Text Connections
Activity

LEVELS 11, 15, 18, 21

What are Text Connections?

Learning is anchored in building meaningful connections. When it comes to building reading comprehension, readers must make connections among their background knowledge, what they are reading, and other texts (Keene & Zimmerman, 1997; National Research Council, 2000). One key element of quality literacy instruction is supporting readers as they make connections among texts that present different angles on a multifaceted topic (Duke, Pearson, Strachan, & Billman, 2011; Lesaux, 2012). When students engage in these connected reading opportunities, they gain a deeper understanding of each text, build their content-area knowledge, and ultimately "read to learn."

Why is it important to think critically and build connections when reading?

Reading success in school and beyond requires the content-area knowledge, critical thinking skills, and engagement necessary for "reading to learn" (Goldman, Snow, & Vaughn, 2016). First, to read deeply, readers must continuously draw on background knowledge and then connect it with what they are reading. When a text's concepts are too unfamiliar, the comprehension process breaks down. Cultivating students' content-area knowledge and promoting their reading comprehension development go hand in hand (Duke & Block, 2012; Lesaux & Harris, 2015; McKeown, Beck, & Blake, 2009). Second, reading to learn means connecting deeply with texts by interpreting, evaluating, and synthesizing ideas and concepts. Strong reading comprehension instruction supports critical thinking and allows students to expand their interpretations of what they read (Snow, 2018). Third, it is important to remember that engagement drives learning—in school and beyond. A reader's sense of purpose, competence, and autonomy supports the sustained engagement needed to think critically and build connections (Wigfield, Gladstone, & Turci, 2016).

What is the approach to developing comprehension in the Text Connections activity?

Levels 11, 15, 18, and 21 of Lexia® Core5® Reading each contain an activity titled Text Connections. The activities are organized into text sets, each of which is anchored in an engaging, content-area theme (Neuman & Roskos, 2012; Wigfield, Mason-Singh, Ho, & Guthrie, 2014). These themes dig deeply into a big idea related to a science, social studies, or literary standard (e.g., How do instincts help migrating birds?).

Every text set includes four connected texts, each of which is presented in one of four high-interest formats that offer flexible modes of interaction: (1) linear texts that integrate genre-specific text features; (2) highly visual "slideshows" that provided a shared reading experience; (3) hyperlinked, "clickable" diagrams, timelines, maps, and annotated illustrations; and (4) interactive "text construction" tasks that use a digital genre called "interactive fiction" to require students to apply and synthesize what they learned throughout a set of texts (Kozdras, Haunstetter, & King, 2006). Each reading is followed by a task (graphic organizer, concept sort, or multiple choice questions) designed to spur deep comprehension within and across texts.

Works Cited

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