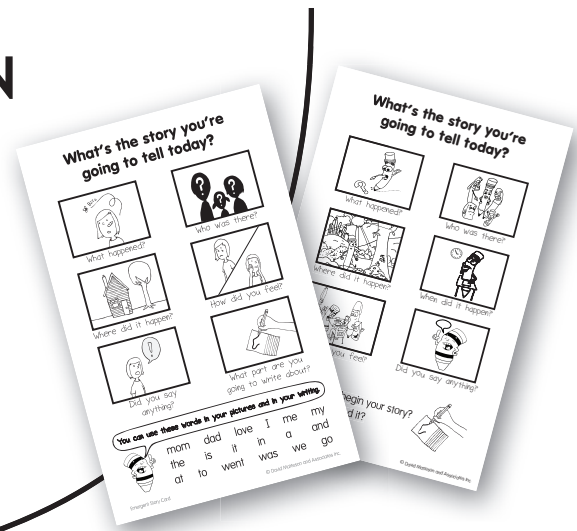


COMPREHENSION INSTRUCTION

USING TEXT FEATURE CARDS TO ENHANCE UNDERSTANDING

BY DAVID M. MATTESON



Along with the teaching of reading skills, having an instructional focus on comprehension is crucial in the development of a reader. The more deeply readers are able to comprehend, the more success they will experience throughout their education. Understanding the different levels of comprehension, especially higher levels of comprehension such as analytical thinking is important to reading instruction. Analyzing is the ability to break the whole into its parts and understand how the parts work together to produce the whole. Comprehension in reading is much the same. It's the ability of the reader to see what the author did (the parts) to convey his/her message (the whole). In other words, a reader who understands "author's craft" will be better able to understand what the author is trying to say. Developing students' understanding of genres will give them insight into author's craft and how authors create pieces to articulate their message.

THE ROLE OF GENRES

Genres play a key role in today's world of high-stakes testing. Whether answering multiple-choice questions about a reading selection, constructing a written response to a science or social studies open-ended question, or composing a piece to a writing prompt, students need to be knowledgeable about genres and how they work in order to perform well on standardized tests. The following list is a partial example of one state's overall focus on genres, text features, and text structures that span the grades from kindergarten to middle school.

- **Literature Goal**—Describe how literary elements (e.g., theme, character, setting, plot, tone, conflict) are used in literature to create meaning.
- **Reading Goal/Strategies**—Identify structure (e.g., description, compare/contrast, cause and effect, sequence) of nonfiction texts to improve comprehension.
- **Reading Goal/Comprehension**—Interpret and analyze entire narrative text using story elements, point of view and theme.
- **Writing Goal/Communicating Ideas**—Write for a variety of purposes and for specified audiences in a variety of forms including narrative (e.g., fiction, autobiography), expository (e.g., reports, essays) and persuasive writings (e.g., editorials, advertisements).
- **Research Goal**—Write letters, reports and stories based on acquired information.

With this focus on genre in mind, there are certain questions that teachers need to be asking themselves about their students as well as their teaching. These questions might sound like: How adept are students in their knowledge of genres? Are students able to identify the features and structures of a genre while reading a passage so that they can more readily answer questions about the text? Can students "build" a well-constructed composition that reflects a certain genre because they know it will best support the message they have to convey? How can I help my students understand how genres work? What does teaching look like that supports this kind of thinking or learning?

Comprehension Instruction

Many students don't have a solid grasp of basic narrative and expository elements, which are the backbone of all genres. Not understanding these two broad text forms can interfere with students being proficient in their knowledge of genres, which can impact their comprehension as well as their scores on standardized testing. Developing students' understanding of basic narrative and expository elements and helping them make connections from these elements to related genres can improve students' comprehension in reading and quality of writing, resulting in improved performance on tests. (See page 3 for a developmental perspective on literacy development)

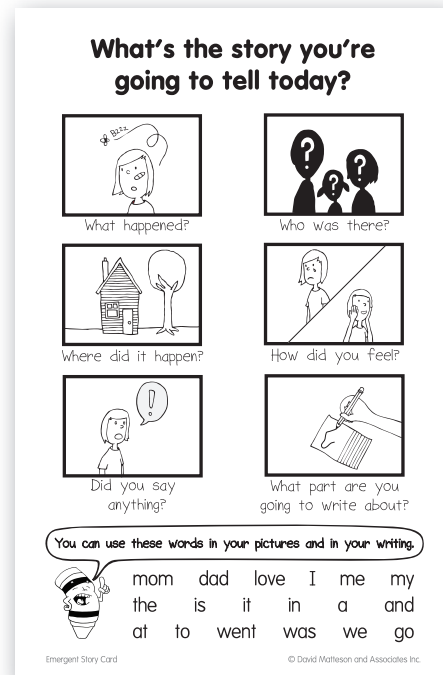
TEACHING TOOLS

Text Features Cards are tools that a school can use to help develop students' understanding of basic narrative and expository elements, which impacts their understanding of genres. The Text Features Cards consist of four cards, one Emergent Story Card for prekindergarten and kindergarten classrooms, two early cards (an Early Story Card and Early Expository Card) for first and second grade classrooms, and one Fluent Text Features Card (double-sided with narrative and expository elements) for intermediate classrooms. These cards were designed to help create a continuum of learning within a school by developing consistent literacy understandings among teachers as well as effective reading and writing practices for students. The sections in this guide describe how each card can be used and give examples of teaching to illustrate those understandings and effective practices. Even though the examples used to illustrate the use of each card are of *either* reading or writing instruction, each card can and should be used for instruction in *both* reading and writing.

DEVELOPING STORIES FROM THE VERY BEGINNING

An understanding of narrative elements needs to start at an early age. By helping young children tell stories, we begin to set the foundation for deeper understanding in reading and writing. The Emergent Story Card is a tool that prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers can use to help their students understand how stories work, especially when writing a story of their own. In

prekindergarten teachers can use the emergent story card to help elicit a more complete oral story from the children so they can draw a more detailed picture. Whether prekindergarten teachers are modeling writing in front of their students or meeting with them in small groups, the Emergent Story card acts as a reminder as to the kind of questions both teachers and students need to be asking themselves as they tell and draw their stories.



Emergent Story Card Front

Additionally, the Emergent Story Card contains a letter/sound card which can be used to support any word work the teacher may want to incorporate in the students' pictures. For example, prekindergarten teachers will often help students add labels, speech bubbles, thought bubbles, and noises to their pictures. The letter/sound card on the back side of the story card, as well as using the sight words located beneath the story icons on the front, can act as another level of support for developing stories for both the teacher and the student (see companion articles: *Spelling Instruction* and *Meaning-Based Phonics Instruction*). Even though prekindergarten students may never write text below the picture, the Emergent Story Card is an important literacy tool in developing the strong foundation needed for the developing reader and writer.

The kindergarten teacher can use the Emergent Story Card in the same way as the prekindergarten teacher,

A DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE OF LITERACY DEVELOPMENT.

Grade Level	Central Instructional Focus	Comprehension	Phonics (and Phonological Awareness)	Spelling
Birth-Three	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral Language Gross Motor 	Relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forming attachments, responding to and interacting with caregivers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognizing names orally (own, family, friends) Experiments with putting sounds, words together with purpose, attaching meaning 	Identifies some letters in their name—may connect first letter as their name Makes connections to environmental print
Pre-kindergarten	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral Language Fine Motor Control 	The Picture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drawing and telling stories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognizing names (own, family, friends) Playing with words (changing onset/rime) Identifying similarities between words (beg. letters and/or sounds) 	Recognizing and writing basic sight words in pictures and/or text below the picture (student name, sibling/friend names, mom. dad, me, I, the, my) 10-15 words
Kindergarten	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making connections between sounds and letters Understanding how words work 	The Text <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading/Writing the words of the story 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beginning hard consonant sounds Ending hard consonant sounds Medial hard consonant sounds Spacing Blends Endings (s, ed, ing) 	Weekly spelling list of sight words (which include generalizing words or simple word families) 35 – 50 words
First Grade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Narrative Elements Expository Elements 	The Writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elaboration of detail 		Weekly spelling list of sight words Weekly spelling list of word families/ patterns (Long/short vowels) 75 – 100 words
Second Grade		The Writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purpose 		Weekly spelling list of sight words Weekly spelling list of word families/ patterns (Long/short vowels) 75 – 100 words
Third Grade and Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Genres 	The Reader/Writer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Author's Craft 		Building Higher Level Vocabulary—Descriptive and Content

Comprehension Instruction

but at this level students need to use their detailed picture to produce writing below the picture that has details and voice. In the following teaching scenario, a kindergarten teacher models the use of the Emergent Story Card to help her get down all the important parts to a story she wants to tell her class. This modeling is important because when the teacher is done with her writing she will meet with students to help them think about and remember their own stories. The Emergent Story Card will support both the teacher and student as they talk about the important events in their lives as well as getting them down on paper. The teacher knows that the more she uses the story card with her students, the sooner they will be using it independently to help them get their stories down in pictures, and then, in words.

USING THE EMERGENT STORY CARD

Teacher: (standing in front of her easel with an enlarged Emergent Story Card in her hand; the children are sitting on the rug) Let me think—what’s the story I’m going to tell today? Remember, your feelings are important when you’re writing a story, so I could write about a time that I was happy or sad or scared. Oh, I know—I think I’ll write about the time I was riding my bike and something surprised me. I was really surprised that day. (Pointing to the “How did you feel?” question on the story card.) That’s how I felt—surprised.

(Moving her finger up to the “Who was there?” question on the story card.) Who was there? This story was about me riding my bicycle. (She starts drawing herself on her bike; she looks at her story card and continues reading the questions.) Where did it happen? Well, I was riding my bike along the sidewalk right across from the river. I need to draw the sidewalk and put the river up here. (The teacher quickly draws the sidewalk and the river as it winds along the sidewalk.) Now, I need to tell what happened. You know I was surprised, but you don’t know what surprised me. I need to tell the important part of what happened. (She points to the question “What happened?” on the card.)

(Without telling the surprise ending, the teacher draws little black circles on the road. The children try to guess what the black circles are, but the teacher knows that they will be more engaged if she waits until the end to

tell them her ending.) Just wait—you’ll see. I’ll tell you when I write my story.

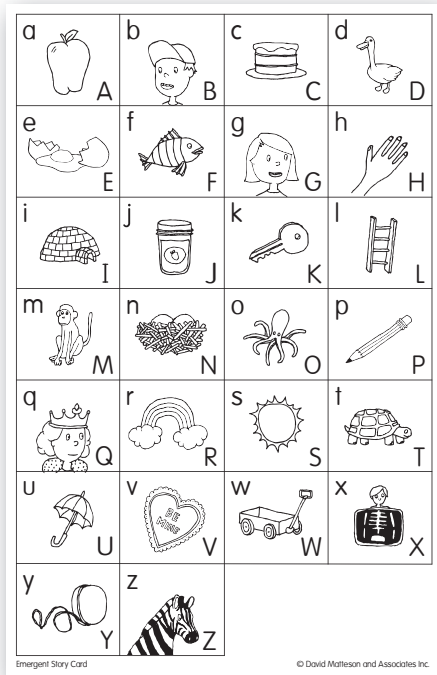
There, I think my picture’s done. Let me check my story card to make sure I have everything that I wanted to tell you. Oh, wait. I just remembered (pointing to the question, “Did you say anything?”). I didn’t say anything, but I did slam on my brakes and they made a big noise. I think I’ll put the noise in my picture. It went something like “Eeeeeek!” I’ll make the letters down by the wheels so my readers will know that I stopped quickly because I was surprised by something. (The teacher writes the noise in by the wheels.) What do you think—does that look like I slammed on my brakes? (The children all nod.)

Okay, I think I can write my story now. What part am I going to write about? (She asks herself this while pointing to the picture of the pencil.) I know I need to write about what I was doing—riding my bike, but I also need to write about what surprised me. Those will be the parts I will write about.

(The teacher begins to write her story.) I was—oh, “was” is one of the words on my story card that I need to remember to spell correctly. (She points to “was” on the story card and says “w-a-s, was” as she continues to write. She goes back to the beginning of her story.) “I was riding my”—oh, that’s another word I need to remember (pointing to “my” on the story card. The teacher spells “m-y” aloud and says “my.” Once again she goes back to the beginning of her story.) “I was riding my bike when I had to slam on my brakes. Baby, /b/, /b/” (The teacher emphasizes the beginning sound of baby and looks at the letter/sound card.) “Oh, baby starts just like boy. That’s a b.” The teacher writes “baby” and rereads once again. “I was riding my bike when I had to slam on my brakes. Baby turtles were crossing the path.”

There, I’m done. What did you think about my story? Did you like it? Would you have been surprised if you saw baby turtles? What are you going to write about today? Remember your story card can help you remember all the important parts of the story you want to tell. I’ll be around to help you use your story card to write your stories.

This kindergarten teacher understands that narrative helps us to communicate more effectively. She knows that young children have important things to say and the more they understand how stories work, the better they will be able to communicate what they have to say. This teacher wants writing that reflects what a story or narrative is, right from the start of school, and the Emergent Story Card will help her accomplish that.



Emergent Story Card Back

She also knows that knowing letters, letter/sound connections, and sight words are important for students as they begin to write down their stories. By using the alphabet card and the basic sight words on the Emergent Story Card as she models her own stories as well as when she works with small groups and with individual students, the teacher helps her students begin to make connections between the pictures they draw and the letters and words they put beneath them (see companion articles: *Spelling Instruction* and *Meaning-Based Phonics Instruction*).

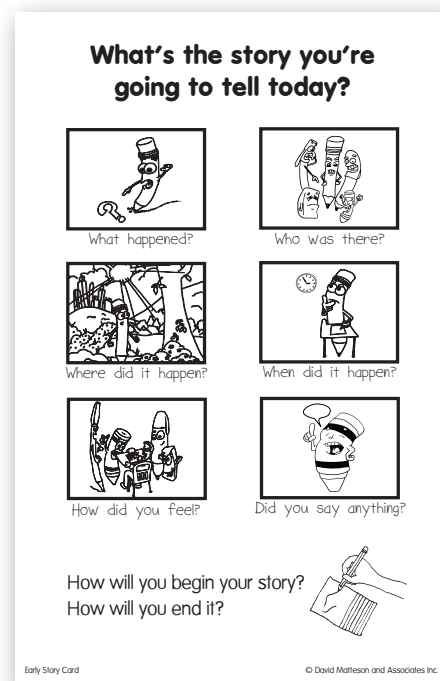
This teacher knows it will take time and practice, both on her part as well as the students' part, to scaffold their beginning understanding of story, but she understands her role in the writing continuum within her school. A quote from Richard Peck reflects this kindergarten teacher's instructional focus—"Most of who we are is determined in those first five fleeting years of life. A six year old who doesn't already know what a story is

will have grave difficulty in following the plot line of elementary school."

INTRODUCING A NEW KIND OF WRITING

Narrative is our main way of thinking and needs to be increasingly scaffolded through the grades. The *Early Story Card* continues where the Emergent Story Card left off. It contains many of the narrative elements found in the Emergent Story Card but extends them ever so slightly.

With the student's prior knowledge and use of the Emergent Story Card in kindergarten, as well as its strong alignment to the elements on the Early Story Card, students should experience ease and success with its use. The connection between the Emergent and Early Story Cards was designed for that reason—

























Early Story Card Front

the Early Story Card can be used right away, with little support from the teacher.

One of the benefits of this increased independence is that students can now focus more on in-depth word work that allows for greater accuracy in writing. Whereas the Emergent Story Card focuses on skills such as letter identification, letter/sound connections, and basic sight word recognition, the Early Story Card builds on those skills, concentrating on consonant

Comprehension Instruction

blends, word endings, and increasing students' sight word recognition (see companion articles: *Spelling Instruction* and *Meaning-Based Phonics Instruction*). With stronger understandings about stories in place, the Early Story Card focuses on increasing students' ability to produce a more readable piece.

bl 	br 	ch 	cl 
cr 	dr 	fl 	fr 
gl 	gr 	pl 	pr 
sh 	sk 	sl 	sm 
sn 	sp 	st 	sw 
th 	tr 	Endings on words- s- brother s, play s, sister s ed- play ed, want ed ing- play ing, do ing, go ing	

Words I need to remember to spell:
 a am and are at brother can came come
 dad did do get go had has have I in is it
 love me mom my not play said sister the to
 want was we went were will

Early Story Card © David Matteson and Associates Inc.

Early Story Card Back

Another benefit of students working more independently on writing their stories is that teachers can now introduce and focus more on the *Early Expository Card*. The purpose of the two early cards—story and expository—is to help students understand and differentiate between the two broad text forms. Students at this level need to continue writing stories using the Early Story Card, but now the instructional focus can shift to developing students' understanding of expository text. This is done through the introduction and use of the Early Expository Card. While looking at the following teaching scenario; notice how this first-grade teacher uses the Early Expository Card to shift his students from thinking in terms of narrative to writing expository text.

USING THE EARLY EXPOSITORY CARD

The students in this first-grade class are at the second quarter of the year, which marks the time when the district first-grade writing curriculum shifts to expository writing. The teacher is meeting with his

students in small groups to support them in writing a basic research paper. This group, which contains some second-language learners, is at the very beginning stage of the research paper. The teacher is introducing the Early Expository Card to them and trying to get them

What information are you going to share today?



What's your topic?
Are you going to tell or explain something?



What do you know about this topic?



Will you need to find out more information?



What picture will you need to go along with the information?



What words will you need to label your picture?



What would be a good title for this piece?

What will you write first?
What will you write next?

Early Expository Card © David Matteson and Associates Inc.

Early Expository Card Front

to identify their topics. The teacher has decided that after they have their topic, he will have them draw a picture that will remind them of their topic and serve as their diagram for their piece.

Teacher: Today, boys and girls, we're going to start writing in a different way. It's not going to be like the stories we have been writing—like when we write about the things that happen to us or with our friends. (The teacher pulls out the Early Story Card and reminds the students about what they have been writing.)

The writing we're going to be doing now has to do with writing about the things we've learned or information we want to share with others. It is not a story. This writing is called expository. (The teacher shows the students the Early Expository Card and goes over each of the different parts of the card.) Expository writing is the kind of writing you do when you want to write about birds, for example. (The teacher points to the picture of the bird on the Early Expository Card.) This picture reminds us that we need to have something to write about. Birds can be a topic to write about. What

else could be some topics—what are you interested in writing about?

Will: I like dinosaurs.

Samir: Me, too.

Teacher: Oh, dinosaurs are interesting. It might be too much to write about all dinosaurs—could you think about one kind of dinosaur to write about? Will, what's one dinosaur that you might want to write about?

Will: I want to write about T-Rex.

Teacher: Tyrannosaurus Rex, that's a good one to write about. Why don't you start by drawing a picture of Tyrannosaurus Rex on your paper? Expository writing usually has a picture of what we're writing about. (The teacher points to the camera on the expository card.) Samir, what dinosaur could you write about?

Samir: I want to write about Allosaurus. They're mean like Tyrannosaurus Rex.

Teacher: Good. (Again the teacher points to the camera on the expository card.) Draw a picture of Allosaurus on your paper. If you or Will need to get a book to remember what your dinosaur looks like, go to the class library and get our dinosaur book. Don't draw the picture too big—it's going to be a part of your writing. You need to have room to label and write about your dinosaurs. What about you, Fatima? What are you interested in?

Fatima: I write about horse. I rided a horse before.

Teacher: Oh, "horses" is a good topic to write about. I bet you can draw a good picture of a horse on your paper. (Fatima immediately starts drawing her horse.) Hassin, what are you going to write about?

Hassin: I write sharks.

Teacher: "Sharks" is a wonderful topic to write about. I'm sure the other children will be interested in reading about sharks. Can you draw a picture of a shark? (The teacher holds up a black crayon and hands it to Hassin.) You will need a picture to go along with your topic (again pointing to the camera on the expository card). Don't make it too big. Remember we need to save room to label and write about our animals.



Early Expository Card Front

The students in this class have been using story cards to help them write stories since kindergarten (some since prekindergarten). Because of this, and because the Early Story card and the Expository card have a similar structure, the teacher feels confident that the students will catch on quickly to the Early Expository Card. The fronts of both cards are formatted in the same way and the back of each contains the same reading/writing skills. Because there isn't an order to the questions or pictures on the cards, the teacher can begin wherever he thinks will best support his students. With this first-grade group, it was starting with the illustration or diagram first.

UNDERSTANDING NARRATIVE AND EXPOSITORY ELEMENTS

Narrative and expository elements form the basis for all genres. Once children have a strong understanding of reading and writing narrative and expository text, it is much easier for them to understand other related genres. By changing one or two narrative or expository elements, a writer can transform one genre into another. In science fiction, for example, the characters, setting, and plot all revolve around some aspect of scientific speculation in the future. On the other hand, myths use the characters, setting, and plot to explain a belief through supernatural happenings. Expository

Comprehension Instruction

elements work similarly for nonfiction text like reports, biographies, articles, or procedural texts. With this in mind, it is important that students understand basic narrative and expository elements and learn to be flexible in their use to create or interpret different kinds of text or related genre as they move through intermediate grades.

The *Fluent Text Features Card* is a tool that helps intermediate teachers be more explicit in their teaching of narrative and expository texts. Whether interpreting a story in a reading group or writing a piece of their own, students can use the Fluent Text Features Card as a resource to help them problem-solve their way through texts. Authors use narrative and expository elements intentionally. The way they use the elements creates a piece that prompts the reader to think in a certain way—a way that helps the reader to understand the author’s message or purpose. The Fluent Text Features Card gives a structure for students to use when asking questions and/or making decisions about the author’s craft and its effectiveness in getting the author’s message or purpose across to the reader. (See page 9 for questions that prompt understanding of narrative text) In the following lessons, note how the teacher uses the Fluent Text Features Card. In both reading groups the teacher is introducing a new book to a small group of students and uses the Fluent Text Features Card to set up the thinking that will be needed

for deeper understanding. Think about how this kind of instruction can impact the student’s comprehension as a reader and ultimately his/her skill as a writer.

USING THE FLUENT TEXT FEATURES CARD: LESSON 1

Teacher: (showing the students only the beginning of the piece—a photograph of an old man holding a pan and a shovel with the title underneath) Today, boys and girls, we’re going to be reading a piece called *Gold Seeker*. What’s your prediction based on the title and picture—is this going to be a narrative or expository piece? Use your text features card to help you make your decision.

All Students: (flipping back and forth, looking over the narrative and expository descriptors on the Fluent Text Features Card)

Daniel: I think it’s going to be expository because it says here (pointing to the expository elements side of the Fluent Text Features Card), “a specific subject.” Gold is a specific subject.

Anna: I agree. It’s going to be about *finding* gold.

Teacher: Okay, but I’m wondering about the word “Seeker.” Does that sound like an expository-type word or more of a narrative-type word?

Anna: It sounds more like a narrative word.

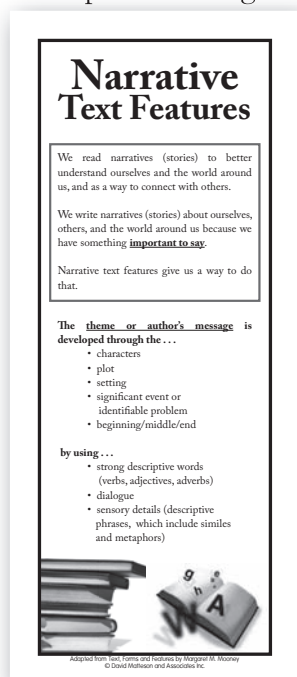
Sam: It says here (pointing to the narrative elements side of the Fluent Text Features Card) “strong descriptive words.” “Seeker” is a strong descriptive word.

Teacher: Yes it is. What would an expository word sound like for “Seeker?”

Peter: I think he’s a gold miner. You could say gold miner.

Sam: We called them prospectors in social studies.

Teacher: Yes, gold miner and prospector are good expository-type words. So, based on the word choice in the title—or as Sam suggested, based on the strong descriptive word “Seeker”—this piece could be a narrative, correct? Let’s look at the first line; maybe



Fluent Text

QUESTIONS TEACHERS CAN USE WITH STUDENTS WHEN PROBLEM-SOLVING NARRATIVE TEXT

Narrative Elements	Reading Questions	Writing Questions
Theme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the author’s purpose for writing the story? • What did the characters learn? • What does the author leave you to think about? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What’s your purpose in writing this story? • What do you want to say to your reader?
Characters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did the character develop/change over time? • What did the author do to show how the character changed? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are you going to develop the character?
Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the setting advance the story? • What did the author do to develop the setting? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are you going to develop the setting?
Significant Event (Problem/Tension)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the significant event advance the story? • What did the author do to develop the significant event? • What is the significance of the problem on the main character? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are you going to develop the significant event?
Beginning/Middle/End	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the beginning intrigue the reader? • Does the middle keep the reader moving along? • Does the story have a satisfying ending? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What graphic organizer would best help you plan your story? • How should you start your story? • Does your beginning grab the reader’s attention? • Is there enough detail so your reader isn’t working too hard? • How should you end your story? • Does your ending make sense to the story?
Plot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What structure did the author used to propel to develop the story? • Was the structure easy to follow? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What graphic organizer would best help you plan your story? • Does the flow of the story make sense? • Is there enough detail so that your reader isn’t working too hard to understand the events in the story?
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did the author use description to develop the theme? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are you going to convey your ideas and thoughts? • What word choice would be appropriate? • Do you have a variety of sentence structures?
Dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did the author use dialogue to develop the theme? • Was the dialogue believable? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are you going to convey your ideas and thoughts? • What word choice would be appropriate? • Do you have a variety of sentence structures?
Sensory Detail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did the author use sensory detail to develop the theme? • What kind of picture did the author paint for the reader? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are you going to convey your ideas and thoughts? • What word choice would be appropriate? • Do you have a variety of sentence structures?

Comprehension Instruction

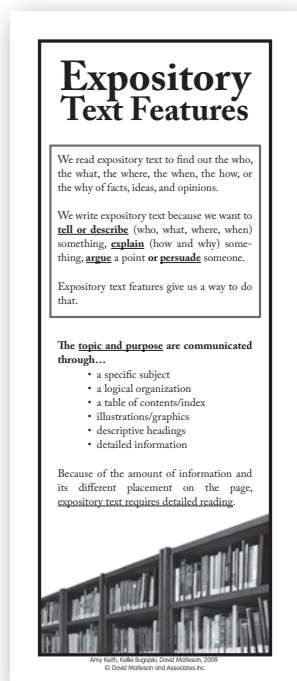
that would give us a bit more information about this piece. Don't forget that you need to support your answer with information from your text feature card.

(Uncovers the first line and reads) "Gold be where it be," the old man said."

Peter: He's talking. It says "dialogue" right here (pointing to the bullet "dialogue" on the narrative element side of the Fluent Text Features Card). This must be a narrative.

Teacher: Do others agree? (Students nod as the teacher passes out copies of the piece to each student.) Let's read on to see and confirm our prediction that this is a narrative text and, perhaps, find out what kind of narrative it is.

USING THE FLUENT TEXT FEATURES CARD: LESSON 2



Fluent Text Features Card

Teacher: (Without showing the piece to the students) The piece we're going to read today is entitled, "Stop! Nerves at Work." What do you think you'll be reading, a narrative or expository text? Remember to use your text feature card to support your answer.

Jaymie: That's easy. It's going to be an expository piece because it's about nerves.

Teacher: Where does that fit on your text features card?

Jaymie: (looking at the expository side of Fluent Text Features Card) Right here—"a specific subject."

Teacher: Okay. Does everyone agree? Based on the title, you're thinking it's an expository text because nerves are a specific topic.

Students: (All nod.)

Teacher: (Sliding down a sheet of paper that covered the reading piece, the teacher reveals the title as well as a caption below.) Look at what it says under the title. "The nerves have a lot of work to do in your body. There are different nerves for different jobs." This caption is giving us a hint about the article's purpose. What do you think the purpose of the article is going to be (pointing to the three purposes on the expository side of the Fluent Text Features Card)—to tell or describe about nerves, to explain what nerves do, or could it be an argument over which nerves might be more important than others?

Allysa: I think it going to describe what nerves do. It says that there are different nerves for different jobs. I think we're going to find out what jobs nerves do.

Paul: I think so too, because there aren't any "explaining" words.

Teacher: Oh, are you remembering the last time we read an "explaining" piece—there were words that let us know when something is being explained. What were some of those "explaining" words?

Paul: "Because," "since," "causes."

Teacher: Right. How about "in order to" and "so that?" Who remembers the question words that ask for an explanation?

Allysa: "Why."

Teacher: Yes, when you see a "why" question you know it's looking for an explanation or reason. A "how" question is also asking for a reason or an explanation.

Teacher: Okay, let's read and see if this is a descriptive expository text and, if it is, (pointing to the bullet

“logically organized”) how the author organized the information about the nerves’ functions.

Because there has been such a strong focus on developing her students’ understanding of basic narrative and expository elements throughout this school, the teacher can take her students deeper into the reading that they are doing. Instead of reading and talking about the story itself, this intermediate

teacher has her students looking more closely at the author’s craft or what the author did to convey the purpose they had for writing the piece. When teachers look at reading in this way, students can see a strong connection between their reading and the writing they do. As a result, this teacher has seen an improvement in her students’ writing. (The following list of questions can be used by teachers to support their use of the expository text feature cards.)

QUESTIONS TEACHERS CAN USE WITH STUDENTS WHEN PROBLEM-SOLVING EXPOSITORY/INFORMATIONAL TEXT

Expository Elements	Reading Questions	Writing Questions
Topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What information is in this book? • Is the information you need in this book? • Will you need other books to get more information? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will you focus your topic? • Is your topic focused enough? • What areas do you need to include to complete the topic? • Does the title of your piece reflect the topic so the reader can anticipate the content?
Tells/Explains/Argues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the author’s viewpoint/opinion? • What does the author want you to know? • Has the author made the information as accessible as possible? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is your purpose for writing this piece? • Does the form reflect your purpose?
Detailed and Descriptive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the information you need in this book? • What information is critical? • Will you need other books to get more information? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is your topic focused enough? • What areas do you need to include to complete the topic? • Have you included enough supporting details?
Organized Logically	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where will you find the information you need? • Can you find the information you need easily? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will you organize your piece? • Does the form reflect your purpose?
Table of Contents/Index	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the information you need in this book? • Can you find the information you need easily? • Are there other references listed? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will you organize your piece? • What areas do you need to include to complete the topic?
Descriptive Headings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where will you find the information you need? • Can you find the information you need easily? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What areas do you need to include to complete the topic? • How will you organize your piece?
Illustrations/Graphics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you looked at all parts of the text for the information you need? • Can you find the information you need easily? • How did the author support his information? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the purpose of your piece? • Does the form reflect your purpose? • What areas do you need to include to complete the topic? • What other ways can you show the information?
Detailed Reading is Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you looked at all parts of the text for the information you need? • What information is critical? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What areas do you need to include to complete the topic? • How will you organize your piece? • Does the form reflect your purpose? • Have you included enough supporting detail?

Comprehension Instruction

CONCLUSION

All four text features cards are simple, powerful tools that help give a consistent structure to the daily instruction of students, whether in reading or writing. In schools where the text features cards are being implemented, students come to expect to see tools such as these at each grade level and know that they will be a support for their learning. Teachers like how the text features cards place more responsibility onto the student for problem-solving than on themselves as the person with all the answers. This is especially true for older students who have had repeated experiences using the text features cards across their elementary years. Administrators like to see the text features cards used throughout the school because it helps focus their observations, and as a result, the professional development needs of the school. When there is consistency of focus in classroom instruction, the professional development needs are similar, and meeting those needs becomes less challenging.

REFERENCES

- Cartwright, Pauline. 2000. *School Journal: Gold Seeker*. Wellington, NZ: Learning Media (Ministry of Education)
- Duncan, Marilyn. 2005. *The Kindergarten Book: A Guide to Literacy Instruction*. Katonah, NY: Richard C. Owen Publishers, Inc.
- Illinois State Board of Education. *Illinois Learning Standards*. <http://www.isbe.net/ils/ela/standards.htm>
- Keaney, Cath. 2000. *The News: Body Systems, Stop! Nerves at work*. St. Leonards, Australia: Horwitz Martin Education
- Matteson, David M. 2006. *My Pictures and Stories: Teachers Guide*. Katonah, NY: Richard C. Owen Publishers, Inc.
- Matteson, David M. and Deborah K. Freeman. 2005. *Assessing and Teaching Beginning Writers: Every Picture Tells a Story*. Katonah, NY: Richard C. Owen Publishers, Inc.
- Mooney, Margaret E. 2001. *Text Forms and Features: A Resource for Intentional Teaching*. Katonah, NY: Richard C. Owen Publishers, Inc.
- Peck, Richard. 2005 "From the Desk of Richard Peck." *Dear Teacher: A Book of Days with Special Messages from Your Favorite Authors and Illustrators*. Unnumbered. Jefferson City, MO: Scholastic Book Clubs 2005-2006

© 2011 David Matteson and Associates, Inc.

Revised 05/2011

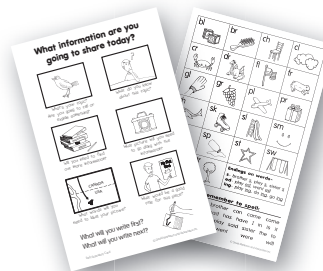
OTHER RESOURCE MATERIALS FROM DAVID MATTESON AND ASSOCIATES, INC.



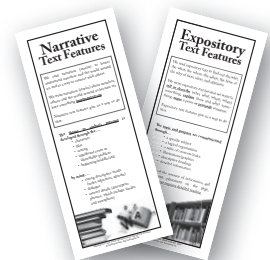
Meaning-Based
Phonics Instruction



Spelling
Instruction



Text Features
Cards



Narrative
Text Features
Expository
Text Features
Features Card