

Color Marking

A Reading and Writing Strategy

Description:

COLOR MARKING, or highlighting a text in various colors of markers, is a close reading strategy which helps students keep track of an idea, theme, literary element, or even a punctuation mark while reading. This strategy can be used across the content areas.

Prior to turning students loose on a text, determine the purpose for the reading. For example, students might look at an author's use of dashes, infinitive phrases, repeating lines, or metaphors in a short passage or throughout a story, poem. The idea is to slow the reader down to pay attention to the details of a writer's craft — so they can duplicate it in their own writing — or as a way of deepening their understanding of complex text.

Highlighting text is a way of paying attention to the reading or writing in a highly focused manner. In a content area class, students might highlight evidence that supports the author's claim in one color, and evidence that contradicts the author's claim in another.

Steps:

- 1) The teacher determines what idea, concept, theme, literary element or writing device that students need to find.
- 2) The teacher distributes copies of a content-area piece of writing, either nonfiction or fiction, which contains the examples of the idea, concept, theme, literary element or writing device.
- 3) Highlighters are also distributed to students. If students will find only one concept in the reading, then they can choose any color of highlighter. If the teacher wants to find more than one concept, then students will need multiple highlighter colors.
Example #1: Similes might be highlighted in yellow and metaphors might be highlighted in orange.
Example #2: Direct dialogue could be highlighted in green while dialogue tags (he said, she yawned, Henry blushed, June laughed) might be highlighted yellow and blocking (scratching his nose, curling into a sleepy ball) would be highlighted in pink.
Note: The teacher must have 3-4-5 classroom sets of highlighters of different colors, depending on how much color marking will be completed on one piece of reading.
- 4) After the teacher cues the students about what to find as they read, students highlight as they read.
- 5) Next, have students break into pairs to share what they have highlighted. If students have highlighted different pieces of the text, this is an opportunity for a discussion.
- 6) Students may now write their own material, using the literary element or writing device they have just highlighted.