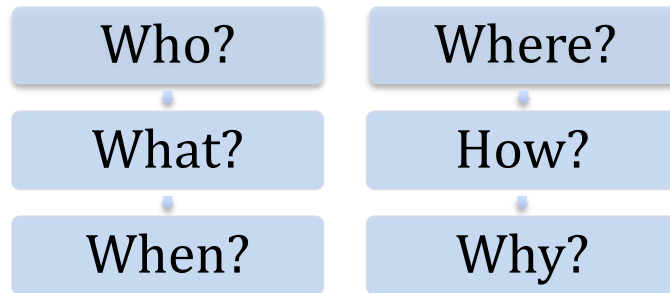


Module 21: Comprehension Instruction

Script for “5Ws & H” (Questioning) Strategy

The lesson begins with the teacher showing a graphic like the following, explaining the strategy, and then modeling its use.



When reporters gather information to write a story, they ask themselves 6 questions: Who is this story about? What happened? When? Where? How? And why? Asking ourselves these same questions can be a good strategy for testing our own understanding and getting the most from what we have read.

Teacher then models how to use the strategy, starting with something like the following:

Let’s suppose that I want to use this strategy to test my understanding of a video I’m watching. While I’m watching the video, I’m going to jot down some information from it.

The teacher plays the following video, and writes down – so students can see – information about it.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nOCgrAWujn0>

Let me look at my notes. I wrote down: beach, people, disappear, trash, recycle, think globally, act locally, different languages.

I’m going to look at it again to see if I’ve missed anything. 5 people. 4 disappear, trash is all that’s left, 1 person left recycles.

Okay, now I’m going to ask myself the 6 questions to see if I really understood this video.

Who was the video about? There were 5 people at first, then only 1 at the end

What happened? When the 4 people disappear, all I see are bags of trash left behind in their places. The one person who I still can see at the end I see disposing his trash.

When did this happen? During the day, I guess, because the sun is shining. But I'm not sure if that's too important.

Where did it happen? Looks like at the seashore.

How did it happen? Four people seemed to think it was okay to leave their litter behind when they left the beach while one person didn't.

Why did it happen? This is where I think the "think globally, act locally" part comes in. I know global comes from globe, which means the world, the earth, our planet. And locally comes from local, which means close by, where I live. So I think this happened because the one person who disposed of his trash properly was thinking of the well being of our earth by acting responsibly in his own neighborhood. And the other four people weren't.

And actually, I want to ask myself another "why" question. Why all the different languages at the end? Because I think the maker of the video wanted to point out to me that caring for the environment is the responsibility of everyone worldwide.

Asking these questions really helped me, I think, to sort through the information to make sure I understood the video's message. Let me see how the "5Ws and H" strategy would work if I try it with a text.

The teacher reads the following text aloud:¹

During World War II, the language of Navajo Indians was used to develop a code that the military used to keep its troop movements in the Pacific Ocean secret from the Japanese.

American military officials had to develop a code the Japanese couldn't crack so that U.S. ships and troops could move into place for attack throughout the Pacific theater. A variety of codes had been developed, but the Japanese always seemed to figure them out.

Then, in 1942, Philip Johnston came up with an idea. Johnston, a World War I veteran, wanted to do something to help Marines serving in the second World War. He knew the Navajo language because he had grown up on a reservation in Arizona, where his parents were missionaries. Johnston developed a code that was rooted in Navajo. Part of the code used symbols, such as "chicken Hawk" standing for a bomber.

Johnston presented the idea to Marine Corps officials, and he trained about two dozen Navajo volunteers as the first group of recruits called "Code Talkers". By 1945, there were more than 400 Navajo Marine "Code Talkers" working in the Pacific. The American invasion of Iwo Jima, in the Volcano Islands of Japan, was successfully conducted under the Navajo code.

In the three years the code was used, the Japanese never were able to crack it. The complexity of the Navajo language made it a perfect code, with its difficult-to-imitate sounds and meanings that change, depending on the intonation of words.

The Navajo code was kept secret until 1968. That year, the "Code Talkers" got special awards from the United States government.

*So, I'm going to ask myself: Who is this about? Lots of people it seems! (The teacher highlights the following while saying) *There's the Navajo Indians, the American military, the Japanese, a guy named Philip Johnston, and a group of**

¹ Source: *Reading Is FAME, the Boys Town Reading Curriculum.*

Navajo Marines called “Code Talkers”. But I think two really good who questions to ask myself would be: Who was Philip Johnston? And who were the “Code Talkers”? (Teacher answers these questions.)

Now I’m going to ask myself: What happened? That one is answered right here in the first sentence. That can happen sometimes. The American military developed a code based on the Navajo language that protected American troops from attack by the Japanese.

When did this happen? That’s another “right there” question, but I’ve got to go to more than one place in the text to get the full answer. It happened during World War II, and the code was used for 3 years.

Where did it happen? It says “the Pacific Ocean”, “the Pacific theater”, “Iwo Jima, in the Volcanic Islands of Japan”. “Pacific theater” is military talk, I think. I’m going to say it happened in the Pacific Ocean.

How did it happen? For that one I need to look across a couple of paragraphs to get this information. I see in the 3rd paragraph that a veteran named Philip Johnston developed the code and, in the 4th paragraph, it says he trained Navajo volunteers – called “Code Talkers” – to use it.

Why did it happen? There’s more than one answer to that one, I think. First, it happened because the Japanese had already figured out other codes that had been tried, so a new one was needed. And it happened because Philip Johnston knew Navajo since he had grown up on a reservation. And third, and most importantly, I think, it happened because the complexity of the Navajo language made it an impossible code for the Japanese to crack.

Can you see how using the “5Ws and H” strategy can help you to see if you’ve gotten the full story, just like reporters do?

Let’s look at another passage, and this time we’ll try the strategy together.

The teacher and students read the next text aloud together:²

In 2005, Dr. Greg Olsen became the third person ever to travel into outer space as a private citizen. The New Jersey entrepreneur and college physic professor who bought his own ticket and paid for his own training traveled aboard the Expedition 11 Russian Soyuz rocket, which docked at the International Space Station. The main goal of the Soyuz mission was to switch crews and to replace emergency capsules that must always be attached to the space station in case of an emergency escape.

Olsen’s fascination with outer space and astronomy began when he was still a boy. He was born in 1945, years before space travel was close to becoming a reality. In fact, space exploration did not really heat up until the post-WWII rivalry known as the Cold War between Russia and the U.S. Both countries fought to win the race to space.

Most of Dr. Olsen’s training was spent in classrooms and in flight simulators. According to Olsen, the most physically challenging part of the training was the water-landing exercise to practice “splash down”. This is a demanding and dangerous method of landing a spacecraft into a body of water. To prepare for the grueling task, Olsen and his crewmates wore wetsuits and other protective survival gear. During just two hours of practice, he sweated off more than three pounds from 170-pound frame.

² Based on “NJ Physics Professor has the ‘Right Stuff’”, by Valorie Sands, in ReadWorks.

Despite demanding tests of endurance, Olsen described the physical training as the easiest part of the preparation for the experience. He said that for him the hardest part was learning Russian well enough to bond well with the Soviet training personnel and crew.

Ten days after liftoff, the Soyuz crew landed safely back on earth, in a desert in Kazakhstan.

So...looking at our 6 questions, who was this passage about?

The teacher asks for the opinions of several students. If students say “Greg Olsen” or “Dr. Olsen”, the teacher should push them to say more about him (i.e., a physics professor who traveled to outer space).

And what happened to Greg Olsen in this passage?

Help students to avoid providing too little or too much information. Explain how, if a student were to say, “he flew into space”, we would want to ask if that’s all the passage says he did, and then direct him or her toward all the information about his preparation for the flight. Or, if a student would say things like, “He lost more than 3 lbs.”, how we would want to ask how a detail like that could help us to figure out what happened. Point out to students that, unlike the previous passage, the answer to what happened in this passage is not stated in a single sentence in this passage. To answer this question, we need to look across paragraphs to come up with the answer.

When did this happen?

Point out that answers to when questions are often, but not always, stated right there in a text.

Where did it happen?

Point out that the passage doesn’t say where the training happened – something a reader might want to know! But we know that the flight took place aboard a Soyuz rocket and that it docked at the International Space Station and that it landed in a desert in Kazakhstan.

How did it happen?

After getting at the point that Olsen was able to pay for it himself, ask students, “Are there other how questions that we would want to ask about this passage?” Guide them in seeing that “How did Olsen prepare?” is an important question that we would want to be able to answer to make sure that we understood the passage.

And what about some why questions?

Ask students to generate and answer some possible why questions such as, *Why did Olsen want to do this? Why was the Soyuz making this mission?*

The lesson ends with the teacher reminding the students that using this strategy is a good way for them to test their own understanding and make sure that they get the most from what they read.