

UNLOCKING INFORMATIONAL TEXTS

“The text is a lazy machine that needs to be activated” (Eco).

Reliance on textual evidence and citations is integral to reading, writing, and thinking. Gone are the days where a standardized test only asked students to pick out a main idea. Students need to be able to cite other portions of text that offer important concepts, paramount issues, or supporting ideas. Understanding that there are often several important ideas in a piece of text rather than a single main idea is necessary when students try to make sense of a text. This marking strategy is a simple way to get students to focus on important information beyond the main idea. It will help them defend their stance, cite evidence, and explain the thinking behind their decisions.

1. **QCC**: Write **questions, comments, and connections** in the margins. When you have a question or need clarification, write down your uncertainty. When you discover something surprising, fun, or exciting that makes you say wow, cool, awesome, yuck, no way, whoa, etc., put a comment in the margin. When you discover something new, a knowledge you did not have before or a knowledge that can connect or add to texts previously read, write down your new knowledge and its connection to what you already know, to your own experiences, or to other texts.
2. **Underline** the main idea and/or write it at the top if the main idea is not directly stated.
3. **★Star** important supporting points in the text.
4. **☐ Box** each word you do not know. Write brief definitions beside them if you do not figure them out from context clues.
5. **≈ Put wavy lines** under repeated ideas or words.
6. **△ Triangle** peoples' names so they are easy to locate on each page; label the author/speaker.
7. **Determine point of view and type/level of diction**. Write them near the title.
8. **/Mark off** longer or really difficult sentences with backward slashes (pay attention to semicolons and colons, parentheses, italics, compound-complex sentences, etc.) This can help with archaic language, compound-complex sentences, periodic sentences, etc.
9. **Write the type of text** at the end (essay, article, image, chart, speech, etc.).
10. **Make a dramatic situation chart**.

Who is speaking or writing?	
To whom?	
About what/subject?	
When/Where?	
Why/Purpose?	
Tone?	

Need More Help?

-paraphrase the piece

-do a partner think aloud