

## **Before Reading Activities**

I have tried to brainstorm all of the reading strategies I have heard from other teachers, or trainings. Most of the ideas are NOT ones I have come up with so I can not take any of the credit!



### **Word Sort**

In a word sort I choose several words from the story that I think could be difficult for students or will give students an idea of what the story is about. Then I ask the group to sort the words into any categories they like. I have had students sort in alphabetical order, nouns verbs and adjectives, subjects and predicates, group like objects together like people or things. Students will surprise you with the ways that they come up with. I usually step outside the group and simply watch. I find out LOTS about the kids, like who is a leader and how different students think.



### **Tell Me a Story/Word Splash**

In this activity the teacher chooses several words from the story in advance. The teacher needs to choose characters, places verbs and a few words from the main idea of the story, as well as some other words in the story. The teacher shows the students the cover of the book and asks the students to use the list of words chosen to retell the story on their sheet of paper. Students receive a paper that looks like [this](#).

This is a great way for students to predict the story.

After students use the list to predict the story, they can (independently) cut the word list apart and sort the words into parts of speech, syllables, etc.



### KWL chart

Students create a 3 column T chart with each sections labeled K (know), W (what you want to know) and L (what you learned) like below.

<u>Know</u>	<u>Want to Know</u>	<u>What I Learned</u>

Students brainstorm what they already know about the subject in the Know column. Then they brainstorm what they want to learn about in the want to know column. After you have read and discussed the book, fill out the what I learned column so students can see all they learned!

Click [here](#) for a copy of this KWL chart in Word.

Click [here](#) for a copy of this KWL chart in PDF.



### T Chart of Questions

This is very similar to a KWL chart but students are just focusing on what they want to learn and what they learned at the end of reading. I have students create a T chart (I have students make many of their graphic organizers to cut down on copies.). On the left side they write What I Want to Know. On the left Side they Write I Know it. I have students brainstorm questions they want to know about the topic. Then on the left side students try to answer their own questions AFTER they finish reading.

Click [here](#) for a copy of the T Chart in Word.

Click [here](#) for a copy of the T Chart in PDF.



### **Power Point Presentation**

Sometimes when I want to activate prior knowledge I might create a short power point presentation to show my students. For example, last week we were reading a story called The Creature of Cassidy Creek. This story is about a "monster trapped in basement- which turns out to really be an opossum. I created a power point about opossums. The presentation had pictures and explanations. Students loved it because it was different and they could see it.

Click [here](#) to see the power point as an example.



### **Concentration**

When I do a word sort activity, usually the next meeting I will play concentration with the students so that they know not only how to pronounce the words, but also what they mean. I use the word sort cards, and then use an online dictionary to create the definitions during my planning. Students then play a matching game (like Memory) and match word to definition. They like it and it achieves its purpose!

Click [here](#) to go to the online dictionary I use.



### **Anticipation Guide**

An anticipation guide is an activity that taps into the student's prior knowledge. The teacher selects several true/ false or yes/ no questions from the story. Students are asked to answer the questions and to make their best guess based on what they already know about the topic. After students finish reading the text they are able to go back and answer the problems again to show what they have learned. I find that this is an activity that really works with nonfiction texts.

Click [here](#) to see an anticipation guide similar to one I have used in class. I usually hand write these because they are so quick and do not have any saved on the computer!



### Picture Talk

I have also seen this called a word splash. I am not sure where I got this idea; I can only assure you it is not mine! In a picture talk the teacher selects several words from the story that are important and then creates an attractive presentation for these words (I just use word art). Students then write a paragraph using these words trying to explain what the words mean and how they would fit in the story.

Click [here](#) to see an example of a picture talk a teacher could create using the story Cinderella.



### Story Wheel

I purchased these two spinners from a teacher story. The first spinner or wheel is marked before reading and the other is for after reading. The students can simple spin the wheel and then share what they think.



### Probable Story Passages

This is once again, not my idea but I really like this one. This is a great strategy to encourage prediction. In a probable story passage the teachers chooses about 20 words from the story. These words should describe the characters, setting, problem and solution of the story as well as a couple of other words thrown in. Then students are asked to complete a passage using the words given (and they can add in a few words to make it make sense). I have done this where students did not see the cover first, or it can be done where students are able to see the cover and title.

This is what a probable story passage looks like:

This story takes place \_\_\_\_\_.

The main character of the story is \_\_\_\_\_ who  
\_\_\_\_\_. The problem in the story is when  
\_\_\_\_\_. The problem is solved when \_\_\_\_\_.

[Here](#) is an example of words I would choose for the story Cinderella.

Click [here](#) for a blank copy of the probable story passage.



### Brain Folder

This is an idea that I got from one of the classes I am taking this semester. We repeatedly discussed activating prior knowledge and asking students to open those "file folders" in their brains. I decided to actually do this, literally.

Before reading a nonfiction book in our guided reading groups I gave each student a manila file folder. I explained to students about activating prior knowledge and we discussed thinking about what we already know about a topic and why this was important. I told them every time I asked them to get out their "brain folders" I wanted them to get out the folder I was giving them AND the one in their brains!

Everything we did with the book was put in this file. We created KWL charts and stapled them in the folders. On the back of the KWL charts we predicted what topics we would read about in the books (Example for the book on snakes- habitat, kinds, what they eat, etc) Students decorated the folders with pictures that related to the reading. On the other side students cut and pasted their vocabulary words for the unit. They sorted them in any way and then defined the words using a dictionary (or glossary of the book). I will take a few pictures of a sample of a student's brain folder and post them soon.



### **Give One Get One:**

This activity is a brainstorming session that allows students to tap into prior knowledge regarding a subject area. I have found that it works particularly well with nonfiction reading.

Students are asked to brainstorm everything and anything that comes to mind about a topic. This is done independently. For example if students were about to read about the eruption of Mt Saint Helens, the teacher may ask students to brainstorm about volcanoes. Student may brainstorm words and/ or phrases such as: ash, lava, burning, hot, eruption, smoke, and so on.

After each child has brainstormed their personal list, it is time to begin the activity. Students will each share one word on their list. If another student has this word or phrase on their list then they need to check the word so that the word is not repeated. If the students do not have the word on their list, they need to add the word to their list and mark it so they know it has already been shared. Students continue to share and mark off words until they are "out" and have no more words to share. The last student with words to share "wins."

