

THIEVES: Surveying a Text to Set a Purpose for Reading

Rationale

In order to become independent readers, students must understand what experienced readers do prior to reading a text. Students must be explicitly taught that experienced readers pay close attention to key features of a text *before* they read in order to activate prior knowledge, ask questions, and set a purpose for reading.

Implementation Instructions



1. Explain the importance of surveying a text, and introduce the THIEVES strategy to students. Sunday Cummins (2013) suggests telling students that by previewing a text we become “information thieves,” stealing as much information as we can about a text prior to reading.
2. Distribute copies of the text to students, project a copy of the text, and then model how to survey the text using the THIEVES mnemonic, recording notes on a separate sheet of paper.

T itle	Read the title of the chapter (article) and predict what the selection will be about.
H eadings	Look at each heading. What will you learn about in each section?
I ntroduction	Read the introduction and any questions or summaries at the beginning. What information gives you clues about the main idea? What additional information adds to your knowledge of the topic?
E very First Sentence	What do you think each section is going to be about based on the first sentence in each paragraph?
V isuals & V ocabulary	Look at any visuals, lists, margin notes, and bold and <i>italicized</i> words. Make notes of what you plan to learn.
E nd of Chapter	Read the material at the end of the selection such as summaries or questions. What information stands out?
S ummary	Using the information above, write a summary of what you think the text will be about or what the author’s central ideas will be.

3. Students are now ready to engage in an independent first read of the text to determine if their summary prediction is correct.

Tips for Teaching

- Initially, this strategy will take approximately 45 minutes to teach. As students become more proficient with the strategy, they should be able to “thieves” a text within 5-10 minutes.
- Looking at every first sentence in a paragraph can become tedious. As you model this section for students, be strategic, and have them look at every first sentence under each heading, or 1-2 first sentences that provide key information about the topic.
- When working with the chapter of a textbook, consider chunking each read into 1-2 pages or focusing on specific sections of the chapter, so students are “thievesing” manageable amounts of information.
- Provide sentence starters for the summary statement such as, “We think this article is going to be about...” or “I think the author’s central idea is...because...”