

Reacting to Reading: Responding to Text (Graffiti)

Good readers 'wake up' and use the information they have about a topic in order to help them understand what they are reading. (Cris Tovani, 2000)

Graffiti is a collaborative learning strategy that can be used before or after an assigned reading. Here you can see how it might be used *after* reading. The strategy involves students working in groups to generate and record ideas on chart paper. The teacher sets up as many chart pages as there are groups. On each chart page, the teacher writes a topic related to the assigned reading. The groups travel in rotation from chart to chart, writing responses to the topic and to the comments previously written by other groups.

Purpose

- Provide an opportunity for students to make a personal connection to a topic or unit of work by expressing their opinions, demonstrating their understanding of the assigned text, and making connections to their prior knowledge and experience.

Payoff

Students will:

- connect their personal knowledge and experience with a curriculum topic or issue.
- expand their understanding of the reading by seeing and hearing the ideas and opinions of others.

Tips and Resources

- Use a *Numbered Heads* strategy to randomly assign roles in small groups. For example, if you are working with groups of five, have the students in each group “number off” from 1 to 5. After the students have numbered off, assign a particular role (e.g., recording, reporting, displaying work, etc.) to each number. Rotate the roles as the students continue with the exercise.
- For sample role descriptions designed to promote small-group discussion, see the **Group Roles** strategy in the Oral Communication section.
- In the version of graffiti described here, each group uses a different coloured marker so that everyone can identify which group made which contribution to the charts.
- After a specified period (usually no more than three to five minutes), and at a specific signal, each group rotates to the next chart page until the group has traveled full circle and arrived back at its page.
- The rotation and recording aspect of the strategy should take about 15 to 20 minutes. If groups have too much time at any chart page, there won't be anything for subsequent groups to write.
- Subsequent groups may put checkmarks beside ideas to agree with them, may write disagreements beside items already recorded, or may add new information and ideas to the chart page. They may also put question marks beside items that they feel require clarification.
- For tips on generating the topics, see Teacher Resource, *Graffiti Strategy – Topics for Geography*.
- For step-by-step instructions on leading the class through the graffiti strategy, see Teacher Resource, *Graffiti Strategy – Procedure for Groups*.

Beyond Monet, pp. 174-177.

Further Support

- Pre-teach some vocabulary related to the topic or issues, to support struggling or ESL students. Consider putting key terms on a Word Wall.
- Assign two students the role of reporter, to ensure that struggling or ESL students are supported if they are chosen as the reporter.



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What teachers do	What students do
<p>Before</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign the reading to students. • Determine how many groups of five you will have in the class, and set up that many “stations.” At each station, put a chart page and a different-coloured marker. On each page, write one issue or topic related to the reading. • Define <i>graffiti</i> for the class (e.g., “scribbling on walls or in public places that represents a highly personal expression of thoughts or feelings”), or ask students for definitions. • Explain the graffiti process to students: groups of five students will begin at a chart page, choosing one student to record their information and ideas with the coloured marker. • Ask students to number off from 1 to 5 to create groups. See the <i>Numbered Heads</i> strategy on the facing page, under Tips and Resources. • Indicate that #1 will be the recorder for the first chart page. Recorders for later chart pages will follow sequentially, and other students will be designated at the end of the rotation to display and report on the original chart page. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the assigned text. • Contribute to the discussion about graffiti. • Listen carefully to instructions about the process. Clarify if needed.
<p>During</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After a specified length of time, ask groups to rotate to the next chart page, taking the same coloured marker with them. At the next chart page, a new recorder will be chosen to write down ideas and information, and so on. • Monitor activity and remind students of the task and process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rotate as a group to each chart page, keeping the same coloured marker. • Respond to the next topic or question using the same coloured marker they began with. • Have a different recorder for each chart page they encounter. • Take turns contributing ideas and information to the graffiti page. • Ensure that each group member has an opportunity to contribute to the graffiti. • Conclude at the original chart page.
<p>After</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designate #s to be reporters and displayers for the chart page (e.g., #3 students will be displayers and #5s will be reporters). This keeps all students accountable until the last moment. • As each group reports, ask other students to record in their notes the top three items that interest or concern them, leaving spaces between each item. • Invite students to reread the assigned reading and add page numbers to the top three items they chose from each report, in preparation for making more complete notes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the original chart page together to ensure they can read and understand each item. • Display and report the information on their chart page, as requested by the teacher. • As other groups report, individually record the top three items of interest or concern in one’s own notes. • Reread the textbook chapter and add page numbers to the three items listed from each of the other groups’ reports, to prepare for making more complete notes.

Notes

Graffiti Strategy – Topics for Geography

- Subheadings from a textbook chapter often provide very useful topics for graffiti charts when you turn them into questions.
- In this instance, the topics are based on subheadings from a Grade 7 textbook. Chapter 5, “The Themes of Geographic Inquiry: Interaction” in *Physical Geography: Discovering Global Systems and Patterns* (Toronto: Gage, 2000.)
- Try to keep questions short so that they do not take up much space on the chart.

Questions:

1. How does weather influence people’s lives?
2. Why do some crops grow really well in some places in Canada and not in others?
3. What land features may be a barrier to human settlement?
4. How have human beings overcome difficult geography in Canada and other places?
5. What are some ways human beings have damaged the landscape and the environment?

Graffiti Strategy – Procedure for Groups

1. Form groups of five students each.
2. In each group, assign each student a number from 1 to 5. (Tell the students that they will not know the role for their number until later, and that the roles will change. They are all accountable for the work in the group.)
3. Give each group a colour name (e.g., red, blue, black, green, orange, brown), and a marker of that colour. The group will keep that marker as they move to a different chart page and topic.
4. Give each group a piece of chart paper, with a topic already written at the top.
5. Tell the students that they will have about three minutes to write their group's responses to the topic on the first piece of chart paper. Number 1 will be the recorder when the group is at the first chart; Number 2 will be the recorder when they rotate to the second chart; and so on.
6. As the first three-minute time-limit approaches, tell the students, "When I give the signal, finish your last word, leave your chart page where it is, and move on to the next chart page. Be sure to take your marker and give it to the new recorder in your group. You will have two to three minutes to read the responses at the next chart page, and add comments, question marks, disagreements, or additional points."
7. As the students return to the chart page where they first started (their colour of marker will be the first one on the page), tell them, "Prepare to report on the information by reading it carefully, and deciding what is most important to tell the whole class. I will choose a reporter and a displayer when the time comes to report. Everyone should be ready to take on these roles."