

KYLENE BEERS & ROBERT E. PROBST

Notice & Note

STRATEGIES *for*
CLOSE READING

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D e d i c a t i o n

For Louise Rosenblatt

Dedicated to the lifelong work and ongoing inspiration
of friend and mentor

1904–2005

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I'm not under the illusion that the schools alone can change society. However, I can reaffirm the belief uttered so many years ago: We teachers of language and literature have a crucial role to play as educators and citizens. We phrase our goals as fostering the growth of the capacity for personally meaningful, self-critical literary experience. The educational process that achieves this aim most effectively will serve a broader purpose, the nurturing of men and women capable of building a fully democratic society.

from "Retrospect" by Louise Rosenblatt found in
Transactions with Literature: A Fifty-Year Perspective,
edited by Edmund J. Farrell and James R. Squire (NCTE, 1990)

Introduction



We Begin

Notice and Note presents a suite of new lessons for helping students read literary texts with deeper understanding. We've been working on these lessons since 2008. With a publication date of fall 2012, you could possibly think we're slow. We prefer to think we're thorough. (Our editor might side with you.) Actually, some of the thinking for the ideas presented in this book probably was planted long before 2008, perhaps when we both—separately—met Louise Rosenblatt in person and through her seminal texts: *Literature as Exploration* and *The Reader, the Text, the Poem*.

These books, and Louise herself, shaped our thinking about reading and about the role of literacy in creating a democracy. Meaning can't reside in the "inkspots on paper," she said. Meaning emerges as readers, with all their own thoughts and experiences and predispositions, interact or—to use Rosenblatt's word—transact with those squiggles. The text awakens associations in the reader's mind, and out of the mix, meaning is created. It resides neither in the text nor in the reader's mind, but in the meeting of the two.

How might we affect those moments in which reader and text come together so as to improve the reading experience and deepen a student's understanding of the text? That question has guided much if not all our professional work and certainly has shaped this material you now have in your hands. As we wrote, we constantly had students and teachers in our minds. We know that as you read

The text awakens associations in the reader's mind, and out of the mix, meaning is created. It resides neither in the text nor in the reader's mind, but in the meeting of the two.

this, our words are those inkspots on a page, and your prior experiences will shape the transactional moments you will share with us through these words. And when you share ideas with your students, you will help them read at a deeper level; you will help them learn how to notice and note.

What We First Noticed

In early 2008, we started reflecting on reading instruction in our country. We've both been public school teachers and university teacher-educators. Additionally, for decades, either separately or together, we have walked into schools, sat in classrooms, occasionally taught in those classrooms, and worked with teachers and administrators from across this nation. We've watched the change from mostly whole-class instruction to instructional practices that include large-group minilessons, small-group guided-reading instruction, literature circles, and readers' workshops. We've watched the evolution of materials in the classroom: one basal reader for all, trade books, big books, small books, and leveled texts. We've seen the format of these materials change: hardback, paperback, e-book.

And we've seen an explosion of professional texts that support teachers who are trying to improve the literacy skills of students. We're hard pressed to walk into a principal's office or a teacher's classroom and not see at least an entire shelf of professional texts (sometimes even our own). And these books have been *read*. Sticky notes are on the pages, passages are underlined, coffee stains are on the covers. These texts have contributed a great deal to what teachers do in their classrooms, shaping the lessons that are taught and moving kids toward a literate life. Yet there we were, in 2008, thinking it's just not enough.

Our concern was that we still saw too many readers who plow through a book giving it little thought; too many readers who finish the page or the chapter and then, rather than express a thought, ask a question, or leap into conversation, look up at the teacher and wait. They

We want them inside the text, noticing everything, questioning everything, weighing everything they are reading against their lives, the lives of others, and the world around them.

seem not to have noticed anything, responded to anything, been touched or troubled or amused by anything. Some wait patiently—or passively—for the teacher to tell them what to do next and then do that, just that, and nothing more. Others, those who have substituted the word *finishing* for the word *reading*, perhaps simply shrug and ignore whatever the teacher has said to do next. If we're lucky, we get kids standing at our desk saying, "I don't get it," for then we see students who at least recognize that there is something they didn't get, that there is something else they might have done with the book besides stare mindlessly at it.

What we want are kids who are curious, who dive into a text and can't begin to think of coming up for air until they know what happens to Brian and his hatchet or Kenny and the people who thought bombing a church filled with little girls would be a good idea; until they figure out what's happened to Sal's mom; until they understand why it is both the best and worst of times; until they feel as Anne felt hidden in an attic or get angry like Atticus or know regret and redemption like a boy who grew up among kite runners. We want them inside the text, noticing everything, questioning everything, weighing everything they are reading against their lives, the lives of others, and the world around them.

What We Did Next

And so we began asking each other questions—questions about the shape and nature of reading today, about what it means to be literate in the twenty-first century, about the new emphasis on text-dependent questions and rigor and text complexity. We asked what it was we might do that we had not yet done to help students notice something about the text that would lead them deeper into it and, simultaneously, deeper into themselves. We believe it is the interaction, the transaction, between the reader and the text that not only creates meaning but creates the reason to read. Eventually, all our questioning and thinking led us to wondering if we could identify something in the text that we could teach students to notice so that their responses might become more nuanced and more reasoned.

We believe it is the interaction, the *transaction*, between the reader and the text that not only creates meaning but creates the reason to read.

THE TWENTY-FIVE MOST COMMONLY TAUGHT NOVELS, GRADES 4–8

- *Among the Hidden*
- *Because of Winn Dixie*
- *Bridge to Terabithia*
- *Bud, Not Buddy*
- *The Cay*
- *A Christmas Carol*
- *The Diary of Anne Frank*
- *Esperanza Rising*
- *Freak, the Mighty*
- *The Giver*
- *Hatchet*
- *Holes*
- *Maniac Magee*
- *Night*
- *Number the Stars*
- *The Outsiders*
- *Riding Freedom*
- *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*
- *Stargirl*
- *Tears of a Tiger*
- *To Kill a Mockingbird*
- *Touching Spirit Bear*
- *Tuck Everlasting*
- *Walk Two Moons*
- *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963*

As you look at this list, some of you will think, yes, we read that book in seventh grade, while others will consider the same book and say that book is read in eighth grade or sixth or fifth or fourth. In other words, while many respondents mentioned *Esperanza Rising*, it was just as likely to be mentioned at fifth grade as it was at seventh. You can read more about this survey on page XX.

Figure 1: The Twenty-Five Most Commonly Taught Novels, Grades 4–8

We owe much to teachers who helped us and offer words of thanks in the Acknowledgments, which begin on page 261.

We began by surveying about a total of 2,300 teachers in two separate surveys, one in 2008 and the second in 2010, to find out what books are most commonly taught in grades 4–10 (those are listed in Figures 1 and 2). We then read these books repeatedly and in those re-readings we began to notice some elements—which we eventually called *signposts*—that occurred in all the books across genres. For each signpost, we crafted a series of questions (brilliant questions, we thought) that students could ask themselves once they spotted a signpost. Next, we developed lessons for teaching the signposts and their questions and started sharing them with particular groups of teachers for feedback as they used them with their students. At the same time, we took these lessons into classrooms and taught them ourselves. We listened when teachers said there were too many signposts, and we culled the list, reducing it from twelve to a critical six. We responded when Jennifer Ochoa took us out in the hall of her New York City middle school and said, “Give them only *one* question for

THE TWENTY-FIVE MOST COMMONLY TAUGHT NOVELS, GRADES 9–10

- 1984
- *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*
- *Animal Farm*
- *Brave New World*
- *The Crucible*
- *Fahrenheit 451*
- *Frankenstein*
- *Great Expectations*
- *The Great Gatsby*
- *Heart of Darkness*
- *Jane Eyre*
- *The Kite Runner*
- *Lord of the Flies*
- *Monster*
- *Night*
- *Of Mice and Men*
- *Othello*
- *Pride and Prejudice*
- *Romeo and Juliet*
- *The Scarlett Letter*
- *A Separate Peace*
- *Their Eyes Were Watching God*
- *Things Fall Apart*
- *The Things They Carried*
- *To Kill a Mockingbird*

We weren't too surprised at this top twenty-five. It should be noted, though, that many teachers mentioned *Tears of a Tiger*, *The Kite Runner*, *Hunger Games*, *The House on Mango Street*, *The Book Thief*, *Al Capone Does My Shirts*, *Miracle's Boys*, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, and Bluford series books. Teachers noted that these books were read in "regular" or "non-academic" or "non pre-AP" classes or were for "struggling readers." Again, we say more about this survey on page XX.

Figure 2: The Twenty-Five Most Commonly Taught Novels, Grades 9–10

each signpost," and cut the list of accompanying questions for each signpost from ten to one.

When we shifted to one anchor question for each signpost we saw two things happen. First, students began using these questions more quickly on their own without our prompting. Second, students began generating more of their own questions. That, of course, was our goal. Indeed, our ultimate objective is to have students asking their own questions. We'd like to see them independently, confidently, and competently noticing those points in the story that they think might yield the most insight into the text, the author's intentions, and the character's motives; we want them to notice those moments that trigger their own memories and thoughts about their own lives, about other texts they have encountered, and about events in the world. And we hope to see them pausing there to reflect, to articulate the questions that arise, and to speculate about possible answers and explanations.

In others words, we hope that they will be alert, observant, responsive, responsible, self-reliant readers, respecting their own perspectives and values but also willing to change their minds when evidence and reason demand. These signposts and their accompanying anchor questions are nothing but a scaffold to move them toward that ultimate goal. And on the road toward that destination, as their responses and questions emerge, we must honor them and address them. Do not assume that our questions should replace questions students ask. That is not their intent or purpose. But for students who have learned to sit passively and wait for teachers to ask the questions, the anchor questions can become the first questions they own, a first step toward finding their own questions and thus toward becoming active and independent readers.

Independent reading is not merely the ability to decode a text with minimal errors. Nor is it simply the ability to answer correctly the teacher's questions. Independent reading is the ability to read a text on one's own with deep engagement, with attention to what might sway

They will need you to put the right books in their hands, books in which they can lose themselves and books in which they can find themselves.

the reader's judgment or acceptance one way or the other. Independent readers are not only able to read without depending on the teacher to help them make sense of the text, but also are able to stand independent of the text itself, choosing on their own, with evidence from the text to justify the decision, to agree or disagree, to accept the author's vision and thinking or

reject it. We hope the signposts and their anchor questions will empower readers to struggle successfully and productively with texts on their own, without relying upon the teacher—and, ultimately, without needing or relying upon these six signposts and questions.

The Work That Resulted

All that reading and work with teachers and their students eventually led to this book you now hold. We've divided it into three parts:

- Part I, *The Questions We Pondered*, shares our thinking about some critical issues in literacy today.
- Part II, *The Signposts We Found*, explains the Notice and Note Signposts and the anchor question that accompanies each signpost.

- Part III, *The Lessons We Teach*, provides model lessons for teaching the signposts.

We hope that *Notice and Note: Strategies for Close Reading* will help students come to enjoy the pleasures of reading attentively and responsively. They will need you to put the right books in their hands, books in which they can lose themselves and books in which they can find themselves. And they'll need you, and other teachers like you, to invite them into the conversations that will transform them into close and thoughtful readers whose entire lives will be enriched by books.

The Questions We Pondered

Anything new is likely to begin with questions about the old. We look at what is and begin to wonder about the possibilities for what might be. Questioning, wondering, and then exploring may lead us to new understandings, new ways of doing things. And so, tentativeness about where we are and what we're doing now—even if it seems to be, so far as we can tell, “best practice”—is a desirable quality, leaving us open to new possibilities, receptive to ideas, willing to change. Our own tentativeness about our teaching, our uncertainties about our theories and practices, led us into the ideas that we'll explore in this book. So we invite you to be uncertain with us, think about some of the questions that started us along this path (and other questions that will occur to you), and consider some possibilities that arose.

In this section you'll see 10 questions that guided our thinking.

And then we share some of our thinking about the topic.

Question 1

Is Reading Still Reading?

"We've just bought ninety Nooks for students to use next year!"

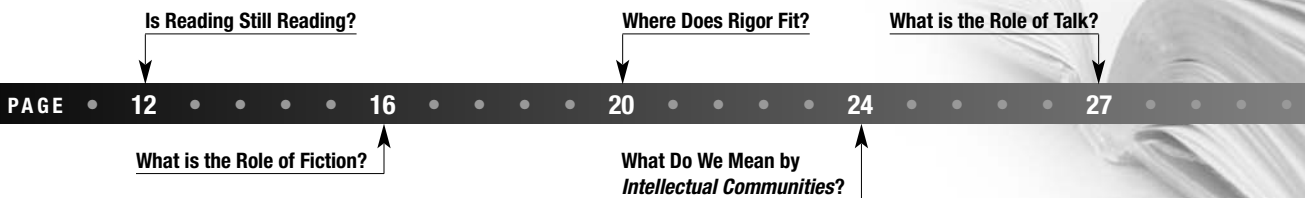
Now, more than ever, reading seems to be a social act.

... We end each question with other topics you might explore with your colleagues in your Professional Learning Community (PLC).

Talking with Colleagues . . .

- ▶ What's my definition of reading? How does that definition compare with my colleagues'? How do my students define reading?
- ▶ Do I think reading will ever vanish as a skill to be taught? Might it become obsolete—much like the teaching of penmanship?
- ▶ Do I think that the nature of reading is changing as a result of the twenty-first century technologies, or is reading still reading?
- ▶ What do I think about how the Internet is changing the way we all read?

Is reading still reading? 7





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Do Text-dependent Questions Foster Engagement?

Must Everyone Read the Same Book?

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How Do I Judge the Complexity of a Text?

Are We Creating Lifelong Learners?

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Is Reading Still Reading?

Now, more than ever, reading seems to be a social act.

“We’ve just bought ninety *Nooks* for students to use next year,” a language arts supervisor in South Carolina told us in May 2012. She said that some teachers resisted the purchase, saying that they wanted instead to buy class sets of paperbacks for the students, “But we finally convinced them that a novel is a novel—hardback, paperback, Nook, Kindle, or iPad.” Her comment reminded us of another teacher we heard telling a student that he would get an F in class for the day because “I told you to bring in *The Scarlet Letter*, not to bring in a Kindle.” He asked why he couldn’t read it on a Kindle.

She paused and finally pointed out that he wouldn’t know where to go when she told people to turn to a specific page. He replied that because people were using different paperback editions, the page numbers weren’t the same from book to book. She fumed and responded, “Well, it’s just not reading if you’re not in a book.”

There are surely some differences between the word as ink on paper and the word as electrons on a glass screen (or whatever it is that magically presents the text on an e-reader), but those two different media share the common purpose of recording and transmitting language. Written language is the essence of both.

The Paper-and-Ink Foundations of Our Country

We have always been a nation in which the written language is vitally important. The documents on which the United States was founded—the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution—are arguably the most valued, most heavily protected items in our country. Early in our history we fought for freedom of the press, created a legal system based on written laws, and “by 1910, three-quarters of the towns in America with more than 2,500 residents had a public library” (Kelly, 2010).

We still have public libraries, but now they are filled not only with books and periodicals but with e-readers. By 2011 “nearly two-thirds of public libraries offer[ed] e-books” and libraries now spend their time dealing with the issues around circulation of those e-books, issues such as the publishers’ restrictions on the number of times the digital version of a book can be circulated via an e-reader (*American Library Association*, 2012). And of course, more often than they borrow e-books from a library, people are buying their own. On February 27, 2012, *Publishers Weekly* reported that “while adult hardcover and trade paperback sales in 2011 were off 17.5% and 15.6 %, respectively [and] the YA/hardcover segment sales fell 4.7% and paperback sales fell 12.7% . . . e-book sales rose 117% for the year, generating revenue of \$969.9 million.”

All those dollars would suggest that someone is reading a lot; but the 2007 National Endowment of the Arts report *To Read or Not to Read* confirmed what many teachers in many classrooms have known—that there is a decline in time spent reading, especially pleasure reading, among teenagers and adults in America. At the same time, those who are reading, and specifically those who are reading digital texts, seem to be reading differently.

Reading Today

It’s probably worth our time to consider how the practices and the demands of reading have changed. It seems to us that digital texts certainly have changed our practices. We find that digital reading allows us to more easily make reader-to-reader and text-to-other-reader connections. Digitally delivered texts allow us to quickly highlight, extract, annotate, and then share our thoughts about what we’re reading with others through social networking sites. With digital texts we can see highlighted passages from other readers, and if they’ve made their notes public, see those as well. And with social networking sites, we can share what we have read, are reading, want to read, and think others ought read. For example, in February, 2012, Otis Chandler, the CEO of the online site Goodreads, stated in his presentation at the Tools of Change Conference that 7 million people use Goodreads, launched in 2006, to share their reading habits and thoughts with others. Now, more than ever, reading seems to be a social act.



There are surely some differences between the word as ink on paper and the word as electrons on a glass screen (or whatever it is that magically presents the text on an e-reader), but those two different media share the common purpose of recording and transmitting language.

And it’s not just Goodreads that folks are using. Here’s a short list of social networks created to help book lovers connect to books and to one another:

- Shelfari
 - LibraryThing
 - BookCrossing
 - Reader2
 - Booktribes
 - Revish
 - ConnectViaBooks
-

READING HABITS SURVEY

- How often do you read each day?
- Do you usually read printed texts or digital texts? If digital texts, do you use an e-reader?
- How is reading with an e-reader different from reading printed books?
- What sort of material do you read online or on an e-reader or mobile device? Is this different from what you choose to read in print?
- Do you read any blogs or websites on a regular basis? If your answer is yes, how large a part of your reading life are they?
- Do you use any social bookmarking sites to communicate with others about what you are reading? How have these sites changed how you think about what you are reading?
- Have you read anything that includes other types of media (video) as a part of the story?
- Do you listen to audio books? Do you consider this reading?
- What do you think are the major challenges of online reading?
- What are you curious about when it comes to reading today?
- Have you talked about these same issues with your students? If not, when will you start? Because they are, in some way, reading online. We promise.

Figure 1.1 Thanks to our friend and colleague Franki Sibberson for suggesting some of these questions. Follow Franki on Twitter at @frankisibberson. This survey, slightly modified for students, appears in the Appendix.

And it seems to us that as we move more and more to digital texts we must recognize some new demands of reading. Screen reading, unlike book reading, may include video and sound; on the monitor images float past us, words move around, videos pop up, and music joins in; we scan and jump and scroll. Screen reading is likely to be faster and less contemplative than book reading. And reading on an Internet-connected device gives us immediate, almost instantaneous access to information, other perspectives, and fact-checking sources that aren't as readily available when we're in a paper-and-ink book. Of course, that same questioning and verifying sometimes leads us away from the primary text we should be contemplating. . . .

In fact, some would say that as a result of all the online reading we now do, our reading is becoming more and more shallow (Carr 2010). At the same time, others would say that because of our reading on the Web, we are getting smarter (Cascio 2009). As you consider those conflicting views, you might ask yourself and your students, "What has changed, and what remains the same as before, when it comes to how we read?" You're likely to find that you and your class talk about such matters as the

changing balance between digital texts and printed texts; the changing ways of highlighting and annotating texts; the ease and speed with which you jump from one text to another; and the greater amount of reading on such sites as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Wikipedia, and Wonderopolis to learn about others and the world. It will be interesting to see what insights into reading behavior your students might offer you. Consider using the questions in Figure 1.1 to guide your thinking and your discussions with your students.

And yet, some things about reading have not changed, at least for now. We still decode symbols to make sense of the text; we still must interact with the text, bringing our own experiences to the words; we still must question what was written, must infer what wasn't written, and must make connections between the text and ourselves and others and the world around us. We must decide when we agree with the author and when we reject his ideas or her attitudes. And we still get swept away by the words, forgetting for a moment that we are in Houston or in Marathon, and believe for that moment that we are in Narnia or Oz or on a space battleship with a boy named Ender. That, we hope, will always remain true.

Talking with Colleagues . . .

- ▶ What's my definition of reading? How does that definition compare with my colleagues'? How do my students define reading?
- ▶ Do I think reading will ever vanish as a skill to be taught? Might it become obsolete—much like the teaching of penmanship?
- ▶ Do I think that the nature of reading is changing as a result of twenty-first century technologies, or is reading still reading?
- ▶ What do I think about how the Internet is changing the way we all read?



Caption TK.

Where Does Rigor Fit?

FROM KYLENE: *Rigor* is, without doubt, the buzzword these days, though Bob first emphasized the importance of rigor in *Response and Analysis* in 1988, offering what I would say is a much more nuanced understanding of what all this word implies. Today, it's a term bandied about so often that some wickedly smart folks created a funny video about it. Go to YouTube and search for "Rigor in the Classroom by Xtrnormal" for a wonderful moment of levity on an otherwise heavy topic.

Rigor in the classroom—or rather lack of it: That's the problem, we're now told. When the Common Core State Standards were originally envisioned by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers, those new standards were to be (1) research- and evidence-based, (2) aligned with college and work expectations, (3) rigorous, and (4) internationally benchmarked. But once written, the single issue that has drawn the most—and most contentious—attention from the policy makers and the press has been the issue of rigor. Those who attribute the downfall of Western civilization in the United States (and perhaps the shrinking of the polar ice caps) to lack of rigor in the classroom have seized the opportunity to renew their condemnation of education's past failure and express their dwindling hopes for the future. Other issues, other criteria, seem almost to have been dismissed or forgotten.

Where Rigor Resides

More rigor is probably a good idea. There is surely a lot of wasted time in the school day—too many minutes spent on drills and pointless worksheets; too much time spent making sure students are prepared to pass high-stakes tests; countless days wasted on Accelerated Reader quizzes. The problem is that *rigor* is a term too easily misinterpreted by critics who have little direct contact with schools. A careless and ill-conceived effort to increase rigor in the classroom is likely to have exactly the opposite effect. If we infer, from the Common Core Standards' call for the teaching of more complex texts at all grades, that we simply need to teach harder books, we will make a serious mistake.

Rigor is not an attribute of a text but rather a characteristic of our behavior with that text. Put another way, rigor resides in the energy and attention given to the text, not in the text itself. We can breeze through

War and Peace hastily and thoughtlessly, or we can labor through it, finishing with nothing more than the most basic understanding pulled from the pages. Either way, that challenging text will not have been read rigorously.

On the other hand, we can read, as an adult, Mem Fox's *Wilfred Gordon Macdonald Partridge*, a child's picture book, exploring deeply and thoughtfully its subtleties and implications, and that simple straightforward book, accessible to a first or second grader, will have provided us the opportunity for a rigorous reading. A professional football player lifting a 100-pound weight ten times would not be justified in calling that a rigorous workout; an eighth-grader trying to get into shape for the football team probably would. And the fourth grader, who could not lift the weight at all, would, like the professional football player, be hard pressed (pun intended) to have said his workout was rigorous. The quality, *rigor*, does not reside in the barbell but in the interaction with it.

Rigor is not an attribute of a text, but rather a characteristic of our behavior with that text. Put another way, rigor resides in the energy and attention given to the text, not in the text itself.

It's Rigor, Not Rigor Mortis

In one high school with which we are familiar, the English teacher intentionally chose the least accessible and most difficult translation of *Beowulf* for her students to read. There was another version of the story, much more readable, much more enjoyable, much more likely to interest readers and invite them into a conversation about the tale, but she ignored that one. Her reason for rejecting it was that it was too readable, too enjoyable, too likely to be interesting. She selected the other one, she explained, because it was inaccessible and difficult.

Presumably, she had reasoned that the more difficult and painful the work was, the better it would be for her students. We doubt that she was motivated by malevolence and a simple, sadistic desire to inflict pain. Rather, she wanted her students to be better prepared, to be intellectually tougher, and to be capable of dealing with all the Old English the world might later throw at them. The pain and suffering would be good for them, make them better people, and build her reputation as a hard, tough, demanding teacher. Rigorous. She probably would have been satisfied that she was honoring the Common Core State Standards call for more complex texts and more rigor in the classroom.



Caption TK.

But the result was *diminished* rigor. Some of the students labored through the text, doing what they could with it. Some students read one of the guides designed to make reading the actual text unnecessary by summarizing and explaining it. Some just accepted the bad grade that resulted from ignoring the text completely and hoping that anything they learned by listening in on class discussion would at least keep them afloat with a C or a D. The text was harder; the work less rigorous.

Those students who did struggle with the assignment, trying their best, were not doing rigorous intellectual work, rigorous reading. They were asking questions like *What does this word mean?* and *How do you say this word?* Or they were trying to figure out simply, *What's happening?* *Who is doing what to whom?* They weren't wrestling with the theme, with the picture of a time presented by the story, with the issues of danger and the courage it demands, or with any other ideas that might have been awakened by the text. Doing so would have been rigorous reading—expressing responses, asking questions, speculating about implications, discussing values and choices, considering similarities and differences between ancient times and our own, debating different interpretations of passages, and so on. Instead, they were working hard at an intellectually low level. The text was hard, the work was painful, and those who attempted it struggled mightily. But the struggle wasn't productive, and therefore the reading wasn't rigorous, at least not in the way that we would hope it might be.

The Essence of Rigor

The essential element in rigor is engagement. The rigor has to be achieved by engaging the readers in a process that is sufficiently interesting or rewarding that they'll invest energy in the work. If they are to read

rigorously, students must be committed to understanding some intriguing character, to solving some problem, to figuring out what a writer believes or values and how those thoughts compare with their own, or to understanding how other readers have made sense of a text. Granted, students

should learn over time to cope with more and more difficult texts. We know of no teachers who do not want students to be able to read more and more complex texts as the year progresses. But students are more likely to do that if they are invited to read texts with which

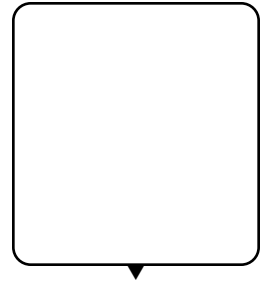
The essence of rigor is engagement and commitment.

they can become engaged and are lured into the sort of thinking that might be both challenging and enjoyable.

Rigor, in other words, lies in the transaction between the reader and the text and then among readers. The essence of rigor is engagement and commitment. A classroom that respects what the students bring to it, what they are capable of and interested in, and that welcomes them into an active intellectual community is more likely to achieve that rigor.

Talking with Colleagues . . .

- ▶ What is my own definition of rigor?
- ▶ How do my colleagues define rigor?
- ▶ What do I think—can a student be encouraged to think rigorously about a text that is at his or her independent reading level?
- ▶ If I needed to make a checklist of practices that new teachers could use to help them decide if their classrooms would be called rigorous, what would I include?



Caption TK.

We too made a checklist—one we've titled Rigor and Talk. You can see it on page 33—after you've made your own!

What Is Close Reading?

Questions about rigor lead naturally to another focus of the Common Core State Standards: close reading. Sometimes rigor and close reading are equated, on the assumption that a rigorous reading means a close reading. Occasionally, close reading is understood to mean a narrow focus on the text to the exclusion of all other factors. When it is interpreted that way, the reader is asked to focus on and think about only the text—the words on the page, the understandings that can be derived from analysis of the relationships and patterns found, as some have described it, within the four corners of the page.

The intent in adhering to such a conception of close reading is noble. Advocates of this notion of close reading want us to:

- Observe carefully what the author has presented to us.
- Avoid imputing to the author any visions, arguments, or ideas that aren't evident in the text.
- Avoid wandering from the experience in the text to think only about experiences of our own, substituting our ideas or story for the author's.
- Avoid parroting the judgments and interpretations of others for our own assessment of the text.

These are respectable goals. We do not want to make the mistake of claiming that the writer asserts something that she has not, in fact, asserted. We do want to attend carefully to what she has given us, exploring her vision, her ideas, her logic, her story. In essence, we want to respect the text.

The danger in this narrow vision of close reading is that it may ignore what Rosenblatt and others have shown us about the nature of all reading. Meaning is created not purely and simply from the words on the page, but from the transaction with those words that takes place in

the reader's mind. The advocate of close reading may legitimately complain that the student who, while reading *Anne Frank*, is asked "How would you feel if you had to hide in a closet with little food for a long time?" can answer that question without reading the diary at all. He might suggest that to achieve a close reading the question should be "How does Anne feel about hiding in the attic, and where are the passages that provide the evidence?" That question, he may argue, will force the child back to the text, requiring the reader to find the answer "within the four corners of the page." That, he may say, is close reading, denying the lazy student the opportunity to avoid the text, tell us about his own feelings, and pretend that he has read when in fact all he has done is remember.

The problem in *this* conception of close reading is that it denies the reader the chance to use the very resources he or she needs to do the reading and forbids the processes that might make sense of the text. Readers of Anne's diary can only begin to grasp the experience the text offers if they can imagine such confinement. They cannot look up *confinement* in the dictionary, learn that it means to be "restricted to tight quarters," and apply that to the diary. The resource readers need is a *sense* of confinement, a knowledge of the feeling one has when locked in a closet or restricted to a small room for a long time. Similarly, they need to know that *hungry* means "feeling the need for food," but they also need to recall the pain and discomfort of being hungry themselves if they are to understand what Anne endured.

They will not understand the diary if all they can do is report, "When Anne was confined to the attic she felt . . . as she says in these lines . . . on pages . . ." They may be able to search the text and find the pages that show that she was hungry at this point, find later pages showing that she was hungrier still, and find even later pages demonstrating that she is near starvation now. That, close reading as it might be, does not reveal much understanding of the text.

To understand Anne's experience, readers need to attend to both their own experience and hers as it is presented in the text. They need to conjure up, from their own memory, a time when they were hungry (or separated from others or afraid, or . . .). They have to remember what it felt like, what physical and emotional effect it had on them, how it

Meaning is created not purely and simply from the words on the page, but from the transaction with those words that takes place in the reader's mind.

Because we know that the resources students bring to a text affect their understanding of the text, we're dismayed that some now dismiss the value of background knowledge. We leave it to you to know when the text offers adequate information so that additional background knowledge is not needed and when it does not. And when it is needed, do not set aside your professional knowledge of how best to help a reader in deference to a document that suggests you ignore this critical practice.

affected their thinking. If they are able to call up that experience—while attending closely to Anne's words—they may be able to begin to feel and understand what she went through. *Only* begin, we hope.

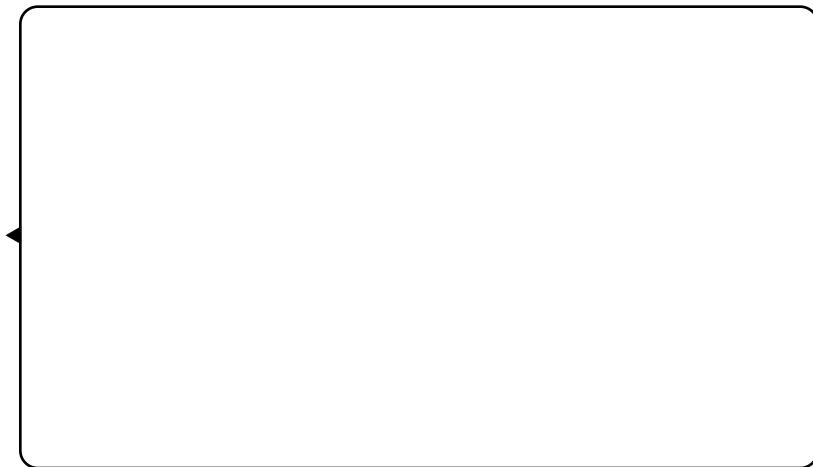
So one of the resources readers need in order to understand the diary is their own experience and memory. And the process they must be invited to engage in is the bringing together, closely, of that experience and the words on the page. Readers can better struggle with what Anne faced if they can remember hunger. To substitute the story of the time a reader missed lunch for the story of Anne's experience in the attic would be, of course, ludicrous, farcical, and embarrassing. And to substitute quoting from this page or that one for the richer process of reading, as Rosenblatt has explained reading, is equally ludicrous.

Characteristics of Close Reading

Close reading, then, should not imply that we ignore the reader's experience and attend closely to the text and nothing else. It should imply that we bring the text and the reader *close* together. To ignore either element in the transaction, to deny the presence of the reader or neglect the contribution of the text, is to make reading impossible. If we understand close reading this way, when the reader is brought into the text we have the opportunity for relevance, engagement, and rigor.

Close reading should suggest close attention to the text; close attention to the relevant experience, thought, and memory of the reader; close attention to the responses and interpretations of other readers;

Caption TK.



and close attention to the interactions among those elements. To focus exclusively on any one of them to the neglect of the others is simply foolish. Likewise, to suggest this is how we read every passage of every text is unreasonable. What we want is to *notice* those elements of the text that are, for example, surprising or confusing or contradictory, so that then we pause and take *note*, think carefully, reread, analyze—read closely.

The practice of close reading has the following characteristics:

It works with a short passage. We might do a close reading of a short poem but probably not of *The Odyssey*; of a paragraph or page from *War and Peace* but not the entire novel. Ideally, this passage is identified by the students themselves (the purpose of the signpost lessons we present in Part II is to teach them some of the characteristics of passages worth reading closely), but at times the teacher will want to call attention to passages the class may have missed or read too casually.

The focus is intense. It may begin with responses, including feelings, memories, and thoughts evoked by the passage, but it will return to the passage itself, exploring the significance of individual important words, the sequence of events or ideas, the connections among elements inside the passage (perhaps the relationship between two characters, for example).

It will extend from the passage itself to other parts of the text. This may allow students to make connections across passages and then to draw inferences from those connections. For example, a closely read climax in the story may lead readers to look back at passages that foreshadowed that scene.

It should involve a great deal of exploratory discussion. Much of that talk will be among students, but the teacher will lead the class at times through some analysis. It should not, however, become a question-and-answer session in which the teacher drags the class through *her* interpretative steps only, preventing them from seeing the text in any way other than the way in which she has construed it.

Close reading should suggest close attention to the text; close attention to the relevant experience, thought, and memory of the reader; close attention to the responses and interpretations of other readers; and close attention to the interactions among those elements.

It involves rereading. Less skilled readers rarely see the value in rereading, and when they do reread, they do so indiscriminately. That rarely proves effective, so they give up on it as a part of close reading or as a fix-up strategy. When you are confused by something you've read, you reread, but you reread with purpose, with questions in mind, with a hypothesis about the meaning that you were trying to confirm. By contrast, less skilled readers *might* reread the same paragraphs, but they reread with no questions in mind, no particular points of concern, eyes just moving over the same words again. Eventually, as that proves to be ineffective, they give up on what is a critical reading strategy and a necessary part of close reading.

The signpost lessons we present in this book are designed to encourage close reading. They attempt to teach students to be alert for the features in the text that identify passages that merit close, intense, thoughtful analysis. They each provide a question that should initiate that close attention and elicit tentative answers and further questions that will enable the teacher to help students through the text.

Talking with Colleagues . . .

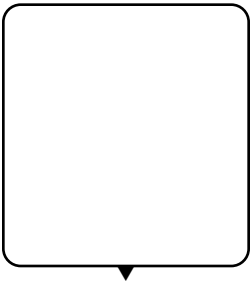


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- ▶ What is my own definition of close reading? How does this compare with what my colleagues say? With what is presented here in this text?
- ▶ What do I do when I closely read a text I've selected myself?
- ▶ Does a text have to be "complex" for one to read closely?
- ▶ What habits and dispositions do I need to instill in students when they are reading multimedia texts so that they read those closely? Are they different habits and dispositions from those used when reading a print text?
- ▶ In your own reading, what motivates you to pay particularly close attention to a portion of a text? What do you do during that close reading? Take notes? Underline? Look back at other parts?
- ▶ Is close reading different for fiction and nonfiction?

Are We Creating Lifelong Learners?

This first part of Notice and Note has been about some of the questions we have asked one another in the past several years. We've not shared here our questions about how the Internet has changed the way we work, made the world smaller, and made collaboration critical. We didn't list our frustrations about cutting fine arts from the school day. We didn't share our deep concern about bullying and the failure by some students to make ethically responsible decisions. We didn't offer our questions about the writing students do (or don't do) or the technology skills they are (or are not) developing, about the new assessments teachers and students are facing, about budget cutbacks, about tying teacher evaluations to assessment scores, or—well, there are always questions.

But the questions we've discussed in this section were the ones that guided our thinking about the biggest question of all: Are we creating lifelong learners?

Helping students be ready for college or for a career is certainly an important mission for schools. We think, though, that there's another mission, perhaps one that, if accomplished, makes the world a better

School ought to be a place where you go to develop a passion for learning—for a lifetime of learning.

place by making each of us a better person. School ought to be a place where you go to develop a passion for learning—for a lifetime of learning. You ought to leave at the end of twelve years with a profound sadness that a time in your life when your primary obligation was to learn, to discover, to wonder, to try, to fail—and then to try again—has ended. School should never be called “jail” or “dumb” or “boring.” There should never be “burn parties,” those events where kids gather at the end of the year to burn their school work in celebration of the year's end. Those first graders who can't wait to

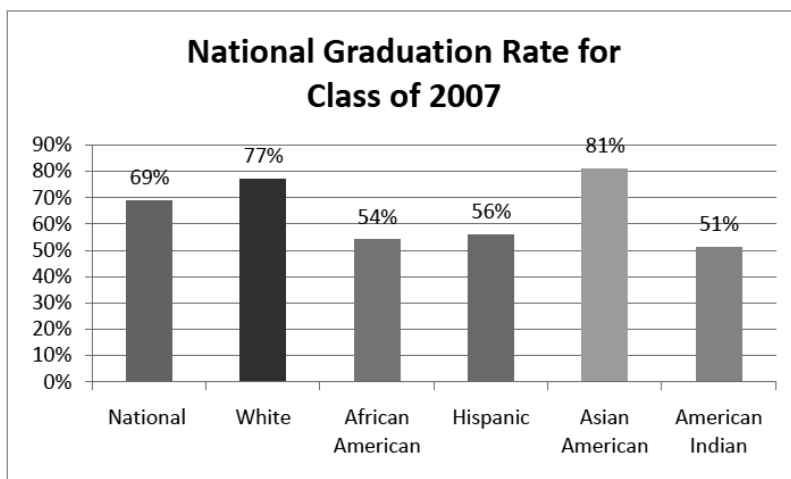
begin this grand adventure called school should become twelfth graders who don't want it to end.

As a nation—perhaps not in your individual school or your own classroom—we have a long way to go in reaching that goal. We think a part of reaching it is helping students become independent, engaged readers—readers who will, for a lifetime, want to turn to books to learn more about themselves, others, and the world around them. Readers who always *notice and note*.

Talking with Colleagues . . .

- ▶ How often do I say something to students about becoming lifelong learners?
- ▶ Do I describe myself to students as a lifelong learner?
- ▶ How would students describe school? A place to hang out with friends? A place to learn more? A place to stretch and grow? Jail? Boring? A place they make you go?
- ▶ In this country, public education is a right given to all school-age children. What are we doing in our school to help students value this right and see it also as a privilege? If they fail to see it this way, why? What could we do in our school, what could I do in my classroom, to change any negative attitudes toward school?

Students from the lowest quartile of family income are seven times more likely to drop out than students from highest quartile (US Department of Education, 2010).



This chart shows graduation rates by ethnicity. To turn that into numbers, about 1.3 million students do not graduate each year. Source: Editorial Projects in Education, 2010.

The Signposts We Found

While thinking about the questions covered in Part I, we began reading the books listed on pages XX-XX. We were looking for text features—beyond those we all already teach, such as the importance of titles, characters’ names, setting, and the opening lines—that would help students read passages closely so they might better understand the text. We did indeed find features worth teaching, features we now call the Notice and Notice Signposts. We then wrote a single question for each signpost that students should ask themselves once they notice it.

Part II shares those signposts, the anchor questions, comments about teaching the signposts, issues regarding assessment, and questions you might have.

1

The Notice and Note Signposts

In Part II, you'll see eight topics, each one explains more about the signposts.

A change in font indicates student talk or our talk in a classroom.

Often, our margin notes discuss what students have said.

we're using the comprehension processes: visualizing, predicting, summarizing, clarifying, questioning, inferring, and making connections. For example, we weren't teaching a lesson on Predicting, but when we taught them Again and Again, they began to use language that showed us they were doing that. For example, when discussing an Again and Again moment that had been spotted in *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, one ninth grader said,

Hey, every time this yellow school bus shows up, these kids are really angry. I bet something is going to happen to it or the driver (ninth grader talking about *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*).

When we taught Memory Moments, another student showed us how easily she could clarify.

So, this part, where Kerry describes how his momma's house burned down when she was little, so that was a Memory Moment and it was important because it explained why she was so angry at Byron for playing with matches. Without that scene, her anger seems too much. (ninth grader talking about *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963*)

And when we taught Contrasts and Contradictions, we saw how easily students could make an inference.

I noticed that here, when she told him to go to the sink and wash his face, he had a chance to run but he didn't. That contradicted everything because all he had been thinking was "run, run, run." I think this line here that says that he could hear other people laughing made him feel safe. If they had been crying or yelling or even if there had been no one else there, he might have been afraid to stay. But saying that others were laughing was a way of showing us that the place looked safe. (ninth grader talking about "Thank you, Mam")

The more we thought about this, the more we realized why this happens. We know that we (usually) don't read consciously hunting out connections (or places to predict or visualize, or so on). Rather, as we are reading, something in the text triggers a response that causes us to think in a certain way (predict, infer, connect, etc.).

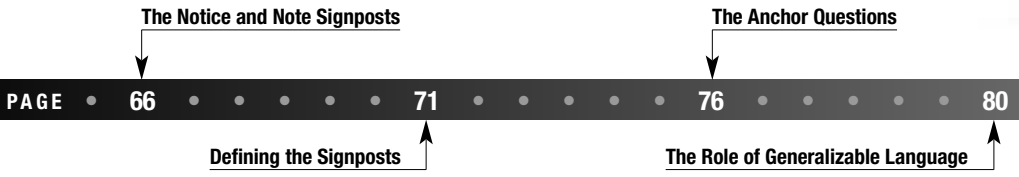
We don't read for the conscious purpose; rather, as we read, something causes us to make a connection. We have

We didn't tell him to stop and predict. We taught him Again and Again and he naturally made a prediction.

Because this student knows to look for Memory Moments, she could use Kerry's memory about Momma's just to explain why Momma was so angry.

We didn't tell him to infer; noticing the contrast and answering the anchor question led him naturally to do that.

66 Part II / The Signposts We Found





Our Generalizable Language



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Assessment and the Signposts



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Explaining the Signposts



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Questions You Might Have



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The Notice and Note Signposts

In August of 2010, Mark, an eighth grader, told us what he thought would happen next in the book he was reading: “I guess I think that maybe, I guess that, that something else is going to happen.”

While we couldn’t say his prediction was wrong (surely something else *was* going to happen), his comment lacked . . . specificity. We wanted him to be able to latch on to something in the text that allowed him to make an inference and form a prediction. We wanted him to be able to say something about the characters or the conflict. So, we taught him—and his classmates—a signpost we call Contrasts and Contradictions. Between August and November, as Mark kept reading novels and short stories, he became more skilled at spotting those moments in a literary text in which a character acts in a way that surprises us. Recognizing those moments, and then reflecting on what they might mean, helped Mark learn more about character development and internal conflict and sharpened his ability to make inferences, offer predictions, and see connections.

By November, Mark was using this strategy often, without prompting from his teacher. While talking about *The Giver* in a class discussion Mark noted:

I stopped in this chapter because I noticed how it said that he had a harsh smile. Smiles aren’t harsh. I noticed that because it was really a contradiction and I wondered why he would be sad and smiling. I think that the Giver is smiling because he’s still trying to make Jonas feel good about this assignment, but he also knows something that Jonas doesn’t know. This part made me think that something important is finally going to happen that’s about Jonas finding out something.

This is a dramatic change in the quality of Mark’s response. He’s reading closely, looking at a specific part of the text—just two words—to point out the contradiction he noticed, and then explaining why he

thinks the character (in this case, the Giver) smiled harshly. Comparing his November comments with his August statement, we see that he's reading more thoughtfully, using both what his experience has taught him and what's in the text to form a prediction, make an inference, and analyze a character. Without doubt, Mark can still tighten his language, but when we compare this analysis offered in November to his earlier comment, "I guess that, that something else is going to happen," we are pleased. So, what is this signpost Contrasts and Contradictions, and how did we come to start teaching it—and the other signposts—to students? Let's begin with how we identified them.

Establishing the Criteria

As we were reading the novels that teachers told us they commonly taught (see pages XX-XX), we began to identify particular features, features that helped us understand character development, internal conflict, and even theme. We kept comparing notes on what we were finding until one day, when talking about *Among the Hidden*, we both mentioned that we had noticed that the author had revealed Luke's internal conflict by having the character ask himself some tough questions: Is it really a life if you're hidden? Why do I have to hide? What will I do when Mother and Father die? We started rereading to see if this feature—the central character asking himself tough questions—occurred in other books. In each book we reviewed, we found scenes where the main character asked himself, or someone else, questions that revealed his innermost struggle.

Another time, while discussing *Tuck Everlasting*, we noticed the scene in which Tuck, the father, takes Winnie out into a boat and discusses the cycle of life with her. This scene, in which he shared wise words, revealed the author's theme, or at least one of them. Were there similar moments in other books in which a wise character shared a life lesson? Again, we reread and again we began to find such scenes.

As we looked for those features, we established three criteria that had to be met for us to conclude that the feature was worth teaching.

1. ***The feature had to have some characteristic that made it noticeable, that caused it to stand out from the surrounding text.*** We were looking, after all, for something in the text that even our less skillful and less enthusiastic readers could learn to spot, not for those clues that were subtle and easy to miss.

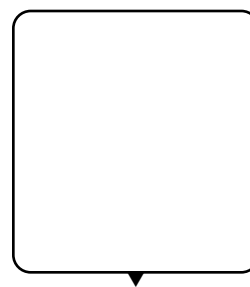


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2. ***The feature had to show up across the majority of books.*** We realized that any particular author might in any particular book use a device unique to his or her idiosyncratic writing style. We want students to notice that, of course, but we were looking for text clues that consistently appeared across most books. It is this consistency across texts that makes the text feature important to learn and that gives us what we came to call *generalizable language*. This language provides students a principle they can apply across texts.

3. ***It had to offer something to readers who noticed and then reflected on it that helped them better understand their own responses, their own reading experience, and their own interpretation of the text.***

The textual element had to provide some insight into or raise some question about a literary element (character, setting, conflict, or theme) or it had to help readers predict, visualize, make connections, or draw an inference—any one of the comprehension processes.

Eventually we found features that met *all* three criteria. Most surprising, we found that not only did these features appear in *most* young adult books—they appeared in *every* young adult novel we read. Then we began to cull the list down to a critical six. Because these six features seemed to be particularly noticeable points in a text, passages that almost demanded that the reader pause and reflect, notice them and make note of them, we called them, as a group, the Notice and Note Signposts, and we named the signposts individually:

- Contrasts and Contradictions
- Aha Moment
- Tough Questions
- Words of the Wiser
- Again and Again
- Memory Moment

The Relationship Between Signposts and the Comprehension Processes

Before we define each of these (although we suspect that you can deduce what each means just from its name) we want to share something that happened as we taught students to notice them, something we never expected. The more students noticed these signposts, the more they

were using the comprehension processes: visualizing, predicting, summarizing, clarifying, questioning, inferring, and making connections. For example, we weren't teaching a lesson on predicting, but when we taught them Again and Again, they began to use language that showed us they were doing that. For example, when discussing an Again and Again moment that had been spotted in *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, one ninth grader said,

Hey, every time this yellow school bus shows up, these kids are really angry. I bet something is going to happen to it or the driver (ninth grader talking about *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*).

When we taught Memory Moment, another student showed us how easily she could clarify.

So, this part, where Kenny describes how his momma's house burned down when she was little, so that was a Memory Moment and it was important because it explained why she was so angry at Byron for playing with matches. Without that scene, her anger seems too much. [sixth grader talking about *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963*]

And when we taught Contrasts and Contradictions, we saw how easily students could make an inference.

I noticed that here, when she told him to go to the sink and wash his face, he had a chance to run but he didn't. That contradicted everything because all he had been thinking was "run, run, run." I think this line here that says that he could hear other people laughing made him feel safe. If they had been crying or yelling or even if there had been no one else there, he might have been afraid to stay. But saying that others were laughing was a way of showing us that the place looked safe. [eighth grader talking about "Thank You, M'am"]

The more we thought about this, the more we realized why this happens. We know that we (usually) don't read consciously hunting out connections (or places to predict or visualize, or so on). Rather, *as* we are reading, something in the text triggers a response that causes us to think in a certain way (predict, infer, connect, visualize, question, and so on). We don't read for the conscious purpose of finding and labeling a connection; rather, as we read, something in the text triggers a memory or causes us to make a connection. We have to be alert for those noticeable

We didn't tell him to stop and predict. We taught him Again and Again and he naturally made a prediction.

Because this student knew to look for Memory Moments, she could use Kenny's memory about Momma's past to explain why Momma was so angry.

We didn't tell him to infer—noticing the contrast and answering the anchor question led him naturally to do that.

If you need Mark to think metacognitively about the thinking he is doing while he reads, then you could respond to him with, “When you talk about what you think of harsh smiles, you show me that you are making an inference and making a connection. Perhaps you are even visualizing as you think about what smiles do and don’t look like.” Eventually, you could ask Mark—after he’s made his comments about the text—to tell you what type of thinking his comments reveal he is doing.

moments in the text that trigger the connection, and then we explore the significance of that interaction.

Now, think back to Mark’s comments about the Giver’s harsh smile. Mark said, “I stopped here because I noticed how it said that he had a harsh smile. Smiles aren’t harsh.” Mark didn’t stop and say, “I’m going to make a connection. My connection is that I don’t think smiles are harsh.” That’s not natural language, and it’s not natural thought. What’s natural is to talk about the trigger and our reaction to it. Mark didn’t set out to read the book with a plan to “make connections;” instead, he set out, alert and responsive, looking for moments that surprised and interested him, and in particular for the moment we’ve called Contrasts and Contradictions. He found one—“harsh smile”—and then he talked about that. If you’ll look carefully at what he said, you’ll see that he’s made a connection and he’s drawing some inferences.

Defining the Signposts

The lessons for teaching the six signposts we've identified appear in Part III. Here, though, is a brief explanation of each one. A chart of these appears on page 67, in Figure 2.1.

Contrasts and Contradictions: This is a point in the novel at which a character's actions or thoughts clearly contradict previous patterns or contrast with patterns the reader would normally expect, suggesting a change or offering new insight into the character. We see an example in *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* when Byron, the near juvenile delinquent, kills a bird. When he thinks he is alone, he cries. This tender behavior contradicts the tough-guy exterior we've seen through the early pages of the book, suggesting that he may be more than simply a bully. Other contrasts and contradictions might offer insight into internal conflict, theme, or relationship of the setting to the plot.

Aha Moments: These are moments when a character's sudden insight or understanding helps us understand the plot's movement, the development of the character, or the internal conflict he faces. An Aha Moment is almost always revealed with very direct language students can be taught to watch for. Characters say, "I realized . . ." or "I suddenly understood . . ." or "It came to me that . . ." or "Now I knew. . ." Luke, in *Among the Hidden*, is very direct with his aha: "The answer was there instantly, as if he'd known it all along and his brain was just waiting for him to come looking" (pp. 145–146). When students notice these Aha Moments, they see the character figure out something that almost always changes the character and therefore the plot.

Tough Questions: This is one lesson we haven't seen as often in adult literature but see consistently in children's and young adult literature. It is the point when the main character—a child or teen—pauses to

We present the definitions of the signposts in this order because this is the order in which we teach them to students. We've chosen this order because we find that every book has multiple instances of Contrasts and Contradictions and Aha Moments but perhaps only one or two Memory Moments. So, we want to introduce students to the signposts they'll see most often before those they'll see less often.

ask, of himself or a trusted other, tough questions. Sometimes, these questions appear not as questions but as statements, often with the word *wonder*: “I wonder what I should do about. . . .” These moments of uncertainty give readers insight into the character’s development, his internal conflicts, and perhaps theme. The lesson of Tough Questions is easy to teach because you simply encourage students to be on the lookout for the big questions a character asks, all of which will be obvious. For instance, Esperanza, in *Esperanza Rising*, asks of herself, “Why did Papa have to die? Why did he leave me and Mama?” (p. 38).

Elementary school teachers tell us that their students understand this signpost quickly when they call it “The Heart Lesson.” Use the language that works for your students. There is nothing magical about the names we’ve chosen.

Words of the Wiser: This is the scene in which a wiser and often older character offers a life lesson of some sort to the protagonist. This lesson often emerges as a theme of the novel. Sometimes the Words of the Wiser consist of only one line: Vern telling Charlotte in *Riding Freedom* that “You gotta do what your heart tells you” (p. 38). Other times the lesson emerges in a longer scene as in *Tuck Everlasting* when Tuck takes Winnie out on a pond in a rowboat and tells her that:

It’s a wheel, Winnie. Everything’s a wheel, turning and turning, never stopping. The frog is part of it, and the bugs, and the fish, and the wood thrush, too. And people. But never the same ones. Always coming in new places, always growing and changing, and always moving on. That’s the way it’s supposed to be. That’s the way it is. (p. 62).

The Words of the Wiser moment in a novel is often announced by placing the younger main character off alone with the older, wiser character in a quiet, meditative, often solemn moment. It’s usually obvious from the setting that a serious conversation is about to ensue, and that conversation is usually the Words of the Wiser. When students notice these scenes, these moments when the wiser character imparts his or her wisdom, they see a guiding lesson that transcends the conflict in the novel; they gain insight into a theme.

Again and Again: This is an image, word, or situation that is repeated, leading the reader to wonder about its significance. Repetition might provide information about a character, about the conflict, about the setting, or about the theme. The object or phrase or event that is repeated might serve as some sort of symbol. In *The Giver*, readers see

the word *release* repeatedly. In *Bud, Not Buddy*, the main character—Bud—repeatedly examines the small bag of rocks with strange numbers on them that his mother had collected. In *Hatchet*, Brian keeps calling to mind something he calls “the Secret.”

Memory Moments: A Memory Moment is a scene that interrupts the flow of the story and reveals something important about a character, plot, or theme. It is the intrusion of the remembered event into what’s happening in the present that marks this moment for the reader (and it is because the memory seems to interrupt the ongoing narrative that readers often skip it, eager to get on with the tale). In *The Outsiders*, early in the book Ponyboy remembers when his friend Johnny was badly beaten. This memory gives readers important background about Johnny’s fears, the situation in Ponyboy’s community, and the relationship between two rival gangs.

Other Signposts in Texts

We know that these are not the only moments in a text to pay attention to and wouldn’t encourage students to sleep through the passages in between. Rather, we see these as the features most easily spotted and most likely to reward reflection. If students begin to notice these, question them and note what they learn, they are likely to become observant and thoughtful at other points in the book as well.

Over the several years we’ve worked on this project, the number of these signposts has varied, once rising as high as twelve or thirteen. For instance, for a long time we had a *Last Lines* signpost. We asked students to be alert for a last line of a chapter or section that seemed to be unique. It might be extraordinarily short—perhaps even just one word—or it might begin with a conjunction (*and* or *but*). Such a last line often pointed to something important, perhaps indicating an imminent change. But too often it was simply a hook to compel the reader to move on to the next chapter, so even though that text feature appeared frequently, it didn’t seem to be as helpful as others. For a while we worked with *Mind the Gap*, that point in the story at which the author makes obvious the character’s ignorance of some crucial information (and probably the reader’s ignorance, too). Later we decided that in many cases the gap in understanding was made evident through one of the other signposts. We finally settled on the six described above as the ones that best met the criteria.

If you see other signposts that you want to add to the list, do so (taking care not to make the list unmanageably large for your students). See this list of six as a starting place. As we begin to work on signposts in expository texts we are very likely to add several that aren't in this collection.

As you think about each of these signposts, you'll see that they appear not only in texts, but also in our lives. When your significant other mentions *again and again* that the garbage needs to go out, there's a subtext to that message—and it has to do with rising anger!

We think that these signposts show up in novels because they show up in the world.

When the friend who always checks on you suddenly begins to ignore you, then the *contrast* with what you expect, the *contradiction* of an established pattern, makes you wonder what is wrong. If you're now a parent, you can look back on those long talks with your own parents not as “another boring lecture”

but as your parent's attempt to spare you some pain, to impart the *words of someone wiser*. When a friend asks you what your teen thought of the party that weekend, you suddenly realize—*aha*—that your teen's sad face over that weekend tells you she hadn't been invited.

We think that these signposts show up in novels because they show up in the world. Fiction does imitate life, and as a result we shouldn't be surprised to find that the patterns that help us understand the world around us also help us understand the world of the book in front of us.

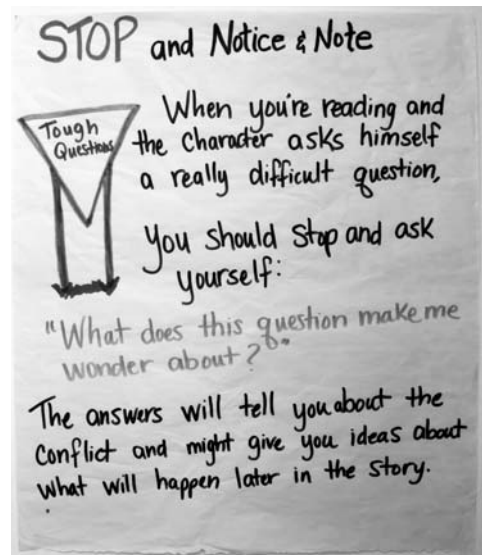
The Notice and Note Signposts and Definitions	The Clues to the Signpost	What Literary Element it Helps Readers Understand
<p>Contrasts and Contradictions A sharp contrast between what we would expect and what we observe the character doing; behavior that contradicts previous behavior or well-established patterns</p>	<p>A character behaves or thinks in a way we don't expect, or an element of a setting is something we would not expect</p>	<p>Character development Internal conflict Theme Relationship between setting and plot</p>
<p>Aha Moment A character's realization of something that shifts his actions or understanding of himself, others, or the world around him</p>	<p>Phrases, usually expressing suddenness, like: "Suddenly I understood" "It came to me in a flash that" "The realization hit me like a lightning bolt" "In an instant I knew"</p>	<p>Character development Internal conflict Plot</p>
<p>Tough Questions Questions a character raises that reveal his or her inner struggles</p>	<p>Phrases expressing serious doubt or confusion: "What could I possibly do to . . . ?" "I couldn't imagine how I could cope with. . . ." "How could I ever understand why she . . . ?" "Never had I been so confused about. . . ."</p>	<p>Internal conflict Theme Character development</p>
<p>Words of the Wiser The advice or insight a wiser character, who is usually older, offers about life to the main character</p>	<p>The main character and another are usually off by themselves, in a quiet, serious moment, and the wiser figure shares his wisdom or advice in an effort to help the main character with a problem or a decision</p>	<p>Theme Internal conflict Relationship between character and plot</p>
<p>Again and Again Events, images, or particular words that recur over a portion of the novel</p>	<p>A word is repeated, sometimes used in an odd way, over and over in the story An image reappears several times during the course of the book</p>	<p>Plot Setting Symbolism Theme Character development Conflict</p>
<p>Memory Moment A recollection by a character that interrupts the forward progress of the story</p>	<p>The ongoing flow of the narrative is interrupted by a memory that comes to the character, often taking several paragraphs to recount before we are returned to events of the present moment</p>	<p>Character development Plot Theme Relationship between character and plot</p>

Figure 2.1 The Notice and Note Signposts

Questions You Might Have

1. *After I teach a signpost lesson, will students really be able to spot whatever signpost they've just learned?*

Probably not. The lesson transfers responsibility to the student gradually; the student will accept that responsibility even more gradually. Keep the chart listing the name of the signpost, a brief definition, the feature they should look for in the text, and the question they should ask themselves posted on the wall for the entire year if necessary. Also, you might distribute the Notice and Note Signposts bookmark for students to keep with them as they read. The front of the bookmark reminds students of each signpost, and they can use the back to jot down the page numbers where they've spotted signposts if you don't want to use the Signpost Log. Templates for the bookmark and log are included in the Appendix.



2. *If students didn't seem to understand the text clue or need some review, what do I do?*

We suggest following up with a minilesson that reteaches or reviews the lesson. Now we really do mean *minilesson*. At the end of each of the lessons in Part III, we offer some other texts you can use for these much shorter lessons (seven to ten minutes).

3. *How do I know if they are finding the signposts when they are reading independently, perhaps in books I haven't read myself?*

If students are reading different books, ask them to show you what they've found. You must do this just with small groups or with individuals—doing it with the entire class would leave too many students sitting idly by, waiting, for too long.

When they become adept at finding the signposts, you can ask them to show you less frequently, though we've seen that as they are catching on, they want to show you often what they are finding. You'll also find that the very general question, *What Notice and Note Signposts have you found, and what did you think they revealed?* is a great way to begin an individual conference or a small- or large-group discussion. And you might follow it up with, *What were the scenes that didn't seem to be one of the signposts, but that still seemed to be important to the story?* In addition to these six signposts, emphasized here because they are easy to spot, there is a great deal more happening in any book.

That said, you could presume, with almost any novel or chapter book expressly written for children (*Charlotte's Web*) or in which the main character is a child even if the book was not written for young readers (*Life of Pi* or *Kite Runner*, for example), that each signpost has a very good chance of appearing in the book. Contrasts and Contradictions, Aha Moments, and Tough Questions most certainly will appear. So, feel comfortable thinking that if in twenty pages students haven't marked at least one of those, you could say, *Has the character changed at all in this section? If so, find that scene where you think he's starting to behave or think differently.* When students find that scene, glance at it. There's probably an Aha Moment or a Contrast and Contradiction. Reread it and then ask them to speculate on the anchor question.

To help them spot a Tough Question they might have missed, ask, *Have you run across a part where the character seems really worried about something and has expressed that worry to someone else or just thought about it by himself? He might have asked someone questions that were hard to answer, or he might have said something like, "I wonder if. . ." Let's look at those questions. Remember, when you spot tough questions, they are showing you what is really bothering the main character, and you need to pause and ask yourself what these questions make you wonder about. Chances are, you'll be wondering the same thing the character is.*

For Words of the Wiser, if you haven't read the book, just ask if the main character has learned a life lesson from someone.

For Again and Again, ask them if something—a word, an image, an event—keeps showing up again and again.

For Memory Moment, ask students if there's been a place where a character pauses to recall something. These moments are marked with phrases such as "I remember . . ." or "Mom was always telling us about when. . ." or "This memory kept popping into my mind . . ." or "I found myself remembering . . ." and so on.

4. *What do I do when a student identifies a passage that others didn't find or when students disagree about what signpost a passage represents?*

That should lead to good conversations. If students argue—politely, we hope—about whether a passage is an Aha Moment or a Tough Question, the best outcome is probably that neither of them wins but that both modify their position slightly. Consider what they will have done: They will have each noticed something significant in the text, formulated their own response to it, asked a question about it, framed a tentative answer, listened to another reader's thinking, and reshaped their own thoughts as a result of the dialogue. They will, in other words, have been engaged in the process of thinking about a text. What they label the passage is significant only in generating that intellectual activity.

5. *How many signposts might I expect to find in any novel?*

We wish we could tell you that answer, but honestly, it's a surprise in every novel. You can always count on Contrasts and Contradictions (as this usually indicates character development), Aha Moments (as they help move the plot along and toward the end reveal resolution of internal conflict), Words of the Wiser (though often only one or two life lessons are shared), and a least a couple of scenes with Tough Questions (though we're seeing that science fiction seems to offer many scenes with Tough Questions), and then Again and Again and Memory Moments range from many to only a few. Not too helpful, we know. We do know, though, that they appear often enough to make it valuable to your students to learn these signposts. To see an example of how often the Signposts occur in *Walk Two Moons*, by Sharon Creech, turn to page XXX in the Appendix.

6. *Are these lessons appropriate for expository texts?*

Yes, with modifications. As a history teacher pointed out to us, history is nothing but Again and Again moments, though they take a shape different from those in a novel. She put up chart paper in her classroom, one sheet for each chapter in their history textbook and, as students studied each historical period, they entered on the chart events and causes and effects. By the third chart, students realized that events (and causes and effects) kept repeating over time. She modified the Again and Again question slightly (*Why do these types of events keep showing up again and again?*), and that led students to begin discussing persistent human traits such as greed, curiosity, bravery, and honor.

Also, when teaching Contrasts and Contradictions in history, you will probably change the anchor question to *Why does the government/person/society act this way?* In science, you might say, *Why does this element/cell/cloud behave or react this way?*

Science teachers tell us that as students write their lab reports, they ask them to identify the Aha Moment the students had when conducting the experiment. “This alone has shown my students what happens when scientists repeat experiments modifying only one thing at a time.” The Aha arrives when the significant variable is changed.

Don’t be afraid to experiment with how these signposts work in expository texts. Change the anchor questions to better match the content—but we’d still encourage you to keep only one question per signpost.

7. *Aren’t there other places in a novel, besides the six you’ve identified here, that are worth noticing and talking about?*

Yes, of course there are, and there are many important scenes in a novel that don’t offer the easily named and observed text features that characterize the signposts. But we are working with struggling readers, and they aren’t going to catch all of the subtlety and nuance in a text. Writers may tell us that they try to make every word count, but we don’t linger over every word, or even every other word. Louise Rosenblatt, the literary theorist who most shaped our thinking about students’ understanding of texts, pointed out that readers don’t respond to an entire text; they select, sometimes

intentionally and consciously but often instinctively or impulsively, what they'll focus on and think about. And if we, the more experienced readers that we are, don't closely examine every word or every page, our less experienced readers surely won't have the patience for that intensive analysis.

These six signposts are simply the textual elements that we think are easiest to keep in mind, spot, and question. We hope that learning and staying alert for the signposts will inculcate a habit of paying close attention, a readiness to slow down and reflect, and a willingness to hear and explore other responses to a text. As your students find other places in the text that strike them, applaud their diligence, encourage the discussion, and ask them what they now wonder about. Do not let students think that a novel is nothing more than a nicely arranged collection of six text elements.

8. *I worry that teachers can ruin the love of reading by constantly telling students they must be looking for something in a novel and then writing about it on a sticky note. Is that what I'm doing with these lessons?*

Only if this is reduced to mechanical hunting for text features and the signposts they announce. The purpose is not to collect signposts but to grow alert to significant moments in a text. There is a subtle but important distinction between *search for* and *be alert for*. We'd prefer to think that our students are *alert for* these text elements, not engaging in a scavenger hunt for them. We are trying to teach them to be observant and thoughtful. The lessons teach them how to be observant by showing them some patterns in the texts that they might notice; they then teach them how to become more thoughtful by suggesting a question that leads to interesting conversation. In short, we hope these lessons will teach them to notice and note.

We hope that learning and staying alert for the signposts will inculcate a habit of paying close attention, a readiness to slow down and reflect, and a willingness to hear and explore other responses to a text.

The Lessons We Teach

In this section, you will find the six Notice and Note Lessons we use to introduce the signposts to students. We begin each of the lessons by describing the class we were in, and then we move through the lesson. Toward the end of the lesson, we share some conversations that are similar to what you might hear, and then we conclude with a Q & A section.

We hope that in this section you'll not only see how we teach the lessons, but that your own ideas will begin to take shape. Should you decide that some of our language works for you, please feel free to use it. And if you like the text we chose for each lesson and think it's appropriate for your students, you'll find each reproduced in the Appendix.

Mostly, we hope that as you read you will find things in each lesson that cause you to stop and notice and note.



Aha Moment ↑



Contrasts and Contradictions

We begin this section with the signpost we like to teach first, Contrasts and Contradictions. This signpost helps students recognize character development, internal conflict, or the relationship of setting to the plot. Students are taught to identify places in the text that reveal a contrast (between the behavior of one group of characters and that of another group, for example) or contradiction (between how a single character acted at an earlier point and how he or she now acts). Once students identify the contrast or contradiction they ask themselves one question: *Why would the character act (feel) this way?* We teach this signpost first for the simple reason that *all* novels have contrasts and contradictions, and often many of them, so students *always* have something to notice.

Materials You Will Need

- A copy of "Thank You, M'am," by Langston Hughes for each student. See Appendix.
- Chart paper for making the Contrasts and Contradictions chart you'll put up in your room. We make charts during the lesson, but you can make yours ahead of time if you want. Just make sure your chart contains the information called out on the chart to the right.

Materials Students Will Need

- A copy of "Thank You, M'am"
- Pen or pencil
- Couple of sticky notes
- Notice and Note Signpost Log (optional). See Appendix.

The generalizable language to use when teaching the lesson

STOP and Notice and Note

When you're reading and a character says or does something that's opposite (contradicts) what he has been saying or doing all along:

You should stop and ask yourself:

"Why is the character doing that?"

The answers could help you make a prediction or make an inference about the plot and conflict.

Name of Lesson

Anchor question

Meeting the Class

This lesson took place in a seventh-grade classroom with twenty-five students. No one seemed too impressed that we were in the classroom, and actually, none of them seemed happy that *they* were in the room. When the tardy bell rang, some students were talking with their buddies; a few had their heads down on their desks; one asked if we were substitute teachers, and another asked where the “real” teacher was. We quieted students and Bob began the lesson.

This is the setting for the example lesson we’re about to provide. You need a sense of the students in the classroom to understand the pace of this lesson. As you think of your own classes, you’ll know if you should slow the pace or perhaps can speed it up.

Explain the Signpost

“ Let’s take some time and think about one of the ways that an author shows us how a character is changing, is developing. We’ll call this technique **Contrasts and Contradictions**. [Write “Contrasts and Contradictions” at the top of your chart paper.]

We’ll begin by thinking about Harry Potter. Who has read any of the Harry Potter books or seen any of the movies? . . . Great. Now think about Hermione. She’s a kid who always has her homework done. Not only does she do her homework, but she likes doing homework, and she wants the teacher to know that she always knows the answer. So, what would you think if one day Hermione came to class and didn’t have her homework done? [Give students time to respond. Most will say something about how that would be weird or odd or, as one student responded, “That would only happen if she were dead.”]

Right. It would make us wonder what’s going on because that’s not a part of Hermione’s personality. That change in behavior contradicts what we’ve come to expect. When authors show us something that doesn’t fit with what we expect, when they present us with a contrast or a contradiction, then we want to pause and ask ourselves one question: **Why would the character act this way?** [Take a moment to get some things written on your classroom chart: the definition of Contrasts and Contradictions and the one question students should ask.]

As I read, I’m on the lookout for a place where the author shows me a character acting in a way that is a contrast or contradiction from how he or she has been acting or how I would expect the character would act. When you notice that contrast or contradiction, then stop

Some teachers want to begin by giving students an overview of all the signpost lessons. If that seems like a good starting point to you, take a look at the Classroom Close-Up on page XX. There, you’ll see how a fourth-grade teacher introduced all the signposts to her students.

Marginal note (“With older students . . .”) does not fit.

This is the generalizable language and anchor question for Contrasts and Contradictions. This is what you want in their heads so that as they read, when they spot a contrast or contradiction they notice it, pause, and consider the anchor question.

We like to make sure students understand what it is the signpost lesson does by pointing out how noticing the signpost might help them understand conflict or character development, for example. If you do that for each of the signposts, then eventually you'll hear them use that language when they talk about the signpost. For example, when discussing Maniac, the main character in *Maniac Magee*, one student said, "Look, here, it says he just turned and walked away. Before he was always running. I think he's acting this way because he's tired of being a hero and just wants to be a normal kid. I think this is an important scene showing us how his character has changed."

Notice that this is an extremely brief introduction to the text. Your introduction was to the signpost. Now you want to move directly into the text.

and ask yourself one question: Why would the character act that way? As you answer that question, you will learn more about the character and sometimes more about the problems he or she faces. Sometimes you might even gain some insight into a theme—the important life lesson the author is trying to share.

OK. Let's try finding some contrast and contradiction clues in this story you have in front of you: "Thank You, M'am."

Classroom Close-Up

Once you've explained the signpost and the anchor question, it's time to show students how this signpost looks in a text. Everyone should have a copy of "Thank You, M'am," something to write with, and perhaps a few sticky notes. If you teach younger students and have a space in your room where they gather for group instruction, perhaps they are on the floor and you're in a rocking chair. We keep older students in their seats, but make sure everyone is close to another student for moments in the lesson when you'll ask them to turn and talk.

Now, move the students into the text with the briefest of introductions.

“ This is a story about a boy who tries to steal a purse from a woman. If you'll follow along, I'll read it aloud to you.

She was a large woman with a large purse that had everything in it but a hammer and nails. It had a long strap, and she carried it slung across her shoulder. It was about eleven o'clock at night, dark, and she was walking alone, when a boy ran up behind her and tried to snatch her purse. The strap broke with the sudden single tug the boy gave it from behind. But the boy's weight and the weight of the purse combined caused him to lose his balance. Instead of taking off full blast as he had hoped, the boy fell on his back on the sidewalk and his legs flew up. The large woman simply turned around and kicked him right square in his blue-jeaned sitter. Then she reached down, picked the boy up by his shirt front, and shook him until his teeth rattled.

After that the woman said, "Pick up my pocketbook, boy, and give it here."

She still held him tightly. But she bent down enough to permit him to stoop and pick up her purse. Then she said, "Now ain't you ashamed of yourself?"

Firmly gripped by his shirt front, the boy said, "Yes'm."

The woman said, "What did you want to do it for?"

The boy said, "I didn't aim to."

She said, "You a lie!"

By that time two or three people passed, stopped, turned to look, and some stood watching.

"If I turn you loose, will you run?" asked the woman.

"Yes'm," said the boy.

"Then I won't turn you loose," said the woman. She did not release him.

"Lady, I'm sorry," whispered the boy.

"Um-hum! Your face is dirty. I got a great mind to wash your face for you. Ain't you got nobody home to tell you to wash your face?"

"No'm," said the boy.

"Then it will get washed this evening," said the large woman, starting up the street, dragging the frightened boy behind her.

I'm going to stop here because as I'm reading, I'm alert for contrasts or contradictions, and when I spot one I want to pause and ask myself, *Why would the character act this way?* At this point, I'm surprised that the woman does what she does! If someone tried to steal something of mine and I caught him, I don't think my first impulse would be to take him home and wash his face. She's acting in a way that contrasts with what I would expect, so I'm going to ask myself why. I'd expect her to haul him off to the police station, but she does the opposite. She takes him home to clean him up. Why would she do this? I have to say that I'm not sure. Perhaps she knows this boy's mother and so she thinks she should take care of him. I just don't know enough about her at this point, so I'm going to keep on reading.

He looked as if he were fourteen or fifteen, frail and willow-wild in tennis shoes and blue jeans.

The woman said, "You ought to be my son. I would teach you right from wrong. Least I can do right now is to wash your face. Are you hungry?"

Notice that we've explained what caused us to stop, identified the anchor question we want to consider, and then shared our thinking with students. When we teach a signpost lesson, at the first pause, we model our thinking and students listen.

“No'm,” said the being-dragged boy. “I just want you to turn me loose.”

“Was I bothering you when I turned that corner?” asked the woman.

“No'm.”

“But you put yourself in contact with me,” said the woman. “If you think that contact is not going to last awhile, you got another thought coming. When I get through with you, sir, you are going to remember Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones.”

Sweat popped out on the boy's face and he began to struggle. Mrs. Jones stopped, jerked him around in front of her, put a half-nelson about his neck, and continued to drag him up the street. When she got to her door, she dragged the boy inside, down a hall, and into a large kitchenette-furnished room at the rear of the house. She switched on the light and left the door open. The boy could hear other roomers laughing and talking in the large house. Some of their doors were open, too, so he knew he and the woman were not alone. The woman still had him by the neck in the middle of her room.

She said, “What is your name?”

“Roger,” answered the boy.

“Then, Roger, you go to that sink and wash your face,” said the woman, whereupon she turned him loose—at last. Roger looked at the door—looked at the woman—looked at the door—and went to the sink.

When we tell students to turn and talk, we really do want them talking with only one other student, for no more than about two minutes. You'll listen in on one or two pairs, nodding, encouraging.

Notice that we begin our comment with generalizable language (“I've noticed a character acting in a way . . .”). Then we applied the signpost to this story. Now, we release a little of the responsibility to the students by asking *them* to discuss the anchor question.

I'll stop here because again I've noticed a character acting in a way that surprised me. When authors show us a character doing something that contradicts what we would expect, we need to stop and consider what's happening. Earlier the boy—Roger—wanted to escape, but now, when she has let go of him and he could run, he chooses to do what she's told him to do. What's the question we need to ask ourselves when we see a contrast or a contradiction? That's right: Why did the character act this way? Turn and talk with your shoulder partner to answer that question.

As students talk in pairs, listen to what they are saying. You're focusing on two things. First, make sure they are answering the question. So if you hear, "If I had been Roger, I would have run," then say, "You've seen a sharp contrast—the contrast between what you would have done and what Roger did. Now you need to share why you think Roger might have acted this way." Second, if you have a student who is willing to let the partner's answer be her answer, then tell that student, "That's fine to share the same idea, but you need to say it, too. If you agree that Roger didn't run because he was hungry, then you need to say that." You want each student to take some ownership of an idea, even if the idea came from their partner first, and you may find that in restating the idea the second student adds something important to the thought.

Watch your time. This is only about two minutes of talk.

“ Let's come back together as a big group. Tell me some of the ideas you and your partner shared. [Give students time to share their thinking—only about three or four minutes.]

OK. Those are interesting ideas. A lot of good thinking is going on. Notice how much you are able to consider just by noticing a contrast or contradiction and then asking yourself why the character would act this way. Let's keep reading, but this time, as I read, when you notice something that looks like a contrast or contradiction to you—something that surprises you—then with your pencil, put a small check mark or perhaps C & C in the margin. We'll come back to those points in a moment.

"Let the water run until it gets warm," she said. "Here's a clean towel."

"You gonna take me to jail?" asked the boy, bending over the sink.

"Not with that face, I would not take you nowhere," said the woman. "Here I am trying to get home to cook me a bite to eat, and you snatch my pocketbook! Maybe you ain't been to your supper either, late as it be. Have you?"

"There's nobody home at my house," said the boy.

"Then we'll eat," said the woman. "I believe you're hungry—or been hungry—to try to snatch my pocketbook!"

As students share out, encourage them to offer evidence from the text. So, if a student says, "He didn't run because he was scared of her," prompt her with "tell me more" and she'll probably point out that Mrs. Jones already had him in a "half-nelson" and was a "large" woman. Then nod and move on to the next student.

While some students will mark the next sentence, “You could of asked me,” we find just as many choose the comment about blue suede shoes. And then the conversation—truly dialogic, to use that term—begins. In one school in Gwinnett County, Georgia, one boy said he was surprised because he thought Roger would say he was hungry. Another responded that it was honest, “Because from the beginning even though he was trying to steal her purse you see he was polite the way he says m’am and the way he told her that if she turned him loose he’d run.” Another joined in and said, “He wanted these blue shoes because whatever those are, those are what will make him fit in and fitting in is what was most important. He just wanted to fit in.” We were touched by this child’s understanding until he said, “Wasn’t there like a singer dude from olden times who sang about blue suede shoes? My grandmother used to sing that song. Do you guys know that singer? He’s like ancient.” Oh well. For a moment, it was nice.

“I want a pair of blue suede shoes,” said the boy.

“Well, you didn’t have to snatch my pocketbook to get some suede shoes,” said Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones. “You could of asked me.”

“Ma’m?”

The water dripping from his face, the boy looked at her.

There was a long pause. A very long pause. After he had dried his face and not knowing what else to do, dried it again, the boy turned around, wondering what next. The door was open. He would make a dash for it down the hall. He would run, run, run!

The woman was sitting on the day bed. After a while, she said, “I were young once and I wanted things I could not get.”

There was another long pause. The boy’s mouth opened. Then he frowned, not knowing he frowned.

The woman said, “Um-hum! You thought I was going to say but, didn’t you? You thought I was going to say, but I didn’t snatch people’s pocketbooks. Well, I wasn’t going to say that.” Pause. Silence. “I have done things, too, which I would not tell you, son—neither tell God, if He didn’t already know. Everybody’s got something in common. Sit you down while I fix us something to eat. You might run that comb through your hair so you will look presentable.”

This is an important place to stop because I’ve noticed several contrasts and contradictions and I bet you did, too. Take a look at the places you put check marks and before I let you talk with your shoulder partner, let’s each take a moment to jot down our own thinking about the passages you’ve marked. Use one of the sticky notes you have on your desk and think about Roger or Mrs. Jones and what each has just said or done and answer this question: *Why would the character act this way.* OK. Let’s all capture our thinking. Once you have some thoughts on paper, turn again to your partner and share your thinking.

As students write, you should walk around noticing what they are writing. With your shyer students, we find it helpful to point out that their thinking is smart and ask them quietly if, when they come back to the full group, they’ll be willing to share their thinking. Since you’ve already

affirmed that they've had a good idea, we think you'll find that they'll be much more willing to share their thinking with others. Don't let students spend more than a minute or two jotting thoughts. Your goal is to get them to turn and talk. Again, after the paired discussions, let students report to the full class. We just say, *So, who found a part they found to be a contrast or contradiction?* and that usually gets at least some talking and then others join in.



Caption TK.

“ Again, I'm so impressed with all the thinking you're doing about the characters. Remember, we're looking for places where a character does or says something that isn't what we expect. That's a contrast or a contradiction. When we find those places, we want to stop and ask ourselves, *Why would the character act this way?* With that in mind, share with everyone some of the comments you made on your sticky notes. What I heard as many of you shared your comments were excellent inferences. Remember that an inference is an idea you have that is based on what you read and what you already know. By answering this one question—*Why would the character act this way?*—you are able to make good inferences about how the character is thinking. As we keep reading, we'll discover which inferences might be more supported and which ones turn out to be inaccurate. Let's keep reading. Again, as I read, when you find parts that you think are contrasts or contradictions, go ahead and mark them. You'll want to be able to come back to them in a moment.

In another corner of the room behind a screen was a gas plate and an icebox. Mrs. Jones got up and went behind the screen. The woman did not watch the boy to see if he was going to run now, nor did she watch her purse, which she left behind her on the day bed. But the boy took care to sit on the far side of the room, away from the purse, where he thought she could easily see him out of the corner of her eye if she wanted to. He did not trust the woman to trust him. And he did not trust the woman not to trust him. And he did not want to be mistrusted now.

“Do you need somebody to go to the store,” asked the boy, “maybe to get some milk or something?”

“Don't believe I do,” said the woman, “unless you just want sweet milk yourself. I was going to make cocoa out of this canned milk I got here.”

Yes, you're repeating the generalizable language and the anchor question, and yes, this will feel repetitive. It is. This is new language for students, and you need to keep reinforcing it.

We find it's important to use words such as *inference*, or if you hear students put things in a sequence, then talk about *sequencing*. In other words, let them see that by noticing Contrasts and Contradictions, they are doing thinking that involves many reading skills. Likewise, if you hear students make a *prediction* (“I bet he's still going to try to run”), then as you respond say something that uses the word prediction: What's happened so far that would support that prediction?

Many of your readers will identify that she gave him the ten dollars as a contradiction, saying people don't normally do that. As you listen to their answers, some will say, "People just don't give strangers money, especially as they've tried to rob them." Others, though, will say, "She's trying to teach him a lesson, show him that it's better to be honest and ask than dishonest and steal." And some will reach further (as did this tenth-grader): "From the beginning, she's been a contradiction. First, she's angry that her purse was nearly stolen, then she takes him home, then she treats him nicely, then she gives him the money, and then she just shuts the door on him." By asking one question, *Why did the character act this way?* you'll encourage rich conversation that is all about differentiation because each student can enter the conversation via his own understanding.

She heated some lima beans and ham she had in the icebox, made the cocoa, and set the table. The woman did not ask the boy anything about where he lived, or his folks, or anything else that would embarrass him. Instead, as they ate, she told him about her job in a hotel beauty shop that stayed open late, what the work was like, and how all kinds of women came in and out, blondes, redheads, and Spanish. Then she cut him half of her ten-cent cake.

"Eat some more, son," she said.

When they finished eating, she got up and said, "Now here, take this ten dollars and buy yourself some blue suede shoes. And, next time, do not make the mistake of latching onto my pocketbook nor nobody else's—because shoes got by devilish ways will burn your feet. I got to get my rest now. But from here on in, son, I hope you will behave yourself."

She led the way down the hall to the front door and opened it. "Good night! Behave yourself, boy!" she said, looking into the street as he went down the steps.

The boy wanted to say something other than "Thank you, ma'm," to Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones, but although his lips moved, he couldn't even say that, as he turned at the foot of the barren stoop and looked up at the large woman in the door. Then she shut the door. And he never saw her again.

Well, here we are at the end, and my head is full of thoughts. The first thing I want you to do is look back at this portion we just read and find the contrast or contradiction that you thought was most interesting. Put your finger on that one. . . . OK. Now, what is the question you want to ask yourself? . . . That's right, *Why did the character act this way?* Now, use another one of your sticky notes to jot down your thoughts. [Only give about two minutes for this.]

Now, turn and talk with your shoulder partner and share the contrast or contradiction you thought most interesting, and then read what you wrote on your sticky note.

Again, give students only about two minutes to talk with their partners. Then bring the class back to the full group and let them share their thinking. Notice how much conversation you are getting from one

question. And, if your class is anything like any of the classes we've taught, you'll see that student participation has increased. Students are now, by the end of this lesson, comfortable with this one question, and they realize that they all have a chance to talk through turn and talk. When you pull students back together, let them share their thinking. We like to give as many students as possible the chance to share at this point. If someone offers an answer that you think really isn't supported in the text, then follow up with something like, "Tell me what happened in the story that helped you make that inference." If they say, "I don't know," then push them back to the place where the contrast or contradiction occurred and tell them to do some more thinking and then move on to the next student.

“ Those were great comments about Roger and Mrs. Jones. And all that thinking came from the close reading you were doing. Let's review what you did that helped you make these inferences. First, we learned one text clue that authors give us. The name of this clue is . . . ? Right! Contrasts and Contradictions. [If you need to, direct students' attention to the chart you made.] When I see a character acting in a way that I wouldn't expect then I want to stop right there and ask myself one question which is . . . Right again! "Why would the character act this way?" When I can answer that question, then I'm learning more about the story and more about the character.

Now, as you do your reading in your own books, be sure to use your Notice and Note log or sticky note, to mark any contrasts and contradictions you see. Jot down your thoughts about why the character would act that way.

The Conversations You'll Hear

We didn't want to interrupt the flow of the lesson to share examples of student talk, but we do want you to see what you might expect. Here's a brief exchange from two students who were in the midst of this lesson:

DREW: This line here, where she says, "You could have just asked," that was a contradiction because if you try to steal a lady's purse, then the idea that she would just give it to you, man, that is crazy.

DOMINICK: Yeah, I marked that one, too. So now if you say why she gonna act that way, I think she is crazy! [laughter] Or maybe she just want to show him someone care.

At the end of the story, we want students both identifying the contrast or contradiction and answering the question.

While you might want to come back to "Thank You, M'am" for more discussion at this point, remember that you're sharing the story to teach this signpost. Summarize what they've learned about Contrasts and Contradictions and hang the chart you've created someplace in the room where it can stay for a while.

The Notice and Note Signpost Log is found on page XXX of the Appendix and some adaptations are found beginning on page XXX. If you want to show students an example of a student's reading log, you can find a student example on page XX.

Notice that when Drew first spoke, his “thinking” about the woman’s action was shallow: “man, that is crazy.” Now, after listening to Dominick, he’s extended his thinking. That’s more rigorous thinking and closer reading.

Now Drew goes back into the text for more evidence from another line to support his thinking. We didn’t have to ask them what that line meant; instead, because it supported the thinking Drew was doing, he found it. He’s attending to a critical standard in the ELA CCSS—using evidence to support his thinking without a special lesson on doing that. The signpost helped him do that in a very natural way.

These pages numbers are from the edition with this ISBN: 0-440-41412-1. If those pages don’t take you to that scene, then look through Chapter 6. That’s where this scene occurs.

DREW: I think that’s it. She’s took him home and made him dinner and early on she didn’t lecture him any. But this line, this line it was the one that really showed how much she was caring.

DOMINICK: Or maybe just being like someone who really care, you know like maybe no one ever cared for her. Maybe she ashamed and some things and so this is her way to give it back.

DREW: Like earlier when she say that she has done things that no one but God knows about.

This is a close reading of this one line, and the students do a good job of connecting it to other parts of the text. Looking at this behavior is, of course, a part of assessing how well the students are reading the text. We said much more about assessment on page XX of Part II.

Questions You Might Have

1. *This lesson with “Thank You, M’am” seems longer than a minilesson. Is it?*

Yes. Minilessons are short—five to seven minutes for us—lessons that we think are best for reinforcing or reviewing something. We don’t use the minilesson format for introducing new information that will take students a while to learn. Set aside about forty minutes for this lesson.

2. *So, after this one lesson, my students will get it?*

Don’t we wish! No, we find that you’ll need to use minilessons to remind students what the text clue is they are looking for (the character acts in a way that surprises us or two characters have clear differences) and the question they must ask themselves (Why would the character act this way?) Here are some short scenes from other trade books that you might use to quickly review (truly a minilesson) Contrasts and Contradictions:

The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963, pages 84–85. This is the scene where Byron kills a bird and then later Kenny watches him cry over doing this. Reproduce the scene for students. Before you read it aloud, tell them that Byron is Kenny’s older brother and he’s the school bully. When you finish reading, ask them what the contradiction is (Byron, a bully, showing remorse for his actions), and then ask, “Why would the character—Byron—act this way?”

The Giver, page 105. The single sentence that says, “The Giver smiled, though his smile was oddly harsh.” Display this sentence so all can see it. Tell students that the Giver is a wise elder of a community and his student is a boy named Jonas. The Giver is teaching Jonas how to take over his job one day, a job that will require that Jonas act as the memory keeper of the community. Ask students what the contradiction is. Someone will point out that smiles aren’t harsh. Follow up with the question, “Why would the character act this way?”

This line occurs on page 105 in the edition with this ISBN: 0-553-57133-8. If you don’t see this line on that page, look for it toward the end of Chapter 13.

3. *Do Contrasts and Contradictions show readers only something about a character?*

No. In historical fiction, science fiction, and fantasy we want students to notice the contrasts between the world (time and place) of the novel and the world of the reader. When you move into those genres, remind students that in addition to seeing Contrasts and Contradictions in characters, they should look for ways in which the setting of the book contrasts with the setting of their own world. For instance, in the first chapter of *The Giver*, they’ll see a community in which loudspeakers are everywhere (not just schools or airports) and see that people are instructed to go inside immediately because a plane is flying overhead. That’s a characteristic of a setting that should strike them as odd. The question they ask themselves once they notice a contrast regarding setting is, *What might this mean to the character?* The “this” in that question refers to the element of the setting that the student has found to be a contrast.

4. *So, asking just Why would the character act this way? or What might this mean to the character? is all I need to teach students to ask themselves?*

Yes. We’ve found that we can easily overload students with text clues and questions. Students internalize this more easily if they have only one clue to keep in mind and one question to ask themselves once they find that clue. That one question will lead naturally to others. That said, we want to provide you with some additional questions you’ll want to use as you talk with students. We don’t suggest that you give students this list of questions; instead, keep them nearby and use one or two as needed when

talking with students to help them think more deeply about the contrast or contradiction.

- Does this contradiction show us some new side of the character's personality, something we hadn't seen before? If it does, then it may be showing you that the character has been hiding something from us, or it may be revealing how the character is changing. How did it change your opinion of the character?
 - Does this contrast tell us anything about the differences between individuals or groups? If so, you're probably seeing the conflict that is arising in the story.
 - Is the contrast between what you would expect to see in the place portrayed and what the author actually shows you? If so, it may be revealing some unique feature of the setting.
 - Is the contrast between what the character expects to find or achieve and what he actually does discover or accomplish? If so, we may be learning about the theme of the book.
 - Is the contradiction between what the character says and what he does? Is it between his speech or actions at one point in the story and his behavior at another time? If so, we are learning something about his character and probably about his inner conflicts.
 - Does the contradiction show the character making an important decision or doing something that surprises you? Try completing this statement: Once I saw [insert character's name] do _____, then I knew that he/she had learned this lesson: _____. If you can do that, then the contrast or contradiction that you noticed is probably showing you something about the theme.
5. *What do I do if a student is reading a book I've not read, and I therefore don't know if she's missed seeing a contrast or contradiction?*

This will happen often, especially if you use readers' workshop as your instructional style. So, as you talk with a student about the book she's reading, ask where she's noticed a character doing something that is a contradiction or contrast to the way she expected the character might act. Have the student take you to that point in the book. Skim that passage quickly and then make

sure to have the student answer the question (all together now: *Why would the character act this way?*)

While we're both fans of readers' workshop, we think this approach to literature instruction means that students miss out on important conversations. So, use Contrasts and Contradictions as a starting point for conversations—even when students are reading various books. Have pairs of students tell each other what their book is about and point out a couple of the contrasts and contradictions they noted that day while reading. The other person has one job—to ask that all-important question!

Overset from page 107

With older students, Bob prefers to ask instead what would happen if the friends they always sat with in the school cafeteria suddenly moved to another corner. "You'd think that was behavior that contradicts how they've normally acted. Wouldn't you wonder what was going on?" he asks. Kids always respond to this scenario he paints—probably because it's something that has happened to them or that they dread happening to them. One student once responded by (unknowingly) moving directly to the anchor question for Contrasts and Contradictions by announcing, "I'd ask him why he was acting that way." The point is, explain the signpost by first making a real-life connection.

Overset from page 112

You don't have to use sticky notes. Sometimes, though, giving students a chance to write their own thoughts—just for a minute or two—helps them think on their own.

Now we're turning over even more responsibility to students. We've stopped the reading, but now they need to decide what the contrast or contradiction is and answer the question.



And Now You Begin

So there you have it. Six lessons. Six signposts. Six anchor questions. One goal: to help teachers help students come to love thoughtful, reflective, engaged reading.

Not that they shouldn't also love getting lost in a book. That's a wonderful, if strange, metaphor—*lost in a book*. Normally we don't think of being lost as a desirable state of affairs. Driving around a strange city, unable to find our way to the airport, no street names recognizable, no familiar buildings serving as landmarks, no idea whether to turn left or right can be unsettling, even frightening. When we hear of a friend who has "lost his way in life," we don't celebrate the joy he must be feeling but instead mourn for his confusion and discomfort and hope that he will one day find his way again. Getting lost isn't fun.

But getting lost in a book is a great joy. Most passionate readers have had—and loved—the feeling of being so immersed in the imaginary world that they're barely aware of the room they're sitting in or the beach they're sitting on, so caught up in the narrative that they feel what the character must be feeling, that they begin to tell him which door to open and which to stay far away from and hope desperately that he'll take their advice. At such moments the reader loves the hero and hates the villain, though both are mere ink spots on paper; fears the tiger behind the door, though both tiger and door are nothing but print on paper; wishes fervently that the good guys will triumph in the end

So there you have it. Six lessons. Six signposts. Six anchor questions. One goal: to help teachers help students come to love thoughtful, reflective, engaged reading.

and the bad suffer appropriate punishment, though, no matter how it works out, once the story is over and the book ends, both hero and villain will vanish between the cardboard covers of the book or float into cyber space as the Kindle is turned off. But, for a few hours, that imaginary world was more real than the one around us. We were lost in the book, in the moment, an experience Margaret Early (1960) called “unconscious delight.”

Much as we hope our students will have the experience of losing themselves in a book, at the same time we hope that they’ll have the experience of finding themselves in a book. That is to say, we’d like them to close the book or turn off the e-reader thinking that they understand themselves, the people around them, and their world more fully than they did before they began the book. That sharpened understanding may take the form of newly acquired knowledge. That is often why we go to nonfiction—to gather information that we want or need. But it also may consist of refined understanding of the human condition, which is why we go to imaginative literature. We may read *To Kill a Mockingbird*, for instance, and close the covers with a deepened appreciation for the courage it takes to reject the assumptions and attitudes of our commu-

Much as we hope our students will have the experience of losing themselves in a book, at the same time we hope that they’ll have the experience of finding themselves in a book.

nity. Or your class may read *Riding Freedom* and come to realize, somewhat more clearly, how much a society shapes our lives and dictates to us what we can or cannot do, who we can or cannot be. Literature enables us to see our world and ourselves more clearly, to understand our lives more fully.

Coming to those sharpened understandings requires us not to extract something from the book but to *transact* with it. It requires us to attend to what’s happening on the page just as we attend to what’s happening around us and to question and speculate. Then we are more than *lost* in a book; we are *found* in the book—through thoughtful, engaged, reflective reading. If we are to refine our understandings of ourselves and our conceptions of our world, we have to read our environment and our texts closely. We have to listen to the responsive chords struck in our own minds and see where they lead us. And we must seek evidence in the text to confirm or refute our speculations—speculations about what the text means to us, in our world, at this moment. Without that connection to us, the words on the page might

just as well be mere inkspots. But if we read responsively and responsibly, we can, with those inkspots, shape our own lives into something richer than they would otherwise be.

So we must notice what's happening, ask ourselves what it means, and take note of the possible answers. We hope that *Notice and Note* will help you help your students to do just that and to come to appreciate the pleasures—intellectual, social, and aesthetic—of reading closely and thoughtfully.

Literature enables us to see our world and ourselves more clearly, to understand our lives more fully.

Appendix

In this section, you'll see many of the figures and templates from Parts I and II, as well as the texts needed to support the lessons found in Part III. All of the texts in this Appendix also appear in digital format at www.NoticeandNote.com.

- 1. SURVEYS** 195
 - a. The Twenty-Five Most Commonly Taught Novels, Grades 4–8
 - b. The Twenty-Five Most Commonly Taught Novels, Grades 9–10
 - c. Reading Habits Survey
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 - a. *Thank You, M'am* (for Contrasts and Contradictions)
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 - c. *A Long Walk to Water* (for Tough Questions)
 - d. *Riding Freedom* (for Words of the Wiser)
 - e. *Hatchet* (for Again and Again)
 - f. *Hope Was Here* (for Memory Moment)

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Though we did not reference or quote from these books, they have nonetheless affected our thinking about literacy education. We appreciate the work and dedication of these authors and encourage you to find the texts you've not read and read them, perhaps with a colleague.

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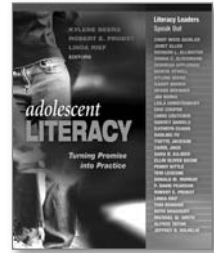
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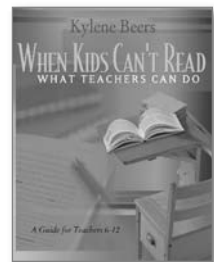
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George couldn't read. When George's parents asked her to explain what their son's reading difficulties were and what she was going to do to help, Kyleene, a secondary certified English teacher with no background in reading, realized she had little to offer the parents, even less to offer their son. That defining moment sent her on a twenty-three-year search for answers to that original question: how do we help middle and high schoolers who can't read?

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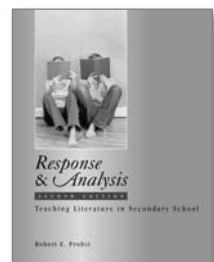


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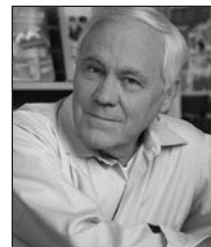
A b o u t t h e A u t h o r s

Kylene Beers, Ed.D., is a former middle school teacher who has turned her commitment to adolescent literacy and struggling readers into the major focus of her research, writing, speaking, and teaching. She is the author of the best-selling *When Kids Can't Read/What Teachers Can Do*, co-editor (with Bob Probst and Linda Rief) of *Adolescent Literacy: Turning Promise into Practice*, and co-author (with Bob Probst) of *Notice and Note: Strategies for Close Reading*, all published by Heinemann. She taught in the College of Education at the University of Houston, served as Senior Reading Researcher at the Comer School Development Program at Yale University, and most recently acted as the Senior Reading Advisor to Secondary Schools for the Reading and Writing Project at Teachers College.



Kylene has published numerous articles in state and national journals, served as editor of the national literacy journal, *Voices from the Middle*, and was the 2008-2009 President of the National Council of Teachers of English. She is an invited speaker at state, national, and international conferences and works with teachers in elementary, middle, and high schools across the US. Kylene has served as a consultant to the National Governor's Association and was the 2011 recipient of the Conference on English Leadership outstanding leader award.

Robert E. Probst, author of *Response and Analysis*, (Heinemann, 2004) is a respected authority on the teaching of literature. Bob's focus on engagement and literary analysis helps teachers learn the strategies to help readers approach a text with more confidence and greater skill.



Professor Emeritus of English Education at Georgia State University, Bob's publications include numerous articles in *English Journal*, *Voices from the Middle*, and professional texts including *Adolescent Literacy: Turning Promise into Practice* (Heinemann, 2007), and the forthcoming Heinemann book *Notice and Note: Strategies for Close Reading* (with Kylene Beers). He presents at national conventions including the International Reading Association (IRA), the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), the Association of Supervisors and Curriculum Developers (ASCD), and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP). He has served NCTE in various leadership roles including the Conference on English Leadership Board of Directors, the Commission on Reading, column editor of the NCTE journal *Voices from the Middle*, and is the 2007 recipient of the CEL Outstanding Leadership Award.