



THREE LEVEL GUIDE (during reading)

The Three-Level Guide (3LG) is a powerful teaching tool with three sets of true/false statements, each with a different focus: reading the words, reading between the words and reading beyond the words. Reading the words is the literal level and exercises the skill of reading for accuracy — does the author state that or not? Reading between the words is the inferential level and students are instructed to draw conclusions from what the author said and support this with evidence from the passage. The third level, reading beyond the words, is where students explore the broader issues around the content of the passage and they form opinions and argue their position. With limited writing requirements, it is primarily thinking and reading. This can also be used for videos and podcasts.

Level 1 (Literal) – reading ‘on the lines’ to find out what is actually said on the page

Level 2 (Interpretive) – reading ‘between the lines’ to infer what the author might mean

Level 3 (Applied) – reading ‘beyond the lines’ to relate the information to other knowledge and situations

Design rules of thumb

1. Choose a content-dense passage. Ideally it contains the core concepts of a unit and that there are some broader issues or key implications associated with the content. Not all passages are suitable for a 3LG.
2. Use the template as a guide. Aim for about five level one statements, five level two and usually no more than three level three statements. Keep these in the order they appear in the passage.
3. Write more true statements than false as the false statement might be what stays in memory.
4. Spread the level one and two statements throughout the text and include diagrams or tables.
5. The first statement of level one should be found fairly early in the passage.
6. Level three statements are designed to split opinion, there is no right or wrong as positions argued will generate deeper understanding.
7. An image used to demonstrate the key concept of the activity can provide a powerful visual cue for memory encoding and retrieval.

Implementation

A Three-Level Guide must be explicitly taught the first time. The teacher models the approach to making decisions around level one and two statements and highlights the evidence in the passage. Talking aloud is a useful way to share the thought processes with your students. While levels one and two are either true or false, level three must be designed to split opinion and there is no correct response. Demonstrate how the student should write their arguments and how they might argue their point of view.

1. Give clear instructions by referring to the instructions (these are provided on the templates). This is a three-stage process:
 - a. Individual stage: students read the passage first and then indicate true or false for each statement. Some teachers use two coloured markers to highlight the evidence for their decision within the passage to support levels one and two. When a student finishes all three levels, they are to select one level three statement and write points to use in their argument to support their decision. This could be called ‘think’ writing.
 - b. In pairs: students compare their responses and if statements differ in levels one or two they justify using their evidence. It is acceptable for a student to change their response based on the evidence.
 - c. Whole class: run through level one and two responses and clarify any issues. Then focus on level three responses; this could be achieved statement-by-statement as a whole class activity or by forming affirmative and negative teams for each statement and facilitating the debate.

Why is this effective for young adolescents?

Adolescent readers struggle with comprehension of content-area text (Hervey, 2011, Marchand-Martella et al., 2013, IRA, 2012). The Three-Level Guide takes students from the literal level, to the inferential level with a requirement to provide evidence to support their position and then beyond, to the ‘broader issues’ level. Students read the text

References

Enhancing Reading in Junior Secondary - Participant Reference Guide

critically, reflect, evaluate and apply their knowledge. Intrinsic to the Three-Level Guide is thoughtful instructional design where:

1. (Good) instructional design ... frees working memory resources so they can be used for other purposes, such as the deep elaboration that leads to insight and gaining deeper knowledge. (PMSEIC Expert Working Group, 2009). With light writing demands, the focus is on thinking when reading.
2. Active processing in working memory is a prerequisite for storing information in enduring or 'long-term' memory stores. (PMSEIC Expert Working Group, 2009).
3. The gaining of deep knowledge can be enhanced by analysing what we are learning while we are learning. (PMSEIC Expert Working Group, 2009)
4. Motivation can be increased by (Boardman et al., 2008):
 - increasing social interaction related to reading, and
 - using text interesting to the student.
5. Visuals, in particular, pictures, are powerful and whenever you have the chance pair pictures with text to increase storage and retrieval of memories (Frey & Fisher, 2010).

For further information about how to teach comprehension go

to: <https://learningplace.eq.edu.au/cx/resources/file/26f80d6c-99be-f575-d572-84bd9f51c97b/1/reading/index.html>. If this link is broken go to OnePortal – Education and delivery – State Schooling – Teaching Quality – Reading Improvement – Reading – Comprehension strategies.

References

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