

HELPING STUDENTS READ: Tips for Teachers

Helping Students Read Primary Source Documents and Advanced Level Texts

Sometimes you will want your students to read articles and other documents written at a more advanced reading level than their own. This is especially common when asking students to read *primary source* materials. Difficult words and unfamiliar phrases may also be encountered when reading contemporary news articles, especially news from sources across the globe. Try the following strategies to help increase your students' reading comprehension.

- 1 Use Pre-Reading Strategies:** Preview any vocabulary words you know will be difficult for your students. Activate prior knowledge in students before asking them to read — what experiences might they have had that relate in some way to the text? Preview the text structure: Are there any patterns? Bold or italics? Other types of formatting that could help indicate structure? Scan the first and last sentence of each paragraph before diving into the article as a whole. Are there any images or charts that go with the document? Examine them first and predict how they will relate to the article. Provide students with the historical background to understand the time and situation from which the document arose.
- 2 Use During Reading Strategies:** Ask students to read a portion of the document then pause to summarize and verify understanding before continuing. Allow students to read in partners, whether aloud or silently, and have them discuss what they have read at predetermined stopping points throughout the document. Provide students with a “reading guide” containing questions sequenced along with the document; the reading guide could contain troublesome vocabulary words, main ideas, key supporting details, or any other ideas in the document that require emphasis. Encourage students to highlight or underline important details and to make connections as they read (text-to-self connections, text-to-world connections, and text-to-text connections). Above all, encourage students to read actively and monitor their comprehension. It can be beneficial to have struggling students listen to a recorded version of the document while they follow along in the text.
- 3 Use Post-Reading Strategies:** Ask students to summarize what they have read. Provide students with multiple opportunities to apply what they have learned in a variety of learning modalities (artistic, written, oral, performance, etc.). Ask students to reflect about what they have read; have them compare it to something else they have read, support or refute ideas in the document, and to think “beyond” the document itself.