COMPOSITION
WITH THINKING. . .
SIMPLIFIED

A REVISION OF
COMPOSITION or RESEARCH SIMPLIFIED:
A PROCESS FOR ALL AGES, KINDERGARTEN TO ADULT

by THEA M. HOLTAN

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PREFACING REMARKS

This is a process; it is a *how to* approach. It teaches students the tools for dealing with information and for developing some form of communication. Because of its *how to* nature, it develops students' tools for life-long use. It has internalizing effects on students: the steps become simple habits, and the information tucks into their long-term memories.

My original book Composition or Research, Simplified ©1982, focused on the same three phases that I present in this ©1989 book. However, I have added very important thinking strategies with which students interpret information and arrive at their own inferences. These new strategies excite me! They are by far the real meat of what I have designed in this process. They cause students to understand the implications of their data; they cause them to internalize meanings; and they build their confidence in dealing with abstractions of thought.

The presentation of my ©1982 book addressed both students and teachers. This ©1989 publication addresses teachers. Explanations focus on instructional designs, organizational strategies, and implications for learning.

Separate *Student Directions* are written to address students of all three phases near their reading levels. Each phase is produced on an 8 1/2"X 11" card of special paper for affixing your lamination film. Each phase has a different topic. Steps of each phase specifically direct students in what to do and how to do it. They are illustrated by examples to model their directives. As students progress, one step at a time, they work their ways through the process, returning completed cards and getting cards that they need. The exact headings of basic steps on these *Student Directions* cards are listed in "Basic Overview" on *page 95*. These cards are bundled and shipped with twelve sets per ordered package. These twelve sets nicely manage a class of thirty students, using them for self-reliance.

In this ©1989 book I focus heavily on process teaching. I urge student learning involvements with the **processes of 1) thinking, 2) writing,** and **3) analyzing fiction. 4) Word processing** gives students a "how to" set of process tools never before available to them; it helps them to compose their thoughts from strategically planned and fully developed notes. **5)** The act of **"proof reading,"** traditional in its focus on product, now leads to a "how to" process so students have some key ways of finding their errors. **6) Spelling,** of course, is a little-understood skill for which few processes exist. I suggest ways of involving students in processes of *how to* identify and repair their own spelling problems.

These processes involve students in *learning how*, rather than in *imitating what*. These *processes* teach students skills of "how to" so they can build on them through life. If what I share will help you to help one student, my efforts here are well spent. I share with you these *processes of managing information, thinking, communicating, then re-examining one's own presentation of thought.*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

HOW STUDENTS THINK (pp. 12-13, 78-79)

Column 1

ENABLING SKILLS
Perceiving
-observing (3)
-recalling (3)

PROCESSING SKILLS
Analyzing
-discriminating fact from opinion (3)
-discriminating relevant from irrelevant (3)
-discriminating reliable from unreliable (3)
Inferring
-understanding statements' meanings (3)

Column 2

ENABLING SKILLS
Conceiving
-comparing/contrasting (3B)

PROCESSING SKILLS
Analyzing
-questioning (3A-3F)
-distinguishing relevant from irrelevant (3A-3F)
-recognizing part to whole relationships (3A-3F)
Inferring
-understanding statements' meanings (3A-3F)
-identifying causes/effects (3A)

OPERATING SKILLS
Logical Reasoning
-inductive (3A-3F)
-deductive (3A-3F)

Column 3

PROCESSING SKILLS
Inferring
(teacher adds and requires)
-concluding and generalizing (pre 4)
-making predictions (pre 4)
-making assumptions (pre 4)
-forming point of view (pre 4)

OPERATING SKILLS
Logical Reasoning
-inductive (pre 4)
-deductive (pre 4)

Column 4

ENABLING SKILLS
Conceiving
-grouping/labeling (I:4-5; A:4, 8-9)
-categorizing/classifying (B:4)
Sequencing
-Ordering (B:5); Prioritizing (I:5, 7; A:5, 8,9)

OPERATING SKILLS (B:5; I:7; A:10-11)
Creative Thinking (teacher assigns/requires)
-demonstrating fluency (several responses)
-demonstrating flexibility (several applications)
-demonstrating originality (new, related responses)
-elaborating (expanding a concept or an idea)
-creating new ideas spontaneously ("aha" ideas)
Problem solving (teacher assigns/requires)
-making judgments/decisions (conclusions and actions from relevant facts)
-defining a problem; determining the desired outcome
-searching, selecting, then applying a solution
-evaluating outcomes, revising, and repeating steps

WHAT STUDENTS ACHIEVE (p. 95)

Column 1

GATHERING INFORMATION

Process Steps 1 - 3

Column 2

CONNECTING THE MEANINGS AND RELATIONSHIPS AMONG THE INFORMATION

Process Steps 3A - 3F

Column 3

FORMING AND CONNECTING THEIR THOUGHTS, ARRANGING THEM BY PRIORITY, AND PLANNING HOW THEY WILL COMMUNICATE THEM

Process Steps B:4; I:4; A:4

Column 4

PREPARING SOME FORM OF MEDIA IN A WAY THAT BEST COMMUNICATES WHAT THEY HAVE LEARNED AND WHAT THEY NOW THINK

Process Steps B:4-5; I:4-8; A:4-11

WHAT STUDENTS DO (pp. 14-55)

Column 1

-read, enjoy, then reflect
-locate relevant information
  -read paragraphs and write notes
  -read page(s), recall, and write notes
  -read paragraphs, recall, and write notes
-read sections, review, recall, and write notes
-recall and write notes
-read and write notes

Column 2

-examine the story's problem, solution, characters' traits
-examine notes for reasons affecting one another
-examine notes for like/differ parallels from common knowledge
-examine notes for examples that help to explain ideas and concepts
-examine notes for conceptual words which need definitions
-transpose ideas to noun form for a list of the subject's synonyms
-connect notes, reasons, and like/differ thoughts by meaningfully arranging them in varying sentence patterns

Column 3

-read each note and decide what it tells
-label notes with teacher's labels (B:4)
-think of a label for each note and mark the note with a code (I:4)
-put notes into stacks, based on how they are related:
  -likenesses (A:4, grades 3-5)
  -causes/effects (A:4, grades 5-12)
  -predictions, assumed conditions (A:4, grades 6-12)
  -conclusions, generalization (A:4, grades 6-12)
  -application of a generalization (A:4, grades 7-12)
  -inductively group notes around a hypothesis to make a tentative generalization (A:4, grades 9-12)
  -deductively arrange notes with drawn conclusions to prove or disprove them (A:4, grades 8-12)

Column 4

-follow the order of the labels that were given to each student (B:5)
-arrange ideas in an order that will make sense to the readers or listeners who will receive the product (applying a logical sense of priority) (I:6; A:5, 8-9)
-plan presentation of the product with an introductory statement (A:6)
-plan framework and transitional flow of the product by writing topic sentences (I:7; A:7)
-plan a summarizing conclusive statement to give the readers or listeners the key impact point (A:11)
-apply plans for explaining ideas in the written or spoken product (I:7; A:10-11)
-examine the product for final perfections before presenting it in final form (B:6; I:9; A:12)

WHAT STUDENTS USE

Column 1

-library fiction sources
-library print non-fiction sources, their contents, and indexes
  -general reference books
  -subject reference books
  -condensed reference articles
  -whole chapters in books
  -fictionalized styles of writing
-texts and supplements
-discussions, interviews, lecture
-graphic forms: graphs, diagrams, charts, maps, pictures, cartoons
-audio-visual materials

Column 2

-notes on Fiction Forms (pp. 75-77)
-notes on note forms (pp. 82-5, 88-9)
-recalled notes from text assignments
Caution: taking notes from texts while reading is difficult because texts ramble; best to read, review, then recall by responding and taking notes to open focusing questions (pp. 10-13, 78-79)

Column 3

-teacher's guidance in expanding the possibilities of criteria for organizing the notes
-label list made by teacher (B:4)
-label/topic sentence form (I:4)
-outline form, Roman numeral lines (A:4)

Column 4

-teacher's input and modeling with Teachers' Transparencies for group instruction (B; I; A)
-Student Direction Cards to give models and step-by-step process instructions (B; I; A)
-Topic Sentence form (p. 85) (I)
-Topic Outline form for topic sentences and topic paragraph (pp. 90-91) (A)
-Subject Form for identifying synonyms (p. 80) (3A-3F)
-plans for thought extensions (3A-3F)
-a word processing program on which to design the communications of ideas (pp. 56-7, 68-73)
-self-correcting processes and forms for finding their own errors and working on their own problems in spelling (pp. 57-61, 92-4)

WHAT TEACHERS DO

Column 1

-require specific kinds of fiction reading, with reports on the Fiction Form, or as essays with the Form as an outline
-assign the kinds of writing that students will do (pp. 8-9, 66-7)
-assign topics at fitting reading and thinking levels
-observe reading levels from:
  -special subject reference books
  -general reference books
  -whole books and chapters
-observe dialogue and personification in factual books
-observe students taking notes
-assign readings; ask open focusing questions (pp. 10-3, 78-9)
-plan interpretive thinking lesson and ask open focusing questions
-teach how to read graphic forms then check for understanding by asking for information about a graphic form with open focusing questions
-plan lesson design to teach note-taking, then lead to guided and independent practice
-monitor students and adjust plans, if needed

Column 2

-model how to do each step by using sample notes (3A-3F)
-check for understanding by asking students to apply a given step to their own notes (all steps)
-share "thinking" extensions and "silly" extensions helping students to acquire senses of quality thinking
-assign only the numbers of responses appropriate to students

Column 3

-expand concepts of how ideas can be put together, based on a variety of ways in which they can be related (above)
-model how to group ideas with labels by using the Teachers' Transparencies
-cut the transparencies of the Advanced note card type of form in fourths and group notes on the overhead to model
-check for understanding by having students raise hands when they think of their first label
-expand labeling skills before beginning by asking students for labels; be sure they think of labels, and not of specific notes

Column 4

-guide students in putting ideas into their own words to explain them to readers/listeners
-encourage students to use more than one sentence to explain ideas fully
-stress that each sentence have all of its parts as numbered on their note forms
-guide students through processes of looking for their own errors in their writing
-guide students' improvements by working them to find two to five errors (or kinds of errors) which they can repair
-hold students accountable for their identified errors which they should be repairing
-be a coach, not an editor, to the writer/speaker

Information processing is not limited to making inferences and relationships among data found in non-fiction, knowledge-based sources. It also involves inferences made with data from fictionalized, story-based sources. Story forms include myths, tales, legends, fairytales, folklore, short stories, novellas, and novels. Story-form works are designed with four components: characters, plot, setting, and purpose or main theme. These parts blend to become a whole. They are conveyed to readers through numerous literary devices, such as person, tense, flashbacks, irony, personification, figurative language, imagery, dialogue, monologue, soliloque, and narration.

Readers often have difficulties identifying and analyzing the four components within particular works of fiction; therefore, they experience haziness when trying to infer the relationships and meanings among them. The *Fiction Report* form is helpful because it provides a visual, almost kinesthetic way of thinking with the abstractions of literature.

As young readers progress through the grades, they are asked to read stories in literary texts, fiction from media centers, and novels for curricular focuses. Students are assigned some form of feedback to their teachers. This feedback comes in worksheet form. It also comes in paragraph form, with step-by-step accounts of the plot and with characters' names intermingled. Students often get this information from a book's cover or from a friend who has read the book. Students might also be assigned to count titles and pages to keep track of how much they have read. All of these activities achieve some purpose in causing students to deal with books, but they do not achieve the purpose of giving students 1) **systematic approaches to literature, 2) analytical skills which connect the development of a plot to its characters, setting, and purpose, and 3) skills in forming conclusions about a book's effectiveness**. Few readers have acquired these skills through reading assignments. These skills are more important today than they have ever been because they also pertain to the literary viewers who view television and video tapes and read literary interpretations in television reviews and guides.

A **systematic process** is needed for students to form as habit. A **graphic form** is needed for students to see the parts of literature's abstractions. The *Fiction Report* form gives them both the process and the graphic view. It can be used in many ways, a few of which are presented on these pages. *(See Fiction Report forms, pp. 75-77)*

FICTION INTERPRETATIONS . . . GRADES 2 +- 12

The headings are directed to students. Explanations are directed to teachers.

USE THE *Fiction Report* FORM

The *Fiction Report* form can be used by you, the teacher, in several ways. **1)** You could have the whole class read a literary piece; then, using an overhead projector, lead them through a transparency of the form as they infer relationships among the components of their story. **2)** You could assign 50% of their book reports to be explained graphically on this form, rather than being explained verbally in paragraph form. **3)** You also could assign that students complete this form and use it as an outline for verbal, essay-style book reports (see next paragraph). **4)** Fiction analyses apply books, but they also apply to other media forms which carry stories. The video drama, for example, is extremely relevant to this kind of analysis. Lead students through interpreting a video/television dramatization which they have all seen. You could also send this form home for families to view a televised

ILLUSTRATION A	THREE PARTS OF A PLOT: 1) ITS PROBLEM, 2) ITS KEY SOLUTION-SEEKING ACTIONS, AND 3) THE FINAL SOLUTION TO ITS PROBLEM.	
PLOT — What is the story's problem?	What 3 or 4 things happened to solve the problem?	What was the solution to the problem?
Cinderella lived a life of being enslaved within her home. She was controlled and dominated by her selfish sisters.	1. Fairy Godmother gave Cinderella the gift of going to the ball, but home by midnight.	Cinderella fit the slipper.
	2. Cinderella met a prince. In the haste of leaving by midnight, she lost her slipper.	The prince knew she was the woman whom he sought.
	3. Her coach turned into a pumpkin at midnight. Only the slipper remained.	Cinderella left her oppressive home and sisters.
	4. The prince looked for her by fitting slipper on women. Sisters couldn't fit into slipper.	She and the prince married and lived happily ever after.

CLIMAX CONCLUSION

ANTI-CLIMAX
(sometimes used)

FALLING
ACTION

RISING ACTION

PRESENTATION OF THE CONFLICT
INTRODUCTION
(characters, situation, setting)

PLOT ACTION LINE
[focusing on solving the conflict]
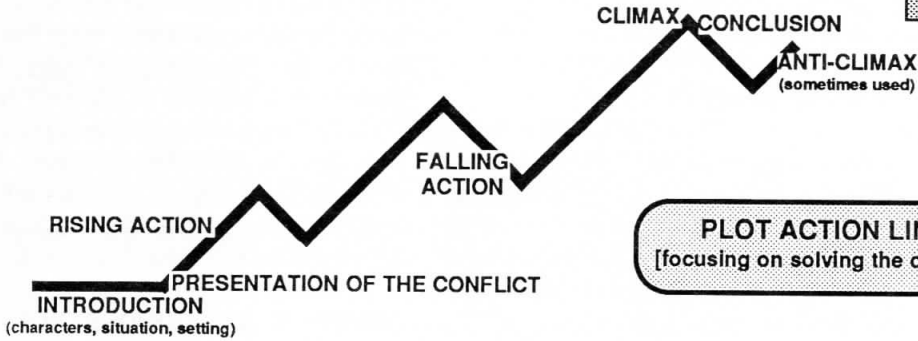
Plots can be viewed in parts: **1)** **the introduction** of characters, setting, and situation **2) the presentation of the problem** (conflict), **3) key steps** of rising action toward solving the conflict, and **4) the solution to the problem** (climax), **5) the conclusion** (denouement), and **6) sometimes a flare of rising action** after the conclusion (anti-climax).

dramatization, to analyze together, and to arrive at family consensus.

ANALYZE A STORY AND ITS PARTS WITH THE *Fiction Report* FORM
Information at the top of the form:
Have students write the title, author, and copyright year (which they can find on the back, or the front, of the title page). Also, have them write their names, your name, and the date.

Characters: Show students where on the *Fiction Report* form to list the main characters of the story. Then show them how to write describing words which explain each character. Help to stimulate their word choices, raising them above "good, bad, happy, sad," to "kind, evil, loyal, true, upset, gloomy," and so on. Use open focusing questions (p. 78) to help them generate these words; list their words and create a "character description" word bank on the corner of the chalk board. Leave it there so they can use the words and to link them to characters as they analyze future characters from their readings.

Plot: On the *Fiction Report* form help students to understand what is meant by a story's problem; clarify to them that no story really exists unless it has a dilemma (a conflict) which needs a solution. *(Illustration A: plot's problem, actions, and solution)*

A short story has one problem; a novel, however, might have several problems. If the novel has more than one problem, students should use more than one form, listing each plot or sub-plot and its related characters, setting, and theme/purpose.

Each plot can be segmented into parts: **1) the introduction** of the people (characters) and the place (setting), **2) the presentation of the problem** (conflict), **3) key steps** which peak toward solving the conflict (rising action), and **4) the solution to the problem** (climax), **5) the conclusion**, and **6) sometimes a flare of rising action** in the conclusion (anti-climax). You might even want to illustrate the plot's parts graphically, showing how a plot could look. *(Illustration B: plot action line)*

On the *Fiction Report* form guide students through completing main actions that happened to solve the problem. These are the actions which rise toward solving the conflict. Help them to identify the problem-solving action of the conflict that ends the story's problem.

Setting: Show students how to identify the setting's three focuses listed at the bottom of the *Fiction Report* form: **the story's location, its place in time, and its length of time.** Students using the Advanced form can identify why these parts are important to the story. They can also identify the setting's mood and tone which should be appropriate to the conflict, putting readers in a frame of mind for following the characters through the ensuing action.

Theme or Purpose: Writers' purposes vary. Some write toward a moral or main theme; others do not. Some make a statement about an issue, a situation, or a way of life; others merely involve readers in a series of experiences which lead to readers' reactions.

When writers seek reader reactions

rather than thematic development, they seek varied reactions. James Thurber aimed at entertaining his readers with humor. Alfred Hitchcock aimed at leading his readers through tales of intrigue, concluding with anti-climactic twists which few readers can out-guess. Edgar Allen Poe, inventor of detective stories, wrote two kinds of stories with different reactions in focus: one focused on the reasoning skills required to unravel detective stories; the other focused on the horrors felt by readers through terrifying circumstances of the characters. Each of these writers had a clear purpose toward which they wrote their works; none of them had a theme or a drove a main idea to their readers.

The purpose of some writers might be reactionary; but the purpose of other writers is thematic, developing a concept or moral to the story. These could be simple good-over-evil themes; they could be thematic pleas for attention to needs, shocking declarations about problems, or suggested answers to entanglements and dilemmas.

Whether eliciting a reaction or declaring a theme, the writer's purpose dictates the molding of the plot of events, the characters who enact the roles, and the setting in which it all takes place. Therefore, you can teach students to identify the theme or purpose by examining the plot's actions and the characters' traits. Then teach them to substantiate their conclusions with the evidence that they found in the actions of the plot and the traits of the characters.

On the *Fiction Report* form help students to determine the theme or the

purpose of a story. To find evidence of their theme or purpose, lead them through a review of the story's key elements:
- conflict of the plot
- solution to the conflict
- traits of the main characters
- place and time of the setting

Listing these on the board should help them to identify evidence. The **conflict** will be a specific form of these broad categories:
- person vs. her/himself
- person vs. another person
- person vs. nature
 (nature = life, times, environment)

The **characters** will have traits. These are samples:
- strength, weakness
- cleverness, uninventiveness
- sensitivity, insensitivity
- kindness, cruelty
- committed, uncommitted
- heroic, villainous

The **settings** will vary to carry the purpose or theme. These are examples:
- festive, serene
- open, oppressive
- light, dark
- rural, urban
- mystic, realistic

Once students have identified the descriptors for the plot, purpose, and setting, they are ready to infer the relationship among these parts. They should ask some inferential questions:
- Was the solution pro or con?
- Who won, the good or the bad?
- Was the ending solved or in the air?
- What characters did the author like?
- How was the location important?
- What was the mood of the story?

Now work to identify the purpose or theme from the answers to these questions. Link them together to help you and the students to draw conclusions about what the author intended.

On the form students can complete the information of the right column. Having investigated to find their purpose, they are ready to prove their theme or purpose by listing evidence from the plot actions and the characters' traits. They identify key *actions* in the plot which give evidence of the theme or purpose; they should list *action in verbs*. They now link the theme or purpose with the characters' traits; they list traits as nouns or adjectives to define the characters.

PREPARE AN ESSAY-STYLE FICTION ANALYSIS BY FIRST PREPARING AN OUTLINE ON THE *Fiction Report* FORM

If you now and then want students to write a report in the form of paragraphs, you can ask them to use this *Fiction Report* form as their outline plan, and to give it to you, stapled beneath their paragraph-style reports. A way of eliminating your burdened book report read-

ILLUSTRATION C

Title *P.S. I Love You*
Author *Barbara Conklin*
Copyright © *1981*

Student *Ann Example*
Teacher *Mr. Helpful*

Accompanies *Composition with Thinking, Simplified* by THEA M. HOLTAN 206A SARATOGA LANE, MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55441 ©1989

Date *April 1* **Room** *100*

FICTION REPORT
ADVANCED PHASE
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CHARACTERS
If you are reporting on a novel that has more than one plot, use a new form for each plot.

List the main characters' names.	Write words to describe each character.
1. *Mariah*	*bright, fun-loving, talented, loved Paul*
2. *Paul Strobe*	*sensible, fun-loving, handsome, loved Mariah*
3. *Mariah's mother*	*understanding, empathetic, caring, supportive*
4.	
5.	

THEME or PURPOSE
What was either the (theme) or the (purpose) of the story?

To help teenaged people to deal with the death of someone close

PLOT

What is the story's problem?
Paul is going to die. He and Mariah are dealing with this.

What 3 to 5 things happened to solve the problem?
1. *console each other while Paul is alive*
2. *Paul dies*
3. *Mariah cries; consoled by her mother*
4. *she remembers Paul saying, "Sometimes*
5. *rememeber me."*

What was the solution to the problem?
Mariah keeps Paul alive in her memories.

What evidence do you see in the (plot's) actions to prove the theme or purpose?
Paul dies and Mariah grieves; then she experiences a process which leads her to a resolution to keep Paul alive in her memories.

SETTING

Where did the story take place?
Palm Springs, California

When did the story take place?
during the summer
could be any year

What length of time passed in the story?
the months of one summer

What evidence do you see in the (characters') traits to prove the theme or purpose?
Mariah's sensitive nature; her determination, and her values toward survival
Paul's likeable character, his depth, and his concern for Mariah's survival

LITERARY DEVICES
Read each item and decide if it relates to the literature which you have read. Circle those which relate, and be ready to discuss and/or write about how they relate to your literature.

Plot Development:
- tense (past) present, future)
- person (first, second, (third))
- flashback
- irony

Character Development:
- stock character (narrative)
- hero
- anti-hero (thoughts)
- personification (actions)
  (dialogue)

Descriptive Language:
- imagery
- figurative language
- metaphor
- assonance; alliteration

Setting: (mood) (tone)
Meaning:
- symbolism
- (theme)
- purpose

6

TOPIC SENTENCE 1   The story (P.S. I Love You) used only three (characters) to tell its message.

TOPIC SENTENCE 2   The (plot) of this (story) uses actions which create closeness among the characters.

TOPIC SENTENCE 3   A (story) like this happens in almost all (settings.)

TOPIC SENTENCE 4   A very clear (theme) comes to the reader through this (book's) people and their experiences.

TOPIC SENTENCE 5   Barbara Conklin, the author of (P.S. I Love You,) used (literary devices) which clearly carried the story and its message.

NOTE THE TWO KEY WORDS IN TOPIC SENTENCES, AS IN INTERMEDIATE AND ADVANCED PHASES.

ILLUSTRATION D

health. Also, you might be studying a form of literature; have them design a story in that form.

When you have students plan their stories, they should identify their stories' components (parts) in the order indicated by the circled numbers, below. They simply fill the blanks of the form and use the form to tell their stories to the class. Have them make a radio or a video drama with puppets or illustrations. Have them draw a story on raw film, then show the filmstrip and narrate stories to the class. Audio effects of music and sound spark the production and add touches of creativityt. Through story creations students **1) understand story construction** and **2) personalize the topic about which they create stories.** (Illustration E: steps in creating a story)

ing is to stagger the paragraph-style report so that only a third or a fourth of the class at a time gives you the written paragraphs with their forms; the other students give you only their report form. Show students how to arrange their paragraphs the way they want them, (setting, plot, characters, plot, setting, and purpose or theme). Also help them to transfer and strengthen their skills in writing topic sentences. Topic sentences are constructed just as the topic sentences of the Intermediate and Advanced Phases are constructed. Each topic sentence should include the title and the topic: characters, plot, setting, and purpose or theme. (Illustration D: Topic Sentences)

The focus of their stories might stem from some concept they studied earlier in the year and will now put into story form. If they studied this focus two or three months ago, you will be enforcing meaningful retention and transfer of concepts in social studies, science, or

PLAN AND CREATE A STORY WITH THE *Fiction Report* FORM

You might want students to create a story. This form helps them to plan their story, its parts, and their relationships. One strategy might be to have students work in small groups or pairs to design their stories, then tell their stories to the class.

ILLUSTRATION E

Title _____
Author _____
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Accompanies Composition with Thinking, simplified
by THEA M. HOLTAN 205A SARATOGA LANE, MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55441 ©1989

Date _____   Room _____

FICTION REPORT
ADVANCED PHASE
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CHARACTERS   If you are reporting on a novel that has more than one plot, use a new form for each plot.

List the main characters' names.		Write words to describe each character.
1. _____	.....	
2. _____	.....	
3. _____ (5a)	.....	(5b)
4. _____	.....	
5. _____	.....	

THEME or PURPOSE

What was either the (theme) or the (purpose) of the story?

(1)

PLOT

What is the story's problem?	What 3 to 5 things happened to solve the problem?	What was the solution to the problem?
_____ (4a)	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ (4b) 4. _____ 5. _____	_____ (4c)

What evidence do you see in the (plot's) actions to prove the theme or purpose?

(2)

SETTING

Where did the story take place?	When did the story take place?	What length of time passed in the story?
_____ (6a)	_____ (6b)	_____ (6c)

What evidence do you see in the (characters') traits to prove the theme or purpose?

(3)

LITERARY DEVICES   Read each item and decide if it relates to the literature which you have read. Circle those which relate, and be ready to discuss and/or write about how they relate to your literature.

Plot Development:	Character Development:		Descriptive Language:	Setting: mood; tone Meaning:
-tense (past, present, future)	-stock character	-narrative	-imagery	-symbolism
-person (first, second, third)	-hero	-thoughts	-figurative language	-theme
-flashback	-anti-hero	-actions	-metaphor	-purpose
-irony	-personification	-dialogue	-assonance; alliteration	

Holtan, Thea. <u>Composition with Thinking. Simplified.</u> ©1989.

Planning a writing assignment is an art. Considerations to be met deal with manageability of students' progress, subjects, experiences in both research and personal writing, topics, types of personal compositions, and thinking levels of the topics. Choosing topic for students' writing assignments is a crucial part of this whole process. First, you as teacher, must determine your purpose for the assignment. You might have more than one purpose (Illustration A: purposes for giving writing assignments to students). The purpose which you must determine early, however, is whether you are providing students with opportunities to find information about a topic of special interest or teaching how to perform a process which they can use through life on any knowledge-management topic. We must be careful to select the appropriate stage for assigning a "whatever interests you" topic. When you are teaching a process, you must consider how manageable the topic is so that you can help the whole class through each step. Thirty students on thirty "interest" topics is hard to maintain when students lack senses of self-reliance with a process. What students truly need is a focus on teaching a process for managing thinking and communicating information. This may seem "elementary" to people, and, indeed, it is. However, "elementary" as it may seem, most students of "secondary" grades have yet not developed these "elementary" skills in managing information.

PURPOSES, TOPICS, SOURCES, AND THINKING SKILLS
Tips are written for teachers who seek suggestions, specifics, and idea starters.

Identify at least four manageable subjects for the school year. Two subjects can be assigned as research reports; two subjects can be assigned as personal compositions. The only difference between these is where students find information. Research reports begin with taking notes from specific sources; personal compositions (often called "themes" or "essays" in high school classrooms) begin with taking notes from one's experiences, knowledge, or implanted knowledge. If students are not required to write by using a process for both research and personal compositions, they will link the process only to research assignments and will not grasp that this process can be used for both research and personal writing. The topic

selection should be limited enough so the final product is not longer than five pages. When we teach processes, we should observe how much product emphasis we retain. Process teaching leads to using a process several times; product teaching leads to holding a product as an example and aiming at it once or twice. Make special note of this by assigning quantities of 25-35; 30-45; 35-50; or 50-65 notes as minimum and maximum restraints.

A NOTE ABOUT TERMINOLOGY (especially for teachers of elementary students): When speaking with students about their writings, use the standard terms, research reports and personal compositions. Somehow in elementary levels, whenever students write, we have been calling their writings "stories." This inaccuracy confuses students; when they read "stories," they learn that a "story" is a form of literature with parts: characters, plot, setting, and a purpose or thematic idea; when they write in paragraph form, they do not use "story" parts. This "story" term was probably created by someone who perceived writing skills as being too difficult for children and tried to create appeal with the term "story." The students do not need this term; they can handle writing very well at very young ages. The terms research reports and personal compositions will be most helpful to their senses of clarity and consistency as they mature to the secondary grades.
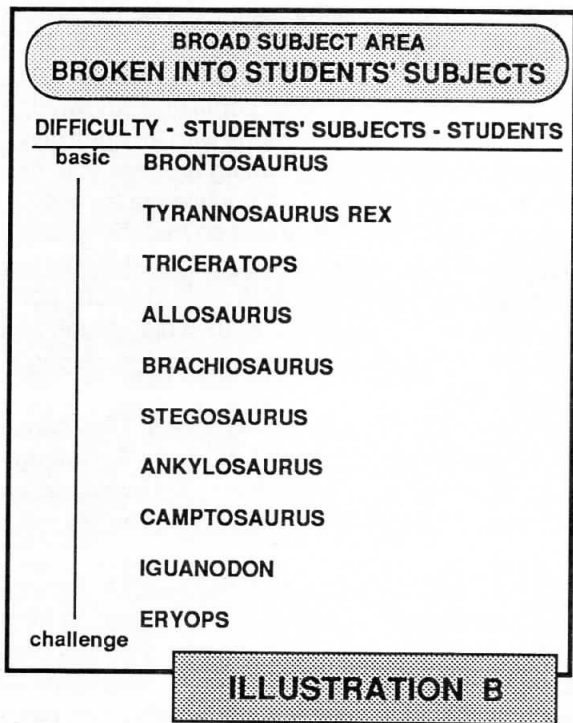
When choosing students' research topics, pick broad subjects which relate to the curriculum; then break them into small topics which students can manage. Set your plans so that you can give students as much help for students as possible during the early experiences with the process. Do this by developing plans which will give you the greatest management control so you can guide them in their progress. Break research subjects into fifteen sub-categories; assign a pair of students to each sub-category; have them work together on all early steps up to, but not including, Step 4. For their first process experience(s) lead students through some of the steps as a whole class. When students are studying a common subject, some steps lend themselves to being easily managed, (ie: note-taking Step 3, and Steps 3A-3F). Guide students through each step of the process; utilize good lesson design plans with the transparencies; develop specific steps on specific days; have sponge activities (Hunter, Madeline) ready for use as students complete the day's step(s).

Research subjects vary in their range of complexity; research sources vary in their range of difficulty. These ranges give us grand opportunities to match students to one another by their comprehension skills, then to match pairs of students to subjects and their available sources. Pair students with each other, based on likeness in comprehension and reading skills. Identify a broad topic which can be split into about fifteen specific subjects. Some subjects and their sources will be challenging; others will be more easily understood. Match the subjects and their sources to students who will gain the most from them; challenges for some...simple comprehension skills for others. (Illustration B: subjects on a difficulty scale)

WRITING ASSIGNMENT PURPOSE(S)

INTENT of TOPIC	__Develop students' comprehensions of curricular concepts __Provide opportunities for students' experiences with their own special interest topics
FORM of WRITING	__Personal composition __description __narration __exposition __persuasion __Researched composition
STAGE with the WRITING PROCESS	__Need total process guidance __Need some process guidance __Need guidance with some steps __Need pacing and monitoring
PURPOSE of the TOPIC	__Follow-up on a unit topic __Follow-up on an input activity __Communicate thoughts about self and/or curriculum __Reinforce a special interest

ILLUSTRATION A

8

Research generally requires the activity of reading any of three broad kinds of sources. Each requires different styles of reading. **1) Reference sources** are often the most easily understood, unless they are special-subject references with highly technical language. Because reference sources are written in compact form, they reap information abundantly, often yielding several ideas from one sentence. This is the type of source which we can use to teach students how to take notes. Make a transparency of a reference article; shine it on the screen; have students identify each idea in the sentences; circle the ideas; and transfer them to transparent the note-taking cards or forms. Reference sources are extremely practical sources for students to learn how to manage. Newspapers, magazines, general reference, and special subject references fall into this kind of source. It is the kind of reading that students will use throughout their lives. **2) Whole books** make a second form of reading source. Students need different approaches for this kind of reading. Teach them how to interpret the table of contents and to select the chapters appropriate to their subjects. Unlike reference sources, these whole-book sources cannot be used for extracting several ideas from one or two sentences. They are written loosely; they require different note-taking strategies. Teach them strategies for taking notes from whole chapters. Have them read one, two, or three pages, then reflect and write ideas which they recognize as being relevant and important. If they are sharing a source, they could take turns reading one or two pages at a time. Another strategy has them read the headings within a chapter, pick the relevant sections, read the first sentence of paragraphs, and select the paragraphs which will contain desirous information. **3) Fictionalized sources** are the third form of reading. Biographies and historical fiction fall into this category to some degree. However, other sources also fall into this story-style category. Dialogue between people is one method for explaining concepts and giving specific information; giving human characteristics to inhuman objects is another way of presenting information. Though these story-style sources are written to gain reader interest, they lack a plot. A different set of strategies is used for deciphering true information from these sources. As with whole book sources, students again read contents, headings, and whole pages at a time. They again reflect and determine relevant information from what they have read. They must be alerted to the fact that the meanings are factual rather than fictitious.

Writing which does not require research might be called personal compositions. The writer draws upon her or his own thoughts and expresses them in paragraph form. The writing process can be the same for this personal composition writing as for researched writing. Four standard forms of personal composition are based on their functions: descriptive, narrative, expository, and persuasive. **1) Descriptive writing** requires writers to arrange their details in an effective way. Descriptions can be the sensory appeals (five senses: sight, sound, smell, touch, taste), appearance, habits, movements, and characteristics. **2) Narrative writing** calls upon the writer's abilities to recall chronologically and to use exact verbs in relating an event by telling when, where, what did-saw-heard, and how felt. **3) Expository writing** has students declare a limited topic, crystallize main ideas,

and support these ideas with supporting details. **4) Persuasive writing** gives students opportunities to express what they think about change, about causes, effects, and predictions. *(Illustration A: types of composition)*

Topics (subjects) which we assign are a way of elevating thinking skills. Often we assign subjects with a single focus. This is fine while students are acquiring information processing skills. However, once these skills are achieved, students are ready for higher levels of topic assignments. They tend to become bored if challenging topics are not planned for them. As another extreme, we might assign students a topic which requires that they synthesize information by proving or disproving an applied generalization. However, these students might not have the slightest ideas of a process for managing the information or the steps involved in meeting the assignment. Topics should be presented with varied degrees of difficulty: **1) single-focused** topics, **2) compare-contrast** topics, 3) **cause-effect** topics, 4) **trend reflection-prediction** topics, 5) **generalization formation** topics, and 6) **applied generalization** topics. *(Illustration C: topics and thinking levels)* (See also: pages 66-67)

BROAD SUBJECT AREA
BROKEN INTO STUDENTS' SUBJECTS

DIFFICULTY - STUDENTS' SUBJECTS - STUDENTS

basic BRONTOSAURUS

TYRANNOSAURUS REX

TRICERATOPS

ALLOSAURUS

BRACHIOSAURUS

STEGOSAURUS

ANKYLOSAURUS

CAMPTOSAURUS

IGUANODON

ERYOPS
challenge

ILLUSTRATION B

A TOPIC IDENTIFIED BY THINKING LEVELS	
SIMPLE, SINGLE-FOCUSED	Siberia
COMPARE/ CONTRAST	Siberia and Alaska
CAUSE/EFFECT	Siberian and/or Alaskan weather and living styles relationships
TREND	Modernizations in Siberia and/or Alaska
GENERALIZA-TIONS	Usually life styles of cultures are affected by their locations on the earth when these locations have effects from the sun.
APPLICATIONS OF GENERALI-ZATIONS	Argentina and Australia's locations on the earth and relationship to the sun.

ILLUSTRATION C

Composition is the result of a series of processing steps. The first step is a matter of listing facts. These facts come from sources other than the writer; and when they do, we call it "research." However, these facts also come from the writer's knowledge; and when they do, we use terms including: descriptive, narrative, expository, persuasive, and report, essay, theme, creative, and non-fiction writing. Often students have difficulty with this very first step of listing facts that come from knowledge because much of their knowledge remains tucked in a fold of their memories. If they are asked questions with an open style, these hidden bits of knowledge rise to awarenesses. Therefore, if you link these questions to the writing process you can have a set of skills for opening students' minds and for developing their concepts as they list their own knowledge for writing.

Open focusing questions are questions which directly focus on specific concepts and are asked so that the quantity of responses and the people who respond are unlimited *(See Hilda Taba, page 96)*. Asked this kind of question, students are capable of writing responses in notes or of discussing them in class. These four pages address teachers skills in asking open focusing questions, in designing recall questions, and in elevating students' thinking to higher levels, both in discussion and in composition. They relate to the three process phases on pages 14, 24, and 38; full planning forms are located on pages 78 and 79. They are a highly abbreviated form of questioning designed by Hilda Taba.

These questions are wonderful for teachers wanting to develop student knowledge in learning situations. They cause discussions about a chapter assignment, a field trip, or a film. They should be used for pre-assessing students' knowledge only when we know that students have knowledge because if students give too many inaccurate responses, the inaccuracies become lodged in minds because of the first, and therefore lasting, exposure. Follow the suggestions below, and you will enjoy full student discussions of at least the data recall level.

Though *recall* is the lowest level of human thinking, we teachers have had little help in causing this recall to happen to its fullest. Use the form on page 78 *(Illustration A)* to plan recall of a topic about which students know something from experience or from a previously learned focus. *Inferential thinking* challenges the mind, and is the thinking which we teachers can prompt through our oral and written questions and through our activity assignments. The form on page 79 *(Illustration C)* is designed to help you to plan this question; it will help you to lead students toward thinking in higher levels with direct focus on your plans for their thinking.

OPEN FOCUSING QUESTIONS . . . K-12
Questions help teachers to lead students through gathering and interpreting information.

Plan, practice, and ask open focusing questions in several learning situations. The question which is well planned will bring wonderful results! Not only should a question be planned, but the mind set for it should also be planned. The questioning strategy breaks into three stages: **1) setting students' minds into the topic, 2) wording the question with an accurate focus,** and 3) **maintaining and extending the flow of thinking.** Make a photocopy of the *Focusing Question: Plan 1,* on page 78; pick a knowledge topic about which your students know some information. Follow the examples on the right edge and in *Illustration A* as you complete your own questioning plan on the photocopy. When you finish, you will have a concept expanding plan which begins with students' knowledge recall. Then continue with these instructions for the final touches on your plan. Before asking questions of your students, practice them on a colleague; then, take them to the classroom. *(Illustration A: scripting knowledge-developing questions)*

You now should have a completed *Focusing Questions: Plan 1* **ready for your classroom.** However, before activating your plan, be prepared to set a

class rule. When students orally give responses to your questions, they must give evidence that prompts their responses. Be careful of this rule; giving evidence means that the students tell where they found or how they know their information. Often this step becomes misinterpreted by teachers who infer that students should state why the information is true or the cause-effect reason behind the informative response. They confuse "evidence" with an interpreting step which occurs later in the process of thinking about the gathered data, Steps 3A-F. Set the giving-evidence rule with your students; tell them that you will rimind them with a hand gesture so you can avoid repeatedly saying, "What is your evidence for saying that, '___'?" For your hand gesture you could tap the palm of one hand with fingers from the other hand.

A student could give a *response...with evidence* that might sound like this in a discussion about tropical rain forests:
-located between the Tropics...the globe shows them in the Equator's part of the earth
-have broadleaf evergreen plants...the film showed them so thick that people had to cut a path

-humid, hot weather...my cousin lived there and talks about the weather

Students will listen to one another's evidence as much as to data; they will grow from listening to both, but they will develop a marvelous feeling tone in the room. You will become the facilitator of student thinking and sharing; you will diminish your role as an information presenter.

Gather students' responses in several learning situations. 1) You could use the questions for discussions with no writing involved; with the questions you coordinate their sharing. 2) You could ask the questions to introduce assigned essay writing, such as an essay exam or their weekly theme. Have students list their thoughts in response to your questions. Ask the questions, to raise their awarenesses; tell students to write notes in response to your questions. 3) Write students' responses (not their evidence) on a transparencies of the note-taking cards. Cut the transparencies into fourths so you have several cards ready to use. 4) Write the students' oral responses on full transparencies; take transparencies to the office copy machine; turn them up-

side-down on the photocopier; make a copy for each student to use through the processing steps. **5)** Ask focusing questions to help students recall and process information attained from a textbook assignment, from a field trip, from a film, or from a unit that they studied last fall.

Use their responses for several purposes. 1) Help them to study for a test. 2) Help them to develop their own knowledge. 3) Lead them toward interpretations in *Plan 2*. 4) Have them use their notes on a note-taking form or cards when they follow the process steps of this ©1989 Composition with Thinking, Simplified. These questions give us tools to help students bring information into their awarenesses when they are not directly using sources to take notes. How we use these questions varies.

However, we must be **cautioned not to intermingle telling with asking.** If students do not know about the subject of your focus, stop asking and teach; then ask the questions tomorrow while determining what they recall.

Clarify the thinking levels. Benjamin Bloom categorized, listed, and illustrated thinking skills in a taxonomical arrangement, based on difficulty levels. Another way of listing these skills is in three divisions, based on functions. **Observe *Illustration B* while reading about these three divisions.** The first is the function of **1) enabling** the thinker to perform. Before any thinking action, thinkers must conceptually perceive knowledge with which to thin; they must "load" their minds much as a computer "loads" its memory. They do this by ob-

serving or recalling backgrounds, situations, and information. Next, they must develop conceptual understandings of the information; they do this by mentally manipulating the informative items through comparing/contrasting, grouping/labeling, or categorizing/classifying. Finally, having grasped an understanding of the items, thinkers now claim ownership of the information and can sequence the information in an order, like ABC or 123, in a patterned arrangement, or in a logical priority arrangement. The second division is the function of intellectually **2) processing** the information. This is done through analyzing the information by questioning it; by discriminating fact from opinion, relevant from irrelevant, and reliable from unreliable; and by identifying part to whole relationships. Inferring is a level

ILLUSTRATION A

CHOOSE A TOPIC (SUBJECT) WHICH IS KNOWLEDGE BASED RATHER THAN SKILL BASED.

PREPARE STUDENTS' FRAMES OF MIND, LEADING THEM INTO THE TOPIC. PHRASE YOUR WORDINGS IN THE ORDER LISTED TO GIVE SMOOTH FLOW. *(See example, right margin)*

TELL STUDENTS WHAT THEY WILL BE DOING AND HOW THEY WILL BE USING THE RESULTS.

LEAD THEM INTO LOADING THEIR MINDS WITH THE INFORMATION WHICH THEY WILL NEED.

AS YOU LEARN HOW TO PLAN THESE QUESTIONS, START YOUR FIRST QUESTIONS WITH THE WORDING LISTED ON THIS FORM. AS YOU GROW, CHANGE TO OTHER QUESTION FORMS. KEEP THE SAME FORM PATTERN THROUGHOUT THE DISCUSSION TO GIVE YOUR QUESTIONS CONSISTENT FOCUS. lie:What do you remember about...? Share what you know about... What thoughts do you have about...?)

REFOCUS YOUR QUESTION (DON'T REWORD IT). ADD "ELSE" TO IT TO START WITH "WHAT ELSE COMES TO MIND..." IF STUDENTS ARE ON TRACK, KEEP GOING WITH "WHAT OTHER THINGS..." AND "WHAT MORE THINGS..." USE REFOCUSING QUESTIONS TO KEEP STUDENTS ON TRACK. ALWAYS STATE THE WHOLE QUESTION, HOWEVER, TO HELP STUDENTS WHOSE MINDS MOMENTARILY WANDER FROM THE FOCUS.

DIVIDE YOUR SUBJECT INTO SUB-TOPICS WHICH YOU WANT YOUR STUDENTS TO BE SURE TO COVER. LIST THESE AND NUMBER THEM IN YOUR PRIORITY ORDER.

PLAN EXTENDING QUESTIONS FOR THE ABOVE SUB-TOPIC FOCUSES. YOU WILL BE READY TO LEAD STUDENTS INTO ALL THE CONCEPTS WHICH YOU WANT THEM TO DEVELOP ABOUT THE TOPIC.

NOW THAT YOU HAVE THE FLOW OF YOUR QUESTIONS, SIMPLY WRITE THE FOCUS AND THE EXTENDED FOCUS SO YOU'LL HAVE THE WORDING READY WHILE YOU'RE IN FRONT OF CLASS.

SPECIAL NOTE: These questions are intended for developing students' concepts (knowledge) about a topic. **They differ from brainstorming** because they develop knowledge with which to think; but brainstorming develops creativity from which to venture into a creative development.

FOCUSING QUESTIONS: PLAN 1

TEACHER _____ GRADE ____

HELP STUDENTS TO DEVELOP KNOWLEDGE

This plan helps teachers to ask questions which draw students' thoughts from their long- and short-term memories. It can be used to get information from students in a class discussion, in a prelisting for an essay exam, or in a listing of information for students to use while writing essays and narratives. This questioning strategy helps students to bring forth ideas that they can use in discussions and in expository writing. This questioning strategy helps students to acquire a process for identifying information. This form is Thea Holtan's design for helping teachers to plan focusing questions. Learn more about how to develop questioning strategies at higher thinking levels; see the reference listing of Hilda Taba's Discussion Dynamics at the end of this book.
(See pp. 12-13 for instructions with this form)

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TOPIC — [IDENTIFY HERE A KNOWLEDGE (not a skill) TOPIC ABOUT WHICH STUDENTS CAN LIST SOME INFORMATION.]

ANTICIPATORY SET (RECALL):
• TIME
• SOURCE
• CONTENT

OBJECTIVE MENTAL FOCUS

INPUT RECALL

OPEN FOCUSING QUESTION — [3-2] WHAT COMES TO MIND [...K-2] WHAT POPS ONTO YOUR MIND...] WHEN YOU THINK OF...
[Add your Topic to these words to form a question with a clear focus.]
ie: What comes to mind when you think of living in Alaska?

REFOCUSING QUESTION — -What else... -What other things... -What more things... ...COME(S) TO [POPS INTO YOUR] MIND WHEN YOU THINK OF...
[In this space copy your Focusing Question from above.]
ie: What else comes to mind when you think of living in Alaska?

EXTENDING QUESTION #1 — TRANSITIONAL STATEMENT: You're doing fine! Now concentrate now on this question What comes to [pops into your] mind when you think of...
[Add your Topic and Subtopic Extension #1 to these words.]
ie: What comes to mind when you think of living in Alaska's weather?

REFOCUSING of EXTENDING QUESTION #1 — -What else... -What other things... -What more things...
[In this space copy Extending Question #1 from above.]
ie: What else comes to mind when you think of living in Alaska's weather?

EXTENDING QUESTION #2 — TRANSITIONAL STATEMENT: Good! Think about this for awhile. What comes to [pops into your] mind when you think of...
[Add your Topic and Subtopic Extension #2 to these words.]
ie: What comes to mind when you think of living in Alaska's homes?

REFOCUSING of EXTENDING QUESTION #2 — -What else... -What other things... -What more things...
[In this space copy Extending Question #2 from above.]
ie: What else comes to mind when you think of living in Alaska's homes?

What comes to [pops into your] mind when you think...

EXTENSION #3 — ...of [In this space write the Topic and Subtopic Extension #3 to plan your wording.]

EXTENSION #4 — ...of [In this space write the Topic and Subtopic Extension #4 to plan your wording.]

EXTENSION #5 — ...of [In this space write the Topic and Subtopic Extension #5 to plan your wording.]

EXTENSION #6 — ...of [In this space write the Topic and Subtopic Extension #6 to plan your wording.]

SUBTOPICS TO EXTEND THINKING (list 2 - 6)
___ [ie:transportation (3)]
___ [ie: resources (4)]
___ [ie: weather (1)]
___ [ie: houses (2)]

IN EXTENSIONS 3-6, ONLY WRITE WHAT YOU WILL SAY TO JOIN THE TOPIC AND THE SUBTOPIC. ONLY WRITE WHAT GOES ON THE BLANK, SO YOU WILL HAVE YOUR WORDINGS PLANNED.
* Needed parts of a lesson design from Madelyn Hunter and the Clinical Supervision model.

FIRST LIST THE SUBTOPICS, THEN NUMBER THEM IN PRIORITY ORDER.

THINKING SKILLS

ENABLING SKILLS
PERCEIVING
... observing
... recalling
CONCEIVING
... comparing/contrasting
... grouping/labeling
... categorizing/classifying
SEQUENCING
... ordering
... patterning
... prioritizing

PROCESSING SKILLS
ANALYZING
... questioning
... discriminating fact/opinion
... discriminating relevant/
    irrelevant
... discriminating reliable/
    unreliable
... recognizing part/whole

INFERRING
... understanding meanings
... identifying cause/effect
... generalizing
... predicting
... citing assumptions
... identifying points of view

OPERATING SKILLS
REASONING LOGICALLY
... reasoning inductively
... reasoning deductively
THINKING CREATIVELY
... demonstrating fluency
... demonstrating flexibility
... demonstrating originality
... elaborating
... creating new ideas
    spontaneously
SOLVING PROBLEMS
... forming judgments/decisions
... defining the problem
... determining the desired
    outcome
... seeking possible solutions
... selecting and applying a trial
    solution
... evaluating outcomes
... revising and repeating
    steps as needed

modified from Cradler, John, *(See page 96)*

ILLUSTRATION B

of thinking which should not be confused with "implying." "Implying" is a statement which has a meaning that is not directly stated. "Inferring" is the thinking activity which mentally connects an informative item to broad linkages like intended meanings, causes and/or effects, generalizations, predictions, assumed conditions, and points of view. Processing involves mental activities which give thinkers broad perspectives and cause thinkers to avoid conclusive thinking until their inferences have been made. **3) Operating** with processed information causes thinkers to do something with results of their thinking. Inductive and deductive reasoning refresh the thinker with formed inferences. Creative thinking reveals the thinker's fluency, flexibility, originality, elaboration, and creation of new ideas. Problem solving is the highest operational function. This is done through a series of problem-focused activities which aim at determining appropriate solutions.

These are the fundamental thinking divisions. Thinkers perform at one division or another with various topics; they do not have to progress through each function with each thinking task, because their experiences and backgrounds differ from topic to topic. The process in Composition with Thinking, Simplified calls upon enabling and inferential thinking in steps 3A-F, and 4-9. Operations are demonstrated when we assign topics which cause operational thinking functions. *(Illustration B: thinking levels)*

Develop questions which cause students to think at inferential levels. The form for *Focusing Question: Plan 2* iis located on page 79, *(Illustration C).* These questions build with the same three parts as defined for the knowledge-developing *Plan 1*. **1) setting students' minds into the topic, 2) wording the question with an accurate focus,** and **3) maintaining and extending the flow of thinking**. Make a photocopy of the *Focusing Question: Plan 2*, on page 79; pick an inferential topic about which your students know some information. Follow the example on the right edge and in *Illustration C* as you complete your own question plan on the photocopy. When you finish, you will have an plan to lead students through

inferring interpretations about a topic. You will be ready first to practice your planned questions on a colleague, then to take them to the classroom. *(Illustration C: scripting an inferential question plan)*

Acquire productive discussion-leading habits. Most of us teachers have not been in asking questions to coordinate group discussions. Some simple cautions and clues will help you.

1) Ask your question, and wait at least thirty seconds. Average waiting time is less than two seconds, so thirty seconds might seem like an eternity. Because you have been unsure about the clarity of your questions, waiting has been painful. Now you know what makes a good question, so relax and wait for students' responses. Ask your question; then slowly tap your big toe at least six times to stretch your waiting time. Remember, the most valuable activity is happening after your well stated question has been asked...**students are thinking**.

2) Smile pleasantly, and nod calmly as students respond. Avoid making noises which distract the thinking. We often think we are encouraging students by saying, "okay," "good," "uh-huh," "wonderful;" but we're only giving meaningless encouragements. If we give approvals to some students and omit approvals for others, we risk subtle putdowns which we unwittingly communicate to them.

3) Insist that students give their evidence for what they have to say. Hilda Taba found that students begin to speak their ideas with supportive evidence when teachers and parents insist on this behavior. The evidence of some students differs from the evidence of others. Encourage other evidence, but be ready to return the discussion with the refocusing question.

4) Word your questions so that they imply a limitless number of answers. Avoid questions responses: "What are the primary colors?" Word the question openly: "What comes to mind when you think of the primary colors?"

5) Word your questions to imply that everyone in the room should listen. Avoid

questions which close the channel of the responses: "Tell me what comes to mind when you think of the primary colors?" Instead ask: "Share what comes to mind when you think of the primary colors."

6) Use either introductory or transition statements before asking a new question. Lead students into the discussion with anticipatory set, objective, and input steps. Students do much better with a smooth flow of focuses. Plan transitions between your focuses and extensions so students can follow your lead. These transitions might sound like this: "Those are interesting thoughts. Now focus on this question."

7) Pick one form of a question and keep it throughout your questioning. By keeping the same question, you hold students' minds attentive to your focuses, refocuses, and extensions. You maintain the same form of our question; you replace "rephrasing" with "refocusing" by inserting: "else," "other things," and "more things." Untrained teachers change questions; they rephrase, rather than refocus: "What comes to mind when you think of the primary colors?" "What do you know about the primary colors?" and "What do primary colors make you think of?" Changing the focusing question sends new messages for students to unscrambling before they can think.

Use these questions for writing and for thinking assignments. The questions are intended for teachers' uses in numerous learning situations. Use them with writing processes when students' thinking is the source information; they help students bring thoughts to awareness levels. Replace textbook questions which lack interpretive thinking processes; give students successful processes of thinking with valuable text and source information. Also, use these questions as successful ways of getting students to share thinking, so they can process it together or alone, and develop their own written or spoken presentations of thought.

FOCUSING QUESTIONS: PLAN 2

TEACHER_____ GRADE____

HELP STUDENTS TO INTERPRET INFORMATION

Use to help teachers plan questions which cause students to infer meanings and relationships within information. The question can cause students to think with information in discussing with classmates, in prelistings for essay exams, in preparing for writing essays, or developing their own questions toward further inferential thinking. This questioning strategy helps students to form processes for interpreting information. Learn more about how to develop questioning strategies at higher thinking levels; see the reference listing of Hilda Taba's Discussion Dynamics at the end of this book.
(See pp. 12-13 for instructions with this form)

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IDENTIFY A TOPIC WHICH WILL RAISE STUDENTS' THINKING LEVELS ABOVE RECALL AND LABELING. THE TOPIC SHOULD BE PART OF YOUR CONTENT CURRICULUM. SOCIAL STUDIES, SCIENCE, AND HEALTH ARE EXCELLENT CONTENT CURRICULA.	**TOPIC**	*Effects of Threats To Our Tropical Rain Forests* IDENTIFY HERE A TOPIC WHICH REQUIRES INTERPRETIVE THINKING SKILLS (beyond listing information).
IDENTIFY THE PURPOSE WHICH WILL BE THE FOCUS OF YOUR TOPIC. THIS FORM LISTS THE VARIED LEVELS OF THINKING IN TERMS OF PURPOSES. CHOOSE ONE FOR THIS DISCUSSION. THESE ARE INFERENCE-MAKING SKILLS WHICH STUDENTS OFTEN DO NOT GET AN OPPORTUNITY TO PURSUE.	**PURPOSE** Choose one of these purposes and keep it for this discussion form. Plan another form for higher-level topic interpretations.	CHOOSE ONE OF THESE PURPOSES FOR YOUR QUESTION. STAY WITH YOUR PURPOSE. YOU CAN USE ANOTHER FORM TO CARRY YOUR TOPIC. __To COMPARE / CONTRAST _____ and _____ __To INFER CAUSES / EFFECTS of_____ on _____ __To INFER TRENDS [tendencies over space and time] about _____ __To INFER PREDICTIONS [what might happen] about *tropical rain forests* and INFER CONDITIONS [necessary for prediction to occur] if *trees are destroyed* __To INFER CONCLUSIONS [from comparisons/contrasts, causes/effects, trends, or predictions] about_____
PREPARE STUDENTS' FRAMES OF MIND BY LEADING THEM INTO THE TOPIC. PHRASE YOUR WORDINGS IN THE ORDER LISTED TO GIVE SMOOTH FLOW. *(See examples: on form and on far right margin)*	**ANTICIPATORY SET (RECALL)** ▪ TIME ▪ SOURCE ▪ CONTENT	▪ *Yesterday* ▪ *we read our textbooks about* ▪ *threats to the tropical rain forests.*	le: -Lately -we have been experiencing -an extremely hot and dry summer which has caused unusual things to happen.
TELL STUDENTS WHAT THEY WILL BE DOING AND HOW THEY WILL BE USING THEIR RESULTS.	**OBJECTIVE** MENTAL FOCUS	▪ *Today we'll examine these threats and think about what effects these threats are having on our tropical rain forests.*	le: Today let's share what can happened because of our hot, dry summer.
LEAD STUDENTS INTO LOADING THEIR MINDS WITH THE INFORMATION WHICH THEY WILL NEED.	**INPUT** ▪ KNOWLEDGE RECALL	▪ *Thinking back on all you remember about threats to our tropical rain forests,*	le: Thinking of what often happens from hot, dry weather,
AS YOU LEARN HOW TO PLAN THESE QUESTIONS, START YOUR FIRST QUESTIONS WITH OBVIOUS WORDINGS WHICH CLEARLY STATE THE THINKING THAT STUDENTS ARE TO DO. THE QUESTION MUST STATE THE PURPOSE WHICH YOU CHECKED IN THE *PURPOSE* SECTION. PLAN A NEW FORM IF YOU SHIFT TO A NEW PURPOSE. ("What are some ways that *X* and *Y* *compare* [*contrast*] with each other?" "What are some *causes* for *X* being a part of the alphabet?" "What *effects* has *X* had on *y*?" "What *trends* do you see in the activities of *X*?" "*Predict* what might happen to *X* under the *conditions* (assumptions) which we have just identified?" "Make some *conclusions* about the prediction that *XYZ* might happen if *ABC* were the condition.")	**OPEN FOCUSING QUESTION**	-What... *might happen because of threats to our tropical rain forests?* [Add your Topic from above to these words to form a question with a clear focus.]	le: What things can happen when summer weather is unusually hot and dry?
REFOCUS YOUR QUESTION (DON'T REWORD IT). ADD "OTHER" "MORE" OR "ELSE" TO REFOCUS THE QUESTION. IF STUDENTS ARE ON TRACK, CONTINUE THE PURSUIT. STUDENTS MUST GIVE THEIR EVIDENCE FOR THEIR THOUGHTS. USE REFOCUSING QUESTIONS TO KEEP STUDENTS ON TRACK. ALWAYS STATE THE WHOLE QUESTION, HOWEVER, TO HELP STUDENTS' MINDS TO STAY ON THE FOCUS.	**REFOCUSING QUESTION**	-what else... -What other... -What more... *might happen because of threats to our tropical rain forests?* [In this space copy your Focusing Question from above.]	le: ...can happen when summer weather is unusually hot and dry?
DIVIDE YOUR SUBJECT INTO EXTENSIONS WHICH YOU WANT YOUR STUDENTS TO BE SURE TO COVER. LIST THESE AND NUMBER THEM IN YOUR PRIORITY ORDER. EXTENSIONS SHOULD BE VERSATILE ENOUGH TO GIVE MULTI-SIDED VIEWS; THEY SHOULD SHOW BOTH SIDES.	**EXTENDING QUESTION #1**	TRANSITIONAL STATEMENT: *You make good predictions. Now try this focus.* -What.... *might happen to the plantlife because of the threats to our tropical rain forests?* [In this space add the Topic and Inference Extension #1 to form a question.]	le: What things can happen to plant life when summer weather is unusually hot and dry?
	REFOCUSING of EXTENDING QUESTION #1	-What else... -What other things... -What more things... *might happen to the plantlife if tropical rain forests go on being threatened?*	le: ...can happen to plant life when summer weather is unusually hot and dry?
PLAN EXTENDING QUESTIONS FOR THE ABOVE SUBJECT EXTENSIONS. YOU WILL BE READY TO LEAD STUDENTS INTO ALL THE VIEWS THAT YOU WANT THEM TO DEVELOP ABOUT THE TOPIC. ALSO WORD REFOCUSES.	**EXTENDING QUESTION #2**	TRANSITIONAL STATEMENT: *Good! Now make predictions about this.* -What... *might happen to people if tropical rain forests continue to be threatened?* [In this space add the Topic and Inference Extension #2 to form a question.]	le: What things happen to animal life when summer weather is unusually hot and dry?
	REFOCUSING of EXTENDING QUESTION #2	-What else... -What other things... -What more things... *might happen to people if tropical rain forests continue to be threatened?* [In this space copy Extending Question #2 from above.]	le: ...happen(s) to animal life when summer weather is unusually hot and dry?
NOW THAT YOU HAVE THE FLOW OF YOUR QUESTIONS, ON EXTENSIONS 3,4 SIMPLY WRITE THE FOCUS AND THE EXTENDED FOCUS SO YOU'LL HAVE THE WORDING READY WHILE YOU'RE IN FRONT OF CLASS.	**EXTENDING QUESTION #3**	What... ...to our *atmosphere if tropical rain forests continue to be threatened?* [In this space write the Topic and Inference Extension #3 to plan your wording.]	**INFERENCE EXTENSIONS** #___ [le: animals (#2)] #___ [le: plants (#1)]
SPECIAL NOTE: Now that you're acquiring questioning strategies, examine texts; reword questions; use the content.	**EXTENDING QUESTION #4**	...to the *destroyers if our tropical rain forests continue to be threatened?* [In this space write the Topic and Inference Extension #4 to plan your wording.]	#___ [le: people (#3)] #___

ILLUSTRATION C