Purpose of this Strategy

Anticipation guides allow the reader to make predictions about text that will be read by eliminating possibilities that are unlikely. Also called reaction or prediction guides, the anticipation guide is a way to prepare a reader prior to a reading assignment by asking them to react to a series of statements related to the content of the material. Three reasons for using anticipation guides include: 1) relating prior knowledge to new information to enhance comprehension, 2) creating interest which stimulates discussion on the topic, and 3) creating possibilities for integrating reading and writing instruction.

Directions

Step One: Read Passage or Story
Read and analyze the text to identify the major concepts, both explicit and implicit.

Step Two: Decide on Major Concepts
Decide which concepts are most important. Use these to create student interest and to agitate or stimulate reflection on prior knowledge and beliefs.

Important concepts in *The Importance of Being Earnest* include:

- Satire
- Hypocrisy
- Triviality
- Irony
- The nature of marriage
- Morality
- Societal conventions
- Idleness and leisure
- Dual identities
- Farce
- Earnestness

Step Three: Write Statements on Major Concepts

Write a series of short, declarative statements about the major concepts (usually about 7-10). The statements should be thought-provoking and reflect the students’ backgrounds. General statements are better than abstract or overly specific ones. Famous quotations and idioms work well. The statements should be written in a format that will elicit students to predict and anticipate.

Some examples of statements on this work’s major concepts include:

- It is morally wrong to pretend to have beliefs, virtues, or standards that you do not actually have.
- People should depend upon the conventions of society (that is, what their current culture says is the social norm) dictate their everyday behavior.
- People should marry for love and not for any other reason.

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It is okay to pretend to be something you aren’t in order to get someone to fall in love with you.

Lying is different than just letting someone believe something that isn’t true.

It is possible for morality to impose constraints on society.

It is okay to exaggerate and make up elaborate stories as long as the truth is not assaulted in any way or anyone’s perception of reality is not altered.

It is impossible to really be earnest and sincere and moral while you are claiming to be so.

Step Four: Write Questions that Precede a Response to the Statement
Consider what students need to ask themselves before they can respond to the statement already written. The question should be simple and tied directly to the concept that statement asks them to consider. Questions can refer to philosophies/experiences/beliefs, etc.

Here are corresponding questions to the statements listed in Step Three:

- Why do some people act hypocritically?
- Is society as a collective unit always right?
- What do most people marry for?
- Is pretending to be something you aren’t different than blatantly lying?
- How bad is it to deceive someone?
- Does being good sometimes constrain you?
- What does society think of people who profess to everyone that they are good and honest?

Step Five: Display the Guide
To allow students time to react to each statement, display the guide on either the blackboard or an overhead, or distribute individual worksheets. Give clear instructions for what the students are to do with the guide, such as writing a smiley-face ☺ for agreeing and a frowny face ☹ for disagreeing in the left-hand column for each statement. Make sure to leave space for responses on the sheet. Students can complete the guides individually, in pairs or small groups, or as a whole class.

Step Six: Discuss
Conduct a class discussion about the concepts before the students read the text. Students are expected to support their answers with more than a “yes” or “no” response. Ask students to give examples from past experience and explain their decision-making process by which they arrive at their answers.

Step Seven: Read
Read aloud the second part of Act II, the scene in which Algernon appears at Jack’s country house pretending to be Ernest. This will allow students to get a feel for the tone, characters, humor, and sentiments of the play. After finishing Part Two, which ends with Algernon parting from Cecily while telling her he’ll love her forever, evaluate with the class the statements from the anticipation guide in light of Oscar Wilde’s intent and purpose. You can have them respond again to the anticipation guide, this time from the author’s perspective.

Step Eight: Revisit the Guide
Revisit the guide after you have read the passage to allow students to compare and contrast their original responses with the current ones. The objective is to see what information the reading of the passage has allowed them to assimilate or learn.

Assessment
Writing and discussion stimulate review of what students know and believe and allow them to them to expand these concepts. Students are enabled to take charge of their own learning and to focus their reading. The teacher can use the anticipation guide to preview students’ beliefs and knowledge about a subject.

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