

Chapter 3

Noticing Key Details

In Chapter 2, we explored how to get students into the inner game of reading: how to help them as readers orient themselves to the text by noticing the conversational topics that the reading takes up. *Why?* Because before students can play the game of reading, they have to be in the ballpark and know what game they are in.

The way we notice key details is informed by our purpose—by how we think we might use the information. As we argued in the last chapter, being assigned to read an unfamiliar text is like being dropped by a helicopter into unfamiliar terrain. You first have to get the lay of the land. But once you get oriented, you have to pay attention to the specific details of that terrain. Your noticing those details determines the actual journey you'll make.

In this chapter, we explore how students must learn *how to notice* what is most essential in a text. To continue our metaphor, we explore how to help students recognize the signposts and landmarks necessary to their meaning-making journeys.

To help them do this, our lessons focus on *conceptual detail* and *authorial moves*—that is, *how authors cue readers to attend to critical details*. We then focus on teaching students to use what they notice to make meaning. Expert readers notice and remember key details, connecting what they notice to other details and overall patterns. The ability to notice and connect details is a major characteristic of expert readers. Poor readers may be able to decode and understand text at the local level, but experts build knowledge

throughout their reading by connecting what they have read before to what they are reading in the moment—they make meaning globally. Poor readers often do not differentiate between details that are just texture and those that are significant to remember; expert readers know how to do this.

Novice or developing readers like our students need to learn how to say: *Here's what I know is important in this text and why I know it's important in this context and for this purpose*. They then need to be able to add what they notice to other details so that they can weave the accumulated details into patterns. Doing so is necessary to identify the overall trajectory of a piece of writing. Readers can then use their understanding of key details to comprehend what they all add up to in terms of total meaning and effect.

Think about a kind of reading often portrayed as being relatively easy: reading an excerpt, a kind of reading often required during information searches or on tests. Reading an excerpt requires even more alert noticing and unpacking than does reading a complete text because the reader has to infer what came before the excerpt (the pretext) and what will come afterward. Reading an excerpt requires students to see, in a short burst of text, the patterning of the larger text, where that pattern came from, and where it will lead.

It's crucial to know what's key.

We want to enable our students to do what expert readers do: attend to the most important details

during reading and put them together in order to understand the main ideas of a text so they can carry the ideas forward into their lives. If we can do this, we will have achieved something profound, something that will help our students as readers, writers, and humans both in school and out.

What happens if we can't accurately notice all the crucial details and what they add up to? Our reading will become associational and off point—we won't be in conversation with the authors and their texts about meaningful issues in life and society. This is a problem we often see students experiencing. If they aren't oriented to the conversational topic(s), then they have no idea what to notice and no purpose for noticing.

They become overburdened trying to attend equally to every detail in a text. Since they can't remember everything, they forget everything. On their reading journey, they can't see the forest *or* the trees.



Reading Visuals for Topic and Topic-Comment

Video 3.1

[http://resources.corwin.com/
divingdeep-nonfiction](http://resources.corwin.com/divingdeep-nonfiction)

Before Reading: A Tool for Noticing Key Details

One of the most profound insights of Peter Rabinowitz (1987), whose work has inspired the teaching we describe here, is that writers write with expectations about how readers are going to read. He argues that writers and readers, experienced readers anyway, have shared assumptions about how texts are constructed to be communicative and impactful—to have meaning and effect. We regard this insight as a *threshold concept* and strategies for enacting it as *threshold processes*. Our work here is to articulate those shared assumptions between writer and reader and so gain the following payoffs:

1. Students become more powerful and consciously competent readers.
2. They become better writers in two ways:
 - a. By being better readers, they get more grist for their own writing, using reading to develop their own ideas and understandings.
 - b. By coming to understand and articulate the expectations writers have of readers, they can put these same codes and structures into their own writing.

In other words, students must learn to notice both *what* writers want them to notice and *how* writers code their texts to cue this noticing.

As we explained in the last chapter, through our own self-studies and teacher research on student reading, we've identified four general rules of notice. Not only do they help readers recognize the conversation of which the text is a part; these four rules of notice also help students identify what's most important as they read. These lessons are designed to help students apply the rules of notice—to help them identify what they need to pay special attention to in order to make sense of what they are reading and to do work with what they are reading.

Noticing Key Details

READING VISUAL TEXTS

Introduction

In our lessons, we follow a central principle of instructional sequencing from cognitive science: start with the concrete before moving to the abstract, and start with the visual and visually supported before moving to texts without such support. Using visuals also makes the modeling more concrete and accessible, something that is especially important for struggling readers, English learners, and the refugee students with whom we work.

We've had great success modeling how to notice key details using the painting *American Gothic* by Grant Wood. This painting works conceptually in inquiry units about relationships, gender roles, trouble, work, the American character, and many other topics.

Lesson Steps

Step 1

Set the purpose for learning the reader's rules of notice for key details:

- Review with students the purpose of today's lesson. Include a review of the four general rules of notice. Perhaps point the students to an anchor chart of the rules that you made in a previous lesson (for an example, see Figure 2.1 on page 23).
- Tell students that you'll be "reading" a painting together, Grant Wood's *American Gothic*, focusing first on noticing key details and then on using the topic-comment strategy (introduced in Chapter 2, Lesson 4, page 39) to figure out what the painting means and how it was structured to communicate that meaning and effect.

PURPOSE

- To discover, name, and practice the reader's rules of notice for key details, including attention to all four general rules, and to use the rules of notice to identify main ideas and thematic generalizations. The four general rules include
 - Direct statements of a principle or generalization
 - Ruptures
 - Calls to attention
 - Reader's response
- To apply these rules to a painting to discover the key details of the painting and how these key details are structured to work together to communicate meaning and effect

LENGTH

- Approximately 75–90 minutes (can be split into two 45-minute classes)

MATERIALS NEEDED

- A way to project Grant Wood's *American Gothic* on a screen so all students can see and study it
- Chart paper to create an anchor chart in a place that all students can see
- A way to look at zoomed-in sections (quadrants) of the painting for students to see up-close

- Share with students that *Gothic* can mean “prototype” or “typical example.”
- Point out that titles are always a rule of notice—they are a call to attention. (We often discuss how the title *American Gothic* might be seen as a kind of direct statement as well—i.e., that the two subjects are quintessential American “types.” *Gothic* can also refer to the strange, frightening, or mysterious if you want to go there!)
- Project the painting one quadrant at a time, if possible, to see what students notice, or simply ask them what details jump out at them and why. For a link to an interactive version of *American Gothic*, visit <http://resources.corwin.com/divingdeep-nonfiction>.

Step 2

Get started with naming understandings:

- Ask students to quickly list all the things that jump out at them in the painting.
- Invite them to explain how they know to notice these things, and what rules of notice are being employed.
- Ask them:
 - *What does Wood want you to notice in the painting? How do you know?*
 - *What do you see that is surprising? What do you not see that you may have expected?*
 - *How do you know to “see” these things—what rules of notice has the painter used?*
- Have students draw a line down the middle of a notebook page. On the left, have them list what they noticed; on the right, have them write how they knew to notice this detail. Compare their reasoning to the rules of notice for key details.
- Ask:
 - *What did the painter do to draw your attention to particular details?*
 - *What was the tip-off or cue to notice them?*
- Allow students to work for a few minutes on their own list of details. As they write, encourage them to use the four general rules of notice, but also to be as specific as they can in identifying the cue that enacts each rule (e.g., *title* for call to attention, or *emotional charge* for the nature of their intense reader’s response).
- Next, have them share in pairs or triads what they noticed and how they knew to notice it.



Noticing Details in a Painting: Wood’s *American Gothic*

Video 3.2

<http://resources.corwin.com/divingdeep-nonfiction>

Step 3

Consolidate students' understanding and add specific details to the anchor chart:

- Invite student groups to share their ideas with the whole class. Create a chart for rules of notice for key details, adding specific examples of the general rules of notice to the chart as the students share.
- Ask: *How did the artist prompt us to notice these things?*
- Help the students to name the rules of notice both generally and specifically. For example:
 - *That is “repetition,” and you always notice things that are repeated. We have to notice repetition as the artist is using that detail to bring our attention to it. Repetition is a kind of “call to attention” rule of notice.*
- Point out an example of repetition such as the vertical lines on the barn, the house, and the man’s shirt or how the pitchfork design is repeated on his pocket and in the dormer window.

For a link to an interactive version of *American Gothic* and an example of what a classroom conversation about it might sound like, visit the companion website at <http://resources.corwin.com/diving-deep-nonfiction>.

Step 4

Ask the class to consider connections and patterns among the key details:

- As needed, prompt noticing that students may have missed—for example, by asking them to make comparisons and contrasts. Ask:
 - *How do the woman and man compare?*
 - *How are they portrayed similarly and differently?*
 - *What are their separate worlds? How do you know?*
 - *What are their shared worlds? How do you know?*
 - *What shared worlds do they inhabit?*
- Cue students to look at the corners of the painting from left to right and from bottom to top.
- Ask: *How do things change as you move across the painting in these ways? What other things do you notice?*



**Discussing
Possible Topics:
Wood's American
Gothic**

Video 3.3

<http://resources.corwin.com/divingdeep-nonfiction>

Step 5

Invite students to identify and share topics, and to justify them with reference to key details:

- Ask students to confer with their small groups and discuss the class list of key details. Have them consider:
 - *How do the details all relate to each other?*
 - *What common topics might all of the details comment on?*
- Remind students that all texts have multiple topics, but that they must confirm any topic by showing how all of a text's major details relate to it in some way.
- Circulate as students try out topics together, and ask them to justify their choices. Students also should justify their topics to each other.

Step 6

Ask students to report and justify topics to the larger group:

- Invite the student groups to report to the class. As they share, probe groups for how major details relate to the topic. If necessary, help them to revise their topics to match the patterns of details.
- On chart paper, compile a list of topics brought up by the students (e.g., marriage, relationships, gender roles, farm life, religious influence). Comment on how topics can be more general (e.g., farm life) or more specific (e.g., farm life in the early 1900s).
- Lead a whole-class discussion. Ask:
 - *How specific do you think the artist is trying to be?*
 - *Why do you think so? [You might remind students that the painting's title is American Gothic, which can mean "American types or icons."]*
 - *How does the title give clues to possible topics?*
- Mention that identifying a topic is akin to setting a purpose and creating applications for what we read. If a topic of the painting is gender roles, then what can we learn from the painting, and how might we apply and use this in our life? It's also important for students to understand that even seemingly simple texts, including a painting, will potentially explore multiple topics that all key details comment on in some way.

Step 7

Apply the topic–comment strategy (see Chapter 2, Lesson 4) to show how patterns of details express the comment about the topic:

- Model topic–comment statements with one of the topics (e.g., gender roles). Emphasize that the statement must begin with the topic and then make a comment about the topic:
 - *Gender roles are . . .*
 - *Gender roles require . . .*
 - *Gender roles can often . . .*
 - *Gender roles can result . . .*
- Try out the following model topic–comment statements:
 - *Gender roles regulate genders to different worlds of work and influence.*
 - *Gender roles require the woman to be positioned behind the man and at home instead of out in the world.*
 - *Gender roles can often be stifling for both males and females.*
- Follow up by explaining how the details of the painting work together to justify the comment that’s been expressed.

Step 8

In small groups, try out various other topics and topic–comment statements to show that even a simple work like a painting can cover multiple topics:

- Invite students to confer in their small groups. Ask:
 - *What other topic do you want to try out, and what comment is the painting making about that topic?*
 - *What makes you say so? How do the details form a pattern of meaning that makes that comment?*
- Have students list commentary verbs they can add to the topic to make their statement (e.g., *is/are, require/s, can/may, results in/leads to*). Have them add one of these to their topic to complete the thought (e.g., “Marriage is . . .”).

Step 9

Review the process with the whole class:

- Ask the student groups to report what the painting expresses about relationships, marriage, gender roles, farm life, or whatever other topic they have justified.
- Remind students that the topic–comment statement is a theme or generalization that the work of art can be said to be making about the world. Remind them to ask themselves what key details, working together, led to the expression of their theme.
- Record their topics and comments on chart paper.



Practicing Topic- Comment With *American Gothic* Parodies

Video 3.4

<http://resources.corwin.com/divingdeep-nonfiction>

Step 10

Look at parodies to show how changing a detail changes the topic and the theme—all of these elements work together to express meaning and effect:

- Tell students that you are going to look at some parodies of *American Gothic* and remind them that a parody mimics and changes an iconic work in some significant way.
- Explain that parodies rupture the original text and it is precisely that rupture that readers must notice. This change in details or structuring of details introduces a new topic and therefore makes a new comment. Help students to see how specific details and structurings lead to specific topics and comments.
- Note that parodies make use of comparison and contrast because the artist is asking us to compare his or her version to the original and to see how a new topic and comment are being expressed by the changes.
- Project a parody of *American Gothic* (examples are available on the book's companion website at <http://resources.corwin.com/divingdeep-nonfiction>). Ask:
 - *What are the new details?*
 - *How do these new details express a new topic?*
 - *A new comment?*
- Show another parody if you wish and ask the same questions. Students enjoy these parodies, as they are often funny. They also enjoy getting the “inside joke,” which they wouldn't if they hadn't studied the original work.
- If you have time and access to computers, have students find additional parodies and quickly come up with new topics and comments, sharing as they do so.

Step 11

Review and consolidate students' learning:

- Work together as a class to review and consolidate the anchor chart on the rules of notice for key details. Ask the students to think about how they worked to unpack what they noticed by using the topic-comment strategy.
- Ask:
 - *How did this help you to see patterns?*
 - *How can we apply this process to reading other situations and texts?*
 - *What besides paintings could you try to “read” in this way between today and tomorrow?*

Extensions

- Have students create memes of their topic–comment statements. Some sites that work well for students include the following:
 - Imgflip: <https://imgflip.com/memegenerator>
 - Meme Maker: www.mememaker.net
 - Quick Meme: www.quickmeme.com/caption
- Use the same lesson plan sequence with another classic painting. (Jan van Eyck's *The Arnolfini Marriage*, shown in Figure 3.1, is a great one to use after *American Gothic*, as it's also a double portrait of a man and woman.)



Source: Wikimedia Commons

Figure 3.1

Jan van Eyck's *The Arnolfini Marriage*



Lesson 2

Noticing Key Details

THINKING ALOUD

PURPOSE

- To learn how key details work together inside a text to create meaning and effect, including thematic generalizations, and then to practice noticing key details in a nonfiction text

LENGTH

- Approximately 60 minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED

- A class set of Handout 3.1, “The Great Fire (Excerpt),” and an excerpt from Jim Murphy’s *The Great Fire* or a complex nonfiction text of your own choosing
- Chart paper or another means of recording examples from the text

Introduction

We previously referenced the idea of *threshold* knowledge. We think that rules of notice are both a threshold concept and a threshold process that give us a transformative view of what writers do to code their texts with meaning. We also believe this knowledge provides a gateway process (Hillocks, 1995) for reading and writing in new and more powerful ways.

As students engage in inquiry over time, we want them to learn transferable, generative, and unconstrained *concepts* and *processes* that will inform how they understand and participate in disciplinary meaning making and apply disciplinary knowledge throughout their lives. We want them to learn concepts that allow them to see and think as experts about the world.

The consideration of threshold knowledge to organize and focus curriculum can be especially useful in areas where curriculum tends to be overloaded (and where isn’t it?)—where curriculum becomes a mile wide and an inch deep, as Wiggins and McTighe (2005) express it.

The takeaway is that understanding threshold knowledge can inform teachers’ thinking about organizing curriculum and about what texts to choose for or make available to students: those that provide threshold concepts for thinking differently and more generatively about the topic at hand, and those that require and reward using threshold processes, like the reader’s rules of notice. Threshold concepts are often expressed in direct statements of generalization. They are always expressed in ruptures as they are troublesome and address misconceptions. And threshold knowledge always gives a radical new way of seeing the topic or doing the discipline.

Thinking aloud is a tremendously powerful technique for modeling and mentoring expert reading, then monitoring strategy use by students, including the use of threshold strategies (Wilhelm, 2012a). Thinking aloud is also great for discovering, with students, what we do and need

to do as we read. We use think-alouds to do self-studies, to engage in teacher research with students, and to model and practice how to engage in expert reading with particular strategies.

We like to model the processes of noticing with short texts or excerpts that are concentrated samples of the use of particular rules of notice. In this way, we can make our own reading “visible” and available to students, give students repeated modeling and practice with a short excerpt, and provide a platform to begin including and mentoring students in the process of using a particular strategy like noticing key details. It is important to note that the rules of notice in most nonfiction texts are not as densely packed as they are in the concentrated samples we use in this book to do initial modeling and practicing of strategies with students.

Lesson Steps

Step 1

Model the think-aloud process and name the rules of notice and key details being noticed, and mentor students into participating in the process with you:

- Provide a print copy of the text, with the text on the left so that students can write in the right-hand column what they notice and think.
- Model the think-aloud. Note that this is the modeling phase of the think-aloud and should be done only until students are ready to be mentored into participating in the think-aloud process.
- As you read and think out loud, have students underline the text details that you notice and record *why* you notice each feature, naming what rule of notice is in play.
- Have one student keep an anchor chart of the specific examples of each rule of notice that comes up. See Figure 3.2 for an example.
- Invite students to participate in the think-aloud, stopping often to ask questions or pausing to see how students will participate.

A sample think-aloud of an excerpt from *The Great Fire* follows. We provide it as a generative model to guide you in creating your own think-aloud on this or other texts highlighting rules of notice.

Rules of Notice: Key Details

1) Direct Statements

The great fire
Def ✓
article judgment

You gotta know
What's Key!

Remember the wheat
Not the chaff

2) Calls to Attention!

Titles, intensifiers, explanations, metaphors, intros, re-post connections.

Names: Pg-Leg

Intensifiers, unusually warm

Refers to heat, Fire, Wood.

Characteristics of characters and setting

Example: Shingled cottage, little house

3) Ruptures

One-legged-unusual already in lead
different

Surprising - unusually warm

4) Reader Response

Emotional change, questions I have, why start with pg leg

What I want to know, what I already know
about Irish

Figure 3.2

Anchor Chart: Noticing Key Details

SAMPLE THINK-ALOUD

Lesson 2. Noticing Key Details:
Thinking Aloud

The Great Fire

By Jim Murphy

The title is a call to attention.

So this will be about a fire and a great one, the great one. I like the idea of learning more about disasters. It's an important topic. "The Great" is an intensifier, and I should notice it because it's a call to attention.

The title is also a direct statement because we have a definite article and a judgment. If something is called "The Great" something, then it's being named, and I want to notice names. I happen to know that this fire is the one in Chicago. I also could figure that out from the back cover. But I am wondering what angle Mr. Murphy will take. Lots of rules of notice in play already!

OK, I want to go slow now. We know that beginnings are always important and have a privileged position and give privileged information. This is a call to attention.

It was Sunday and an unusually warm ending for October eighth, so Daniel "Peg Leg"

I know names are important, especially nicknames. Why this nickname? One leg? That is another call to attention: Having one leg is a rupture from the norm.

Sullivan left his stifling

Connects to title, heat. So this is a call to attention using repetition or connection providing a kind of throughline—that is, an idea that runs through the text, is repeated, and connects and develops other ideas.

little house

So he's poor?

on the West Side of Chicago

Confirms this is about the Great Chicago Fire and where it started.

Tell students to mark this call to attention with one of their colored pens or pencils and to label it as "Title, always a call to attention."

Tell students to mark this with the same colored pen or pencil as "Intensifier: call to attention."

Tell students to mark this with a different colored pen or pencil for direct statements and label it as "Naming: direct statement of evaluation."

Tell students to mark this with their colored pencil for calls to attention and label it "Beginnings: call to attention through a privileged position."

Tell students to mark this with a new color and to label it "Unusual: rule of rupture." They could label it as "Names and Nicknames: call to attention" and underline it with the colored pencil for call to attention as well.

Tell students to underline this text with the color for calls to attention and to label it as "Repetition, throughline connections: calls to attention."

Tell students that it's call to attention when details of setting are mentioned, and readers are being asked to infer what that setting might reveal about character and how the setting might encourage or constrain certain behaviors.

Tell students to underline Chicago and note "Repetition, throughline: call to attention."

(Continued)



SAMPLE THINK-ALoud (CONT.)

and went to visit neighbors. One of his stops was at the shingled cottage

Tell students to underline shingled cottage and note: "Throughline/invitation to infer: call to attention."

Wood, and we know wood burns. This is another call to attention using repetition and connection.

of Patrick and Catherine O'Leary.

Tell students to underline O'Leary and to note "Names/invitations to infer about character: calls to attention and to underline as well with a new color and label: 'Activation of prior knowledge: rule of reader's response.'" You might also remind students that even the most expert readers don't notice everything—if they notice half of what an author wants them to notice, then they will be very successfully reading.

Sullivan and O'Leary—both Irish. This calls to attention names as well as connections. I bet they are in the Irish part of town. I know that the Irish came to this country after the potato famine, and often lived together in the same parts of cities like New York, Boston, and Chicago. They were hard workers and famous for their fighting in the Civil War. And O'Leary: O'Leary's cow, who kicked over the lantern! I've heard about this! This is my reader's response: a personal connection to prior knowledge.

The one-legged

Tell students to underline one-legged with the colors both for rupture and for call to attention and to label it "Unusual: rupture" and "Repetition, connection to throughline: call to attention."

One-legged—so I'm right about the nickname. That's unusual. Given the time period, could he be a Civil War veteran? So it's a rupture and an invitation to infer. It's also another call to attention using repetition and connection.

Sullivan remembered getting to the O'Learys' house at around eight o'clock,

Tell students to underline remembered and label it as "Reference to pretext: call to attention."

Ah, so someone asked him his memories after the fire—reporters? Investigators? This call to attention is a reference to the pretext—that is, a reference to something that must have happened before the text begins in order for the text to make sense.

but left after only a few minutes because the O'Leary family was already in bed.

Tell students to underline eight and already in bed and label the text as "Unusual: rupture."

This is a rupture: Eight is pretty early for bed. They must be hard workers.

Both Patrick and Catherine had to be up very early in the morning: he to set off for his job as a laborer; she to milk their five cows

Tell students to underline with the colors for both reader response and call to attention and label the text as "Activation of prior knowledge: reader response" and "Character activity: call to attention about character."

There's that cow. Another reader's response to prior knowledge, plus a call to attention: a character inference about these two being working class.

and then deliver the milk to neighbors. . . . Fifteen minutes later, Sullivan decided to go home. . . . [He sat down to adjust his leg.] It was while pushing himself up that Sullivan first saw the fire—a single tongue of flame

(Continued)

SAMPLE THINK-ALoud (CONT.)

*I have to notice all figures of speech, comparisons and contrasts, and exaggerations in this case as they are all **calls to attention**.*

Tell students to underline with the color for call to attention and label the text as "Figures of speech, comparisons, hyperbole: all calls to attention."

shooting out the side of the O'Learys' barn. Sullivan didn't hesitate a second. "FIRE! FIRE! FIRE!"

*Here the **calls to attention** are repetition and emotional charge.*

Tell students to underline with the color for call to attention and note: "Repetition, exclamation marks, emotional charge: all calls to attention."

he shouted as loudly as he could. . . .

*Another **call to attention**: intensity.*

Tell students to underline with the color for call to attention and note: "Intensity: call to attention."

The building was already burning fiercely . . .

*And another **call to attention**: repetition, emotional language.*

Tell students to underline with the color for call to attention and note: "Repetition and intense emotional language: calls to attention."

The barn's loft held over three tons of timothy hay, delivered earlier that day.

*Hay would burn like . . . well, wildfire! That connection is a **call to attention**. I should notice causality.*

Tell students to underline with the color for call to attention and note: "Connection, throughlines, articulated or implied causality: all calls to attention."

Flames from the burning hay pushed against the roof and beams . . .

*Here's a **call to attention** that is intensely visual and personal—we know the people involved. Now, I notice this is a story. It involves real people. I'm wondering at the pace. It meanders. Why did Murphy start this way? To get us into the personal aspects and effects?*

Tell students to underline this phrase with the color for call to attention and note: "Visual; personal connection: calls to attention." Encourage students to mark this as well as a reader's response if they have an intense visualization or personal reaction to the scene.

Source: Murphy, J. (1995). *The great fire*. New York, NY: Scholastic.

Step 2

Mentor students to take part in the think-aloud in pairs or triads and in the larger group:

- Continue reading and thinking aloud until students begin to show readiness for the next step. They will start to join in, name what they notice, cite rules of notice, unpack interpretations, write on their own, or finish sentences. This is all good as this moves the group to a collaborative think-aloud.
- If they need more encouragement and assistance, point out a key detail and then ask students in pairs or triads to consider what rule was used, what meaning they make of it, or how they connect that detail to other details. After a minute or so, have them report their small-group thinking to the class.
- Or, read a paragraph, cite a rule, and see if students can notice another specific word or phrase tipped off for special notice as a key detail by that rule.
- Stop before the think-aloud is complete, once the students have gained some confidence in this mentoring phase of the process.

Step 3

Invite students to work in pairs or triads, or individually, without the teacher's help, then report to the whole class:

- Have students work in pairs or triads for a page or so of the text.
- Lead a whole-class discussion in which students can compare and add to each other's work. Record their noticings and rules on the anchor chart.

Extensions

- Have students do their own written group think-alouds with other texts using Google Docs (see Wilhelm [2012a] for specific examples of models for how to do this).
- Ask students to think aloud about different short excerpts for homework and then get together to share their close readings. You can use a short chapter or section of text that they've read.
- Challenge students to change a sentence or several details in an excerpt. Ask:
 - *How does this deleting, adding, moving, or changing of details affect the reading and what is noticed?*
 - *How does this change affect meaning and effect?*
 - *What would you expect to follow this revision, and how would it be different from the original?*
 - *How would things change, for example, if the excerpt from *The Great Fire* was told through the perspective of Catherine O'Leary?*

The Great Fire (Excerpt)

By Jim Murphy

It was Sunday and an unusually warm ending for October eighth, so Daniel "Peg Leg" Sullivan left his stifling little house on the West Side of Chicago and went to visit neighbors. One of his stops was at the shingled cottage of Patrick and Catherine O'Leary. The one-legged Sullivan remembered getting to the O'Learys' house at around eight o'clock, but left after only a few minutes because the O'Leary family was already in bed. Both Patrick and Catherine had to be up very early in the morning: he to set off for his job as a laborer; she to milk their five cows and then deliver the milk to neighbors. . . .

Fifteen minutes later, Sullivan decided to go home. . . . [He sat down to adjust his leg.] It was while pushing himself up that Sullivan first saw the fire—a single tongue of flame out the side of the O'Learys' barn.

Sullivan didn't hesitate a second. "FIRE! FIRE! FIRE!" he shouted as loudly as he could. . . .

The building was already burning fiercely. . . .

The barn's loft held over three tons of timothy hay, delivered earlier that day. Flames from the burning hay pushed against the roof and beams. . . .

Source: Murphy, J. (1995). *The great fire*. New York, NY: Scholastic.



Available for download at <http://resources.corwin.com/divingdeep-nonfiction>

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Lesson 3

Noticing Key Details

PRACTICE IN MINIATURE

PURPOSE

- To practice the rule of notice regarding direct statements of a principle or generalization

LENGTH

- Approximately 60–90 minutes (can be split into two 45-minute classes)

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Class sets of short movie reviews—if the movies are related to the class inquiry, you get a twofer! If you like, you can begin with the review we provide in Handout 3.2, “Movie Review: *Avengers: Age of Ultron* (Excerpt).”
- Class sets of two short texts of your selection, or copies of Handout 3.3, “*Harriet Tubman: Conductor on the Underground Railroad* and *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself* (Excerpts)”

Introduction

It’s pretty clear from survey research that on average students don’t read or write nearly enough, and they certainly don’t get the kind of focused assistance and practice they need with the strategies necessary to read, write, and problem-solve in the ways that experts do. The research compels us that teachers need to provide lots of assisted practice in meaningful contexts of use, and then help students to develop independence and expertise that they can continue to develop throughout a lifetime. Students can do this if they have processes for comprehending text that are both flexible and transferable. Our aim is to transfer what cognitive scientists call “knowledge”—in contrast to “one size fits few” algorithms that are informational, limited, nongenerative, and not transferable to new situations. If we want students to gain mastery with the flexible processes we provide, we have to give them lots of chances to use them. This lesson provides those chances through practice in miniature.

To provide that practice, we often use materials and texts from popular culture that are familiar to kids. It’s best if the texts you choose (or write) relate in some way to a larger inquiry the class is pursuing. In that way, you get a twofer and build both conceptual and procedural knowledge through the activity.

Lesson Steps

Step 1

Introduce the lesson and its purpose in providing practice using one kind of rule of notice: that of direct statements of generalization, principle, or value.

- Tell students you will focus on one rule of notice: attending to direct statements of generalization.
- Explain that one way an author tells you something is important is to phrase it as a direct statement of generalization, principle, or value. For example, if an author is writing in favor

of schools' starting later, he or she might tell a story about a middle or high school student who just couldn't make it to first-period class. If the author then said something like, "If schools really cared about the learning of their adolescent students, they'd start later," you'd need to pay special attention because the author would be directly stating what he or she wants you to learn from the details provided.

Step 2

Provide a short movie review to students to prepare for a think-aloud:

- Distribute Handout 3.2, "Movie Review: *Avengers: Age of Ultron* (Excerpt)," or another short review of a current movie—or, even better, a review of a movie that speaks to the topical conversation being pursued in your current inquiry unit.
- Do a think-aloud focusing on the featured rule of notice. Once again, we provide an example as a guide for you to use in the pages that follow.

Step 3

Ask students to point out any other rules of notice they saw operating in the review.

Step 4

Move from modeling to mentoring the identification of direct statements with a new movie review:

- Distribute another movie review excerpt and mentor students to work individually to identify, articulate, share, and defend their selected direct statements of generalization, principle, or value.
- Divide students into pairs or triads to compare what they chose and how they knew it was a direct statement or generalization.
- If students have difficulty, highlight the first generalization to get them started, but then ask them to find additional generalizations on their own.
- Ask students to return to the review and identify any other rules of notice they found. If students have difficulty, model by identifying the first example of each.
- Repeat this process with other movie reviews until students have demonstrated that they are able to apply the rules of notice regarding direct statements of generalization, principle, or value.

Step 5

Teach to transfer by working with students to apply the process to more complex texts:

- Integrate the noticing and interpretation of direct statements with calls for attention, ruptures, and reader's response.



SAMPLE THINK-ALOUD

Lesson 3. Noticing Key Details:
Practice in Miniature

Movie Review: *Avengers: Age of Ultron* (Excerpt)

By Cary Darling

It's perhaps appropriate that the summer movie season kicks off with *Avengers: Age of Ultron*. It checks all the right boxes: It's long, loud, larded with effects and sporadically witty, and it sets up events for yet another sequel.

What it doesn't have is any sense of going above and beyond.

This is a direct statement: Good movies go above and beyond, and this review directly states that this movie just doesn't do that.

Unlike some other entries in the Marvel universe—the first *Iron Man*, *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*, *Guardians of the Galaxy*, or even the original *Avengers*—it doesn't transcend its boundaries.

Here the author is making another direct statement: Good movies transcend their boundaries and go beyond the expected.

Fans of the franchise will be pleased, but those looking in from the outside of comic-book culture may find themselves also looking at their watches.

Source: Darling, C. (2015, April 29). Movie review: "Avengers: Age of Ultron." *Star-Telegram*. Retrieved from <http://www.star-telegram.com/entertainment/arts-culture/article19881744.html>

- Distribute two short text excerpts of your next text selection to the class, or use the excerpts in Handout 3.3, “*Harriet Tubman: Conductor on the Underground Railroad and Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself* (Excerpts).” Clean copies of these for your students can also be found on this book’s companion website at <http://resources.corwin.com/divingdeep-nonfiction>.
- Tell students that they may work to identify rules of notice in the texts individually or in pairs if they are comfortable with using them. Invite students who need more help to gather around you for more guided assistance and mentoring, thus achieving differentiation based on need, grouping, and level of support provided.

In the pages that follow are sample think-alouds that can be used to model or prompt students’ thinking aloud. We’ve highlighted what we identified as rules of notice used in this concentrated sample. Your own model may vary.

Step 6

Consolidate students’ understanding of the process for noticing key details:

- Bring students back together as a class to share what they found in the two text excerpts.
- As they share, record their thinking on the anchor chart.
- Encourage them to add specific examples of each rule of notice to the anchor chart.
- Ask: *How might you use the rules of notice in the future?*
- Explain that these are concentrated samples and introductions to books, and that in most texts, and in longer texts, the rules of notice will be less dense and farther apart.

Extensions

- Have students find their own concentrated samples of text that use the reader’s rules of notice.
 - Invite them to bring the excerpts into class to share and for others to practice on.
 - Keep them in a classroom file of practice excerpts.
- Match the excerpts to the inquiry and essential question being studied to achieve a twofer. Your students are contributing to archives of both conceptual and strategic material for use in the unit, now and in the future!



SAMPLE THINK-ALOUD

Lesson 3. Noticing Key Details:
Practice in Miniature

Harriet Tubman: Conductor on the Underground Railroad and Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself (Excerpts)

Excerpt 1

From *Harriet Tubman: Conductor on the Underground Railroad*,
Chapter 3: "Six Years Old"

By the time Harriet Ross was six years old, she had unconsciously absorbed many kinds of knowledge, almost with the air she breathed.

That's a direct statement of generalization that she had unconsciously done lots of learning.

She could not, for example,

The word example is a call to attention.

have said how or at what moment she learned that she was a slave.

She knew that her brothers and sisters, her father and mother, and all the other people who lived in the quarter, men, women and children, were slaves.

This is another direct statement of generalization that everyone she was related to was a slave.

She had been taught to say, "Yes, Missus," "No, Missus," to white women, "Yes, Mas'r," "No, Mas'r," to white men. Or, "Yes, sah," "No, sah."

Calls to attention here include the emotional charge of positionality and relationship in regard to others—in this case, an inferior position to oppressors or slaveholders.

(Continued)



SAMPLE THINK-ALLOUD
(CONT.)

At the same time, someone had taught her where to look for the North Star, the star that stayed constant, not rising in the east and setting in the west as the other stars appeared to do; and told her that anyone walking toward the North could use that star as a guide.

That was a rupture: Contrast, surprise, and resistance are introduced with “at the same time” to show the shift. And as for a reader’s response, I must activate my background knowledge about the Underground Railroad and how slaves would navigate northward.

She knew about fear, too.

That’s a direct statement. And its emotional charge is a call to attention.

Sometimes at night, or during the day, she heard the furious

An emotional word!

galloping of horses, not just one horse, several horses, thud of the hoofbeats along the road, jingle of harness.

More calls to attention: visual and sensory.

She saw the grown folks freeze into stillness, not moving, scarcely breathing, while they listened.

The emotion and intensity here are both a rupture and a call to attention.

She could not remember who first told her that those furious hoofbeats

Another call to attention: repetition.

meant the patrollers were going past, in pursuit of a runaway. Only the slaves said patterollers,

That’s a rupture in dialect; slaves use different terms than others.

whispering the word.

And a final rupture here: whispering instead of talking to show how fearsome the patrollers were.

Source: Petry, Ann. *Harriet Tubman: Conductor on the Underground Railroad*. New York: HarperCollins, 1983. (1955)

(Continued)



SAMPLE THINK-ALoud

(CONT.)

Excerpt 2

From *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself*

I preferred the condition of the meanest reptile to my own.

This is a direct statement of the author's condition and feelings.

Any thing, no matter what, to get rid of thinking!

Calls to attention here are emotional charge and exclamation.

It was this everlasting thinking of my condition that tormented me.

Here's a direct statement of generalization—knowing he was a slave tormented him.

There was no getting rid of it.

This direct statement has finality: He absolutely could not get away from it; the repetition and emotional charge are calls to attention.

It was pressed upon me by every object within sight or hearing, animate or inanimate.

The repetition, relentlessness, and parallelism are calls to attention.

The silver trumpet of freedom had roused my soul to eternal wakefulness.

This sentence is visual and sensory, and the metaphor serves as a call to attention.

Freedom now appeared, to disappear no more forever.

Calls to attention also include the varied repetition and contrast of appear and disappear. Finality of "no more forever" is intense and another call to attention.

It was heard in every sound, and seen in every thing.

More calls to attention: repetition and parallelism.

It was ever present to torment me with a sense of my wretched condition.

(Continued)



SAMPLE THINK-ALLOUD
(CONT.)

The continued repetitions—for example, “torment”—and these emotionally charged words are also calls to attention.

I saw nothing without seeing it, I heard nothing without hearing it, and felt nothing without feeling it.

Repetition and parallelism, again, are calls to attention.

It looked from every star, it smiled in every calm, breathed in every wind, and moved in every storm.

This emphasizes those calls to attention: visual and sensory text, repetition, and parallelism.

Source: *Narrative of the life of Frederick Douglass, an American slave, written by himself.* Boston, MA: Anti-Slavery Office, 1845. (1845)

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Harriet Tubman: Conductor on the Underground Railroad and Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself (Excerpts)

Excerpt 1

From *Harriet Tubman: Conductor
on the Underground Railroad*,
Chapter 3: "Six Years Old"

By the time Harriet Ross was six years old, she had unconsciously absorbed many kinds of knowledge, almost with the air she breathed. She could not, for example, have said how or at what moment she learned that she was a slave. She knew that her brothers and sisters, her father and mother, and all the other people who lived in the quarter, men, women and children, were slaves. She had been taught to say, "Yes, Missus," "No, Missus," to white women, "Yes, Mas'r," "No, Mas'r," to white men. Or, "Yes, sah," "No, sah." At the same time, someone had taught her where to look for the North Star, the star that stayed constant, not rising in the east and setting in the west as the other stars appeared to do; and told her that anyone walking toward the North could use that star as a guide. She knew about fear, too. Sometimes at night, or during the day, she heard the furious galloping of horses, not just one horse, several horses, thud of the hoofbeats along the road, jingle of harness. She saw the grown folks freeze into stillness, not moving, scarcely breathing, while they listened. She could not remember who first told her that those furious hoofbeats meant the patrollers were going past, in pursuit of a runaway. Only the slaves said patterollers, whispering the word.

Source: Petry, Ann. *Harriet Tubman: Conductor on the Underground Railroad*. New York: HarperCollins, 1983. (1955)

(Continued)

Noticing Key Details

QUESTIONING

Introduction

Helping students to generate their own questions that support independent comprehension and interpretation definitely depends on (and assists with) noticing what is key. When teachers generate and ask the questions, they are the ones doing the noticing and all the work. When we teach students how to ask powerful questions, we must teach them to notice what's important to ask about, and to think about how these key details and moves make meaning and achieve effect. This moves students to greater competence and independence. We teach our students specific questioning strategies and techniques that reinforce and consolidate student independence with the processes for noticing and interpreting.

We want to stress that the whole purpose of questioning is to get students to internalize questioning schemes so that they come to ask their own independent questions of text that guide and monitor their reading now and into the future. We want the questioning schemes to become transferable and unconstrained sets of strategies—threshold procedures to be used and developed throughout a lifetime.

One of our favorite questioning techniques for helping students to generate questions based on noticing both key details and patterns of details is Taffy Raphael's (1982) QAR (Question–Answer Relationship) (see Wilhelm, Baker, & Dube [2001] and Wilhelm [2007] for how we use QAR questions to inquire into how texts work). We put a little tweak on our use of QARs to ensure that the “Right There” questions (described below) are about key details that can be connected to other details and used to generate inferential, critical, and applied questions. We call our version *cumulative QARs*.

We really like QARs because they mirror the trajectory of inquiry in all disciplines and subject areas (see Wilhelm [2007] for a thorough explanation of how this is the case in science, social sciences, and math). In QARs, there are four different types of questions that help students do different kinds of work:

PURPOSE

- To learn to generate QAR questions that move from the literal to the inferential and then to the interpretive, evaluative, and applied

LENGTH

- Approximately 45–90 minutes (can be split into two 45-minute classes)

MATERIALS NEEDED

- A short, complex nonfiction text

- Right There questions establish the facts/key details.
- Think and Search questions require inferring the patterns of these key details.
- Author and Me questions get after implied meanings that require combining textual information with background knowledge from one's life.
- On Your Own questions critique and apply what has been learned.

QARs also mirror what we understand about expert readers and what they do; that is, we know that expert readers first notice key details and literally comprehend, through what Raphael calls Right There questions, but that this literal comprehension is the springboard for the much more generative activities of inferring and figuring forth by filling in gaps and putting things together to see what patterns of meaning accrue. These are what Raphael calls Think and Search questions/comprehension.

Expert readers then go beyond this to combine these textual meanings with *extratextual* meanings—with personal life knowledge and a personal response—to see further connections and applications and to build evolving theories (through accommodation or assimilation) about how things work in the world. These are what Raphael calls Author and Me questions/comprehension.

We also know that experts engage in all these activities in the context of asking big questions of application about the world that may be informed by the text they are reading but are much bigger than the text and can be addressed without a specific reading. Raphael calls these On Your Own questions/comprehension. These On Your Own questions are, in fact, essential or existential questions that provide an overarching context of use for any reading. This last type of question gets students to consider real-world applications of general principles and problem-solving procedures and to identify situations in which concepts and strategies can be used. This constitutes cultivating the spirit of transfer and future application.

We also love QARs for showing students that while reading does depend on literal comprehension and noticing key details, it is much *much* more than this. This can be threshold learning for many students. Key details, in fact, become significant to the degree that they inform inferring, connecting to the world, and functional applications and problem-solving strategies for big issues and questions. The QAR scheme demonstrates to students that not only is it good to go beyond the literal, but in fact this (threshold learning!) is a necessary move of expert reading.

We put in this twist: asking students to make sure that their Right There question provides a key detail that can be combined in a pattern with other details, leading to a Think and Search question, then to an Author and Me question, and finally to an On Your Own question.

A cumulative QAR builds and consolidates skills in noticing and unpacking, and works coherently to build conceptual knowledge on a textual through-line about a particular focus.

Lesson Steps

Step 1

Introduce the technique of QARs:

- Tell students that they will be generating a series of questions based on a reading. The series of questions is called a **QAR** and includes **four different types of questions** based on three levels of reading.
- Introduce the three levels of reading:
 - **On the lines:** Right There
 - **Between the lines:** Think and Search
 - **Beyond the lines:** Author and You, On Your Own
- Explain the “on the lines” (Right There) reading. This kind of reading focuses on what is “right there” in the text, what is literally and directly expressed.
- Explain “between the lines” (Think and Search) reading. This requires the reader to see throughlines and make connections between various related details that appear in different parts of the text. Note that the connections are typically not explicitly made by the author, so the reader must see the connection and make meaning of it.
- Explain “beyond the lines” (Author and Me, On Your Own) reading. This requires readers to go beyond the text, at both the literal and the inferential level, and to combine the text with information from their own lives (Author and Me) and from the world and then to apply the reading to a real-world problem (On Your Own).

Step 2

Focus students on connecting details to see patterns of meaning and to make inferences:

- Remind students of the importance of making connections across related details.
- Explain that expert readers make the following types of connections:
 - **Text–Self** (rule of reader’s response)
 - **Text–Text** (making intertextual connections, and doing so to notice different turns taken in an ongoing conversation about particular topics)
 - **Text–World** (noticing problems and conversations going on in the disciplines, popular culture, and the world at large)

- Explain that practicing Text–Self connections will help your students ask and answer Author and Me questions and that seeing Text–Text and Text–World connections will help them understand the On Your Own questioning. Encourage them to use what they read to consider real-world problems.

Step 3

Introduce students to the four types of questions they will generate:

- Explain that expert readers use questions to help them do all three levels of reading. The types of questions they will generate fall into four categories:
 - Right There questions, which establish the facts
 - Think and Search questions, which call for inferring patterns
 - Author and Me questions, which imply meanings
 - On Your Own questions, which call for critiquing and applying what has been learned

Step 4

Model how to generate QARs with a reading:

- Demonstrate the questioning scheme with a previously read short nonfiction text. You may wish to have students reread it quickly before you begin. For each question you generate, explain what type of question it is based on and what is required of the reader to answer it.
- As you move on with asking the questions, allow students to try to identify the type of QAR each one is, and justify that identification based on what the reader would have to do to answer it (this is why the scheme is called question–answer *relationships* because the question type relates to what a reader must do to answer it).
- In the example in Figure 3.3, we use Murphy’s *The Great Fire*.

Step 5

Review takeaways:

- Note that to make this a *cumulative* QAR, the Right There question in Figure 3.3 highlighted a key detail that could be combined in a pattern with other details, leading to asking and answering a Think and Search (or “between the lines”) question, and in turn to Author and Me and On Your Own questions (or “beyond the lines” questions).
- To generate this kind of cumulative QAR, then, we have to read the whole text before generating our QARs. This enables us to see what key details connect and build on each other.

What was Mr. Sullivan's nickname?

A: Peg Leg.

Identification/Justification: This is certainly a **Right There** question because we can point directly to the answer and say, "It's right there." But this is not a key detail question *unless* it can be combined with another detail to create meaning.

What did Mr. Sullivan's nickname reveal about him?

A: He had lost a leg and therefore used a prosthetic wooden peg for a leg.

Identification/Justification: This is a **Think and Search** question because it combines two details very close to each other in the text that the reader must connect and combine.

How did Mr. Sullivan's disability affect his role in the story about the fire?

A: He stopped to adjust his leg, and this is when he saw the fire. If he had not stopped, then he wouldn't have been the first to see it. Then, when he rushed into the barn to let the animals loose, his leg kept him from doing it, getting stuck in the floorboards and then coming loose. This contributed to his narrow escape as he had to use a cow and hop to get out of the barn, and may have contributed to the fire's getting out of hand. Later in the book we learn about the troubles that other people with infirmities (as well as lack of social standing, lack of resources, etc.) had dealing with the fire, so Sullivan's leg provides the initial detail in a larger throughline.

Identification/Justification: This is a **Think and Search** question because his disability, indicated by his nickname, connected to later details and affected the trajectory of the story. These details are further apart in the text so require more attention and connection work.

What different courses of action do you think Mr. Sullivan could have taken, and what might have been the different outcomes of such actions? What might you have done in Mr. Sullivan's shoes (or shoe!)?

A: Answers will vary, depending on the reader.

Identification/Justification: This is an **Author and Me** question because it combines your life knowledge and judgment with the meaning from the text. It is cumulative because it develops from the first two questions that were purely textual. We are now going beyond the text by combining textual details with extratextual data from our lives and experiences.

How can we best deal with trouble and even disaster as it is happening? How can we best deal with potential trouble and even disaster before it happens?

A: Answers will vary, depending on the reader.

Identification/Justification: These are **On Your Own** questions because they are essential/existential inquiry questions this text can be used to address. One does not actually have to have read this particular text to address the question. The questions are cumulative because they expand on and reflect back on the previous questions.

Figure 3.3

Example: Modeling QARs

- A cumulative QAR builds and consolidates skills in noticing, connecting, inferring, and unpacking, and the questions at different levels work together to coherently build conceptual knowledge with a particular focus that is developed throughout the text.

Step 6

Move from modeling to mentoring students to work together with your help to generate their own QARs:

- Ask students to help you create another complete set of QAR questions—with the same text excerpt if that works, or with another one of your choice.
- Gradually release responsibility by asking them to work together in small groups or pairs to help each other create cumulative QARs about new short sections of text.

Extensions

- Create, justify, respond. Have small groups create QAR questions for other students to answer and test out, review, or improve.
- Stage a “QAR challenge.”
 - A question is offered by a team.
 - The members of a second team must identify the question type, tell how they know it is that type, and provide an answer for the question.
 - Other teams confirm the responses or revise or add to them using their own justifications.

For specific information on using QARs in the disciplines, visit this book’s companion website at <http://resources.corwin.com/divingdeep-nonfiction>.

Noticing Key Details

WRITING AND RESPONDING

Introduction

In the following lesson, you'll see how students are prompted to use threshold procedures, concepts, and takeaways in their composition of a choral montage.

A choral montage (Wilhelm, 2012c) is a wonderfully easy and fun technique for composing a group poem with key details, key phrases, or crucial ideas and takeaways. First, each student selects a key detail or crucial phrase from a text. Students then read their sentences or phrases aloud, creating a choral montage, and experiment with revising and ordering them for the greatest meaning and effect.

When we introduce choral montage, we start with a simple stem that prompts students to generate ideas related to our inquiry. So, during a civil rights unit, for example, we might ask students to finish a phrase: "Civil rights are . . ." or "Civil rights require . . ." or "Civil rights are violated when . . ." We might ask students to focus on a threshold concept, like a transformative or troublesome insight gleaned from our readings and studies such as the conditions required for successful improvement in civil rights.

We use the prompt stem as the title of our poem, and then everyone reads his or her response aloud as we go around a circle. Then we can decide how to reorder the phrases to create more meaning and maximum effect. We may decide to repeat a certain phrase as a chorus or an ostinato, slightly change or develop a phrase throughout the montage, or revise, delete, or add new phrases. We typically videotape the final revision and then watch it. Students love it.

For a "reader's rules of notice" choral montage, we ask students to choose three of the most important key details, phrases, or ideas from a text. We ask for three so that if someone else has taken their idea, they have two more choices. Of course, repetition works, too—or repetition with slight tweaks or development throughout the poem. These moves to repeat, use parallelism, or slightly rupture previous phrasings

Lesson 5: Day 1

PURPOSE

- To practice using reader's rules of notice to rank the importance of details and ideas

LENGTH

- Approximately 60–90 minutes (can be split into two 45-minute classes)

MATERIALS NEEDED

- An interesting and complex short text or excerpt (we use *The Great Fire* excerpt as the basis for an example provided in this lesson)
- Notecards for all students
- A video recording device

highlight key ideas and demonstrate the various rules of notice for key details, so if we do this in our poem, we are coding our text with the very rules of notice we have been studying and using as readers.

This activity is a version of “mystery pot,” a technique involving single lines that have been cut out and separated from a well-structured short piece. In a mystery pot activity, students must reconstruct the piece, putting it into a sensible order—looking at the various options and the differences in meaning and effect for different orderings. This is a powerful way to highlight authorial choices, as the creation of patterns and revision is made visible. Students then have the opportunity to practice justifying these choices in terms of meaning and effect. In a mystery pot, students can compare their versions with the original author’s version, consider why certain choices were made, and consider the meanings and effects that followed from different choices.

Our three-part lesson concludes by having students employ procedural feedback. A major goal of our teaching is to assist students to be helpful and even expert peer editors of each other’s work. When they can do this, they become self-regulated, metacognitive, and adept editors of their own work, *and* they become people who can notice, unpack, appreciate, and provide procedural descriptions of how an author’s specific choices lead to specific meanings and effects.

When students provide procedural feedback, they comment on what the writer did or accomplished in a particular piece of text, what meaning or effect it had, and how the writer did it. Using procedural feedback emphasizes the fact that making other choices would lead to other meanings and effects. This realization promotes agency on the part of the writer and a need to attend and notice on the part of the reader. The process of composing procedural feedback enacts Carol Dweck’s (2006) research on promoting the dynamic or growth mindset that we discussed in the introduction.

Lesson Steps: Day 1

Step 1

Define montage and set up the purpose and process of composing a choral montage:

- Ask students if they are familiar with the term *montage*. If not, share a visual montage and see if they can define *montage* by looking at an example (see Figure 3.4 as well as other examples available on the book’s companion website at <http://resources.corwin.com/divingdeep-nonfiction>).
- Once they understand what a montage is (a dictionary definition could be reviewed as well), inform students that they are going to create what is known as a “choral montage.”
- See the sample choral montage in Figure 3.5.

- Ask: *How might a choral montage be different from a visual montage?*
- Tell students that they are going to find the most powerful key details, phrases, images, or ideas from a text by using the rules of notice for key details. Explain that they will then use these details and phrases to create a piece of poetry—a choral montage—based on their reading of *The Great Fire* (or any other piece your class is reading).

Step 2

Prompt students for their thoughts about the most crucial details from a text:

- On a notecard, ask each student to individually identify the three most important phrases, sentences, images, or ideas from the text (or selected excerpt).
- On the back of their sticky note or notecard, ask students to jot down what rules of notice they used to identify each of their key details.

Step 3

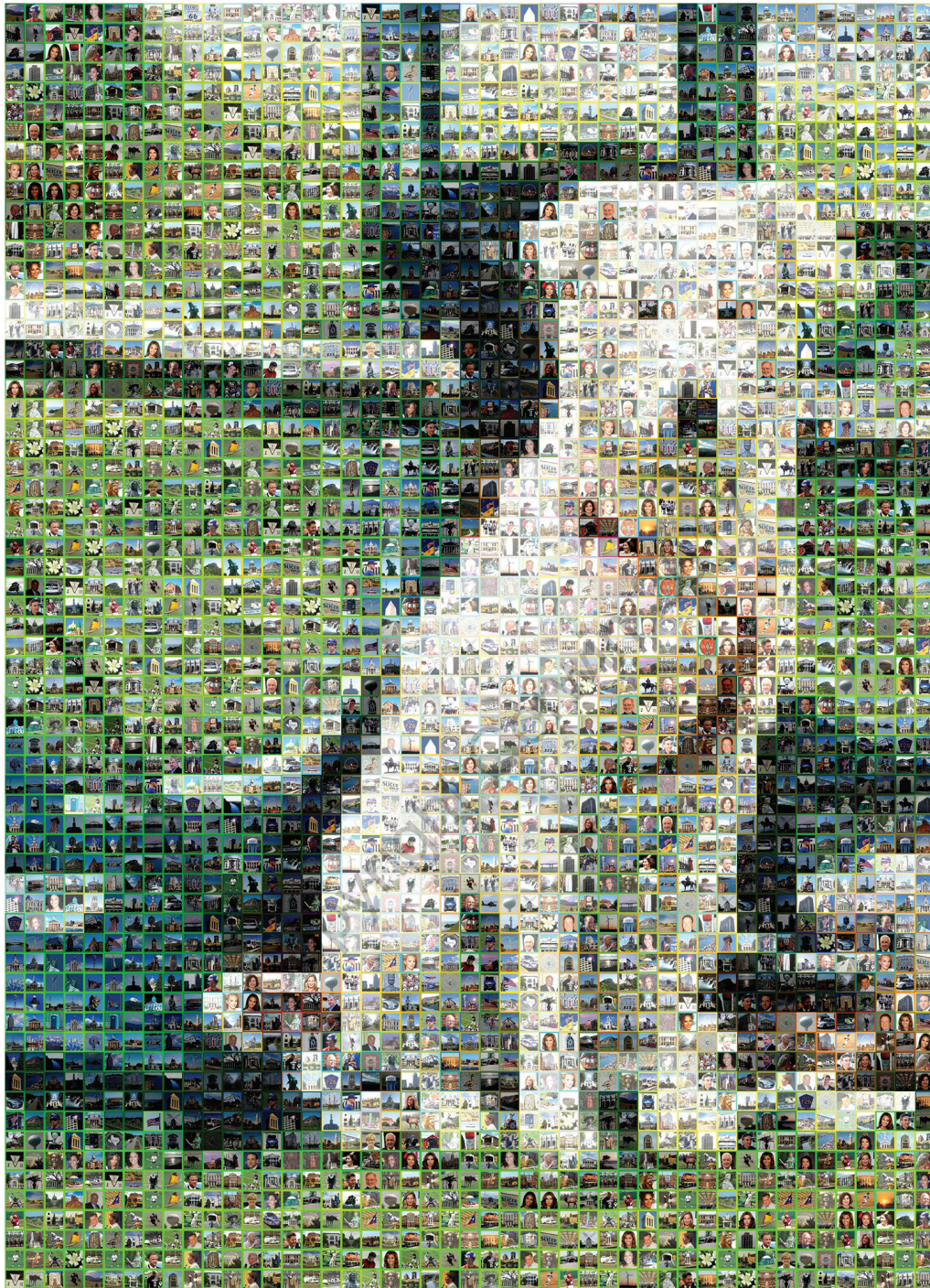
Create a first-draft choral montage in a “whip-around” circle:

- Once students have selected their most crucial details, arrange the class into a circle and have them read *one* of their three ideas in a whip around the circle, one voice after another.
- Go around again, and have students justify why they thought that their key detail choice was the best one to read. If someone has previously spoken their first choice, encourage students to use their second or third choice.
- Have students write on a slip of paper the one sentence or phrase that they read.
- Post the papers in the classroom in the order they were read.

Step 4

Facilitate a gallery walk and reflection on the montage:

- Have students slowly read the displayed montage.
- Invite students to share in pairs what they notice about the details in the montage. Ask:
 - *How was reading and listening to the montage different? How were rules of notice used in the montage?*
 - *How were details or ideas repeated, patterned, or played off each other?*
- Bring the class together and share thoughts with the large group.



Source: © John Phelan/Wikimedia Commons Creative Commons License

Figure 3.4
Example: Visual Montage

The Great Fire

At first so small, its start unseen
The O'Learys sleeping
Flames smoldering small
Flames licking, then thirstily devouring the straw
Then growing, growing
Bursting out the barn rafters
With no one knowing
Seen first by Peg Leg Sullivan
The cows whining and horses screaming
The O'Learys still sleeping
At first the fire was so small
Spreading to the timothy hay
To the wooden outbuildings and neighbors' houses
At first so small
Seen only by Daniel Peg Leg Sullivan, screaming Fire! Fire! Fire!
Losing his leg in the barn
Others losing their houses and all they owned
Before long, the great fire of Chicago
Spreading throughout the whole of the giant city
Drinking the city dry with its giant thirst

Figure 3.5

Example: Choral Montage Created by Sixth Graders for *The Great Fire*

Step 5

Ask students to work together to revise their choral montage:

- Have students confer in pairs. Ask: *What single line would be best to begin the revised montage? Why?*
- Invite them to share with the larger group. Have them justify their selections.
- Have students return to their pairs. Ask: *What line would be best to conclude it? Why?*
- Then ask what lines might build off or answer the first line in some way, making a strong second line. Entertain various ideas and try them out. Then move on to a potential third line and so on.
- Ask students to share their first few lines with the larger group. Have them justify their selections.
- Explain to students that to compose a full choral montage they would use all the rest of the lines, figuring out what order they would best go in to create meaning and effect. They have already chosen the best key details; now they need to put them in the best order.

Step 6

Create a choral montage:

- Now that students have experienced concrete modeling of the process, put them in groups of five or six to create a complete choral montage using the lines from their notes from Steps 2 and 3, or revisions of these. If they want, individuals can read more than one line.
- As students are working, have them reflect. Ask:
 - *What could be revised?*
 - *What could be moved?*
 - *What could be added?*
 - *What could be deleted?*
- Tell students that they can try different constructions, perform them, and compare them.

Step 7

Perform and record the montages:

- Once a group makes a final decision and rehearses it, take a video of the students in that group performing their montage.

Step 8

View the filmed montages:

- Play the montages back for the whole class.
- Ask the composers to list the rules of notice they used to find their details, and the viewers to identify any rules of notice they noticed in the performance of the montage.

Extensions: Day 1

Combine montage composing with the drama technique of in-role writing:

- Ask students to take on the role of a character (Peg Leg or the O’Learys, the mayor, the fire chief, or another character from *The Great Fire*) and to write a diary entry or letter to another character about their experiences described in the text.
- Have students exchange letters and circle the most poignant and moving details or phrases in their partner’s letter by using rules of notice.
- Have students use what they’ve circled to create the choral montage (see Wilhelm [2016] and [2012b] for more ideas on in-role writing and choral montages). This kind of montage features different voices and perspectives and can take on the form of a conversation or call and response.

Optional: Students can engage in reflective writing about the composing or revision process as it relates to creating the choral montages, and reflect on how their use of various strategies and rules of notice made the piece better. They can also reflect on this activity to consider what threshold learnings emerged regarding the inquiry topic.

Lesson 5: Day 2

PURPOSE

- To compare drafts of choral montages to understand authorial choice

LENGTH

- Approximately 45–60 minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Drafts of students' writing to compare (here, we use drafts of their choral montages, but you can do this with other pieces of writing as well)
- Drafts of a classic text that fits into your current unit (we use the Gettysburg Address; Lincoln's five drafts of this can easily be found online)
- A short mentor text that students can use to practice revising for meaning and effect
- Class set of Handout 3.4, "Mentor Sentences Based on *The Great Fire* (Excerpt)" (optional)

Lesson Steps: Day 2

Step 1

Have students compare their writing:

- Assign student groups to compare drafts of their choral montages and reflect on why they made the changes they did.
- Ask: *What differences did your changes have on meaning and effect for a reader?*
- Invite students in each small group to report to the large group and record the effect of some of the changes.

Step 2

Have students compare drafts of a professionally written text:

- Pass out multiple drafts of a classic text, such as the Gettysburg Address, that fits your current unit.
- Ask students to work in pairs to compare the drafts and explain why they think particular changes were made. For example, for the Gettysburg Address, ask them what Lincoln changed or moved and deleted or added in each draft, and then ask them why he might have done so. What meanings and effects do these changes work toward?

Step 3

Make changes to a mentor text and explore changes in meaning/effect:

- Pass out a mentor text of your choice.
- Ask students to work independently to change, move, delete, or add a word, words, or phrases from the chosen mentor text, particularly at the beginning, ending, climax, or some kind of rupture in the text.
- Have students work in pairs or triads to compare their revisions with the original and explore how particular revisions made particular kinds of differences.

Step 4

Identify and use sentences from the mentor text as mentor sentences:

- Explain that using short text excerpts and even sentences as mentor texts and models for writing is extremely powerful and can help students to learn from expert writers how to compose sentences and short passages more powerfully.

- Ask students to choose a powerful sentence or short excerpt from the mentor text they've been working with and explain why it is so powerful, using rules of notice in their explanation.
- Ask students to “copy change”—that is, keep the major structural words in their chosen sentence or excerpt, while adding some of their own nouns, adjectives, or verbs in place of what the original author placed there (like a Mad Lib).
- If students need examples and practice, use Handout 3.4, “Mentor Sentences Based on *The Great Fire* (Excerpt).”

Extensions: Day 2

- Look at more global structural moves and shifts in the text, like the shift in the opening of *The Great Fire* from narrative to commentary and informational writing.
- Consider as a class why and how this shift was made, and then have students practice that same kind of shift in their own collaborative and then independent writing.
- Compare and contrast students' efforts to those of Jim Murphy.

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Mentor Sentences Based on The Great Fire (Excerpt)

by Jim Murphy

Chicago in 1871 was a city ready to burn. The city boasted having 59,500 buildings, many of them—such as the Courthouse and the *Tribune* Building—large and ornately decorated. The trouble was that about two-thirds of all these structures were made entirely of wood.

Original sentence:

Chicago in 1871 was a city ready to burn.

_____ in _____ was a _____ ready to _____.

New sentence:

The North Junior High basketball team in 2017 was a force ready to be reckoned with!

Original sentence:

The city boasted having 59,500 buildings, many of them—such as the Courthouse and the *Tribune* Building—large and ornately decorated.

The _____ boasted _____, many of them—such as _____
and _____ and _____.

New sentence:

The team boasted a star-studded cast of players, many of them—such as Tucker and Will—big guys who could also dribble the ball and shoot the three.

Original sentence:

The trouble was that about two-thirds of all these structures were made entirely of wood.

The _____ was that about _____ of _____ were _____.

New sentence:

The challenge was that about half of the team were not as gifted, but they were willing to work hard.

Source: Murphy, J. (1995). *The great fire*. New York, NY: Scholastic.



Available for download at <http://resources.corwin.com/divingdeep-nonfiction>

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Lesson Steps: Day 3

Step 1

Set the purpose and explain the process for giving procedural feedback:

- Tell students that they will be learning to give authors—including their peers—what is known as *procedural feedback*.
- Emphasize that this is a very powerful way of giving feedback. Explain that procedural feedback is meant to be nonjudgmental and to describe what the writer has done, the moves he or she made, and what followed in terms of meaning and effect.
 - Explain that to start you give a description of what the writer has done.
 - Stress that after the description you explain the meaning or the effect of what was done.
- Note that providing procedural feedback expresses a dynamic/growth mindset because we create meaning through our efforts and use of strategies. This kind of feedback demonstrates that we can always revise and improve anything we do or write through the application of renewed effort and new strategies.

Step 2

Demonstrate how to provide procedural feedback with a previously read text:

- Model an example from a recent assignment. For instance, you could provide feedback to the sample student choral montage on *The Great Fire* by using this frame:
 - “The way you _____ emphasized _____.”
- For example, say:
 - *The way you began your montage with “At first so small” and then repeated this later in the poem emphasized that even the biggest disasters start small, and also emphasized your takeaway that we need to prepare for disasters before they get started.*
- Or model feedback to author Jim Murphy. Say:
 - *The way you began with a story about real people who were so deeply affected by the fire helped to hook me into the book, and made me more deeply experience how real human beings are affected by disasters such as this.*
- Or model feedback to a student argument. Say:
 - *Your use of specific evidence from several different cited and authoritative sources convinced me that you have a point worth considering, even though I initially disagreed with you quite strongly.*

Lesson 5: Day 3

PURPOSE

- To notice what authors do to load their text with meaning, especially through rules of notice, and to describe the meaning and effect of using rules of notice strategically

LENGTH

- Approximately 45–60 minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Class sets of several excerpts of professional pieces of writing; a short piece of student writing; a short piece of your own writing, if possible
- Paper to make an anchor chart

Step 3

Use sentence frames to assist students to generate procedural feedback:

- Provide sentence frames to students, or develop frames with them for providing this kind of feedback.
 - *The way you/the author _____ led me to _____.*
 - *The use of _____ had the consequence of _____.*
 - *When you/the author _____, it had the effect of _____.*
 - *The move you/the author made to _____*
 - *resulted in _____.*
 - *should lead to _____.*
 - *exhibited the principle of _____.*
 - *_____ helped me see/notice/feel/think/consider/rethink _____ because _____.*
- Create an anchor chart that archives different sentence stems for providing procedural feedback and ask students to keep thinking about how to add to the chart by experimenting with different phrasings as you go through the day!

Step 4

Use the sentence frames to provide procedural feedback to authors:

- Practice with students using the sentence frames to provide feedback to the author of a text the class has just read. Have them use the stems on the anchor chart as a guide.
- Mentor the whole class in doing one or two together, then involve students in doing some together in pairs or triads.
- Share examples with the large group and discuss how procedural feedback requires noticing, and requires unpacking how texts work to create meaning and effect.

Step 5

Practice “feeding forward” to develop students’ repertoire of problem-solving moves in their writing:

- Explain that in peer editing and self-editing it is important to provide feedforward, and to consider one’s agency and repertoire in terms of where one can go next—what one has not done *yet* but could one day do after continuing to extend, revise, and improve one’s work.
- Provide models of how to provide feedforward for future directions with a piece of your own writing (particularly powerful), a draft of professional writing, or student writing. For example:

- *I wonder what would happen if _____ [you/I/the author] _____ [made a specific move/tried a strategy] in order to _____ [the meaning and effect that you think might accrue from this move].*
- Note to students that the *in order to* is essential because it explains what the move is designed to do.
- Add this sentence stem to the class anchor chart.

Step 6

Practice phrasing feedforwards in pairs or triads:

- Give students a new excerpt from a professional writer or peer. Have students practice in pairs or triads providing procedural feedback and feedforwards on the piece. Encourage them to use the sentence stems you used in your modeling or to create their own.
- When students are done, have them reflect on what rules of notice they used in the feedback, how composing the feedback went, any experiences of productive challenge, and how they navigated—or could navigate—those challenges.
- Have students share other stems they might have come up with for procedural feedback and feeding forward and put these on the anchor chart for reference.

Step 7

Provide independent practice with procedural feedback and feedforward:

- Have students practice more independently giving procedural feedback to the author of another piece of writing, like a reading assignment for the next day.
- Have them cite the rules of notice they used to decide what to describe in their feedback.

Step 8

Share students' procedural feedback in pairs or triads, then the larger group:

- Have students share their procedural feedback from the previous step in pairs or triads, then to the whole class in a charette (a meeting in which all stakeholders in a project attempt to resolve conflicts and map solutions, an idea from architecture).
- Reflect together on how the process works and how to navigate problems.

- Discuss in what immediate and future situations this kind of feedback and feedforward would be powerful to use. Add a list of situations to your anchor chart.
- Emphasize with students that these kinds of feedback and feedforward leave the authority and decision making to the author, but they are specific in suggesting a move or strategy that the author might want to try.
- Highlight that providing this kind of response requires expert readerly and writerly thinking. It requires having a toolbox or repertoire of expert strategies and procedures for solving problems in our writing, and it asks students to go back to the strategies that they have been taught in the context of this unit and consider how they can be applied.

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Noticing Key Details

SEARCH AND FIND

Introduction

Once the tools for noticing key details are consolidated, we ask students to transfer their noticing to a wide variety of texts in real life through the “search and find” technique—our students like to call it “seek and destroy” or “bring ’em back alive.” This strategy promotes *transfer* by asking students to consider how texts are present throughout their everyday lives, and how these texts—whether written or multimodal; whether informal like conversation or ads, or formal like school assignments—use rules of notice to cue readers and listeners to navigate and make meaning of the text.

Lesson Steps

Step 1

Share models of found texts using rules of notice:

- Show the PowerPoint models of found texts (or some of your own) and ask students to identify the rules of notice in play. For example:
 - *Street signs like “Share the road” and “Please drive slowly” are direct statements of a generalization, principle, or value.*
- Note that the visuals are calls to attention and provide more information about why it is important to drive slowly.
- Display the water billboard. Point out that it uses three of the rules:
 - There is a direct statement.
 - The visual is both a call to attention and a rupture since the earth is not really ensconced in a water droplet.
 - The visual and the allusions to *The Little Mermaid* and “Part of Your World” are also calls to attention.
- Continue modeling with these kinds of texts until students are ready to proceed on their own.

PURPOSE

- To recognize how the rules for noticing key details work for all kinds of texts and utterances

LENGTH

- Approximately 20–45 minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Students’ examples of “found” texts that use rules of notice (see Figure 3.6)
- PowerPoint slides that show “Found Texts” (these can be accessed on this book’s companion website at <http://resources.corwin.com/divingdeep-nonfiction>)

PRIOR TO THIS LESSON

- Ask students to look in everyday life for texts that use the rules of notice you’ve discussed and practiced together. Places to look include
 - Everyday conversation and interactions
 - Billboards
 - Ads or other popular culture texts
 - YouTube
 - Free reading
- Have students bring in examples to share on the day of this lesson whether through photos, the artifact itself, or notes

Found Text	Speaker/Object	Reader's Rule of Notice
Exit Now!	Billboard	Direct statement: command, imperative
Now listen up!	Mom	Direct statement: direction and immediacy ("now do this")
Stop learning and listen to me!	Mr. Wilhelm	Rupture: <i>stop learning</i> (ironic)
The three major things to remember are . . .	Mr. Smith	Direct statement: explicit ordering, list
The Holy Bible: Inspired. Absolute. Final.	Billboard	Calls to attention: capitalization, colon. The list and parallel structure are for effect. Seems to build over time to a climax.
Last Chance for Gas!	Billboard	Direct statement: ultimatum, warning Reader's response: You certainly don't want all the irritation caused by running out of gas!
Porsche: Strong German Engineering	Advertisement	Direct statement of a general principle
Onboard devices can keep engineers awake: (1), (2), (3)—	From crawler below TV news story on train wreck	Direct statement; calls to attention: colon, list of devices in order of effectiveness

Figure 3.6

Examples: Found Texts and Reader's Rules of Notice

Step 2

Students share their artifacts that exemplify the rules of notice:

- Have students bring in their artifacts and share in triads or quads.
- Then have them share with the larger group through a roundtable, sharing and reading
 - What they found
 - Where they found it
 - The rule of notice that is exemplified
 - How they know it is that rule of notice and how they know it is doing its work to create meaning and effect
- Have students post their examples around the classroom with captions explaining the rule of notice used and how it works.

Extension

Ask students to use the comment function in Microsoft Word to explain how they employed rules of notice in creating one of their own short texts.

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Lesson 7

Noticing Key Details

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

PURPOSE

- To color code all of the rules of notice for key details to reveal how the rules of notice work together throughout a text to create meaning and effect

LENGTH

- Approximately 60–120 minutes (can be split into multiple classes)

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Hard copies of a complex nonfiction text (e.g., “I Have a Dream”)
- A device for projecting “I Have a Dream” and a way to highlight the text using that device (e.g., an ELMO document camera, Google Docs and a computer highlighter tool, or some other technique)
- Multiple sets of colored pencils, markers or highlighters, or another tool
- A Google Docs version of the text for students to work on and a computer’s highlighter function to color code the text
- A rules of notice bookmark for each student (you can make these using the template found at the companion website, <http://resources.corwin.com/divingdeep-nonfiction>)

Introduction

What’s the ultimate point of all the modeling—all the structured and mentored practice—using the rules of notice? It’s to lead our students to independence with a generative tool that they can continue to use strategically throughout their lifetimes.

As we noted in Chapter 1, the real proof of effective teaching and learning is in students’ transferring what they’ve learned to new situations. If we have enacted all the principles of transfer (see page 4) in our previous six lessons and given them enough practice, then they should be able to do it, and their doing so will be a profound achievement to be celebrated and then built upon further.

When it comes to the end of a unit and all that practice, we tell our students that they’ve had the great luck to be coached throughout the unit. They’ve gotten nothing but help and productive practice. But now, we tell them, the worm has turned! The time has come for them to show their stuff in actual accomplishment, to pull together all of the strategies they have practiced and orchestrate their use independently.

We typically use shorter anchor texts for a final practice run; following this, we ask students to independently apply their strategies to a more extended anchor text. These anchor texts typically serve as mentor texts for future reading, but also for writing.

The lesson below is inspired by the poet John Ciardi’s colored chalk method of analyzing poetry. We assign each rule of notice a different color and take one pass through part of the excerpt while color coding/highlighting each example of that rule. Then we move to another rule and another color, taking one pass with each rule. Sometimes we have students work in pairs; each pair highlights one rule and then jigsaws with another pair who highlighted a different rule. Other times, we assign more specific rules of each type, like allusions or figurative