

Reading Apprenticeship
Faculty Interest Group (FIG)
Rachel Shelly
Lesson: Activating Schema

Texts and/or materials needed:

This lesson can be used with any text and in any class that requires reading. Some reading suggestions are non-fiction articles from magazines, newspapers, or from selective online websites. Just be sure to pick a text which also has accompanying graphics such as pictures or data graphs.

Activating Your Schema powerpoint by Emily Kissner (and adapted by Rachel Shelly)

Reference materials:

Reference text for Reading Apprenticeship:

Schoenbach, Greenleaf, Murphy. *Reading for Understanding; How Reading Apprenticeship Improves Disciplinary Learning in Secondary and College Classrooms.*
2nd ed. Jossey-Bass: WestEd. 2012.

Featured pages/materials from this text:

Chapter 8: "The Knowledge Building Dimension" specifically, pages 234 -250

Handout: Activating Your Schema worksheet

Learning Goals:

- **Students will use Reading Apprenticeship skills (activating their schema) in order to prepare themselves for reading a text with unfamiliar vocabulary and/or subject matter.**
- **Students will become more confident when attempting to read college level text that is unfamiliar.**
- **Students will improve reading comprehension.**

- Students will learn the importance of background knowledge in making reading more relevant.

Likely Student Prior Knowledge/Misconceptions:

Students often just jump into reading without first taking the time to look at clues that the author provides in addition to the article. This lesson is used to scaffold students on how to activate their schema and help them start to incorporate this important step into their reading habits.

They should already have some knowledge of what an inference is.

Example Learning Activity & Formative Assessment: First, review the Activating Your Schema ppt. with students and elaborate on how our backgrounds can sometimes make reading more difficult because of vocabulary and topics we are not familiar with. Discuss the slides and encourage a class discussion. Then, once the students are familiar with the term 'schema' and what it means, practice the skill as a class using a preselected text from a class resource, newspaper, or magazine. Make sure the text has pictures or graphs and charts. Go over the skills together while following along with the Activating your Schema worksheet. Then, assign another article for students to work on in small groups, and finally one more article for students to work on as homework. The same Activating Your Schema worksheet will be used in all three instances (together as a class, in groups, and individually).

Summative/Formative Assessment Question : The student will turn in their Activating Your Schema worksheet with a selected article of their choice.

Instruction Evaluation Comments: This lesson can be individualized with students at different reading levels. It can also start off at an easier conceptual level on a topic and move on to a more complex ideas. The same skills are being used regardless of the reading or concept level, and students usually enjoy realizing that activating their schema can help them get more out of an article.

I have used the Powerpoint in the past, and at first students may think 'oh, this is too elementary,' but by the end of the powerpoint, most start to really understand how activating our schema can help skillful readers understand complicated text.

Lesson Plan: Activating Your Schema

Materials: Activating Your Schema Powerpoint

Various articles of instructor's choice that have graphics

1 article to model activating schema to the class

Several articles to supply for work groups

(they can be the same or scaled for different reading levels)

Activating Your Schema worksheet (1 per student or post it online)

Overview & Purpose:

Students will learn the importance of integrating background knowledge as a strategy for interpreting unfamiliar college text. They will learn what schema is and why using and building schema will make them a more efficient reader.

Procedure:

Ask students if they have ever heard of the term 'schema' before. Most student have not. Introduce that the lesson today will work on defining schema and how using it can help make students more efficient readers.

Present the Activating Your Schema powerpoint. Discuss the slides when appropriate. Many LCC students don't understand the concept of snowmaking because they possibly aren't skiers or snowboarders, or don't spend a lot of time in the snow. Then talk about the the burro slide. Ask student if the sentence is easier for them to understand, and if so, why. Lead a class discussion on this, and why our background can make some reading easier.

Conclude the power point by having students write down their definition of schema.

Then, introduce an article of choice that has graphic information (pictures, marginal writing, graphs). I often use UpFront articles. Model for the class how to activate their schema by reviewing the article. The article does not have to be read in its entirety. Use the Activating Your Schema worksheet as a guide.

Next class:

Pick a selected article or article, and have students break up into groups of three students each. Have the students work through the Activating Your Schema worksheet with the selected article as a group. Encourage student discussing, and explain the benefit of having a combined resource of background knowledge by working in a group.

Then, if time allows, have the students present what they found with the class or another group.

Homework:

Have students research a topic they are unfamiliar with, but applies to the class objectives. You can give them topics and they can find an article, or you can give them an article. Have the students complete the Activating Your Schema worksheet for this article and turn it in.

Assessment:

Students can be assessed after the group activity or individually through their homework assignment.

ACTIVATING YOUR SCHEMA

Answer the following questions on a separate piece of paper without reading the entire article. Remember, there is no right or wrong answer. You are just activating your schema. When you are done, staple the original article to your answers and hand in your work.

1. After reading the title and briefly skimming the reading, what do you think this reading is about?

2. Give 2 reasons why you think this. *For example: I think this article is about cars being manufactured in Mexico because there is a picture of a car in a manufacturing line with Spanish writing in the background.*

3. Use five sentences to explain what you already know about this topic. *For example: I know that cars are made in Mexico, and they are imported into the United States.*

4. Anticipate what the author may be saying about the topic. *For example: The author may be saying that cars are no longer going to be manufactured in Mexico.*

5. Give 8 possible vocabulary words that might show up in the reading. *For example: manufacturing, dealerships, imports, economy, president, wages, shipping, environment*

6. Are there any bold or italicized words in the article? If so, list them and guess their definition by looking at the sentences before and after the word.

7. List any photos, graphs, charts, or items written in the margin or highlighted in the text.

8. Pick one of the items from question 7, and explain why you think the author chose to include this in the article. *For example: I think the author chose to put a photo of a car being manufactured in Mexico to help the reader understand that he is writing about modern machinery.*

9. Pick one of the items you listed in question 7, and explain what questions it brought up to you, as a reader. *For example: The chart showing how many cars are manufactured in Mexico and shipped to the United States made me wonder why car companies are doing this. It also made me wonder how the workers are educated in manufacturing in Mexico. Do they get college degrees? Why can't we make cars in the United States? I also heard that some companies do not like to manufacture in the United States because of environmental reasons. I wonder if that is why they are building cars in Mexico, and if so, then why is that okay to hurt Mexico's environment and not ours?*

10. Read the last paragraph of the article. Does this give a summary of the article? If so, again, write what you think the article is about. (If the last sentence does not give a summary of the article, read the first paragraph and anticipate what the article might be about.) *For example: The author mentioned that President Trump is encouraging car manufacturers to stay in America by lifting some environmental regulations and giving companies money to build their cars in the USA. I think that is what the article is going to explain.*