

Anticipation Guides: Using Prediction to Promote Learning from Text

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Your world is black and silent. Life for you is a series of bumps and odors and objects thrust into your mouth. . . . You are blind and deaf and only six years old. But alas, someone is here who desires to help you.

Describe how you respond to such an individual offering help. Explain your thoughts and feelings about this person.

Thus might you introduce to your students *The Miracle Worker*, a play by William Gibson (1956). As students place themselves in a situation like the one described above, their prior knowledge about their senses is activated. They begin to wonder how Helen Keller must have felt, and their curiosity is aroused about what kinds of things could happen to make her world different. Hopefully, a discovery learning situation has been set up that encourages students to read in order to fulfill the purposes they've created.

Satisfying purposes is what reading is all about. However, students must be motivated to do this type of reading. One way to get them involved is to encourage them to use what they already know to make predictions about what is to come. In other words, the teacher activates the students' prior knowledge and uses it as an aid in the comprehension process.

Tapping Prior Knowledge

The idea that students' prior knowledge facilitates learning of a topic is one that has been accepted as fundamental by reading researchers and practitioners (Bean, 2002). Once activated, the prior knowledge of readers allows predictions to be made about the meaning of a text. In this way readers can comprehend texts that would be otherwise incomprehensible.

On the other hand, incomplete or inaccurate prior knowledge interferes with the comprehension of text. When students possess an inaccurate schema on the topic, their prior knowledge tends to interfere with text comprehension. Furthermore, readers tend to distort the meaning of the text to fit their own preexisting notions, rather than alter their ideas to assimilate the new information. Students require guidance in their use of prior knowledge so that this interference does not occur or is minimized.

Several strategies have been developed to activate prior knowledge and guide readers' use of it in subsequent reading. For instance, teachers can use Possible Sentences (Moore & Moore) to pre-teach each vocabulary and arouse curiosity about the passage to be read. Students make predictions about ways key vocabulary may be used in the passage and then read the passage to verify their predictions. The Directed Reading-Thinking Activity (Tierney & Readence 2005) is another lesson strategy in which readers must relate their own notions to those of the author and use the text to resolve any

inconsistencies. The Guided Writing Procedure (Tierney & Readence 2005) uses student prediction with the added advantage of the interaction of all four language processes: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. As a group, students brainstorm words related to a topic to be studied, organize them into an outline, and then use the outline as a framework for a short writing assignment. In the subsequent reading of the text, students look for information to revise their writing. Teachers can also use controversy as a motivational device to get readers involved with the material to be read. They then use the text to corroborate the stand they have taken on the issue. (See the anticipation guide video clip – [Windows Media Player / QuickTime](#)).

All of the techniques described above have some common features: a) active student involvement before reading; b) the use of prediction as a means to enhance comprehension; and, c) guidance in the form of purpose-setting behaviors as students read to verify the accuracy of their predictions.

Anticipation Guides

One strategy that utilizes prediction and attempts to capitalize on controversy is the Anticipation Guide (Bean, Readence, & Baldwin, 2007). The anticipation guide can be used to activate prior knowledge before reading, encourage readers to use that prior knowledge during reading, and continue students' involvement into a post reading stage by reacting again to the guide. Briefly, the anticipation guide is designed to introduce a chapter or lesson and cause readers to focus their attention on the topic that is to come. The readers' previous thoughts and opinions about the concept are activated by their responses to a series of statements about the topic. These statements are carefully worded so as to challenge the students' beliefs, which are based on their past experience with the subject. The controversial nature of the statements serves to arouse their curiosity and to motivate them to read to resolve the conflict. Any misconceptions they have held prior to this time will be brought out, and subsequent reading can help the students to correct these inaccuracies. Additionally, teachers can use the statements after reading as a reaction guide, so that the students can observe how their thinking has changed as a result of the new information they have encountered.

The anticipation guide can easily be adapted for any grade level and can be used with a variety of print or nonprint media. Using this technique can be an excellent way to stimulate students' curiosity about an upcoming film, video, lecture, or field trip, for instance, and creates the proper atmosphere for learning to take place. Thus, on any occasion involving some kind of learning activity, the anticipation guide has realistic applications.

Steps in the construction

The following example is provided in order to clarify the principles involved in the anticipation guide. The steps for constructing and using an anticipation guide (Bean, Readence, & Baldwin, 2007) will be explained here through an illustration from a fifth grade science text's chapter on "Food and Health." The anticipation guide derived from the chapter follows:

Directions: Below are some statements about food and nutrition. Read each statement carefully and decide if you agree or disagree with what it says. Place a check (✓) in the blank by each statement with which you agree. Be prepared to defend your thinking when we discuss these statements.

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|---|
| <p>_____1. Calories make you fat.</p> <p>_____2. People need to take vitamin pills every day.</p> <p>_____3. Three square meals a day will satisfy all your body's needs.</p> <p>_____4. If you want to live a long time, be a vegetarian.</p> <p>_____5. An apple a day keeps the doctor away.</p> |
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The following steps are used in the implementation of an anticipation guide:

1. *Identify the major concepts to be learned.* The teacher can determine these concepts by careful perusal of the material and by making use of the teacher's manual. This step would be analogous to the writing of objectives for a lesson plan. In our nutrition example, we identified the following major concepts:

- Food contains nutrients, or chemicals that your body needs for energy, growth, and repair.
- Carbohydrates and fats supply energy.
- Protein is needed for growth and repair of the body.
- A balanced diet includes the right amount of all the nutrients that your body needs.
- Every food supplies a certain number of calories of food energy.

2. *Determine how the main concepts will support or challenge the student's beliefs.* The teacher will have to take into account the experiential background of the students. For example, such factors as the parents' educational history and socioeconomic status could have a bearing on the student's prior knowledge of nutrition. The teacher will have to consider individual students as well as the group as a whole when making these determinations.

3. *Create three to five statements that will support or challenge your students' opinions of the topic to be studied.* The number to be used could vary with the length of the passage and/or the number of concepts it contains, as well as the maturity level of the students. In general, these statements will have the greatest effect when the students have enough prior knowledge to understand what the statements say but not enough so that they already know most of the material to be presented.

4. *Arrange the statements in the order that you find to be the most appropriate and decide upon a mode of presentation to the students.* The order could follow the sequence in which the concepts are discussed in the text or a sequence of most important concepts to least important ones. You can present them to the students on the chalk-board, an overhead transparency, or a sheet to be handed to the students. Include a set of directions and blanks for the students' responses. The age and maturity level of the students will be an important consideration in the wording of these directions so that the students will know exactly what to do.

5. *Present the guide to the students.* It is advisable to read the statements and directions orally. The students follow along and mark their responses to each of the statements. As they think about each statement and their response to it, they should be

directed to be prepared to defend their opinions. You can provide an interesting twist at this point, if desired, by directing students to mark those statements for which they believe the author's opinion will be the same as theirs. Perhaps two columns labeled Me and Author could be provided for students to indicate the statements with which they and the author would agree. In our previous example, statement (3) might be a good one with which to try this technique and could be changed as follows:

Me	Author	(3) Three square meals a day will satisfy all your body's needs.
_____	_____	

Students may believe that the author will preset information to recommend three well-balanced meals daily. This option has the added advantage of being student-centered and thus provides extra motivation. Students can make individual responses or work in a group to cooperatively formulate a consensus. Cooperative learning through grouping has, in fact, been found to be more effective than competitive, individual efforts in enhancing both student achievement and attitude toward learning (Wood, seep. 58-70, this text). Thus, teachers may find that small groups serve better to accomplish their purposes in using the anticipation guide.

6. *Discuss each statement briefly.* You can begin discussion by asking the students to raise their hands if they agreed or disagreed with each statement and then tallying their responses. The discussion that follows should allow the expression of at least one opinion on each side of the controversy. As the students listen to others' defenses of their position, they can evaluate their own beliefs in terms of the others' viewpoints.

This open discussion provides the teacher with the opportunity to fully capitalize on the controversy associated with the anticipation guide statements. It has the effect of increasing students' awareness of their own beliefs and opinions and how they relate to others' feelings. This heightened awareness will motivate them as they read (or participate in the ensuing learning activity) to be attuned to information that will support their own beliefs or refute the opinions of others.

7. *Direct students to read the text in order to find out if the author would agree with the statements they have discussed.* As they read, students should be cognizant of their own and others' opinions and the relationship between what they are reading and what has been discussed.

After the reading has taken place, the students may respond to the statements again, this time in terms of a reaction to the material that was read. A discussion may follow during which the students may share the new information they have learned and the changes that have taken place in their previous ideas. It should be noted by the teacher and made clear to the students that agreement with the author is not required.

Other Suggestions for Using Anticipation Guides

Versatility

One of the most attractive features of using anticipation guides is their versatility. As stated earlier, the strategy can be used before reading a passage, or prior to any other type of learning activity. For example, a set of anticipation guide statements could be given to students on their way to a field trip to visit a rural life museum. Such statements might refer to students' beliefs about life today in comparison to the *good old days* of the past. Another aspect of the anticipation guide's versatility is that it can be used with a variety of content areas. A physical education teacher might present a brief anticipation guide prior to instruction in free-throw shooting techniques. Many students will have preconceived notions about the best way to make these shots, and their responses to the guide statements will allow the teacher to find out the areas in which the most work will have to be done.

Diagnostic Uses

The previous example points out another advantage of the anticipation guide - its value for diagnosis. During the discussion of the students' prereading opinions, the teacher can assess both the quality and quantity of the students' prior knowledge about the topic. This can help the teacher plan instruction and make decisions about the amount of time that will be required, the levels and types of materials that will be the most appropriate, and alternative activities that would benefit some of the students. This aspect of the strategy addresses Lipson's (1984) concern about the negative effects of inaccurate prior knowledge on comprehension. When the teacher discovers incorrect or incomplete schemata, he or she can take appropriate steps to correct misconceptions and fill in the gaps.

Writing Activities

The anticipation guide can also be used to enhance students' writing skills. The teacher may elect to include a written response to the statements in the anticipation guide, either before or after reading, to explain their reasons for agreeing or disagreeing with one or all of the statements. In our nutrition example, the teacher may want students to identify three reasons they agree or disagree with the statement about taking daily vitamin supplements and write a short paragraph defending each of the three reasons. Before reading, students may defend their beliefs and opinions by citing whatever prior knowledge they possess that substantiates their views. After reading, students may use the material from the text to explain to what degree their previously held beliefs have changed, if any. Additionally, students may identify the most easily defended statement and respond to it, either before or after reading.

Reaction Guide

Several times we have mentioned how students might respond to the anticipation guide statements again after they read in order to evaluate how their beliefs and opinions may have changed as a result of interacting with new information. This variation of the anticipation guide, called a reaction guide, provides an excellent follow-up activity after reading to ensure that new material has been properly assimilated; that is, that true learning has actually taken place. Teachers may find that a brief discussion of post-reading student reaction serves as a good culminating activity and provides excellent closure for the lesson.

A Note of Caution

For the most part, anticipation guides are relatively easy to use in the classroom. The one difficulty that may arise for the teacher is the preparation of the guide statements. The teacher must be careful to construct statements that are on the experience-based comprehension level so that students will examine their beliefs and opinions about a topic and not merely search their memories for bits of information related to the statements. Teachers may fall into the trap of writing what amounts to true-false statements rather than statements that create controversy. In our nutrition example, for instance, statement (4) could have been written as *Eating fruits and vegetables is good for you*. This statement is worded in such a way that students could hardly disagree with it. In fact, they would probably respond *true* rather than saying they agreed. Worded in this way, the statement does nothing to challenge opinions or evoke controversy. The emotional and cognitive conflict brought on by student beliefs about the value of being a vegetarian are what makes the original version of statement (4) such a valuable learning tool. Remember, the goal of an anticipation guide is to motivate students to read, not test what they know or don't know.

Summary

The anticipation guide is a novel and intriguing way to activate readers' prior knowledge and encourage them to use it in making predictions about the material to be read. As they read the material following the initial presentation and discussion of the statements, they think about their original beliefs and the opinions of others. After reading, students integrate the new information they have received with their previous knowledge to form modified beliefs. The processes incorporated—using prior knowledge, making predictions before reading, monitoring comprehension during reading, and using fix-up strategies after reading—represent comprehension processes that good readers possess. Thus, we can see how the use of the anticipation guide can enhance comprehension.

References

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