Using Text Features
Comprehension and Learning Strategy

Before Reading Comprehension Strategy

NBSS
The National Behaviour Support Service
An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Tacaíochta Iompraíochta

Text Features

Purpose of using text features:

Different types of nonfiction text contain common features that students can recognise and use to help them understand the information being presented, identify main idea as well as key words and concepts. Drawing attention to, as well as discussing the text's typical features with students can help them to find and understand information, enabling them to be more effective readers and learners. Looking at text features and scanning the chapter also activates prior or background knowledge. Activating prior knowledge helps students make connections to the text they are reading which increases comprehension.

Explicitly teaching text features:

Step 1

When beginning a new chapter or a new textbook students can be introduced to the different features and consider how these help comprehension. Explain to students that text features are parts of their textbook that have been created to help them locate and learn information. Explain how text features include the design and organisation of pages in their textbook. For example the title page and table of contents are text features found at the beginning of a textbook. Headings, graphics, main idea boxes and bolded words are some of the text features found in the chapters of their book, while glossaries and indexes are some text features found at the end of a textbook.

Step 2

Demonstrate how looking at text features can help identify what is most important in a topic and help locate information quickly. For example explain that by looking at the headings and subheadings the important ideas in a topic can be identified or how bolded or coloured text draws attention to key ideas, words or phrases.

Step 3

In pairs have students familiarise themselves with the different text features in their different textbooks.

TEXTBOOK TRIFLES

Trifles – Find out the ingredients of your textbook!

Title

What is the title?
What do I already know about this topic?
What does this topic have to do with the chapter before it?
What do I think I will be reading about?

Read the headings

What does this heading tell me I will be reading about?
What is the topic of the paragraph beneath it?
How can I turn this heading into a question that is
likely to be answered in the text?

Introduction

Is there an opening paragraph?
Does the first paragraph introduce the rest of the chapter?
What does the introduction tell me I will be reading about?
Do I know anything about this topic already?

First sentence in a paragraph

What do I think this chapter is going to be about based on the first sentence in each paragraph?

Look at the visuals and vocabulary

Does the chapter include photographs, drawings, maps, charts or graphs?
What can I learn from the visuals in a chapter?
How do captions help me better understand the meaning?
Is there a list of key vocabulary terms and definitions?
Are there important words in boldface type throughout the chapter?
Do I know what the boldfaced words mean?
Can I tell the meaning of the boldfaced words from the rest of the sentences?

End-of-chapter questions

What do the questions ask?
What information do they point to as important?
What information do I learn from the questions?

Summary

What do I understand and recall about the topics covered in the summary paragraph?

Now you're ready to eat up the information in your textbooks!

WHAT'S IN YOUR TEXTBOOK TRIFLE?

Topic Title: _____   **Textbook Page/s:** _____

T	
R	
I	
F	
L	
E	
S	

TAKE A TEXTBOOK TOUR

In pairs look through your textbook and see can you answer the questions about the text features in the book – you're against the clock!

1. Using the Table of Contents, find the chapter number for the topic _____.

2. In the Index at the back of the text, find and list all the pages that deal with _____.

3. On page _____, what is the purpose of the coloured box *(e.g. highlights a key or main idea).*

4. What diagram appears on page _____? How is it connected to other information on that page?

5. In the Table of Contents, which topic is covered in Chapter_____, Section ___?

6. On page _____, what special feature helps you to identify the definition of _____?

7. In the Index, how many page references are there for _____? Which reference provides you with the most complete information on the topic?

8. In Chapter _____, how many subheadings appear throughout the chapter? Where is the subheading that identifies _____ (e.g. *summary, activity*)?

9. Where would you go in the textbook to (quickly) find information about _____?

11. Turn to page _____. Read the first paragraph and find the words in italics. What is the purpose of this feature?

12. Open the text to pages _____and _____. Scan the words in boldface type. Why did the writers use this feature?

13. Open the text to page _____. Look at the graphic (e.g. *map, photograph, graph*). What is the purpose of this feature?

Source: Think Literacy

BIG FOX

In pairs look through your textbook and see can you find the text features below.

B	**Bold** – List any words or phrases that are in bold print.	
i	**Italics** – List any words or phrases that are in italics.	
G	**Graphics** – Describe any graphics (photos, drawings, graphs, charts, maps, tables, etc.).	
F	**Facts** – List at least 5 facts found in the pages.	
O	**Opinions** – List any opinions found in the textbook piece.	
X	**X marks the spot – or at least the main point.** In 2-3 sentences, write the main point of the piece you have previewed (Hint – read the opening sentence of each paragraph).	

TEXT FEATURE CARDS

Text Feature: What information does it tell me?	**Text Feature:** What information does it tell me?
Text Feature: What information does it tell me?	**Text Feature:** What information does it tell me?
Text Feature: What information does it tell me?	

TEXTBOOK SCAVENGER HUNT

How do we use the text features of books to find and understand information?

Directions: You and your partner are on a quest to find examples of the text features below in your textbooks by completing the chart on the next page.

But this is a **TIMED** exercise – you are against the clock!

Before you start, look at some of the features you will be searching for below. Do you know what these features look like? Before you and your partner start make sure you ask the teacher to explain any of the text features below that you're not 100% sure about.

- **Photographs**
- **Pictures/drawings**
- **Captions**
- **Maps**
- **Charts**
- **Timelines**
- **Chapter titles**
- **Headings**
- **Subheadings**
- **Index**
- **Glossary**
- **Highlighted/bolded words**
- **Contents page**
- **Diagrams**
- **Coloured boxes**
- **Icons**
- **Bullet points**

TEXTBOOK SCAVENGER HUNT

* With your partner find as many of the following features as you can in your textbook. For each feature you find, write the page number (if you're using different books write the title or subject).

TEXT FEATURES			
Print Features	**Graphic Aids**	**Informational Aids**	**Organisational Aids**
Bold print ☐ book: _____ page: _____ *Italics* print ☐ book: _____ page: _____ Coloured print ☐ book: _____ page: _____ Underlined print ☐ book: _____ page: _____ **Font size/type** ☐ book: _____ page: _____ **Bold** print ☐ book: _____ page: _____	**Photos** ☐ book: _____ page: _____ **Drawings / Pictures** ☐ book: _____ page: _____ **Diagrams** ☐ book: _____ page: _____ **Tables/Charts** ☐ book: _____ page: _____ **Graphs** ☐ book: _____ page: _____ **Maps** ☐ book: _____ page: _____ **Cartoons** ☐ book: _____ page: _____	**Introductions** ☐ book: _____ page: _____ **Timelines** ☐ book: _____ page: _____ **Captions** ☐ book: _____ page: _____ **Bullet Points** ☐ book: _____ page: _____ **Boxed Text** ☐ book: _____ page: _____ **Numbered Steps** ☐ book: _____ page: _____ **Icons** ☐ book: _____ page: _____ **Summary** ☐ book: _____ page: _____	**Titles** ☐ book: _____ page: _____ **Chapter Titles** ☐ book: _____ page: _____ **Headings** ☐ book: _____ page: _____ **Subheadings** ☐ book: _____ page: _____ **Contents** ☐ book: _____ page: _____ **Numbered Steps** ☐ book: _____ page: _____ **Index** ☐ book: _____ page: _____ **Glossary** ☐ book: _____ page: _____
Print features help you **pay attention to important words.**	Graphic aids help you **visualise or make pictures in your mind**.	Informational aids help you **understand new or important information.**	Organisational aids help you **find information or connect the ideas.**

DOES IT FEATURE IN YOUR TEXTBOOK?

Directions: Use your textbook to answer the questions below about text features.
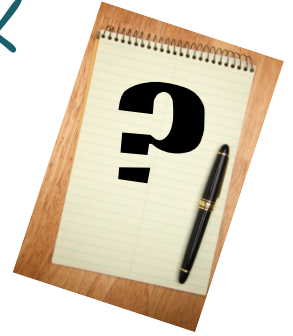
1. Read the text features listed. Write yes or no if your textbook has the text feature and a page number where the text feature can be found. Then explain how it helps you understand the content on the page.

Text Feature	Write **yes/no** and a page where there is an example of the text feature.	**Explain** how you think the text feature will help you understand what you are reading.
Chapter Titles	**Pg:**	
Headings and Subheadings	**Pg:**	
Photos and Illustrations	**Pg:**	
Diagrams	**Pg:**	
Bold or Highlighted Words	**Pg:**	
Graphs/Charts/ Maps	**Pg:**	
Main Idea Boxes	**Pg:**	
Bullet Points	**Pg:**	
Topic or Chapter Questions	**Pg:**	

SKIM AND SCAN YOUR TEXTBOOK

Skimming means to read quickly to get the general gist or idea.

Scanning means to look quickly for one thing in particular.

Name _____

Directions: Would you most likely skim or scan to do each of the following?

1. I would _____ through the table of contents to see what information a book contained.

2. I would _____ through the index of a textbook to look for a certain topic.

3. I would _____ through the glossary to find the meaning of word from the textbook.

4. I would _____ through the headings of a chapter before I read it to see if I know anything about it.

5. I would _____ to search for an unanswered question on an exam paper or test.

6. I would _____ to find a location on a map.

7. I would _____ to find a number in a chart.

8. I would _____ to refresh my memory about a topic I'd studied before.

USING CLUES TO PREDICT

1. Before you begin reading, use the clues of the text features listed in the first column to predict what you will learn. Based on these clues summarise what you predict you will learn from your reading.
2. As you read, as well as after you read, identify and note down what you've learned. Then summarise or write the gist of what you've learned.
3. After reading see how many of your predications were correct and what text features helped you the most.

What I think or predict I will learn about based on the text features.	After I read I learned...	Check for confirmation of your predications. What helped?
Page/s:	Topic:	
Title/Heading:		
Subheadings:		
Bold:		
Italics:		
Charts/Diagrams:		
Pictures:		
In summary, from the text feature clues I predict that...	In summary I learned...	

Read All Over
Bookmark

1. Look closely at all the pictures, diagrams, maps, charts, etc.

2. Read all the headings and sub headings.

3. Read any **bolded** or *highlighted* words.

   What do these words mean?

4. Read the introduction and the conclusion.

READ ALL OVER

1. Look closely at all the pictures, diagrams, maps, charts, etc.
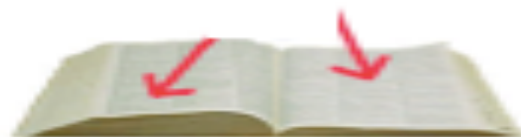
2. Read all the headings and sub headings.

3. Read any **bolded** or <mark>*highlighted*</mark> words.

4. Read the introduction and the conclusion.

For further information contact:

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