



FLAG YOUR STRATEGIES

CONNECTIONS: Flag a spot where a character, event or description reminds you of something from your personal experience, previous reading or knowledge of the wider world.

QUESTIONS: Flag a spot where you had a question or wondered something about the reading.

INFERENCES: Flag a spot where you had to figure out something not directly stated in the text.

CLUNKS: Flag a point of confusion. Put a check mark on the flag if you managed to fix up your mix-up.

AHA MOMENTS: Flag a spot that made you think or captured your attention for some reason.



USING COLOR-CODED STRATEGY FLAGS

What? Provide each student with a collection of colored sticky tabs or flags. Have them read a short section of text and flag at least two spots where they used comprehension strategies.

Why? Flagging strategy spots encourages readers to be metacognitive about the strategies they are using as they read.

How? There are several ways to use this exercise:

- Be sure to provide opportunities for students to discuss with others the strategy spots they flagged and what their thinking was.
- If there's not an opportunity for immediate discussion, have students transfer their flags to paper and record the page numbers and what they were thinking.
- Have students remove their sticky notes and transfer them to a large piece of chart paper. Together, analyze which strategies were used most frequently and why that might be.
- Invite students to reread the same passage and see if they can flag a different strategy than they used before. (Rereading a text often supports deeper comprehension.)

But...

- For most effective strategy use, provide texts that are just a bit challenging for each student ("tiptoe" texts). If a text is too easy, strategies will be unnecessary; if a text is too hard, no strategies will help. (Think of trying to read something in an unfamiliar language.)
- Work with short passages of text at a time.
- Don't ask students to use all five strategies. We use different strategies at different times, depending on the nature of the text and our background knowledge. Sometimes we'll use the same strategy over and over. However, color-coding and analyzing the strategies can help students identify which strategies they might need to practice more.
- Students should be expected to explain their thinking. Be sure to allow time for discussion or written opportunities for students to articulate their thinking.
- Remember that flagging strategies is a means to an end, not an end in itself. The ultimate goal is for students to apply the strategies independently.

