Lesson Skill: Activating prior knowledge

Strand   Reading — Nonfiction

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         4.6

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Materials
- Several, varied nonfiction texts (e.g., newspaper, magazine, informational article, informational book)
- Copies (print or electronic) of a one-paragraph, nonfiction text for each student

Lesson
1. Review previously discussed reading strategies with the class. Focus on the reasons good readers use comprehension strategies, such as activating prior knowledge; making, confirming, and revising predictions; questioning; visualizing; and summarizing to help them comprehend texts.

2. Remind students that good readers use these comprehension strategies before, during, and after reading. After previewing the title and illustrations, they begin by thinking about what they already know about a new text before they start reading it. This is called *activating prior knowledge*. Define *prior knowledge* as information that a reader already has about a topic.

3. Display several nonfiction texts. Using the titles and illustrations for support, demonstrate activating prior knowledge.

4. Display or distribute copies of the short nonfiction text. Direct students to whisper-read the title and then take 30 seconds to do a prior-knowledge-quick-write on loose-leaf paper, creating a bulleted list of all of the things they already know about this topic before reading. Read the text aloud, or direct students to read in groups.

5. Ask students to think-pair-share about how their prior knowledge helped them to comprehend the text. As a class, discuss the strategy, using the following questions as a guide:
   o How does activating prior knowledge before reading help you with comprehension?
   o What elements of nonfiction can help a reader activate prior knowledge?

Strategies for Differentiation
- Choose high-interest nonfiction texts.
- When modeling prior knowledge, choose a familiar topic such as the current president or a specific sport.
- Pair students to complete the prior-knowledge-quick-write, but have them draw pictures rather than write, so they will do a prior-knowledge-quick-draw.
- Group students to complete lesson based on readiness, learning style, interest, or comfort level.