

Teaching strategies for reading comprehension

Best for:



Overview

Description	<p>KWL is an acronym for Know, Want to know and Learnt.</p> <p>The KWL strategy helps students engage with texts in deliberate and purposeful (strategic) ways. In the first phase (K), students activate background knowledge, recording what they already know. Then they determine the additional information they are likely to need (W) and develop a plan to gather that information. In the final phase (L), students reflect on the new knowledge generated or retrieved as the plan is implemented.</p>
Learning focus (based on Literacy general capability — Reading and viewing progression: Understanding texts)	Comprehension <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • scan texts to locate specific information in a text (P6) • integrate new learning from reading with current knowledge (P6) • identify the main idea in a text (P7) • identify main idea and related or supported ideas in moderately complex texts (P8) • accurately retell a text, including most relevant details (P8) • identify the main themes or concepts in complex texts by synthesising key ideas or information (P9) • summarise a text, identifying key details (P9) • distil information from a number of sources according to task and purpose (P9)
Teacher preparation	<p>Choose or negotiate a relevant text to practise the strategy. This should be a text related to the current curriculum focus.</p> <p>This strategy is best used after teachers have modelled the think-aloud strategy and questioning practices, and students have rehearsed them.</p>

Suggested implementation

1. Make a KWL chart (see Table 1) and present the chosen text. Clarify the purpose of the reading/viewing to be undertaken, e.g. to complete a project or research project.
2. Ask students to work individually to examine the title of the text and list what is known about the topic, drawing on their own background knowledge. Write these in the K column.
3. Discuss the list as a group and expand on it by pooling background knowledge across groups and the whole class.

4. Ask students to list what they want or need to know about the topic in the W column. This could be related to purpose for reading (see Step 1).
5. Read the chosen text to the students or have students read it themselves.
6. Ask students what new knowledge they have gained from the text and list this in the L column.
7. Evaluate if the information they have learnt is sufficient for their purpose.
8. Consider the next step, e.g. seek information from additional texts, create a summary in their own words, or use it to work on a project.



Table 1: KWL template

K — What do I know?	W — What do I want to know?	L — What have I learnt?

Variations

- A Ask students to work individually to record their own KWL ideas in a table. Ask them to swap their recording sheets with another student and discuss differences. List suggestions for further research.



Table 2: KWL for research template

K — What I need to know	W — Where to look for information	L — What I learnt

- B Record the source of ideas about a topic and teach students how to draw effective inferences, using variations such as TWL or TWC.



Table 3: TWL template

T — What do I think?	W — Why do I think that?	L — What did I learn about what I inferred?



Table 4: TWC template

T — What do I think?	W — What triggered that idea?	C — Was I correct?

- C Use KWL journals during silent independent reading. Ask students to share and compare their entries in literature circles (groups of students reading the same book at the same time). These journals provide a wealth of information about students' language knowledge, active reading strategies and 'self' as a reader.
- D Teach students to use the KWL strategy to keep a record of predictions and confirmations as they read stories.

The model entry in Table 5 is based on the novel *Why the Whales Came* by Michael Morpurgo.

Table 5: KWL model — *Why the whales came*

K — What do I know?	W — What do I want to know?	L — What have I learnt?
The Birdman is a character in the novel. He seems mysterious and I don't know if he is dangerous or not.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the mystery? • Is the Birdman dangerous? • Why is he alone? • What role does this character have in the story? 	<p>The Birdman is a hermit because he has been cast out by other people who think he is scary because he's deformed.</p> <p>He is not mysterious, just not like everyone else. Although humans have been cruel to him, he is protected by birds and animals.</p>

E Use the KWL strategy as a comprehension assessment resource.

The model entry in Table 6 is based on the novel *Space Demons* by Gillian Rubenstein.

The entries reveal that the student knows the typical narrative structure, although with some misunderstandings: the orientation establishes setting, the main characters and their everyday world; the main problem is typically introduced in the complication stage.

The first entry also suggests the student has little experience with novels like *Space Demons* that subvert narrative structure. Therefore, the students' engagement and understanding of the novel should be monitored.

In addition, the entry in the final column suggests the student could be supported identifying main ideas, e.g. the student has not yet recorded the setting, which is important in this novel.



Table 6: KWL model — *Space demons*

K — What do I know?	W — What do I want to know?	L — What have I learnt?
<p>Novels typically use the narrative structure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • orientation • complication • climax • resolution • coda. <p>The orientation reveals the problems that need solving in the lives of the main characters.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are the main characters? • What will be the complication? • How can the problems be resolved? 	<p>It is a story about two boys in Grade 7, Andrew and Ben, playing computer games. Andrew is spoiled and gets a new game called <i>Space Demons</i>. Ben and Andrew are having a bit of friendship trouble. A new girl, Elaine, has just started at the school.</p>



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