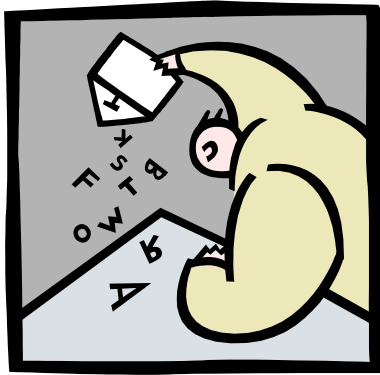# Strategies for Struggling Readers

Meet the "Non-Reader"

A non-reader lacks the skills of a fluent reader. They read below grade level and struggles with comprehension, phonics, and vocabulary. Feelings of defeat have turned off their desire to read and they exhibits inappropriate behaviors to hide their inability to read and comprehend. They read very little and do not like to read.
Lacks effective word attack skills.
Exhibits poor comprehension skills.
Has limited language and vocabulary.

What the "Non- Reader" says about reading and themselves:

"This is boring and frustrating."
"I will misbehave, so I won't have to read."
"I can't understand this assignment."
"I will never learn to read for the rest of my life."
"I'm stupid – this is stupid – you're stupid."

What you can do to help the "Non-Reader"

- Evaluate for listening comprehension level versus reading comprehension level to assess comprehension skills

- Never engage the class in "round robin" reading activities.

- Evaluate word recognition in isolation versus word recognition in text to assess word analysis skills.

- Provide any essential information aloud or taped as the learner follows the print.

- Use oral or video/movie activities to supplement written activities.

- Provide a learning environment that does not constantly stretch the student's level of competency and utilizes the limited areas of strength.

- Provide extensive, consistent models of literacy within the student's grasp.

- Provide concrete examples, organizers, and demonstrations. Relate and connect ideas, vocabulary, and skills. Avoid "drill and kill."

- Structure cooperative group activities that include a role requiring less "traditional" literacy skill – skits, raps, cartoons or visuals

- Assess learning in non-verbal ways whenever possible: models, demonstrations

Strategies you can use to help the "Non-Reader"

- Arrange for this student to read easy books to younger students.

- Group or individual pre-reading: activate prior knowledge and predict.

- Try a shared reading with a partner to share responsibility for active reading.

- Work in cooperative groups for focused and specific purposes related to inferential comprehension.

- Give numerous opportunities to work with peers to "fill the gaps" in comprehension.

- Use computer programs and other technology resources to support word analysis and comprehension.

- Work with combinations of text and audiotape or text and video tape.

- Use "Telling Boards," where they can draw simple "stick figure sketches" based on their ideas or information they find in text. Use as visual organizers instead of trying to record using words.

- Stress ideas and organization/structure when encountering text.

- Provide opportunities for re-readings and choral reading.

- Use a Readers Theatre to create interest and build skills in reading. Use text as "script" – spice it up with simple "costumes" or "sets." Repeated "performances" (readings) bring fluency

Give him chances to "publish" his work and "tell" what he knows about a subject that interests him. He is motivated when he can successfully get his ideas down on paper.

Reference: *Differentiated Instructional Strategies for Reading in the Content Area*, Carolyn Chapman and Rita King

Learning Strategies are tools.
What's in the toolbox for the "Non Reader"?

1. Assess and Conquer
2. Predicting ABC
3. K.I.M.
4. I'll Pause, You Think
5. What Do You Expect?
6. Text Investigation

Teacher's Toolbox	Tool: 1 Assess and Conquer

Class:

Unit:

Date:

Source Reading:

Use this tool:
▶ Pre-reading
▶ While reading
   Post - reading
This tool will help my students:
▶ Define
   Summarize
   Compare

How To Use This Tool:

This tool is best suited to a content subject where understanding a chapter is largely dependent on several concept words. It focuses the reader on the essential vocabulary. It requires independent thought, pair-share for rehearsal and support and whole group for clarifying and feedback.

- Choose six to eight concept words from a text/topic that are critical to understanding the essential ideas of the topic. (i.e. Welding: conductive elements; plasma arc cutting; power source terminal)
- Write the words on the *Assess and Conquer* graphic and provide the worksheet to the students.
- Read the list aloud, one word at a time. Have students mark the appropriate box on their sheet indicating their knowledge of the word.
- Divide the class into mixed-ability pairs. Read the words again giving each pair one minute to share with each other what they know about the terms.
- Pairs should record a definition or the teacher may want to have the entire class decide on a definition to be recorded on the *Assess and Conquer* graphic.
- Instruct the student to read a text selection in search of the words. Remind them to look in titles, subtitles, boldface, captions, illustrations for the terms. They should compare their definitions with the way the word is used in the chapter and record their understanding of the words they didn't know.
- Assess understanding through generative (verbalizing, illustrating, explaining) tests rather than responsive (multiple choice) tests

To Increase Rigor and Relevance:
1. Have students write a chapter summary using the words.
2. Have students classify or categorize the terms and explain their system of comparing/relating the terms.
3. Assess understanding through verbalizing, illustrating, explaining tests rather than multiple choice tests.

Reference: *Literacy Strategies for Grades 4-12*   Karen Tankerley

Reader's Toolbox

Tool: 1
Assess and Conquer

Student Name:

Class:

Due Date:

Reading Assignment:

I can use this tool:
▶ Before I read
▶ While I read
   After I read

This tool will help me:
▶ Learn new words
   Summarize what I read
   Compare information and ideas

How I use this tool: I assess my understanding of key terms before reading so I can conquer the reading. I work with a partner, with the class and on my own as a learner.

Topic:	Title of Selection:			
Key Term	My Knowledge Rating			Definition
	Know Term	Not Sure	Don't Know	

Here's something I learned by using this tool:

	Teacher's Toolbox	Tool: 2 Predicting ABC's

Class:

Unit:

Date:

Source Reading:

Use this tool:
► Pre-reading
   While reading
   Post - reading

This tool will help my students:
► Define
   Summarize
   Compare

How To Use This Tool: This activity activates schema and provides an easily accessed classification system of the words needed to complete a reading assignment. The activity can be done whole group to provide a reference tool for the struggling reader. The words can easily be transferred to a word wall by the teacher or the more able students.

1. Explain that thinking about key words before reading helps the reader prepare for reading.
2. Use a blank transparency of the ABC's graphic to model the strategy.
3. Tell students that they are about to read a chapter about the solar system. Ask them to call out the words that they would expect to find in the chapter.
4. Write their responses in the appropriate boxes on the blank transparency.
5. Repeat every word clearly so that the pronunciation is clear and is associated with that word in print.
6. Give students the subject of the assignment they will read next.
7. Ask students to work in pairs to brainstorm and record on an ABC's graphic as many words related to the subject as they can.
8. Write down the vocabulary words on a blank transparency and have students correct any misspellings on their charts.
9. Have students skim the assignments to add any boldface words or words in the titles and subtitles to their ABC's graphic.
10. Have students watch for these words as they read.

A-B	C-D	E-F	G-H
black hole astronauts	Comet constellations		
I-J	**K-L**	**M-N**	**O-P**
Jupiter		Mars Neptune meteor	Pluto
Q-R	**S-T**	**U-V**	**W-X-Y-Z**
Quasar	Stars space ship Saturn	Uranus	

To Increase Rigor and Relevance:
1. Allow students to devise word games using the words.
2. Require students to use words from ABC's graphic when writing a summary or responses to questions.
3. Have student classify words using a system other than ABC.
4. Have students design an ABC book of the terms for a group of younger students.
5. Require students to use words from ABC's graphic when writing a summary or responses to questions.

Reference: *Yellow Brick Road* by Janet Allen

	Reader's Toolbox	Tool 2: Predicting ABC's

Reader's Toolbox

Tool 2:
Predicting ABC's

Student Name:

Class:

Due Date:

Reading Assignment:

I can use this tool:
▶ Before I read
   While I read
   After I read

This tool will help me:
▶ Learn new words
   Summarize what I read
   Compare information and ideas

How I use this tool: I predict the words that I think I will meet as I read as assignment. I record the words on an ABC chart. This helps my brain get ready for the reading.

A-B	C-D	E-F	G-H
I-J	K-L	M-N	O-P
Q-R	S-T	U-V	W-X-Y-Z

Here's something I learned by using this tool:

Teacher's Toolbox

Tool 3:
K.(key idea) I.(information) M.(memory clue)

Class:

Unit:

Date:

Source Reading:

Use this tool:
► Pre-reading
  While reading
  Post - reading

This tool will help my students:
► Define
  Summarize
  Compare

How to use this tool: Understanding concept vocabulary is essential for the non-reader. They cannot make connections because they lack the language and a strategy to remember vocabulary.

This strategy is very simple and requires a minimum of writing. By making a sketch the student synthesizes and interprets the new information and makes it their own. Students can reference their drawings to remember the words.

1. Provide the key vocabulary critical to a student's understanding of a required reading selection. These terms should represent key ideas or concepts

2. Provide a meaning for the students. The information may be a definition or it may be a more technical explanation of the concept.

3. Be sure to give examples and the context in which the word will be used. Have the student paraphrase his own meaning. Have the student verbalize a connection of the term to what they already know about the topic. Stress the pronunciation of each word.

4. Have the student make a simple sketch that explains the word. This "memory clue" is a way for students to fully integrate the meaning into their memories.

K (key idea) I (information) M (memory clue)

Key Idea	Information	Memory Clue
1. drought	Little or no rain over a period of time	

To Increase Rigor and Relevance:

1. Require students to use the words when writing responses to questions or a summary.
2. Have the students classify the words.
3. Have students attempt to match other students' memory clues to the words.

Reference: Allen: *Words, Words, Words - Teaching Vocabulary in Grades 4-12*

Reader's Toolbox

Student Name:

Class:

Due Date:

Reading Assignment:

I can use this tool:
► Before I read
  While I read
  After I read

This tool will help me:
► Learn new words
  Summarize what I read
  Compare information and ideas

How I use this tool: I write the information that goes with each key idea in the middle column (I). I draw a picture of the idea, what the information means to me, in the right column (M).

K (key idea) I (information) M (memory clue)

Key Idea **(K.)**	Information **(I.)**	Memory Clue **(M.)**

Here's something I learned by using this tool:

Class:

Unit:

Date:

Source Reading:

Use this tool:
    Pre-reading
  ▶ While reading
    Post - reading

This tool will help my students:
    Define
  ▶ Summarize
    Compare

How to use this tool: Struggling readers lack the word accuracy to make comprehension of text possible. This tool enables the teacher to use content text while supporting the reading development of struggling readers. Once the process is mastered it can become a form of peer or buddy reading between struggling readers and unmotivated but competent readers.

1. Provide students with an expository text or selection of text.
2. Create questions, using titles and subtitles, with students during a text preview or provide teacher generated questions. These questions will define the reading purpose.
3. Provide students with a Cornell note-making form with the questions in the left column and space to record connections in the middle and space to summarize in the right column.
4. Read short sections the text to the students at a conversational pace with expression. The students need to visually track the text as the teacher reads so that they are seeing the word being said. In order to support both word recognition and comprehension, the students must hear fluent, connected text rather than halting and fragmented reading. Thus it is essential that the teacher be the reader.
5. Stopping every paragraph or two, ask the students to think about the text to record key words, thoughts, images, and questions (think marks) in the middle column. For "right there" questions, students might want to record the first several words of the sentence where the question details are located. If possible, students should be taught to "tag the text" rather than use the middle column.
6. Honor think time without losing momentum. In the beginning the teacher can interject a "think aloud" to model thinking.
7. Ask the students to restate the key points, or summarize the text section, when the content answering a question has been read. Students can ask questions to clarify their thinking and any misunderstanding or incomplete understandings can be addressed. This emphasis helps everyone focus on meaning rather than their own reading performance.
8. Read the next section of text and repeat the process.

To Increase Rigor and Relevance:
1. Have students turn titles and subtitles into reading purpose questions.
2. Have fluent student readers read the text to a buddy. The pair can jointly summarize the text and answer the questions.

Reference: *Literacy Strategies for Grades 4-12* Karen Tankersley

Tool: 4
I'll Pause, You Think

Student Name:

Class:

Due Date:

Reading Assignment:

I can use this tool:
  Before I read
► While I read
  After I read

This tool will help me:
  Learn new words
► Summarize what I read
  Compare information and ideas

How I use this tool: with my eyes I follow what the teacher is reading while my brain is connecting what I hear to the question I am trying to answer. When the teacher pauses, I will think about how the ideas are related to the question and summarize what I saw and heard.

QUESTIONS	THINK MARKS	SUMMARY

Here's something I learned by using this tool:

Tool 5:
What Do You Expect?

Class:

Unit:

Date:

Source Reading:

Use this tool:
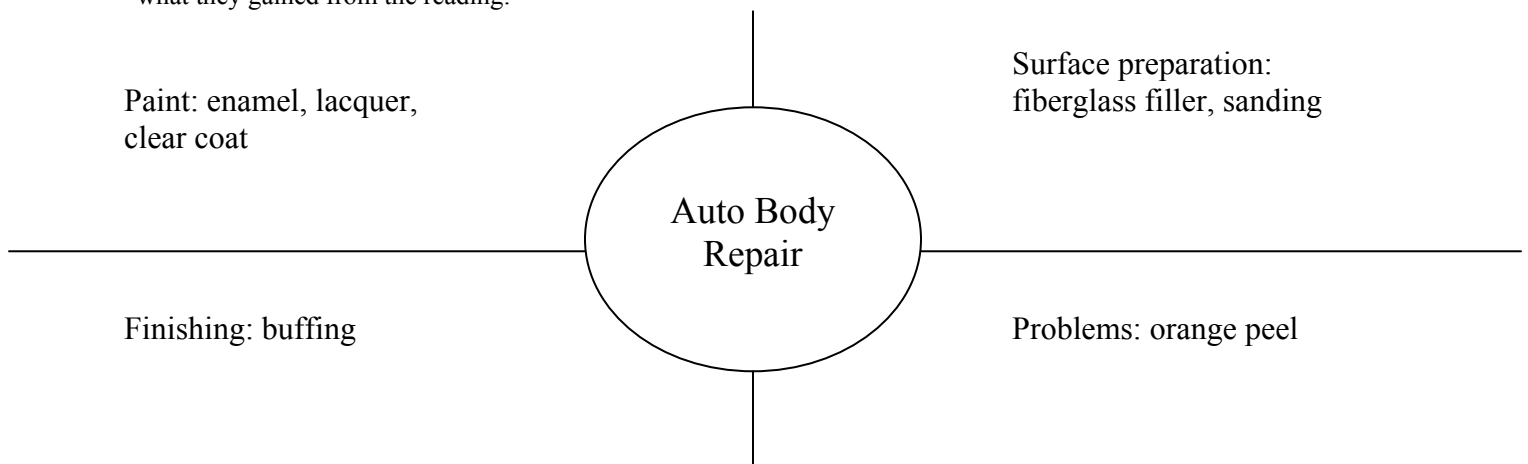▶ Pre-reading
▶ While reading
    Post - reading

This tool will help my students:
▶ Define
▶ Summarize
▶ Compare

How To Use This Tool: This graphic organizer serves a dual purpose. Good readers automatically create a mental expectation grid prior to reading based on past experiences with reading (text structure) and general prior knowledge. Struggling readers do not formulate such a framework. Using the expectation grid students are caused to categorize their prior knowledge, thus matching isolated bits of information to the "big picture." It creates their focus/purpose for reading, provides an organization for note-making while reading and creates a summary tool.

1. Construct an expository expectation grid on an overhead, chart paper or the computer. Place a general topic in the center. When introducing this tool use a familiar topic such as a pet.
   - Ask the students what information they would include if they were going to write about that topic.
   - As students suggest details (black fur, floppy ears) help them understand that those details fit under the category of appearance. Brainstorm other categories of information they would include in writing about their animal: habitat, what it eats, its life cycle, its enemies.
2. Guide students to identify general categories of information they would expect to find when reading a selection about this topic. Use the text as a guide and chose categories you know the text addresses.
3. Point out that one can expect similar categories of information whenever one reads about a similar topic.
4. Have students record what they already know about the topic under each category. Students might also preview the text to help with this.
5. Have students read a selection to fill in each category.
   - As this is modeled, the text can be read in segments and the grid completed by contribution of all the students.
   - One color ink might be used for the pre-reading comments and another for during reading comments so the student can see what they gained from the reading.

Paint: enamel, lacquer, clear coat

Surface preparation: fiberglass filler, sanding

Auto Body Repair

Finishing: buffing

Problems: orange peel

To Increase Rigor and Relevance:
1. Have students retell a summary using the grid.
2. Have students write a summary using the grid
3. Ask students to design and explain their own model for a graphic organizer.

Reference: *Intervention Strategies to Follow Informal Reading Assessment* Caldwell and Leslie

Reader's Toolbox

Tool 5:
What Do You Expect?

Student Name:

Class:

Due Date:

Reading Assignment:

I can use this tool:
- ▶ Before I read
- ▶ While I read
- ▶ After I read

This tool will help me:
- ▶ Learn new words
- ▶ Summarize what I read
- ▶ Compare information and ideas

How I use this tool: I create a mental expectation, categories, before reading based on what I know about the topic and my experience with similar topics. I use these categories to organize my prior knowledge and the information I encounter while reading. I can use my grid to discuss the reading or to summarize.
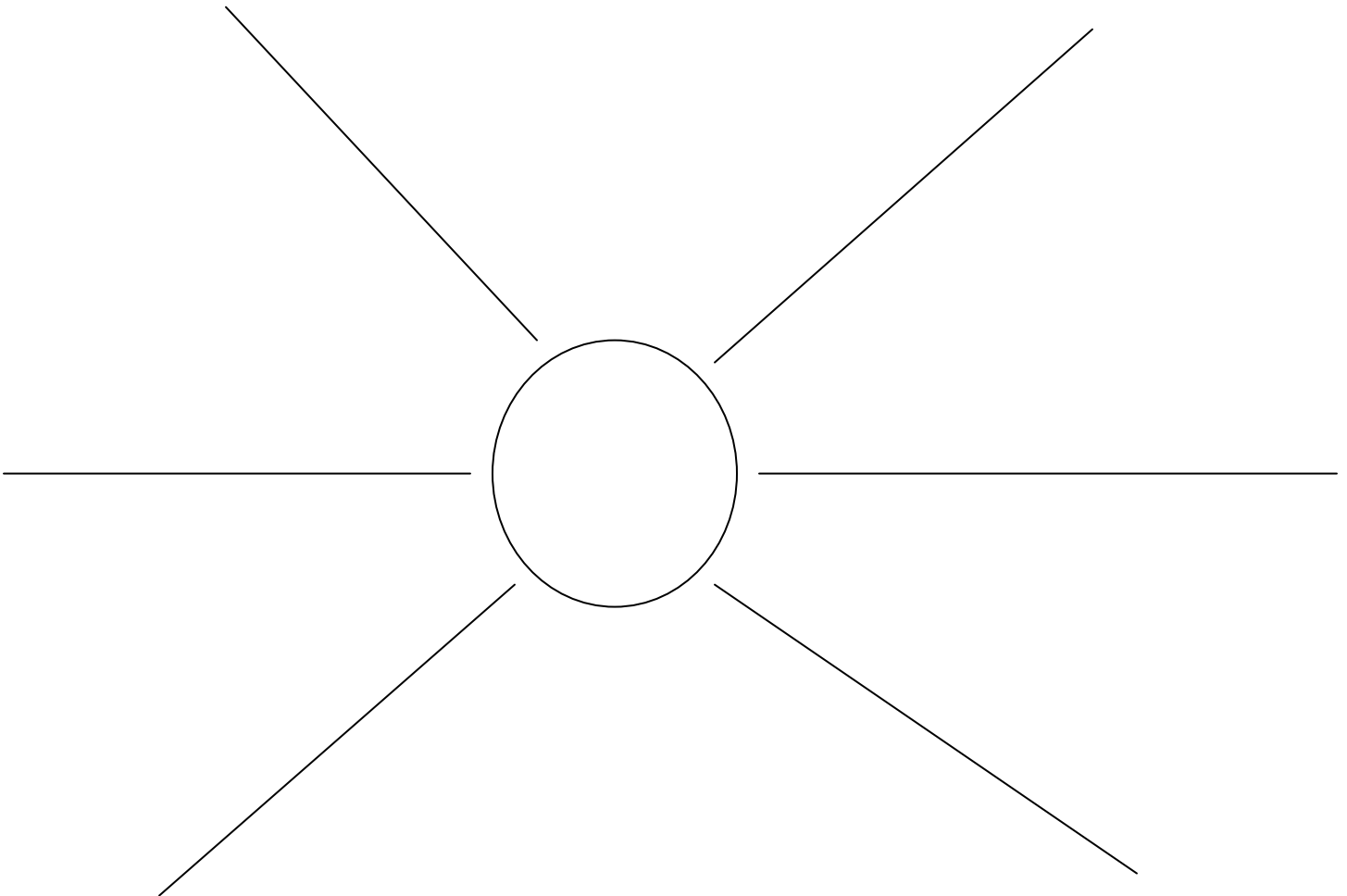
Here's something I learned by using this tool:

Class:

Unit:

Date:

Source Reading:

Use this tool:
► Pre-reading
   While reading
   Post - reading

This tool will help my students:
   Define
► Summarize
   Compare

How to use this tool: This tool scaffolds the more common SQ3R for the struggling reader. It focuses the reader on multiple cueing systems within expository text to assist their word recognition and comprehension. This six-step strategy activates the reader's prior knowledge and builds background knowledge to allow the reader to make predictions and set an accurate purpose for reading. It is most useful when there are no guiding questions.

- Provide students with an expository text selection and the "Text Investigation" sheet.
- Use a blank transparency of the "Text Investigation" sheet to model the strategy.
- Explain the reason for using this strategy: establish background knowledge and establish reading purpose.
- Work through the sample selection with the students.
    1. Scan the selection to select important (usually nouns and verbs), new and interesting words in the titles and subtitles. Ask the students: *What might that tell you about the topic(s) of this selection?*
    2. Review the photographs, diagrams, graphic organizers and other visual elements and make notes on what you see. Spend some time on the nuances of the pictures.
    3. Note interesting, specially formatted words and/or phrases in the captions or labels. Ask the students: *What information can you learn from captions or labels?*
    4. Scan for any boldface words in the text. Select any that are unclear. Write the page number where each word is found.
    5. Review the glossary to define any words that are unclear. Look back in the context to match the glossary definition with the word in context.
    6. Set a purpose for reading. Ask the students: *What did you identify in your preview that is important for you to discover more about while you are reading?*
    7. Read the text either by starting at the beginning or by "dipping" in at the most relevant parts to fulfill the reading purpose. Record in words or phrases the key information.
    8. Ask the students: *What questions or confusion still remains that you must read further to discover?*

To Increase Rigor and Relevance:
1. Have students turn titles and subtitles into reading purpose questions.
2. Have students summarize the reading using words selected during the preview.
3. Have students compare "Text Investigation" sheets and discuss their thinking as they worked through the text.

Reference: *Summarization in Any Subject* Rick Wormeli

Student Name:

Class:

Due Date:

Reading Assignment:

I can use this tool:
► Before I read
   While I read
   After I read
This tool will help me:
   Learn new words
► Summarize what I read
   Compare information and ideas

How I use this tool: I preview a reading selection to get a complete picture of what I will be reading about. Then I can focus my reading on what is probably important.

Title of Selection	
Titles and Subtitles	*What might the titles and subtitles tell you about the topic(s) of this selection?*
Pictures / Graphics	*Review the photographs, diagrams, graphic organizers and other visual elements and make notes on what you see*
Captions / Labels	*Review the captions and label and make notes on what you see*
Glossary	*Review the glossary to define any words that are unclear. Look back in the context to match the glossary definition with the word in context.*
Read	
Further Reading	*What questions or confusion still remains that you must read further to discover?*

Make a prediction or set your purpose for reading: *What did you identify in your preview that is important for you to discover more about while you are reading?*

Here's something I learned by using this tool:

Reader's Toolbox

Tool: 6
Text Investigation

Student Name:

Class:

Due Date:

Reading Assignment:

I can use this tool:
▶ Before I read
   While I read
   After I read

This tool will help me:
   Learn new words
▶ Summarize what I read
   Compare information and ideas

How I use this tool: I preview a reading selection to get a complete picture of what I will be reading about. Then I can focus my reading on what is probably important.

Title of Selection	
Titles and Subtitles	
Pictures / Graphics	
Captions / Labels	
Glossary	
Make a prediction or set your purpose for reading:	
Read	
Further Reading	

Here's something I learned by using this tool