Four Thought Strategy

Have you ever asked students to interpret a text, and all they do is summarize it? Do you want to help your students build more sophisticated interpretations in a step-by-step fashion?

Effective interpretations of text are often multi-dimensional with description, critical thinking, personal response, imagination, problem solving, etc.; however, many readers make interpretations that are one-dimensional or oversimplified.

Numerous students, whenever they are dealing with difficult text, do not know where to begin when it comes to this higher-level skill of making interpretations. The following strategy will help break down this task into more manageable steps.

***How It Works:***

1. Introduce students to the topic or title of the reading.
2. Generate pre-reading associations based on what they know, what they *think* they know, or how they feel about the topic. \*Remember: It is important that readers revisit their pre-reading associations so that they can correct any misinformation that they might have had before reading the text.
3. Students read the text and respond to four separate stems/sentence starters. Each stem/sentence starter corresponds to a different layer of meaning that will become part of the student’s interpretation. You can prescribe the stems or have students create or choose their own.
4. Working in groups, students share their responses and exchange ideas for turning their Four Thoughts into essays (or whatever end product you choose) on the topic. Of course, the activity can also end here with no further extension necessary.

Strong, R.W., Perini, M.J., Silver, H.F., Tuculescu, G.M. (2002). *Reading for academic*

*success*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.

**Four Thought Organizer**

**Topic/Text: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Pre-reading Associations:**

**Four Thoughts**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Describe It** | **React to It** |
| **Analyze It** | Solve It |

*Alternative Four Thought Stems:*

Define it, Sequence it, Compare it, Prove it, Visualize it, Metaphorize it, Improve it, Be it, Teach it, Draw it, Imagine it, Contradict it, Change it, Evaluate it, Connect to it, Question it, etc.