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Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from *The Nonfiction NOW Lesson Bank* by Nancy Akhavan. These graphic organizers are tools that students can use throughout a reading and writing unit to help clarify their thinking.

LEARN MORE about this title, including Features, Table of Contents, and Reviews.

The five textbook tamer graphic organizers in this chapter are organized by the levels of knowledge and the cognitive processes that they incorporate:

- Scanning text features
- Skimming tabs
- Summarizing from notes
- Analyzing sections
- Interpreting text

Using the Textbook Tamers Daily

These graphic organizers are not designed to be an end in themselves—a final product of student learning; rather, these tools help students learn throughout a unit, which may lead to a final product like a writing assignment, project, or text. Using the graphic organizers for 20 minutes or so each day helps students get their arms around the difficult lengthy reading in textbooks, largely by helping them *organize* the information while reading the text. The goal of using these organizers is to help students own the information in the reading, set up a successful plan for students to tackle the reading, and quell the overwhelming sense of resistance that can consume students when faced with a large text that doesn't motivate them to read.

Graphic Organizer: Scanning Text Features

Strong readers often familiarize themselves with the text features within nonfiction texts *before* they begin to read, scanning ahead to notice charts, the sheer length of the piece they are embarking on, subheads, and so on. This kind of previewing works very well with textbooks, and when we train our students to look at text features, it goes a long way; a neglected aspect of reading stamina is the reader's initial “courage” to face the scope of the piece. So many students just dive right in without checking the “depths of the water” around them first. The following tips can be modeled and shared with students in demonstration lessons:

- If students are reading a text *section*, they should orient themselves by asking themselves questions about what they are going to read. What chapter is the section in? What is the chapter title? What is the chapter about? Is the chapter in turn part of a larger unit or theme? What is the content of the prior section?
- If students are reading a textbook chapter, they will ask themselves similar questions, but be focused on the chapter overall. Where does the chapter appear in the book—the beginning, the middle, or the end? What information was shared in the book in the prior chapters? What will be shared in subsequent chapters? What is the chapter title? What is the textbook about? How does this textbook relate to the information learned in class?
- Before reading, students need to orient themselves to the features of the textbook and, in particular, the section or chapter they are going to read. The text features might include boxes, graphics, pictures, graphs, primary source texts, and glossaries. Students can glean important ideas about the text from these features.

The textbook tamer *Scanning Text Features* gives students a place to record things they notice or think about the textbook reading. Students who are unfamiliar, or who struggle, with textbook reading don't have a well-established path for tackling the text. They need a structure to rely on, and this graphic organizer provides one, in basically three steps.

1

Students start with the right-hand boxes of the graphic organizer. In the top box, titled "Important Ideas," students write down what they think are important ideas about a text they are going to read by looking at the text features.

2

Students move next to fill in the box titled "Important Vocabulary." As they scan the text, students should notice vocabulary that pops at them and record the words. They may or may not know the words; the important point is that they can spot words that seem key to understanding the chapter or text section.

Reviewing students' responses in this section will give you a chance to check their thinking and teach words that the class has identified as important to the text. It is important to teach words students are thinking about because this validates, or accepts and confirms, their thinking and thus connects them to the textbook reading. Of course, you may feel other words are important for them to know, so you'll teach those as well. Remember: Validate, validate, validate.

TEXTBOOK TAMER • Scanning Text Features

NAME: Sample Student DATE: _____

<p>Important Ideas (Look at the text features)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continents richest country is South Africa • rich and poor cities • people of many descents • also many languages • World's largest producer of Gold. 	<p>Get the Gist (Summarize key points)</p> <p>South Africa is Africa's wealthiest country, and the world's largest producer of gold. South Africa is very diverse with about 43 million people. There are a couple wealthy cities, but mostly poor towns, and the average lifespan in South Africa is 56 years old.</p>
<p>Important Vocabulary (Bold words, important terms)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • people live an average of 56 years in S. Africa • Capitals - Cape Town, Pretoria • About 43,426,386 population 	

Scanning Text Features Graphic Organizer Filled Out Based on a Section of a Textbook

3

In the third step, students fill in the "Get the Gist" column with ideas on what they think the text is about. To do so, students may read several paragraphs. Overall, strategic readers scan text and text features before reading to get an idea of what they are going to read, and then they plan their reading based on what they glean from the scan. If the material is unfamiliar, strategic readers may slow down, read some sections more closely than others, or read paragraph by paragraph and then check themselves for understanding.

Key to having students use this graphic organizer is to quickly check in with them before they begin reading; by doing so, you can assess their readiness to read the text—and intervene if they are not ready with vocabulary work or other frontloading.

Graphic Organizer: Skimming for Information

Once students are oriented to what they are going to read, they need to decide *how* they are going to read. Most strategic readers make a reading "plan" without even realizing it; they sum up the task of the reading, consider their purposes for reading, and scan the text to decide how to read: slowly and deeply, or quickly to skim. As teachers, we often focus our students on deep understanding of the text they are reading, but sometimes deep reading isn't the goal. For example, skimming text to quickly gather information and

This graphic organizer takes the reader through a strategic process. First, scan the text. Next, skim for information and ideas. Last, read to understand.

1 The student lines up the top of the skimming tab with the first sentence of the text.

2 Then the student skims the text, noticing important words and ideas and jotting them on the skimming tab.

3 The student then reviews his notes before diving into a closer reading of the text. The notes can help the student focus on what he will be reading about.

Skimming Tab • TEXTBOOK TAMER

NAME: Sample Student DATE: _____

Cut tabs apart on middle line. Line up the top of the Skimming Tab with the first sentence on your page, on the right-hand side of the book. Write margin notes by writing on the Skimming Tab.

<p>Page number: <u>433</u></p> <p>Skim over the page to gather information and ideas. Write margin notes below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• cold winter weather from three polar air masses• one over land• two over oceans• mass over Canada• mass over North Pacific - effects Pacific Coast• mass over North Atlantic effects East Coast• Four warm air masses<ul style="list-style-type: none">• three over water• one over land• land mass from Mexico Desert• water masses from Atlantic Ocean, Pacific Ocean, and Gulf of Mexico	<p>Page number: <u>436</u></p> <p>Skim over the page to gather information and ideas. Write margin notes below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Severe weather causes damage and death• Thunderstorms produce - strong winds, heavy rain, lightning, and thunder<ul style="list-style-type: none">• occur from cold fronts• Also occur when Earth surface is warm and moist and atmosphere is unstable• storms created by cumulus clouds turning into dark cumulonimbus clouds
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Skimming Tab Graphic Organizer Filled Out Based on a Section of a Textbook

ideas can be helpful for a struggling reader to access the textbook. Sometimes the goal is a quick skim when we are returning to a text we have already read to try to locate content. In any case, students need a reading plan and a defined purpose for reading:

First: Scan the text.

Second: Skim for information and ideas presented in the text.

Third: Read to understand.

Students who are not strategic readers of nonfiction text don't automatically create a reading plan for themselves in their minds. We must teach them to do this. The skimming tab organizer (see *Skimming Tab*) is a like a bookmark. Students can take notes on it for a particular page they are preparing to read in any given textbook. The skimming tab organizer is a way for students to "write in the margins" without writing in the actual book.

For an example of this graphic organizer in use, see *Skimming Tab*.

Graphic Organizer: Summarizing With Notes

Often students have difficulty discussing what they have read after reading a textbook. This might be because the amount of information they've read is vast, and they are unsure of what is most important to discuss. Sometimes students don't know if they are supposed to discuss a main idea/theme or a series of events/facts. In any case, when students are given a tool that compels them to record important facts as they read, report them

This organizer helps students prepare to write a summary.

1 Students check their thinking before they start reading and decide what their purpose is for reading the textbook section. They write their purpose for writing here.

2 Students write important ideas and information in the box in the middle of the graphic organizer.

3 Once students gather sufficient facts, they read the text. Then they write a short summary in the box at the bottom of the organizer. The students can look at their notes while they write.

TEXTBOOK TAMER • Summarizing With Notes

NAME: Sample Student DATE: _____

BEFORE READING: ASK, THINK, JOT

STEP 1: Ask yourself:
"Do I understand why I am reading this section?"
If you answered **YES**: Write the purpose below.
I am reading this text to understand how temperature works.
If you answered **NO**: Skim the section again, check your notes, and give it a try.

STEP 2: Skim the headings, bold words, and graphics.
Ask yourself: "What is the section or page about?" and "What details support the main idea?"
(Write your jots here)
• temperature depends on kinetic energy
• faster moving particles have more energy and higher temperature
• average kinetic energy controls temp.

STEP 3: Summarize what you read.
(Write your summary here)
Temperature is based on kinetic energy. Particles that move faster have more kinetic energy and a higher temperature. Temperature is measured by average kinetic energy, the amount of substance you have does not matter.

Summarizing With Notes Graphic Organizer Filled Out Based on a Section of a Textbook

in an organized fashion, and then use them to write a summary, students become more sure-footed about what is worthy of discussion. Rather, they become able to more deeply comprehend, and then find summarizing more possible.

Writing is a way of knowing, and when students write, it can help them remember and understand what they have read. Lengthy pieces of writing aren't always necessary! In fact, one way to approach this activity is to have students write important facts on sticky notes as they read and then organize their thinking in a notebook after reading. They can write each important fact on an individual sticky note and then pull the sticky notes from the textbook and place them in an order that helps them report the information in a written summary.

The *Summarizing With Notes* graphic organizer is another way to help students track important information from their reading.

This organizer is helpful because you can assess students' ability to glean important facts from the reading by checking what they write in the boxes. You can check the facts they chose before giving the students the go-ahead to write a summary.

Graphic Organizer: Analyzing Sections

After guiding students to make a reading plan and checking their thinking as they skim the text and identify important details, we can focus on helping students to retain information from the texts they are reading.

Students complete four steps that powerfully aid recall of information.

1 Students write the section headers and page number at the top of the organizer.

2 Students read one or more paragraphs in the section and identify an important fact, recording it in the top box of the organizer.

3 Students write a very short summary about the supporting details of the important fact.

4 Students write one summary sentence describing the important fact in relation to the subject of the textbook section. This summary sentence really compels students to wrestle with new information and put it into their own words. Finally, students repeat the process with two more important facts, recording the information in the middle and right-hand columns.

Analyzing Sections • TEXTBOOK TAMER

NAME: Sample Student DATE: _____

Section heading/page number: Immigration and Migration: Then and Now

IMPORTANT FACT 1	IMPORTANT FACT 2	IMPORTANT FACT 3
An immigrant is someone who moved from another country to the U.S.	Immigration is leaving your homeland and settling in another country.	Some immigrants came to Wisconsin.
Summary of Information About Fact 1 An immigrant moves from another country, a migrant moves from another state.	Summary of Information About Fact 2 People leave their homelands due to bad conditions, no work, natural disasters, or war. Others leave for better reasons, like family or jobs.	Summary of Information About Fact 3 People used to come by boat or railway to Wisconsin. Now they immigrate or migrate by car or plane.
Summary Sentence About Fact 1 Immigrants and migrants both move to new places.	Summary Sentence About Fact 2 People immigrate for both good and bad reasons.	Summary Sentence About Fact 3 Most early immigrants came by boat, now they come by plane.

Analyzing Sections Graphic Organizer Filled Out
Based on a Section of a Textbook

Most textbook chapters are made up of multiple sections that build information in a sequence of events, or in a knowledge-building sequence. Students often cannot retain all of the important information from one section to the next because the text is so dense with information, facts, and details. Another problem students can have when reading textbooks is that they cannot determine important facts within a section of text, or recognize the supporting details of those important facts. To help students learn information while reading textbooks, it helps to focus students on identifying important facts in specific textbook sections, and then identifying supporting details for those facts.

The *Analyzing Sections* graphic organizer is designed to help students identify important facts in their reading, section by section. Students should use one or two *Analyzing Sections* organizers per textbook section. After recording information on the graphic organizers, a student would have a set of notes that he or she could use to read or study in order to learn and retain information from the text.

Analyzing Sections is a simple three-step process that helps students to do the following:

- Discern important information
- Identify facts and details
- Synthesize information into a short sentence

Notice how this organizer encourages students to make a judgment about the information they read and express it in their words. This graphic organizer is a boon to developing students' interpretive skills.

1 Students read the text once to get the gist of the section.

2 Students reread the text to identify three important points in the text. These three points can be recorded in the left-hand column of the organizer.

3 Students carefully consider the three important points they outlined and use this information to write a summary of the text section. When summarizing, students are developing their understanding of what they have read. It is good practice for students to revisit the text as many times as needed to reread, refocus, and check their understanding while writing the short summary. Students can write this summary in the upper right-hand box of the organizer.

4 As a next step, students think about what the information means. The point is for students to relate this new information to previous things that they have learned about the subject. Students can jot a few notes about this in the box in the middle of the organizer.

5 Finally, in the box at the bottom of the organizer, students make a judgment about the information—perhaps why the information read is important, or not—and state why.

TEXTBOOK TAMER • Interpreting Text

NAME: Sample Student DATE: _____

<p>Three Important Ideas (Outline your ideas)</p> <p>1. Constitutional Convention is to improve the Articles of Confederation.</p> <p>2. The Virginia plan proposed a three branch government with representation based on state population.</p> <p>3. The Great Compromise gave the states a House of R. based on state size and a Senate based on a fixed number of 2 per state.</p>	<p>Summarize the Text</p> <p>Leaders of the country met to improve the Articles of Confederation. The Virginia Plan proposed gov. representation based on state population, this upset small states. The Great Compromise appeased both the small and large states.</p> <p>Interpret the Text (Jot why the text's meaning is important or why it is not)</p> <p>The text's meaning is important because the way that the country's Constitution was written is very important history.</p> <p>Make a Judgment (State your opinion about the text)</p> <p>The text does a good job of explaining the details of the Constitutional convention, it gives a full picture of the events.</p>
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Interpreting Text Graphic Organizer Filled Out Based on a Section of a Textbook

Graphic Organizer: Interpreting Text

When students interpret text, they show understanding by determining meaning. Interpretation is the focus of the *Interpreting Text* graphic organizer—for students, developing factual knowledge, developing their evaluative thinking regarding the factual knowledge, and developing their ability to understand what they read. Good to jump-start students' thinking, this organizer prompts students to put four kinds of thinking into play:

- Determining important information
- Summarizing sections of text
- Interpreting the meaning of information read
- Evaluating the importance of the information

Five steps make up the use of the *Interpreting Text* organizer. These five steps are focused on students remembering and retaining information read by determining facts, summarizing meaning, and evaluating importance.

Troubleshooting Tips That Maximize the Benefits of Graphic Organizers

When using the graphic organizers in class, be aware of common pitfalls:

- Students may fill out the sheet just to get the assignment over with.
- Students may not understand anything they have read in the textbook.
- Students working with a partner may just copy their partner’s answers.
- Students may get their thinking mixed up.

You can avoid these pitfalls. First, if your students cannot use the graphic organizer independently, complete the thinking and fill out the organizer together in small or large groups. Another way of supporting student work with the graphic organizer is to stretch one out over several days. For example, you might spend 15 minutes one day and work on just part of the organizer with the class. Then, you can follow up the next day and finish the work.

Remember, the goal is to nurture student thinking, not to fill in the blanks, so pace the use of the organizers in ways that make sense for you and your students.

1. Know your students. Knowing your students is harder if you are a secondary teacher in a departmentalized setting rather than a self-contained setting, but it isn’t impossible. The easiest way to get to know your students and their abilities to read and comprehend their reading is not to lecture. Rather than talking at students for long periods of time, structure your teaching with short lessons and lots of group work. You can walk around the classroom while students are working together and take notes. This is a time to notice who is doing what, how they are doing it, and what they are doing with the task at hand.

2. Design instruction to engage. While disengaged students come to class with a lot of baggage that teachers cannot necessarily change, we can do some things once we know our students. We can provide as much engaging instruction as possible. To do this, get students working together and thinking together. Have students read the text with one another, or have them work in groups using the graphic organizers to support their thinking and learning. Set up some accountability in this teaching structure so that students cannot just copy from the one student in the group who “gets it” and knows what to do. Use a random selection technique, like popsicle sticks with student names or numbers written on them, and use the random technique to call on students to report what their group has been doing, or report what the group wrote on the graphic organizer.

3. Let your students talk. A quiet classroom is a deadly classroom for student thinking. Our students need to talk to understand. It is important that they talk about what they are reading, thinking about, and learning, so I am suggesting not social talk but purposeful talk. Talk can help a student who has fuzzy thinking strengthen his understanding by going over points and details with another student. Talk can help an English learner understand important points in the text when a friend explains it to her. Talk can help all students consolidate and make sense of new information, facts, and details. This action of consolidating thinking is a way of understanding, storing, and retrieving information from our memories. Talk also builds a collaborative classroom community where students feel free to take risks and don’t feel pressure to produce perfect oral and written work, or to be correct all of the time. Talk helps students learn.

Scaffolding Leads to Deep Comprehension

Remember, students who need instruction to support their comprehension don't always receive the help they need (C. Brown & Broemmel, 2011; Means & Knapp, 1991). These graphic organizers designed to help students tame textbooks and give them independent strategies for tackling a textbook, provide direct, explicit instruction as scaffolding to support their learning. Also remember that these graphic organizers and the explicit instruction they engender need not be bound to the basal; you can use these graphic organizers with informational materials of all types.

Should you use them a few times a week for months and months? Not necessarily. My general advice is that students need deep and sustained scaffolding until you see it can be pulled away. Deep scaffolding occurs when you provide more meaningful scaffolding that meets your students' needs prior to and during reading (C. Brown & Broemmel, 2011). Deep scaffolding develops in-depth schema building and critical understanding of text (Schoenbach & Greenleaf, 2009). You may do this in one lesson using a specific organizer or spread out the instruction over the week. You may teach the organizers explicitly at the beginning of the year and then just have them handy for reference later in the year once the students can use the organizers independently. If you are a middle school teacher, you may encourage the librarian to keep copies of the textbook tamers handy for students to use when reading textbooks from other classrooms.

Help your students read textbooks in an appropriate way—as information sources. Keep the focus of your instruction with textbooks on deep scaffolding as you prime students prior to reading, help them navigate a text while reading, and amplify their understanding after they read. The beauty of the organizers is that students use them temporarily as supports to lean on, but use the thinking skills they strengthen for a lifetime.

Student Response Log



NAME: _____

DATE: _____

Paragraph	What Was Interesting From the Text	My Thoughts



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Analyzing Sections • TEXTBOOK TAMER



NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Section heading/page number: _____

IMPORTANT FACT 1	IMPORTANT FACT 2	IMPORTANT FACT 3
Summary of Information About Fact 1	Summary of Information About Fact 2	Summary of Information About Fact 3
Summary Sentence About Fact 1	Summary Sentence About Fact 2	Summary Sentence About Fact 3



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TEXTBOOK TAMER • Interpreting Text

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

Three Important Ideas

(Outline your ideas)

1.

2.

3.

Summarize the Text

Interpret the Text

(Jot why the text's meaning is important or why it is not)

Make a Judgment

(State your opinion about the text)



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Scanning Text Features • TEXTBOOK TAMER



NAME: _____

DATE: _____

Important Ideas

(Look at the text features)

Get the Gist

(Summarize key points)

Important Vocabulary

(Bold words, important terms)



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TEXTBOOK TAMER • Skimming Tab

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

Cut tabs apart on middle line. Line up the top of the Skimming Tab with the first sentence on your page, on the right-hand side of the book. Write margin notes by writing on the Skimming Tab.

Page number: _____

Skim over the page to gather information and ideas.
Write margin notes below.

Page number: _____

Skim over the page to gather information and ideas.
Write margin notes below.



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Summarizing With Notes • TEXTBOOK TAMER



NAME: _____ DATE: _____

BEFORE READING: ASK, THINK, JOT

STEP 1: Ask yourself:

“Do I understand why I am reading this section?”

If you answered YES: Write the purpose below.

If you answered NO: Skim the section again, check your notes, and give it a try.

STEP 2: Skim the headings, bold words, and graphics.

Ask yourself: *“What is the section or page about?”* and *“What details support the main idea?”*

(Write your jots here)

STEP 3: Summarize what you read.

(Write your summary here)



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