The Comprehension Toolkit

Language and Lessons for Active Literacy

Grades 3–6

The Comprehension Toolkit

Language and Lessons for Active Literacy

"The Toolkit *is designed to help students negotiate nonfiction text, to think about what they are reading, and to hold that thinking so that they understand and remember it—and use it to guide new learning and thinking."*

Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis

The Comprehension Toolkit

The Authors

Stephanie Harvey

- Elementary/special ed teacher for 15 years
- Author of:
  - *Nonfiction Matters*
  - *Strategies That Work* (with Anne Goudvis)
  - several video series on literacy instruction

Anne Goudvis

- Classroom teacher and university instructor
- Recent interests:
  - working in schools with linguistically diverse students
  - integrating reading comprehension instruction with content-area topics

The Comprehension Toolkit

Built-In Professional Support

Teacher's Guide

What Is Comprehension and How Do We Teach It?

- 10 guiding principles

How Do We Create an Active Literacy Classroom?

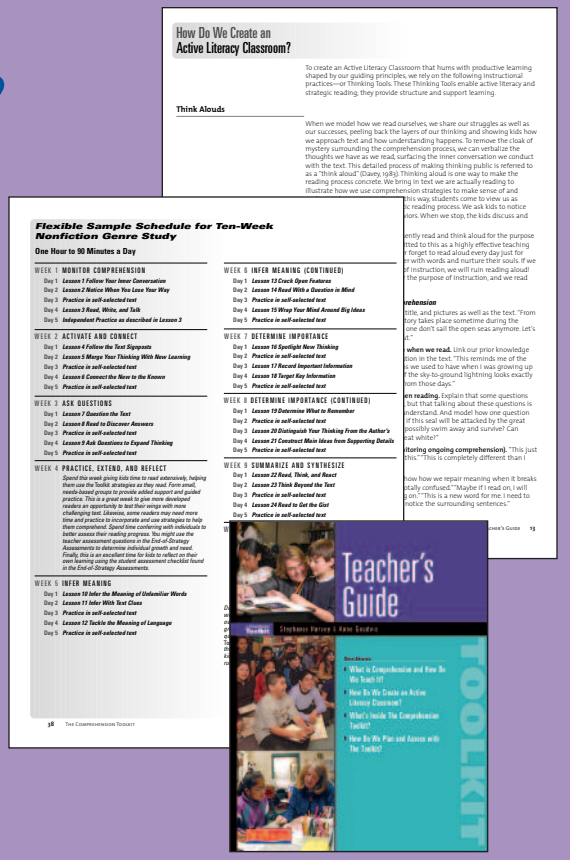
- instructional practices and thinking tools

What's Inside *The Comprehension Toolkit*?

- overview of components and features

How Do We Plan and Assess with *The Toolkit*?

- schedules, classroom materials, and evaluation techniques

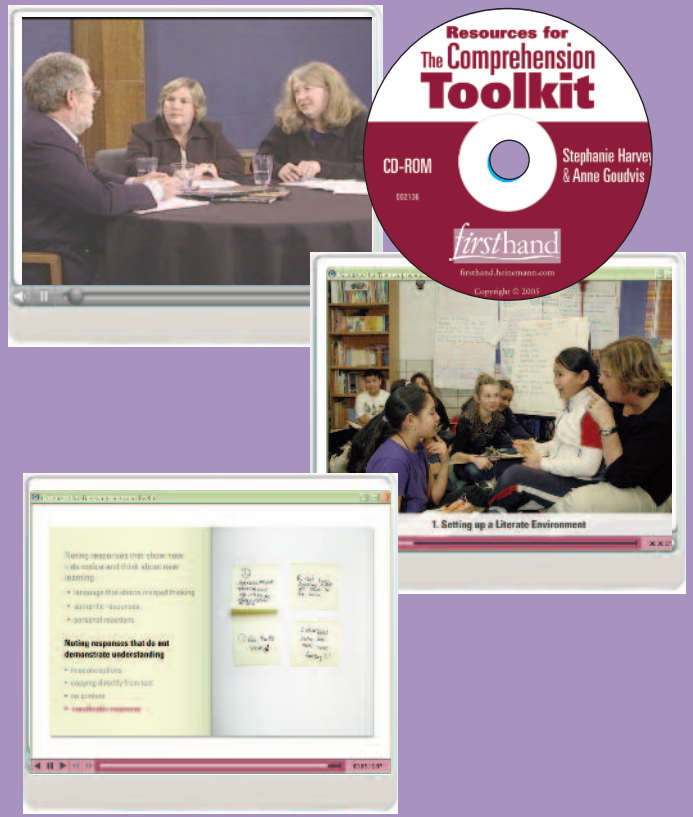


The Comprehension Toolkit

Built-In Professional Support

Resources CD-ROM

- Video conversation with Dr.P. David Pearson about the research on reading comprehension
- A photographic overview of an active literacy classroom
- Electronic tour of the components, lesson design, and assessment
- Downloadable lesson templates, assessment master, record-keeping forms, and lesson texts
- Research articles



The Comprehension Toolkit

Strategy Books

"Reading comprehension occurs when readers engage in an inner conversation with the text, merge their thinking with it, ask questions, infer, think about what's important, and summarize and synthesize."

Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis

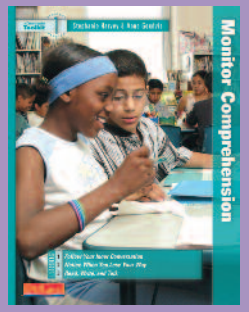
The Comprehension Toolkit

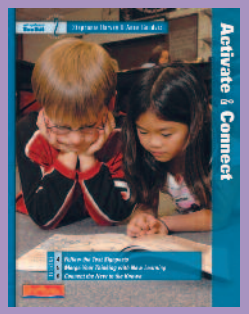
Strategy Books

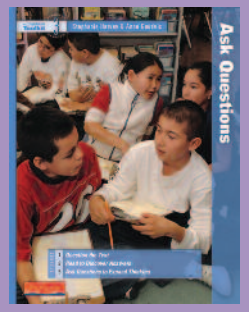
26 strategy lessons organized into 6 books

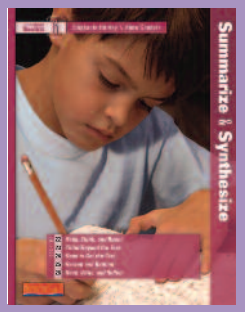
1. Monitor Comprehension
2. Activate and Connect
3. Ask Questions
4. Infer Meaning
5. Determine Importance
6. Summarize and Synthesize

Students learn to use strategies flexibly, across a variety of texts, topics, and subject areas









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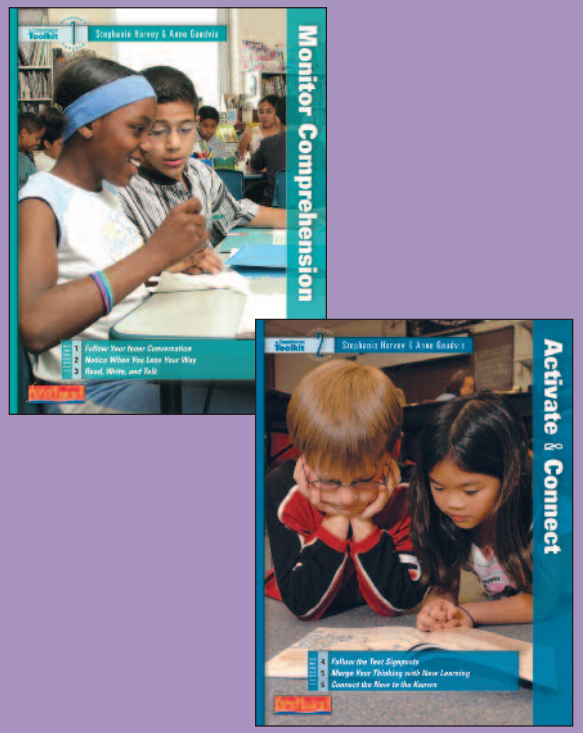
Strategy Books

1. Monitor Comprehension

Monitor Comprehension identifies ways readers listen to their inner conversations and keep track of their thinking as they read.

2. Activate and Connect

Activate and Connect alerts students to the impact background knowledge has on their learning and how, as readers, they continually connect the new to the known.



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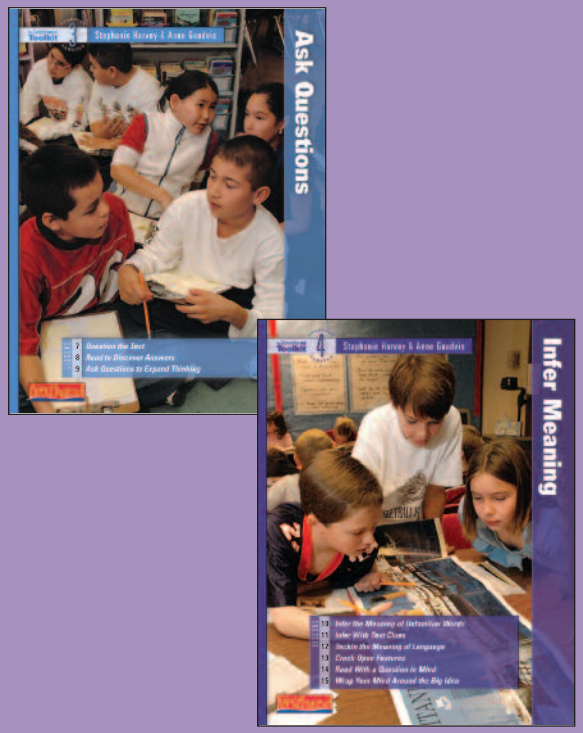
Strategy Books

3. Ask Questions

Ask Questions highlights how readers can use questions to clarify unfamiliar ideas and discover new information.

4. Infer Meaning

Infer Meaning teaches students how to use context clues and text evidence to crack open the new concepts and vocabulary common to nonfiction text.



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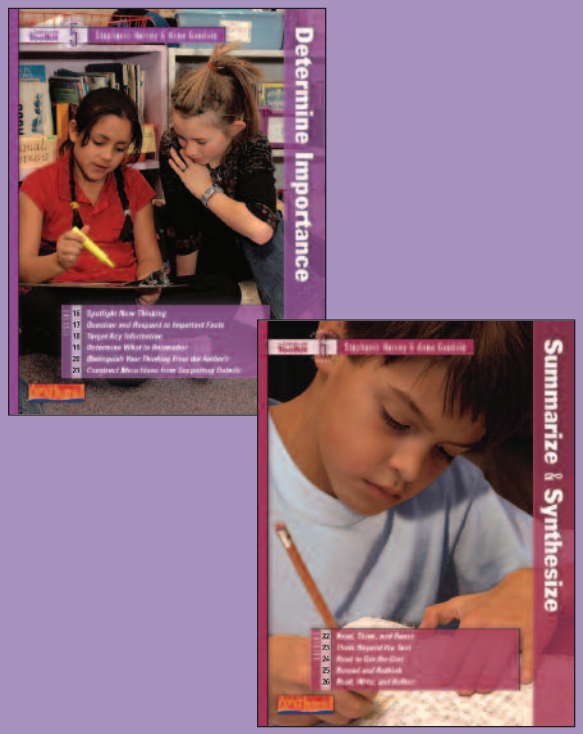
Strategy Books

5. Determine Importance

Determine Importance helps students distill the main ideas and important thinking from the detailed facts in nonfiction text.

6. Summarize and Synthesize

Summarize and Synthesize encourages students to go beyond the simple restating of facts so they can use new information to inspire or change their thinking.



The Comprehension Toolkit

Lesson Framework

"Strategies are taught through the gradual release of responsibility framework. We provide explicit instruction through modeling and guided practice, and then invite the students to try techniques on their own through collaborative practice, independent practice, and application."

Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis

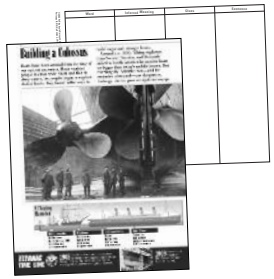
The Comprehension Toolkit

Lesson Overview

The opening spread lists the resources needed, states the purpose of the lesson, and identifies the gradual release plan.

Lesson 10

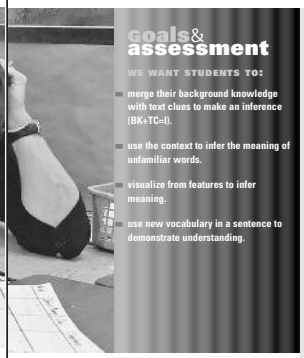
Infer THE Meaning OF UNFAMILIAR



Text Matters

When we teach kids how we use context clues to infer the meaning of words, we choose text that features some vocabulary we suspect will be unfamiliar to them. This gives them an opportunity to infer the meaning of new words. We also make sure that the text does not define the words immediately after featuring them as is frequently the case in textbooks, because then students wouldn't need to infer the meaning.

Use context clues to unpack vocabulary



goals&assessment

WE WANT STUDENTS TO:

- merge their background knowledge with text clues to make an inference (BK+TC=I).
- use the context to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words.
- visualize from features to infer meaning.
- use new vocabulary in a sentence to demonstrate understanding.

resources&materials

LESSON TEXT

Kids Discover "Titanic" pages 2, 3, and 4 [See the *Source Book of Short Text* pages 20–22.]

CLASSROOM SUPPLIES

- Overhead transparency of form with four columns labeled *Word, Inferred Meaning, Text Clues,* and *Sentence* [See *Strategy Cluster 4* page 71 or the CD-ROM.]
- Overhead projector and marker

STUDENT SUPPLIES

- Clipboard with *Word/Inferred Meaning/Clues/Sentence* form
- Copy of the "Titanic" article
- Pencil

why&what

Inferring is at the heart of reading. Writers don't spill information onto the page; they leak it slowly, leaving clues along the way to keep the reader engaged in the act of constructing meaning. Inferring involves taking what we know and merging it with clues in the text to come up with information that isn't explicitly stated there. Inferring is the strategy readers need to figure out the meaning of unfamiliar words. To help readers understand what it means to infer, we teach a literacy equation, BK (Background Knowledge) + TC (Text Clues) = I (an Inference). Readers can use the equation to crack the meaning of unfamiliar words. In this lesson, we teach kids to use the context and the features to visualize and infer the meaning of unknown vocabulary.

when&how

CONNECT & ENGAGE

- ***Explain inferring.***
- ***Teach an equation for inferring to make inferring concrete and to support kids as they try to make their own inferences.***
- ***Explain how to use the strategy of inferring to figure out unfamiliar words in context.***

MODEL

- ***Model how to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words and to use a form to help kids understand and remember the meanings.***

GUIDE

- ***Support kids as they read and infer the meaning of unfamiliar words.***
- ***Explain how readers use the features to visualize and infer meaning.***
- ***Introduce and explain the idea of Word Keepers.***

COLLABORATE

- ***Have kids work together in pairs to read through the text and practice inferring the meaning of words as they fill in their charts.***
- ***Give away a word to remind students what it means to be a Word Keeper.***

SHARE THE LEARNING

- ***Invite kids to share their four-column forms with new words and concepts and explain the process for figuring them out.***

The Comprehension Toolkit

Lesson in Action

Watch Steph and Anne teach, listen to their language, and see the ways in which their students respond to the text.

CONNECT & ENGAGE

Explain inferring.

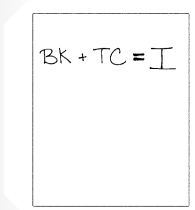
I love it when you're all gathered up here close and personal with your clipboards ready to think, read, and write. For the past few lessons, we have been focused on the questioning strategy. We've been thinking about the questions we have as we read, and we've noticed how our questions can actually lead to better understanding. For the next few lessons, we are going to work on a new strategy that builds on the questioning strategy. It's called *inferring,* and it is at the heart of reading. We frequently answer our own questions by making an inference. Does anyone know what it means to infer? Turn and talk about that for a minute. *[Kids come up with a range of responses and then I continue.]*

When writers write, they don't spill information onto the page. They leak it slowly so readers can draw their own conclusions. In fact, that's one of the things that makes reading so much fun. The reader has to figure things out. Readers need to pay close attention to the clues in the text to make an inference. When we think about what we already know and then carefully consider the clues in the text, we can draw a conclusion or make an inference.

Inferring involves taking information from the text and merging it with our own thinking to come up with an idea that the author hasn't actually written down. We use inferring in many ways. For instance, we infer to figure out the meaning of unfamiliar words. In today's lesson, I will model how I infer the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary words and how I use context clues to crack the words. Is this making sense? Turn and talk about your thinking. [*Kids talk.*]

Teach an equation for inferring to make inferring concrete and to support kids as they try to make their own inferences.

Look, let me show you an equation. You know about math equations. Well, this is a literacy equation to help us infer! To infer the meaning of a word or phrase, we think about what we already know and merge our background knowledge with clues in the text, like this:



BK (Background Knowledge) + TC (Text Clues) = I (Inference) BK+TC=I *[I write the equation on the chart.]*

Cool, huh?

If our inference doesn't seem reasonable or make sense, we can gather more clues and more information to make a more reasonable inference. If we ignore the clues in the text, we are really just guessing. The more clues we have, the better our inference is likely to be. And we can't forget to check our background knowledge, because if the inference doesn't make sense, it might be because our BK is off the mark.

Today, I have brought a magazine article about the *Titanic* story. We're going to read and talk about the *Titanic* tragedy over the next two lessons. How many of you know something about the *Titanic*? Turn to each other and talk about what you know about this terrible tragedy. *[Kids talk to each other and I listen in. After a minute I ask them to share. They share a variety of responses, most of which reflect that the* Titanic *hit an iceberg and sank and that many people perished.]*

Such a terribly sad story. Over the next few days we are going to learn much more about this event. As we read more about the *Titanic,* I am anticipating that we will meet some unfamiliar words and concepts, so I thought it would be useful to work on inferring in vocabulary. Turn and talk to each other for a moment about what you do s a reader when you come across a word you don't understand. *[Kids talk and then share out.]*

Explain how to use the strategy of inferring to figure out unfamiliar words in context.

As I read a bit of this today, I'll probably come across some new words. When that happens, I am going to show you how I use the strategy of inferring to figure out the meaning of unknown words. When I come to a word I don't know, I need to think about what I do know about, and also consider the context, for that word. I need to read the words and sentences that come before and after the word because they will help me to infer the meaning. And I need to think about our equation. Let me give you an example of how it works.

MODEL

Model how to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words and to use a form to help kids understand and remember the meanings.

OK, I am going to model for you how I infer the meanings of words as I read some of this *Titanic* article from *Kids Discover.* I have a transparency with four columns labeled *Word, Inferred Meaning, Text Clues,* and *Sentence.*

As I read, I am going to record unfamiliar words in the first column and then write what I infer the word means in the second column. In the third column, I will write down what clues helped me infer the meaning of the word. When I have a solid idea of what the word means, I will write a brief sentence using the word in the fourth column. One of the reasons we write the word in a sentence is that if we can do that, we probably understand its meaning. Writing the word in a sentence demonstrates our understanding. Let's see what we can infer. First I'll model, and then you will have a chance. Let me read a couple of paragraphs.

"Iceberg Right Ahead"

By the time these words range out on the RMS Titanic, *it was too late. The warning came at 11:40 pm on the clear, cold night of April 14, 1912 in the icy seas of the North Atlantic. Within 40 seconds the ship's starboard side was raked below the waterline by the submerged spur of an iceberg. Less than three hours later, the* Titanic *sunk beneath the water. At least 1,523 of its roughly 2,228 passengers and crew were dead or dying.*

Had the Titanic *missed the iceberg that Sunday it may have simply been remembered as one of the largest, most luxurious ocean liners of its time. Yet so much went wrong that the* Titanic *has become a symbol for disaster. The great ship's story is a drama with a little of everything: heroism and fear, humility and arrogance, wealth and poverty, life and death.*

Wow, so sad. If only it had missed that iceberg, this terrible tragedy would have been averted. In the next few days, we are going to use the *Titanic* story to get into themes, which will be really interesting for you. But before we focus on the big ideas, I thought we had better practice how to infer the meaning of words so that we don't get hung up on them.

As I read this last sentence, I see a word I am not quite sure about, *humility*, so I need to consider clues to help me infer the meaning. The first thing I notice is that the writer has paired some words together in that sentence—*heroism* and *fear, wealth* and *poverty, life* and *death, humility* and *arrogance.* I know the meaning of most of these words. And I know that *wealth* and *poverty* and *life* and *death* are opposites.

The Comprehension Toolkit

Reflection & Assessment

The strategies in this section use assessment to monitor student progress and inform instructional decision-making

reflection& assessment

DID YOUR STUDENTS:

- merge their background knowledge with text clues to make an inference (BK+TC=I)?
- use the context to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words?
- visualize from features to infer meaning?
- use new vocabulary in a sentence to demonstrate understanding?

In assessing student work from this lesson, we check for several things.

We review the four-column forms to see:

- if they made reasonable inferences about word meaning.
- if they considered the clues that led them to infer the meaning.
- if they wrote sentences that demonstrated understanding.

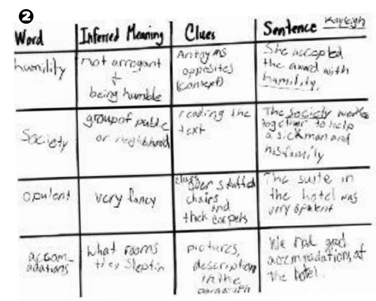
We also assess our students' understanding by listening to their discussions throughout this lesson and throughout the sharing piece.

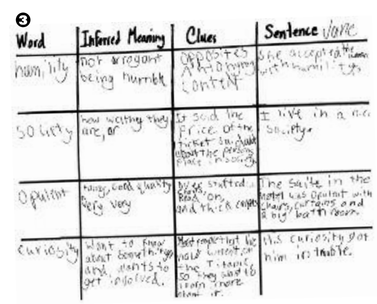
1 Taylor was able to infer the meaning and describe the clues that helped in each unfamiliar word that he came across. He even noted in the *Text Clues* column that the word *hypothermia* was actually defined in the story. Each of his sentences demonstrates a clear understanding of the words.

2 Kayleigh also was able to infer the meaning of the unfamiliar words she came across (facing page). She found helpful clues to lead her to infer their meanings—the overstuffed chairs and thick carpets for *opulent,* and the pictures of the rooms as well as the text description to understand the word *accommodations*. Her sentences demonstrated terrific understanding. Although she has written a very thoughtful sentence and definition for *society*, this was not the precise meaning of the word in the text. Kayleigh was relying on her background knowledge of the word *society,* and she showed a good understanding of the most common definition of the word. In this case, however, the text was referring to the notion of high society, wealth, and position. Multiple meanings throw up barriers to cracking unfamiliar vocabulary, which is one reason we need to teach the strategy of inferring meaning in context. I would point out to Kayleigh that she has a great definition of *society* in general. But I would take her back to the text to show her another meaning of the word as it is used in the text.

3 Jane did an excellent job of using inferential thinking and context clues to figure out the meaning of words. She provided solid evidence for her definitions in the *Text Clues* column and mentioned that she read on to better understand the meaning of the word *opulent*. She got the accurate meaning of the word *society* as it is used in the text, but then her sentence reflected the more common, general meaning of the word. This is not surprising, as multiple meanings trip readers up.

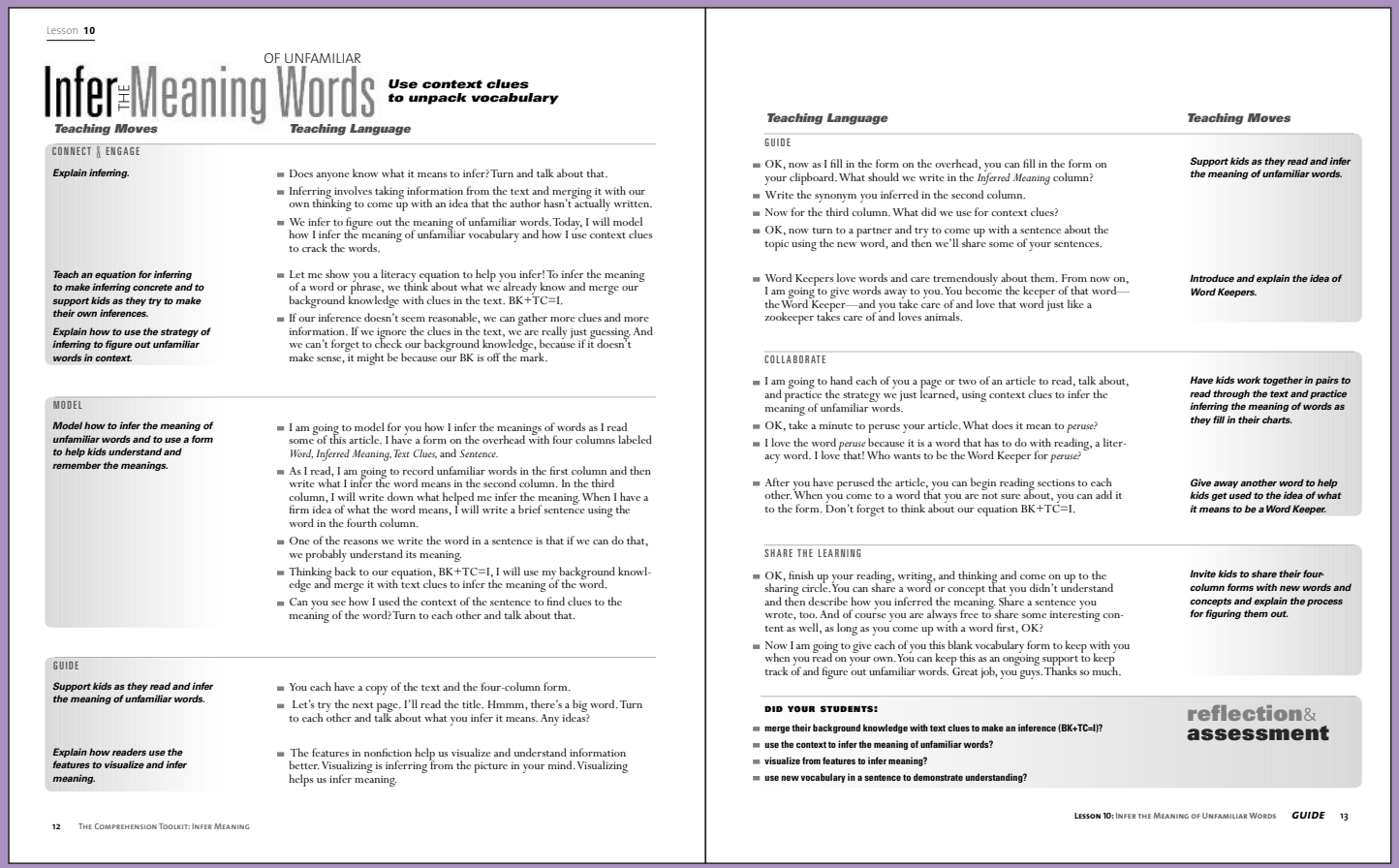
In fact, many kids had trouble with the definition of *society* used in the text. So this provides a great teaching opportunity. I would begin the next day's lesson with a review of some of the words, and I would include a discussion of the word *society* and talk about the multiple meanings of the word, noting how it is used in the text as well as the more common definition. I would then focus the general discussion on multiple meanings to help kids become more aware of these.





The Comprehension Toolkit
Lesson Guide

- **The Lesson Guide outlines the lesson's teaching moves and language and supports you to do the lesson with your own text.**



Lesson 10

Infer the Meaning of Unfamiliar Words

Use context clues to unpack vocabulary

Teaching Moves	Teaching Language
CONNECT & ENGAGE	
Explain inferring.	▪ Does anyone know what it means to infer? Turn and talk about that. ▪ Inferring involves taking information from the text and merging it with our own thinking to come up with an idea that the author hasn't actually written. ▪ We infer to figure out the meaning of unfamiliar words. Today, I will model how I infer the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary and how I use context clues to crack the words.
Teach an equation for inferring to make inferring concrete and to support kids as they try to make their own inferences. ***Explain how to use the strategy of inferring to figure out unfamiliar words in context.***	▪ Let me show you a literacy equation to help you infer! To infer the meaning of a word or phrase, we think about what we already know and merge our background knowledge with clues in the text. BK+TC=I. ▪ If our inference doesn't seem reasonable, we can gather more clues and more information. If we ignore the clues in the text, we are really just guessing. And we can't forget to check our background knowledge, because if it doesn't make sense, it might be because our BK is off the mark.
MODEL	
Model how to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words and to use a form to help kids understand and remember the meanings.	▪ I am going to model for you how I infer the meanings of words as I read some of this article. I have a form on the overhead with four columns labeled *Word, Inferred Meaning, Text Clues,* and *Sentence.* ▪ As I read, I am going to record unfamiliar words in the first column and then write what I infer the word means in the second column. In the third column, I will write down what helped me infer the meaning. When I have a firm idea of what the word means, I will write a brief sentence using the word in the fourth column. ▪ One of the reasons we write the word in a sentence is that if we can do that, we probably understand its meaning. ▪ Thinking back to our equation, BK+TC=I, I will use my background knowledge and merge it with text clues to infer the meaning of the word. ▪ Can you see how I used the context of the sentence to find clues to the meaning of the word? Turn to each other and talk about that.
GUIDE	
Support kids as they read and infer the meaning of unfamiliar words.	▪ You each have a copy of the text and the four-column form. ▪ Let's try the next page. I'll read the title. Hmmm, there's a big word. Turn to each other and talk about what you infer it means. Any ideas?
Explain how readers use the features to visualize and infer meaning.	▪ The features in nonfiction help us visualize and understand information better. Visualizing is inferring from the picture in your mind. Visualizing helps us infer meaning.

Teaching Language	Teaching Moves
GUIDE	
▪ OK, now as I fill in the form on the overhead, you can fill in the form on your clipboard. What should we write in the *Inferred Meaning* column? ▪ Write the synonym you inferred in the second column. ▪ Now for the third column. What did we use for context clues? ▪ OK, now turn to a partner and try to come up with a sentence about the topic using the new word, and then we'll share some of your sentences.	***Support kids as they read and infer the meaning of unfamiliar words.***
▪ Word Keepers love words and care tremendously about them. From now on, I am going to give words away to you. You become the keeper of that word—the Word Keeper—and you take care of and love that word just like a zookeeper takes care of and loves animals.	***Introduce and explain the idea of Word Keepers.***
COLLABORATE	
▪ I am going to hand each of you a page or two of an article to read, talk about, and practice the strategy we just learned, using context clues to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words. ▪ OK, take a minute to peruse your article. What does it mean to *peruse?* ▪ I love the word *peruse* because it is a word that has to do with reading, a literacy word. I love that! Who wants to be the Word Keeper for *peruse?*	***Have kids work together in pairs to read through the text and practice inferring the meaning of words as they fill in their charts.***
▪ After you have perused the article, you can begin reading sections to each other. When you come to a word that you are not sure about, you can add it to the form. Don't forget to think about our equation BK+TC=I.	***Give away another word to help kids get used to the idea of what it means to be a Word Keeper.***
SHARE THE LEARNING	
▪ OK, finish up your reading, writing, and thinking and come on up to the sharing circle. You can share a word or concept that you didn't understand and then describe how you inferred the meaning. Share a sentence you wrote, too. And of course you are always free to share some interesting content as well, as long as you come up with a word first, OK? ▪ Now I am going to give each of you this blank vocabulary form to keep with you when you read on your own. You can keep this as an ongoing support to keep track of and figure out unfamiliar words. Great job, you guys. Thanks so much.	***Invite kids to share their four-column forms with new words and concepts and explain the process for figuring them out.***

DID YOUR STUDENTS:

- **merge their background knowledge with text clues to make an inference (BK+TC=I)?**
- **use the context to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words?**
- **visualize from features to infer meaning?**
- **use new vocabulary in a sentence to demonstrate understanding?**

reflection & assessment

The Comprehension Toolkit

Informational Texts

"If kids are not reading engaging, interesting, thought-provoking text, why bother? We need to provide kids opportunities to read text worth thinking about. Students need a steady diet of texts that present a variety of perspectives, opinions, and interpretations."

Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis

The Comprehension Toolkit

Informational Texts

Students learn successful reading strategies as they read real-world informational texts.

Source Book of Short Text

Lesson Text

- 24 articles from children's magazines
- used in lessons as models of exemplary text
- provided in a reproducible format

Nonfiction Short Texts

- 43 short informational articles
- written for the *Toolkit*
- age-appropriate essays on a range of topics

The Comprehension Toolkit

Informational Texts

Trade Book Pack

- 7 engaging trade books
- referenced in *Toolkit* lessons
- Because these popular books may already be owned these books are available as an optional purchase

The Comprehension Toolkit

Built-In Professional Support

Extend & Investigate

Content Literacy: Social Studies and Science Reading

- two fully-developed samples of content area topic studies
- templates for use with your own content units

Strategy Extension

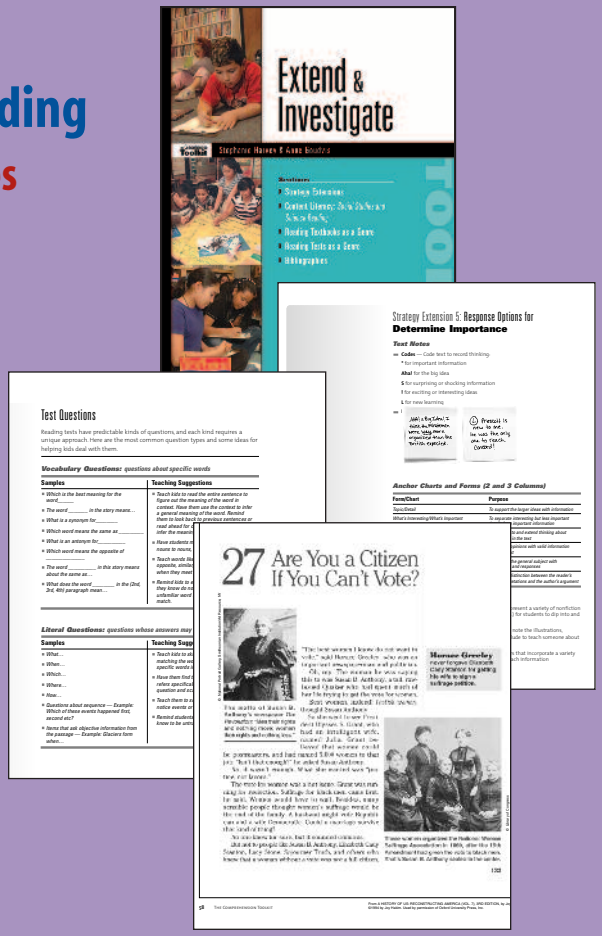
- multiple options for crafting differentiated instruction

The Genre of Textbook Reading

- 10 model lessons target challenges common to content area textbooks

The Genre of Test Reading

- strategies for navigating the reading challenges of standardized tests



Related Resources

Toolkit Texts

Book of Masters

- short nonfiction texts for guided and independent practice
- three-levels: grades 2–3, 4–5, and 6–7
- from children's magazines
- correlated to *The Comprehension Toolkit*

CD-ROM

- all articles in full-color
- all articles in English and Spanish
- search articles by title, topic, or comprehension strategy

Related Resources

The Primary Comprehension Toolkit

Grades K–2

- 6 Strategy Books
- Built-In Professional Support
  - Teacher's Guide
  - DVD-ROM
- Real World Informational Text
  - Lesson Text Poster Pack
  - Source Book of Short Text
  - Trade Book Pack