

# The Challenge of Adolescent Literacy

*Adolescence is the conjugator of childhood and adulthood.*

Louise J. Kaplan

## **WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE?**

No one, we believe, will argue with the fact that teaching adolescents today is a challenge. A walk through the halls of a typical high school of today provides an eye-opening exploration into the world of adolescent literacy in the 21st century.

Elliot transferred from a large urban district in the city. He likes drafting class, but does not do well in other classes and feels school has little to offer him. He does not read well, is far behind in academic credits, and is often introverted and depressed. Most of his grades are Ds and Fs.

Molly loves the fun parts of school, most of her teachers, and all of her friends. The social part of school is what she lives for. She is a C student.

Gabe lives in a foster home and has just returned to regular school from an alternative program. He is often truant and rarely bothers with class assignments or homework. He earns Fs in all his classes.

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Theresa is the ideal student. She works hard, faithfully completes all her assignments, and often requests extra credit assignments. She earns As and Bs.

Depal is the only girl in her family. She, her brothers, and her parents came from Pakistan two years ago, where her brothers went to school regularly; she did not. In America, she goes to school, but she is often absent, because she must stay home and watch her younger brothers when they are ill. Her parents cannot afford the luxury of missing a day of work. Depal has an ELL resource class, where she earns Bs; she is not passing any of her academic classes. Her greatest challenge is reading the assignments her teachers give.

Juan Carlos has just recently arrived from the foothills of the Sierra Madre Mountains. He never attended school before, and the requirement that he meet the school bus on time often prevents him from coming to school now. He is in an ELL resource class where he receives Cs; in academic classes he receives Fs; he readily admits he cannot understand or read English very well.

Perhaps teaching adolescents has always been a challenge; as far back as 1984, Ted Sizer had these words to offer:

Besides their age, they have in common the vulnerability that comes with inexperience and a social status bordering on limbo. They are children, but they are adults, too. Many are ready and able to work, but are dissuaded from doing so. They can bear children, but are counseled not to. They can kill, and sometimes they do. They can act autonomously but are told what to do. . . . They share the pain of a stereotype, of gum-chewing, noisy, careless, blooming sexual creatures who are allowed to have fun but not too much of it. (Sizer, 1984, p. 33)

No matter what challenge these young people might offer up, there are those of us who want and need to teach them, and they need to learn. However, their learning, according to national test results, is also a challenge, and some might even say it is in a state of crisis. Since 1969, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has measured the educational progress of our students by administering subject-area assessments to students aged 9, 13, and 17. The NAEP reading assessment measures the reading comprehension of students by assessing their ability to

1. carry out simple discrete reading tasks (Level 150), such as following brief written directions; selecting words, phrases, and sentences to describe a simple picture; and interpreting simple written clues to identify a common object. At this level, they have difficulty making inferences.
2. demonstrate partially developed skills and understanding (Level 200), such as locating and identifying facts from simple informational paragraphs, stories, and articles. At this level, they can combine ideas and make inferences based on short, uncomplicated passages.

3. interrelate ideas and make generalizations (Level 250), such as using intermediate skills and strategies to search for, locate, and organize the information they find in relatively lengthy passages and can recognize what these passages have paraphrased. At this level, students can make generalizations and inferences about the main idea and the author's purpose in passages of literature, science, and social studies.
4. understand complicated information (Level 300), such as complicated literary and informational passages, including content area materials. At this level, they can analyze and integrate less familiar content area material and can provide reactions to and explanations of text as a whole.
5. learn from specialized reading materials (Level 350). At this level, they can extend and restructure the ideas they read in specialized and complex texts like scientific materials, literary essays, and historical documents. They are also able to understand the links between ideas, even if these links are not explicitly stated. Finally, they are able to make appropriate generalizations. (NAEP, 2005a)

The NAEP numeric levels described above are defined by the following terms:

- Below Basic: Students have achieved less than partial mastery.
- Basic: Students have achieved partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work at each grade. (To be considered to have achieved this level of mastery, students must score at least 243 in Grade 8 and 265 in Grade 12.)
- Proficient: Students have shown solid academic performance for each grade assessed. Students who reach this level have demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter, including knowledge, application of that knowledge to real world situations, and analytical skills appropriate to the subject matter. (To be considered to have achieved this level of mastery, students must score at least 281 in Grade 8 and 302 in Grade 12.)
- Advanced: Students have demonstrated superior performance. (To be considered to have achieved this level of mastery, students must score at least 323 in Grade 8 and 346 in Grade 12.) (NAEP, 2005b)

The NAEP was administered to eighth graders in 2007 and to twelfth graders in 2005. In looking at the trends of student performance, we can understand the concern many have regarding a crisis in adolescent literacy.

- Both male and female students' scores declined in comparison to scores from students who were in the same grades in 1992.

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- While the percentage of eighth-grade students performing at or above the Basic level increased, there was no significant change in the percentage of eighth-grade students scoring at or above the Proficient level.
- The percentage of twelfth-grade students performing at or above the Basic level decreased from 80% in 1992 to 73% in 2005, while the percentage of twelfth-grade students performing at or above the Proficient level decreased from 40% to 35%.
- In sum, when the scores of 2005 and 2007 are compared to the scores of 1992, a decline is seen across all performance levels except in the scores of students performing at the 90th percentile. That is, the scores of the top 10% of students were just as high in 2005 and 2007 as they had been in 1992. For the other 90% of students, scores dropped during that period. (NAEP, 2005b)

And the challenge of adolescent literacy crosses all boundaries as well. Further examination of the NAEP trend data shows the following:

- The score gaps between White and Black students and White and Hispanic students have remained constant since 1992.
- At the eighth-grade level, Blacks scored, on average, 27 points lower on the reading assessment than Whites, and Hispanics scored, on average, 25 points lower than Whites.
- At the twelfth-grade level, White and Black students were the only racial/ethnic groups to show a statistically significant difference in reading performance, scoring lower in 2005 than twelfth graders scored in 1992.
- The performance gap between the genders has widened, with female students continually outscoring male students since 1971. Twelfth-grade females outscored males by 13 points in 1992, and at the eighth-grade level, female students scored 10 points higher than male students. Such gender score gaps are not significantly different from the gaps seen 15 years ago. (Lee, Grigg, & Donahue, 2007)

The above data clearly illustrate that the adolescents of today may possess basic literacy but may not possess the advanced skills they need to successfully function in the world of tomorrow. And, the report *Reading Next—A Vision for Action and Research in Middle and High School Literacy* (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004) supports this conjecture with some very alarming statistics:

- Eight million students in Grades 4–12 have been identified as struggling readers.
- More than 3,000 students drop out of high school every day.

- Only 70% of today's high school students graduate with a regular diploma in the usual four-year time frame.
- During their postsecondary educational experience, 53% of high school graduates enroll in remedial courses.

Biancarosa and Snow lay the blame for this crisis on that fact that adolescents today “can *read* words accurately, but they do not *comprehend* what they read” (p. 8) and conclude with the statement that today's adolescents “lack the strategies to help them comprehend what they read” (p. 8).

## HOW CAN WE MEET THE CHALLENGE?

Thus, if today's adolescents are, indeed, in a literacy crisis, what can we, as educators, do to help? Glenda Beamon Crawford (2007) suggests that a possible reason for the widening gap in adolescent literacy is “the growing ‘disconnect’ between adolescents’ lives and school experiences” (p. 41) and notes that “adolescent learning involves interactive, purposeful, and meaningful engagement” (p. 5); it happens best when adolescents

- encounter developmentally appropriate learning that is presented in multiple ways and in interesting and enjoyable manners.
- are intellectually challenged by authentic tasks that they perceive to be challenging, novel, and relevant to their lives.
- share and discuss ideas and work collaboratively on tasks, projects, and problems.
- utilize multiple strategies to acquire, integrate, and interpret knowledge meaningfully and then demonstrate their understanding and apply their recently found knowledge to new situations.
- are provided opportunities to develop and use strategic thinking skills to reason and problem solve.
- are given guidance and immediate feedback on their progress and encouraged to monitor and reflect upon their personal progress and understanding.
- are situated in a safe, supportive environment where their personal ideas are valued, and they are free from fear of punishment and embarrassment. (Crawford, 2007)

In addition, as teachers, we know that learning occurs when students are motivated, and Crawford (2007) suggests that adolescents are motivated when they (1) study a curriculum that intrigues them and stimulates their curiosity, (2) can express their personal and creative ideas, (3) work collegially with peers and others, and (4) are able to see their work is of high quality and valuable to

those around them. Guthrie and Davis (2003) and Reeves (2004) have conducted research in which they have invited adolescents themselves to offer some thoughts into what motivates them. While some adolescents admit that the difficulty of the texts they are asked to read is a barrier to their reading, most of the adolescents surveyed report that their lack of interest in what they are given to read is a greater barrier (Lenters, 2006). In addition, Ivey (1999) reports that adolescents are motivated to read if they have an authentic purpose for doing so.

## CONTENT AREA LITERACY

Understanding how adolescents learn best does not solve all the problems embedded in the adolescent literacy crisis that exists. Reading is a different task when we read literature than it is when we read science texts, historical analyses, newspapers, or tax forms. This is why teaching students how to read the texts of different academic disciplines is a key part of teaching these disciplines (WestEd, 2002). As students move through school, they usually become quite comfortable with the elements of narrative or story reading. Even the authors' primary school grandchildren can identify the elements of narrative reading, such as main character, setting, and plot. However, as students enroll in middle and high school, they are faced with new reading demands. Suddenly they are required to read and comprehend texts that are difficult and are of an informational rather than narrative nature. These texts are factual and often organized around abstract concepts presented as a hierarchy of main ideas and supporting details. In addition, these informational texts contain longer text segments and content-specific vocabulary. In effect, middle and high school students must become content literate. Content literacy, as defined by Vacca and Vacca (2008) is "the ability to use reading, writing, talking, listening, and viewing to learn subject matter in a given discipline" (p. 10).

To be content literate, adolescents must be able to locate information and understand it; they must be able to compare and evaluate the variety of sources of information they have located, and they must be able to successfully interpret, generalize, synthesize, and apply the information gleaned from these sources (Roe, Stoodt-Hill, & Burns, 2007). Today's adolescents read and write for a variety of purposes; among them are to learn, do, locate information, solve problems, follow directions, perform job functions, and carry out everyday functions as well as for fun. In effect, content literate adolescents must acquire and apply reading and writing strategies to construct knowledge rather than just gain information. And, these thoughts clearly align with the recommendations for effective content area instruction made by Biancarosa and Snow in their *Reading Next* (2004) report. The report recommends that all students receive explicit instruction in reading comprehension and intensive writing in all content area classes, advocates that students be taught not only to read from texts but to learn from them, and emphasizes the need for greater student engagement and motivation and for more opportunities for students to work collaboratively with each other as they

study texts. Both the report of the National Reading Panel (National Reading Panel, 2000) and the RAND report on reading comprehension (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002), along with Santa (2006), posit that effective content area instruction includes the following:

- Integrating strategy instruction into content area learning by teaching students to utilize a repertoire of comprehension strategies, such as question generation, question-answer routines, comprehension monitoring, cooperative learning, summarizing, and graphic organizers when they read challenging text
- Focusing on discipline-specific vocabulary knowledge
- Exposing students to various types of genres, such as expository and narrative texts
- Providing student choice in assignments, challenging tasks, and opportunities for collaborative work with their peers

Thus, in order to become content literate, students need general literacy skills like activating prior knowledge, interpreting facts accurately, identifying main ideas and supporting details, drawing conclusions and making inferences, and monitoring and repairing their comprehension. But they also need to make use of content-specific literacy skills. And, these skills differ from one content area discipline to another. Furthermore, content reading instruction is most effective when teachers guide student learning as they teach them their content area disciplines (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; National Reading Panel, 2000; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). A complete discussion of the skills necessary for successful learning in each content area discipline as well as strategies to scaffold student learning of these disciplines will be discussed below in the section on reading informational text.

## **MEETING THE STANDARDS**

In addition to helping the adolescent become content literate, the road to developing adolescents into effective readers and learners must also include attention to the learning standards that govern what has been deemed important for students to know and be able to do at each stage of their learning journey. Today all states as well as several national and education organizations have created educational standards or guidelines. These national organizations include the following: the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, National Council of Teachers of English, National Council for the Social Studies, National Council on Economic Education, Center for Civic Education, Consortium of National Arts Education Associations, International Society for Technology in Education, and National Academies of Science.

Standards describe what students are expected to know, understand, and be able to do at each grade level. Schools design a curriculum to help students meet these standards. Three kinds of educational standards are used in schools today: content standards, performance standards, and opportunity-to-learn standards.

- Content standards establish what skills and knowledge students should be able to learn by the end of a unit and why they need to learn them. Since effective instruction requires a purposeful and meaningful approach to teaching the content, teachers need to consider which strategies will promote learning the skills and content and to determine which standard(s) the students can master.

- Performance standards describe different levels of attainment and mastery. These standards are like rubrics, because they depict how well students meet the content standards. A performance standard has levels (4, 3, 2, and 1; or advanced, proficient, novice, and basic). The meaning of each score is explained, and frequently examples of student work are provided for each level.

- Opportunity-to-learn or school standards detail the resources schools have in order to be able to meet the standards. Educators believed that schools need to have the necessary staff, programs, and supplies to meet government standards.

### **Adhering to the Standards**

Although the establishment of national standards does not guarantee success for all schools, the standards do provide clear expectations to improve teacher instruction and to raise the academic achievement of all children. They also supply information to administrators, employers, schools, parents, and students that explains how their school's achievement compares with that of other schools.

Standards should guide the way teachers plan lessons and activities in the core subjects: mathematics, science, language arts, and social studies. Teachers need to set clear expectations for all students with every lesson they teach; they need to design tasks that help students attain the standards and to create scoring guides to let students know how they can meet the standards. Meeting all of these expectations can be a difficult task. Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe (2005) advocate the idea of backward design, or considering what the standards require and then mapping backwards to identify the core learning situations and assessments that will reinforce the attainment of the standards.

## **THE CHALLENGE OF READING DIVERSE TEXTS**

The advent of a standards-based curriculum designed to raise achievement leads, naturally, to a realization of the impact reading comprehension has on that achievement, especially at the middle and high school level, when reading demands increase. Woodward and Elliott (1990) note that between 67% and 90%



of classroom instruction at the secondary level involves textbooks as the prime focus. Thus, as students move from elementary to secondary school, they are often required to read great amounts of text independently. However, as Vacca and Vacca (2008) state, “A gap often exists between the ideas and relationships they are studying and their prior knowledge, interests, attitudes, cultural background, language proficiency, or reading ability” (p. 39). And, to add to the burden, according to Allington (2002) and Budiansky (2001), many of the texts students are required to read are written two or more years above their grade level.

In what ways, then, can we, as teachers, help alleviate this possible mismatch between students’ reading ability and the text they must read? One way that has been proven effective is the use of instructional scaffolding, a method by which teachers support students’ efforts to read and understand their texts. Instructional scaffolds, much like the scaffolds used in building construction, provide students with the support needed to attempt new tasks by supplying them with specific and effective strategies for completing these tasks.

One of the prime areas in which teachers can scaffold their students’ learning is in differentiating between reading narrative texts and reading informational or expository texts. These two kinds of texts require very different reading skills, and teachers must be aware of the text characteristics and the specific skills students need to read these two kinds of texts in order to help them learn effectively. The following section will discuss the specific demands each text type presents as well as some scaffolding strategies to help students meet these diverse demands with competence.

## **READING NARRATIVE TEXT**

Narrative text includes any type of writing that relates a series of events and includes both fiction (novels, short stories, poems) and nonfiction (memoirs, biographies, news stories). Both forms tell stories that use imaginative language and express emotion, often through the use of imagery, metaphors, and symbols. Students need to know how narrative texts work and how to read them, because stories are used for many important purposes. The purpose of narrative text is to entertain, to gain and hold a reader’s interest; however, writers of memoirs and novels often relate complex stories that examine universal ideas, events, and issues. In addition, speakers, advertisers, and politicians use stories to persuade us to accept or reject an idea.

In effect, students need to learn the purposes and methods of narration in order to understand the narrative framework and to eliminate frustration when they read. When students know the narrative elements, they can more easily follow the story line and make successful predictions about what is to occur. In addition, understanding these elements develops higher-level thinking skills. For example, the complications in a plot are related to cause and effect, and awareness of character’s motives can lead to analysis.

All in all, the narrative form is unique, because authors relate ideas they want to express about how people behave and what they believe. These ideas, or themes, generally relate to universal truths and make connections to the reader's experiences.

### **Scaffolding Strategies for Narrative Text**

Teachers can use the following techniques to introduce the narrative form.

#### ***Focus Strategy***

1. Focus: Themes
  - a. Ask students to do prewriting about a theme. Examples: List four of your fears; be ready to discuss one. Write about a time you experienced fear.
  - b. Ask small groups to make posters related to a theme or themes. Example: Students can define a theme, identify positive and negative examples, create a symbol, and write a one-sentence assertion about the theme.
2. Focus: Conflict
  - a. Ask students to identify modern values and record their answers.
  - b. Have the class identify the values that are evident in the narrative.
  - c. In small groups, have students determine how the characters' values cause conflict.
  - d. Create a series of questions, each starting with the word *suppose*, that relate to a character's conflicts and complications. Example: Suppose you were not allowed to see the one you loved?
3. Focus: Features
  - a. Ask students to copy lines from the narrative that relate to the conflict or characters; break the lines into three parts, and write each part on a different color index card. Mix the cards together, and then ask students to work together to find complete lines. Then have them read the line aloud and make a prediction. Example:
 

Line 1: "That's true." She hesitated.

Line 2: "Well, I've had a very bad time, Nick,"

Line 3: "and I'm pretty cynical about everything." (p. 16, *The Great Gatsby*)
  - b. Ask students to make predictions about the title and/or illustrations in the text. Example: What does the title, *A Separate Peace*, suggest?
4. Focus: Characterization
 

Utilize the strategy AWAIT. To teach the methods of indirect characterization, have each student create an image of a character. Each image should include the following details:

**Appearance:** What does the character look like? Wear?

**Words:** Create a line of dialogue that the character would say.

**Actions:** Make the character do something (e.g., run, hit a ball).

**Interactions with other characters:** Write a sentence that creates a conflict between the character and someone else.

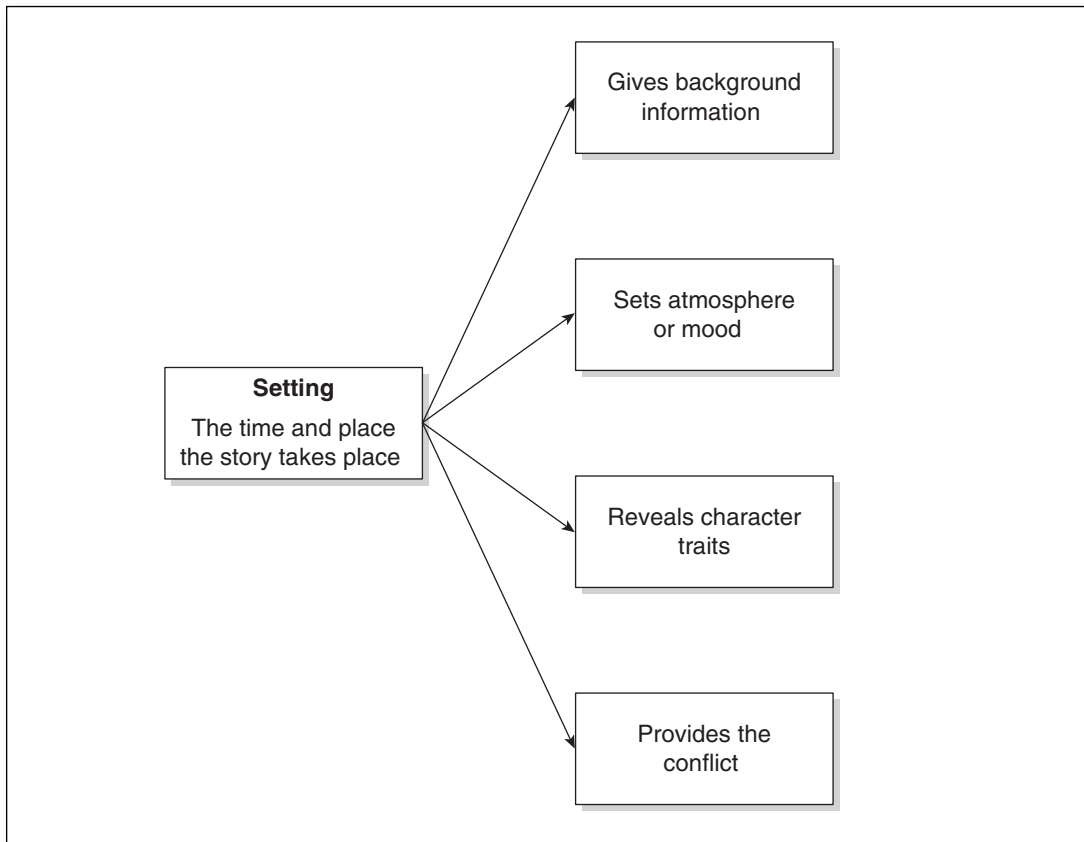
**Thoughts:** Create a thought bubble; record the character's thoughts in the bubble.

In addition, have each student write a one-line assertion stating what the character is like.

Students can easily remember indirect characterization by learning the acronym *AWAIT*.

5. Focus: Setting

Use the graphic organizer in Figure 1.1 to teach the functions of the setting. Ask students to create an example for each function.

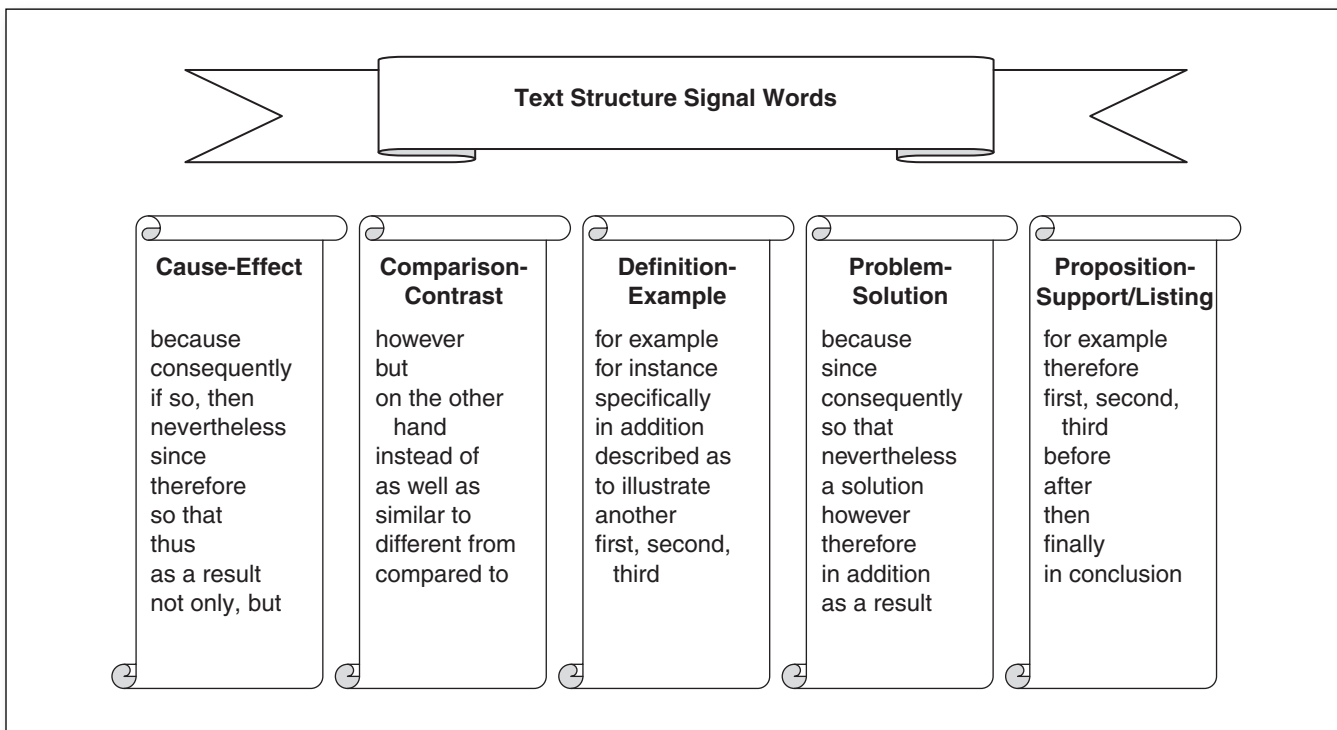


**Figure 1.1** Function of Setting

## READING EXPOSITORY TEXT

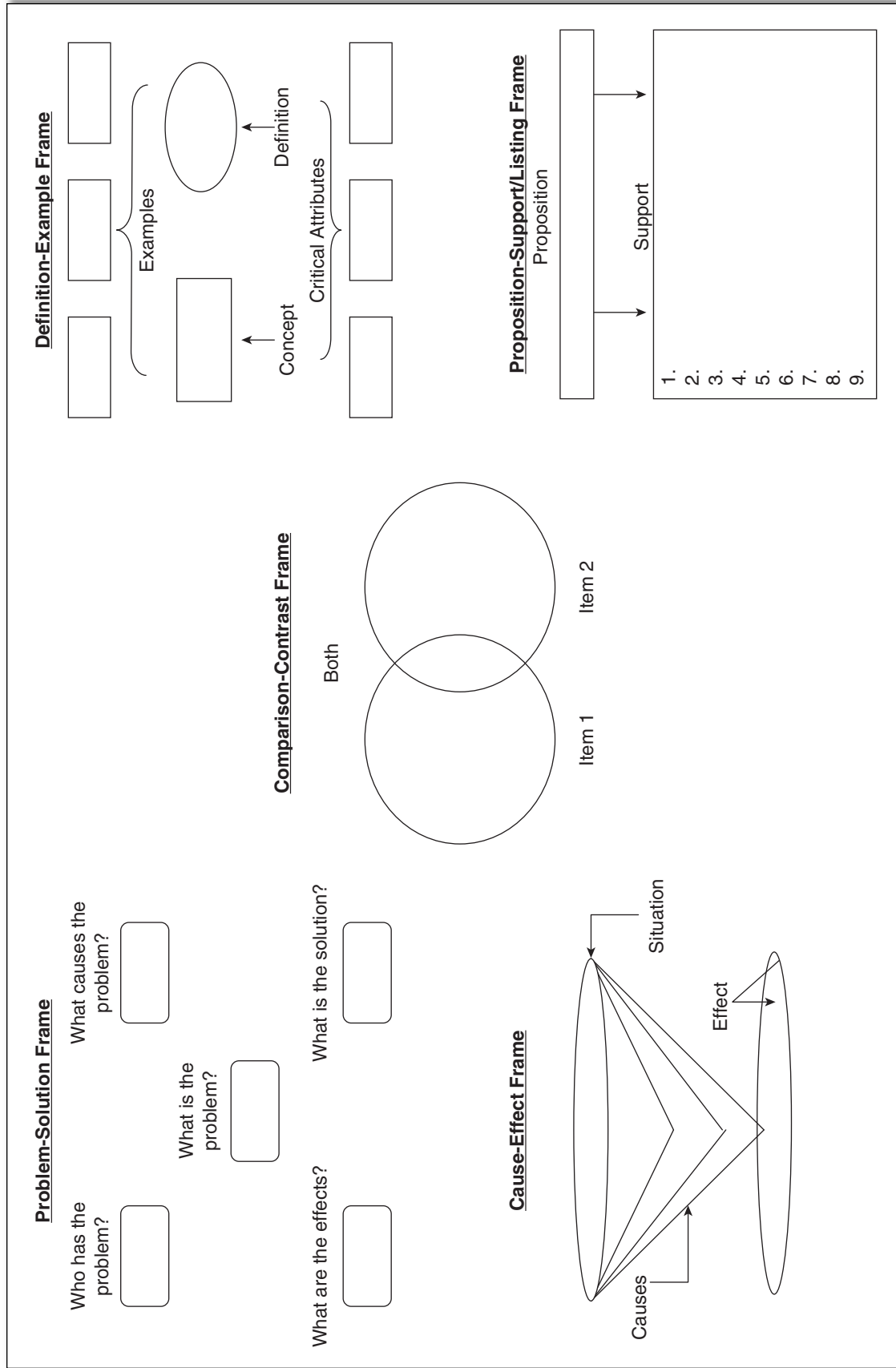
Expository text differs greatly from narrative text in tone, style, structure, and features. First, expository texts purvey a tone of authority, since the authors possess authentic and accurate information on the subjects they write about (Fisher & Frey, 2008). Second, these texts follow a style that is distinctly different from that of narrative text. Expository text uses clear, focused language and moves from facts that are general to specific and abstract to concrete. In addition, Fisher and Frey suggest that texts in each content area discipline exhibit specific styles. These specific styles will be discussed in Chapter 3 of this text.

Another aspect of expository texts is that they utilize specific structures to present and explain information (Burke, 2000). And, it has long been known that the ability to recognize text structure enhances the student's ability to comprehend and recall the information read (Armbruster, Anderson, & Ostertag, 1989; McGee, 1982; Meyer & Poon, 2001; Niles, 1974; Taylor & Samuels, 1983). The five most common structures utilized in informational text are cause-effect, comparison-contrast, definition-example, problem-solution, and proposition-support or sequential listing. To help students recognize and identify these structures, teachers can acquaint them with the signal or cue words authors utilize in writing each of the structures (See Figure 1.2). In addition, Doug Buehl (2001) has created a series of questions to help guide students in identifying each specific structure. Finally, Figure 1.3 is a reproducible master



**Figure 1.2** Text Structure Signal Words and Phrases

# TEXT STRUCTURE ORGANIZERS



**Figure 1.3** Reproducible Master for Text Structure Organizers

SOURCE: From *Reading and Writing Across Content Areas* (2nd ed., pp. 23–31), by R. L. Sejnost and S. Thiese, 2007, Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin. Copyright © 2007 by Corwin. Reprinted with permission. Questions to accompany each of these text structure organizers can be found in *Reading and Writing Across Content Areas*, 2nd ed., pp. 23–31. All rights reserved. Reproduced from *Building Content Literacy: Strategies for the Adolescent Learner*, by Roberta L. Sejnost and Sharon M. Thiese. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, www.corwin.com. Reproduction authorized only for the local school site or nonprofit organization that has purchased this book.

for a set of graphic organizers that students and teachers may use to facilitate structure identification.

A final aspect of informational text is its features or those items that an author uses to organize the text. Common text features include the following: (1) a table of contents, (2) a preface, (3) chapter introductions, (4) chapter headings and subheadings, (5) marginal notes or gloss, (6) chapter summaries, (7) maps, charts, graphs, and illustrations, (8) an index, and (9) a glossary. As noted above, content reading instruction is most effective when teachers scaffold their students' learning (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; National Reading Panel, 2000; Rhoder, 2002). While presenting a structural overview as a scaffolding strategy is a good place to begin, Garber-Miller (2007) advises, "It is also beneficial to give students a content overview so they can ponder the many concepts and questions they will encounter throughout the year. Teachers must help them understand how the ideas in the textbook are interrelated" (p. 285). She suggests that teachers utilize text previews in order to accomplish this. Several textbook previews are presented below.

## **Scaffolding Strategies for Expository Text**

### ***Text Structure Strategy***

Readence, Bean, and Baldwin (2004) suggest a simple procedure to help students recognize, identify, and utilize text structure as a way to better comprehend and recall reading from expository text:

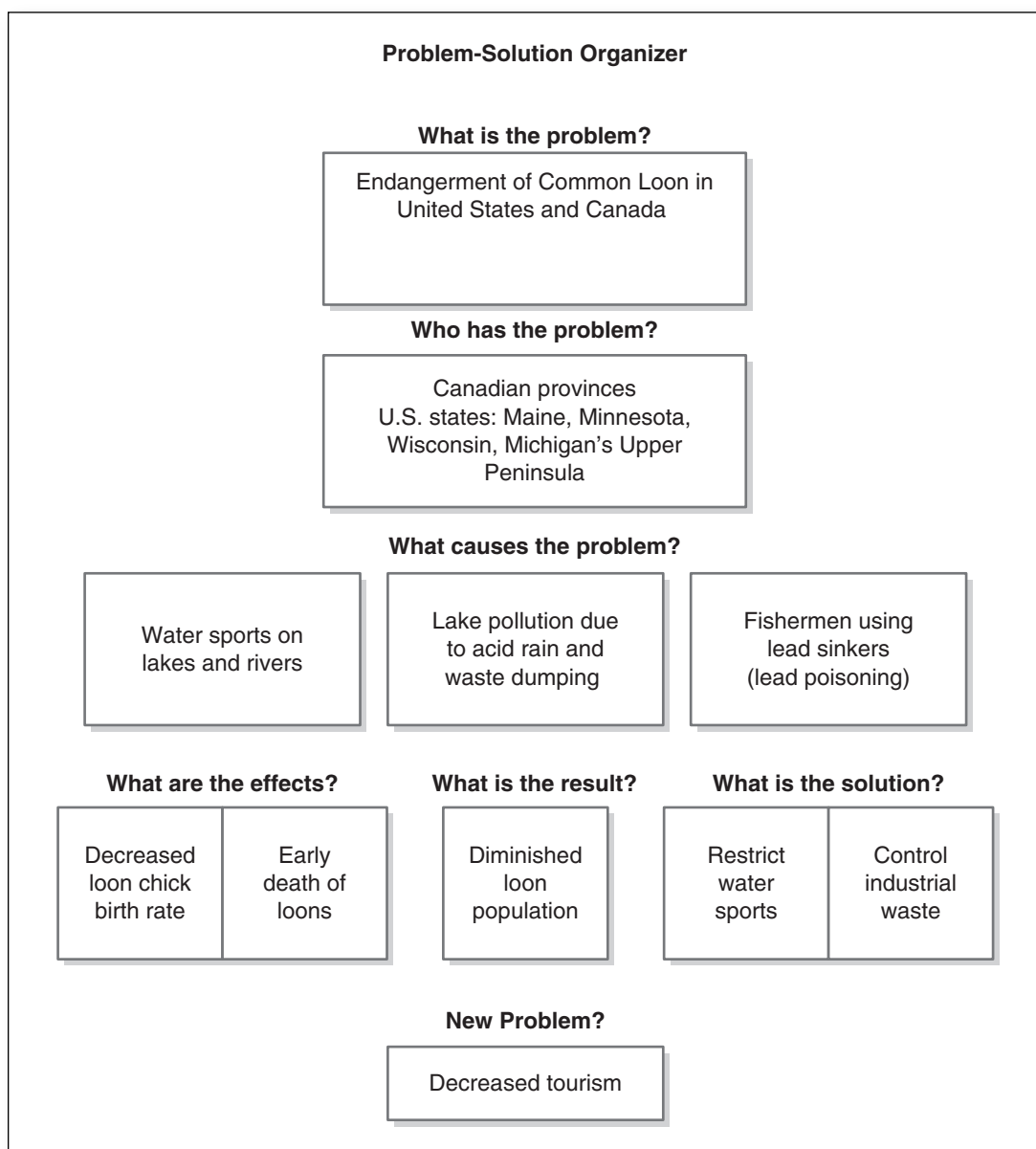
#### ***Steps to Recognize Expository Text Structure***

1. First, model this strategy for students by working through an assigned text reading that illustrates a particular text structure and explaining why it is a certain type and how that type is organized. Make use of the text structure signal words provided in Figure 1.2, and use the graphic organizer from among those in Figure 1.3 that is illustrative of the type of text being explained.
2. Next, provide students with a practice session so they can utilize the signal words and graphic organizers for each text structure pattern. This second step allows you to gradually shift the responsibility of learning about text structures from yourself to the students.
3. Finally, when students have become proficient at identifying specific text structure patterns, they should produce examples of the various structures on their own.

In order to further reinforce students' understanding of text structure, you can utilize the Structured Notetaking procedure (Smith & Tompkins, 1988) to develop study guides based on the text structure of assigned readings.

**Steps for Structured Notetaking**

1. Select a section of text and determine the organizational pattern used to convey information in the text. Common organizational patterns and questions that can be used to guide student reading are discussed above.
2. Next, create a graphic organizer that follows this pattern, complete with focusing questions, and distribute it as a study guide. (See the reproducible master in Figure 1.3 and an example for science in Figure 1.4.)
3. Instruct students to read the chapter and take notes by recording the appropriate information in the graphic organizer sections.



**Figure 1.4** Problem-Solution Organizer

## **Text Previews**

The driving force in most content area classes is the textbook. As noted earlier, Woodward and Elliott (1990) tell us that often 67% to 90% of secondary school classroom instruction is centered around the text, making it the prime provider of content information. Also as noted earlier, we are well aware that the reading difficulty of the texts used in secondary school classrooms often far exceed the reading abilities of the students who use them (Allington, 2002; Budiansky, 2001). And to make the situation even more complex, the students that inhabit our classrooms are often reluctant readers and thus unwilling to read their texts at all. However, given the importance placed upon textbooks by content area teachers, we cannot allow students to merely ignore the reading tasks required of them.

What can we do, then, to help our students as they face the tremendous task of achieving content area literacy? Karen Garber-Miller (2007) suggests that one way teachers can “scaffold their students to reading success” (p. 285) is to provide students with textbook previewing strategies that focus not only on the structure of the text—such as the table of contents, index, chapter introductions, and so forth—but on a content overview, which focuses on the concepts and questions covered in the chapter and their interrelationships. Examples of some innovative text previews (Name that Feature, Textbook Sales Pitches/Commercials, and What’s Old? What’s New?), as well as general steps for previewing text, as developed by Garber-Miller (2007) are detailed below. It is imperative, however, that teachers model the preview strategy they will utilize first, so students clearly understand the process.

### ***General Steps for a Text Preview***

1. Instruct students to peruse the text, searching for important or recurrent features. (It is especially crucial that the teacher model this step first, before asking students to complete it.)
2. Group students into teams, and ask them to choose a recorder to record their findings.
3. Have each student share his or her findings with the group.
4. Ask students to report their group findings to the entire class. (At this point, if you notice students have overlooked an important feature, inform them to add it to the list.)
5. Once all groups have reported out, assign each group a feature or features, and ask them to generate a written description of what each feature does for the book. Collect these descriptions.

## **Variations of Text Previews**

### ***Name That Feature***

If you have several classes completing the feature descriptions described above, you can utilize the descriptions to play “Name That Feature”:



1. Assemble the class into teams; have each team elect a spokesperson.
2. Read each description developed by another class aloud, and challenge the teams to identify the feature.
3. Allow student teams time to discuss their response and, when a team has an answer, the team spokesperson should stand. The first one to stand should attempt the answer. (You may, of course, also provide a bell or a buzzer to signal that an answer is known.)
4. Award one point per correct answer; the team with the most points at the game's conclusion wins.

### ***Textbook Sales Pitch/Commercials***

1. Divide the class into two groups and distribute textbooks to each group.
2. Members of Group 1 assume the role of a textbook salesperson. Allow preparation time for the group to peruse the text to get an understanding of its organization, special features, benefits, and weaknesses. Inform them that their task is to prepare a persuasive sales pitch for the textbook to an audience of skeptical teachers.
3. Members of Group 2 assume the role of teachers and students who are serving on a textbook selection committee and are skeptical about choosing a new text. Allow preparation time for the group to peruse the text to compile a list of what they feel are important features in a textbook of good quality as well as a list of questions and concerns they will pose to the textbook salesperson based on their own review of the text.
4. When the presentation and discussion are complete, be sure to add any additional considerations you feel students have overlooked.

### ***What's Old? What's New?***

1. Divide students into small groups, and assign each group a text chapter to review.
2. Ask students to peruse the topics and special features they find within their chapter.
3. Have each group compile a list of primary topics the chapter covers and list them on a chart under either the heading *What's Old?* for content that has been covered in past classes or *What's New?* for material that is new or unfamiliar. (Note: Garber-Miller warns that due to varying past experiences, group members may disagree on whether topics are old or new; encourage them to reach consensus.) In addition, she stresses that it is especially crucial that the teacher model this step first before asking students to complete it.
4. Ask each group to display their charts and lead their classmates on a "chapter walk," pointing out the old and new concepts in each chapter. Encourage each group to seek feedback on their list.

## SCAFFOLDING INSTRUCTION FOR SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS

The strategies included in this book have been used with students at all levels of achievement: students enrolled in honors classes, regular classes, and low-achieving classes as well as students who have been labeled remedial readers, students in special education classes, and English-language learners. The strategies have been used successfully when adapted by the teacher to meet the unique needs of each specific learner. However, it should be noted that certain practices and adaptations have been identified as being effective when working with special needs students, and these should be utilized when presenting the strategies detailed in this text.

First, as teachers, we recognize that students learn more when

1. they are actively engaged in their learning.
2. information is presented in small “chunks” rather than in large quantities.
3. abstract, complex concepts are presented in concrete ways.
4. information is presented in an organized fashion.
5. students make connections between new information learned and their previous knowledge.
6. graphic organizers are used.
7. students follow a set of procedures or steps.
8. teachers give directions orally, and in writing, and by demonstrating or modeling what is expected.

All of the strategies presented in this text incorporate these elements.

Second, as Deschenes, Ebeling, and Sprague (1994) note, sometimes teachers must allow students to use alternate instructional materials or make changes in the learning environment. They offer nine ways in which this may be done. Teachers may adapt instruction according to the

1. **size** of the assignment, by adapting the number of items or facts a student is expected to learn or to complete, such as reducing the number of vocabulary terms required.
2. **time** for the assignment, by adapting the time allotted for a student to learn a concept or complete a task.
3. **input** provided, by adapting the way they deliver the strategy to a student, such as using visual aids, concrete examples, hands-on activities, or cooperative learning.

4. **output** to be provided, by adapting how a student is asked to exhibit what he or she has learned, such as responding in verbal and tactile ways as well as written ones.
5. **difficulty** of the assignment, by adapting the skill level, problem type, or parameters of how a student may complete the tasks assigned, such as by simplifying task instructions or allowing a student to use a calculator, a computer, or something comparable.
6. **degree of participation** required, by adapting the extent to which a student is involved in the task, such as being the materials manager in a cooperative group rather than the reporter.
7. **level of support** provided, by adapting the amount of scaffolding or support a student is given, such as assigning a partner, an instructional aide, or a tutor to help a student complete the assigned task.
8. **goals** of the assignment, by adapting the outcomes that a student is expected to achieve, such as asking some students to learn the names of various whales while asking other students to compare one type of whale to another.
9. **curriculum**, by providing different instructional strategies or materials for a student, such as choosing a different piece of text or story for the student to read.

Again, all of the strategies in this text can be adapted in any of the nine ways listed above.

## CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter 1 presents the challenge that teaching adolescents often presents and details ways teachers in today's classrooms can meet this challenge by presenting strategies students can use to effectively read narrative and expository texts. In addition, specific scaffolding strategies for both narrative and expository texts as well as suggestions on how to utilize the various strategies presented in this text with special needs students are presented.