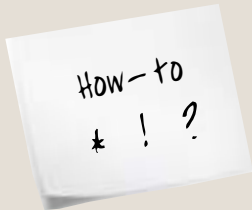


## Text coding reveals students' thinking

As an English teacher, I struggled to “see” my students’ thinking when they read. I found that text coding offers a great alternative to study guides and can act as discussion preparation. Text coding is essentially short hand annotation. I am sure to prepare my students for this strategy by explaining that annotation is our way to make sense of the text, so it is crucial that they take time to engage with the text.



I teach my students to use these three text codes: A star (\*) represents a main idea. An exclamation mark (!) represents a text connection (text to self, text to text and text to world). A question mark (?) represents a question: clarity or an “I wonder...” statement.

As they read, students use post-its to interact with the text and keep track of their thinking. This helps students who struggle with comprehension with a safe

way to communicate their confusion; it also allows me to see what students know and where we can clarify their understanding.

I check for their understanding in a variety of ways: by checking post-its while students are working independently, by calling students up to tell me about a couple of their post-its, by having students discuss their post-its as their small or large group discussion, by having students write one code and explain it as an exit slip, or by having them write what was happening in the text on their post-it and place it on the board for discussion.

Another benefit to this strategy is the application in informational text as well. I am able to model the strategy with articles and how the main ideas may change based on the type of text and the purpose for our reading, but the text coding strategy is the same.

Using this simple strategy can help provide a framework in which students can demonstrate their knowledge of text and teachers can scaffold instruction based on student need.



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