

Chunking Reading – Teaching Strategy

Quick Overview

Involves breaking down a text into smaller, more manageable sections. This helps students focus on specific details and build comprehension by distinguishing essential and non-essential information.

Skill Objective

Students will...

- break a complex text into smaller, meaningful chunks based on ideas, structure, or topic shifts.
- identify key words and details that contribute to the essential meaning of a text section.
- paraphrase each chunk accurately using their own words.
- distinguish between essential and nonessential information within a text.

Content Objective

Students will...

- explain the main events, ideas, or arguments presented in the selected text.
- summarize the text's overall meaning using evidence from multiple sections.
- identify how the organization of the text supports the author's purpose or message.

Civics Skills Connection

Disciplinary Literacy:

- **Information literacy:** Students identify, find, evaluate, and use information from various sources.
- **Media literacy:** Students decode, analyze, and evaluate print and digital media.
- **Historical source literacy:** Students use a variety of maps, documents, and other historical sources to interpret and answer questions about the past and present.

Prep ahead

- Select a medium-to-long text that contains clear sections, shifts in topic, or recurring ideas (e.g., events, arguments, time periods, or themes).
- Decide how students will chunk the text:
 - By structure (paragraphs, headings, sections)
 - By ideas (claims, events, causes/effects)
 - By natural breaks students identify themselves

- Print copies of the text or make a digital copy that allows highlighting and annotation.
- Prepare guiding questions if students are new to chunking (optional).

Strategy Steps

1. Students read the entire text from start to finish without stopping.
2. Students divide the text into smaller sections based on:
 - major events
 - shifts in topic or argument
 - new people, places, or ideas
3. Students label each chunk. Examples of labels include:
 - headings
 - short summary phrases
 - numbered sections
4. For each section students ask, “What is this section mostly about?”
 - They highlight or underline key words, phrases, and details.
 - They write a 1–2 sentence paraphrase of each chunk in their own words.
5. Students review their paraphrases and return to the text.
6. They identify:
 - which words or ideas are essential
 - which details support understanding but are less critical and not essential to the chunk’s main idea.
7. Students cross out or bracket ideas that are not essential
8. Students combine their chunk paraphrases to explain the overall meaning, argument, or message of the text orally, in a short written paragraph, or through a group discussion.

Customizations

- **Option 1: Gamify it**
 - Groups working with the same text compete to create the clearest chunk summaries or reduce each chunk to the fewest words while keeping meaning. Students vote or justify which version best preserves the text’s meaning
- **Option 2: Assess it**
 - Educator collects chunk labels, paraphrases, and final synthesis then develops written feedback that focuses on accuracy of understanding and use of evidence
- **Option 3: Share it**
 - Students display or exchange their chunked versions of the text (with chunk labels, paraphrases, or redacted sections).
 - Peers review each other’s work and discuss:
 - how the text was divided
 - what each student identified as essential

- any differences in interpretation or emphasis
 - The class then reflects on how chunking choices can shape understanding of a text's meaning.
- **Option 4: Preview it**
 - This preview allows students to see a strong example of chunking before they are asked to apply the process independently.
 - Educator pre-chunks a reading in advance, including clear chunk divisions and labels. Students then complete the remaining steps (paraphrasing, identifying essential ideas, and synthesizing meaning) using the pre-chunked text.
 - The class discusses:
 - how the text was divided into chunks
 - why certain chunk boundaries and labels were chosen
 - how the chunking supports understanding of the text