

PYRAMID DIAGRAM

Presented by Hurst

Description:

The Pyramid Diagram is a strategy that guides students in selecting appropriate information from a reading to be analyzed and possible implications considered. This strategy was developed to help students use visual diagrams to further develop comprehension. The pyramid Diagram engages students in both reading and writing activities.

Primary focus: comprehension

Targeted Reading Level: Elementary to college

Procedure:

Step 1: Provide students with a focusing question that will help them select relevant information from a reading.

Ex: A focusing question for students reading a selection about Benjamin Franklin might be, “What were Ben Franklin’s accomplishments during his life?”

Step 2: Distribute index cards to the students and have them read a selection. As they read, they should record on the cards information that deals with the focusing question. One piece of information is recorded on each card.

Ex: Students looking for Franklin’s achievements might write, “invented the lightning rod” on one card, and “was ambassador to France” on a second card. Students then continue making cards until they finish reading the passage.

Step 3: Model the process of categorizing the selected information from the reading by soliciting student responses from their cards. Write each response on a 5x8 index card and line the cards along the chalkboard tray in the order given. Next, ask students if any of the cards can be grouped together. Allow discussion and recognize disagreements as students determine how to categorized the cards. The remaining cards form the foundation layer of the pyramid.

Step 4: Ask students to brainstorm category headings for each grouping of cards. Again, allow discussion and help the class reach a consensus. Write the heading on new cards and tape them to the pyramid as a second layer above the corresponding categories.

Ex: students might decide on statesmen, scientist, inventor, or writer detailing Franklin’s roles.

Step 5: Draw on the chalkboard two rectangles representing the top two layers of the pyramid. The title should reflect the overall topic area of the selection and is placed on the top. Benjamin Franklin would be the title in this case. Then using the title, category labels, and details from the reading, have each student write a one-sentence statement that summarizes the information represented in the pyramid.

Ex: After constructing the Ben Franklin Pyramid students might write, “Ben Franklins accomplishments in writing, science, and government show that he was a man of many talents and interests.

Step 6: Students now write a one-paragraph conclusion that addresses the focusing question. The second layer of the pyramid provides them with a topic sentence. The third layer suggests subsequent sentences that will expand on the topic sentence. The bottom layer identifies appropriate details that may be used to illustrate each of these examples.

Ben Franklin example:

Benjamin Franklin’s accomplishments in writing, science, and government show that he was a man of many talents and interests. Franklin was a well-known writer who published the popular Poor Richards Almanack and wrote his autobiography. As an inventor, he is responsible for inventing the lightning rod and Franklin stove. He also was a scientist who conducted experiments on electricity and studied weather patterns. Finally, Franklin was an important statesmen who served as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention and as a diplomat to France during the Revolutionary War.

**Once students are comfortable using the pyramid diagram strategy they can use it in groups.

(Adapted from an article given to me by Dr. Swanson.)



Benjamin Franklin

Ben Franklin's accomplishments in writing, science, and government show that he was a man of many talents and interests

Writer

Inventor

Scientist

Statesman

Published Poor Richard's Almanack	Wrote his auto-biography	Invented the lightning rod	Devised the Franklin Stove	Conducted experiments on electricity	Studied weather patterns	Delegate to the Constitutional Convention	Diplomat to France during the Revolutionary War