shore. One mile of shoreline was so full of old tires, it took more than a month to clean—one small boatload at a time. Sheltered only by tents and tarps, Chad and his crew battled mosquitoes and summer storms. By summer's end, only Chad and one helper remained on the job. When cold weather forced them to stop, they were just fifty miles from St. Louis.

Chad didn't spend the winter months catching up on sleep. He needed to raise more than \$100,000. Part of the money would go toward finishing his work near St. Louis. The rest would fund his next project, cleaning the 270-mile shoreline of the Illinois River.

¹¹Chad also traveled from town to town. He spoke at schools, churches, and town halls. He shared his story with community groups, conservation clubs, and Scout troops. He asked them to help keep the river clean.

People were eager to help. Someone even offered him a used houseboat for free. There was only one catch: it was resting on the muddy bottom of the Illinois River. "It was a real mess," Chad remembers. "The most totally trashed thing you've seen in your life."

¹³After a lot of repair work and elbow grease, The Miracle became the crew's floating home and headquarters—a big step up from tents and tarps.

In 2000, Chad began hosting community-wide cleanup days in cities along the Mississippi. "I want to get as many people involved as possible," he says.