

FOR-PD's Reading Strategy of the Month

S.O.A.P.S.

November 2008

(*Speaker, Occasion, Audience, Purpose, Subject*)



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Rationale:

What do good readers do? What is important for reading comprehension? Active reading is important for comprehension. Research has shown that good readers activate prior knowledge, establish purpose while reading, make connections, determine the most important ideas, ask questions, question the author, visualize and create mental images of the text, make inferences, synthesize information, and use fix-up strategies (e.g., Keene and Zimmerman, 1997; Pearson & Fielding, 1991; Pressley, 2000).

Reading comprehension is the process of constructing meaning from text (Durkin, 1993). According to the RAND group, comprehension is: “the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. It consists of three elements: the reader, the text, and the activity or purpose for reading” (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002, p. 11). A major goal of reading comprehension is to help readers develop the knowledge, skills, and they strategies they need to know and be able to use to become proficient and independent readers (e.g., RAND Reading Study Group, 2002).

The SOAPS strategy can be used to teach students how to read and understand narrative and expository texts. Each text structure has unique characteristics and students can benefit from instruction on how “to read” and understand text. This becomes particularly important with implicit text and messages as many students have underdeveloped inferential skills. The SOAPS comprehension strategy includes the following:
SOAPS- *Speaker, Occasion; Audience; Purpose; and, Subject.*

SOAPS can help students understand the author's craft by analyzing certain text elements. Students will be able to discuss and identify the SOAPS. This will help them to learn how to "read the text", identify who the speaker is in a text, what the occasion is, who is the audience for the text, identify the purpose of the author for writing this text, and what is the subject of the text; all of these pieces of information are important factors that can help shape a student's understanding of a text.

How to Use the Strategy:

Teaching SOAPS Steps:

1. Start by explaining the purpose and discuss what happens when at times we start to read a piece of text without paying attention to some important pieces of information that are at times hidden in the text. As a result, sometimes we read without developing much comprehension. Share with students that they can take a piece of text apart and look for certain elements that are sometimes not explicitly stated by the author. Explain that when they learn how to identify these elements it will help them to better understand who the speaker is and what his/her intentions and purpose is for sharing this text/topic, what is the occasion for this text, for whom this information is written for, why the author wrote it, and what is the subject of the text/topic. Share with them that all of these elements make a big difference for their comprehension. They will provide them with "a roadmap for reading and understanding the text".
2. Teach (Model)



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SOAPS	
Who is the Speaker?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Who is the speaker? Identification of the person (or group of people) that wrote this text: what is the speaker's age, gender, class, or education?Identify the main voice within the text.What can you tell or what do you know about this person's role in the text?
What is the Occasion?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Identify the time and place of the text. What is the current situation?Is it a personal event, a celebration, an observation, a critique, or...?Identify the context of the text.
Who is the Audience?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The readers to whom this text is directed.The audience may be one person, a small group, or a large group.Does the speaker specify an audience?What assumptions exist in the text about the intended audience of this text?
What is the Purpose?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">What is the purpose for the passage/text?What is the message?Why did the author write it? What is the author's goal?How does the speaker convey the message?
What is the Subject?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The topic, content, and ideas included in the text.Can you identify and state the subject in a few words?Is there one or more than one subject?How does the author present the subject? Does s/he introduce it immediately or not? Is the subject explicit or implicit?

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Select a piece of text for the purpose of teaching this strategy. Provide every student with a copy of that text and a copy of the SOAPS template. Explain each element of the SOAPS strategy and what it involves. Show students how you identified each element in the text. Demonstrate using an overhead projector, a board, a whiteboard, or a computer (whatever resources might be available to you). Use think alouds and explain your thinking process and how you used the SOAPS strategy to identify different pieces of vital information in the text.

The following is an example for secondary grades (use the SOAPS blank line master to demonstrate the following and adjust text level to match the appropriate grade level).

The forced migration of Greek intellectuals and businessmen from Asia Minor to Greece in 1921 (due to the Great Fire of Smyrna and the persecution by the Turks) prompted an explosion of culture, language, and literature in Greece.

Use think alouds and use a whole group approach. Now, ask yourself: Who is the speaker? What is the occasion? Who is the audience? What is the purpose? What's the subject/topic?

Well, the speaker here is the author of our World History textbook. The occasion is the forced migration of Greeks in Asia Minor to the mainland in 1921. That's clear; it is stated in the text. The audience is...us...the world who needs to know about historical events. The author's purpose is to present us with facts, causes and effects of social events on Greek culture, language and literature in the 1920s. The subject is the Greco-Turkish war and its effects on Greece.

Explain to students that by quickly determining the speaker, occasion, purpose, audience, and subject/topic while reading, we can easily deduce why the author is writing this text and even predict of what will follow. Help students to understand (through experiences with texts and with using the SOAPS strategy) that actively reading passages can build understanding and save them much precious time when they get to the questions.

3. Allow time for students to practice using the SOAPS strategy and provide feedback and support as needed. Provide them with a different piece of text and ask them to work together in small groups using the strategy. Monitor their work and at the end, have a class discussion on their findings and a reflection on what this process did for their understanding. Use often as that students develop ownership of the strategy/thinking as they read text. Monitor their understanding of text using SOAPS as needed.



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SOAPS	
Who is the Speaker?	
What is the Occasion?	
Who is the Audience?	
What is the Purpose?	
What is the Subject?	

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Example for Elementary Grades:



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Example for Elementary Grades: *Chicken Sunday* by Patricia Polacco

SOAPS	
Who is the Speaker?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The author, Patricia Polacco• She is a young girl, sharing about her childhood experiences with neighbors.• She is friends (and sort of a sister...) with Stewart and Winston.
What is the Occasion?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chicken Sundays and Easter celebration.• Baptist and Russian families celebrating Easter.• Friends and family members getting together.
Who is the Audience?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All of us, people of different races and cultures.• Friendship does not recognize color or race.• Young and older people.
What is the Purpose?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To help us understand trust, love, and acceptance.• To learn more about other cultures.• To accept each other.• The author uses colorful language and speaks from her heart.
What is the Subject?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Friendship.• Love.• Acceptance.• Family.• Diversity.

Example for Secondary Grades:



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Example for Secondary Grades: *Copper Sun* by Sharon Draper.

SOAPS	
Who is the Speaker?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anani, a slave girl.• Fifteen years old, from Africa, taken involuntarily from her homeland and sold as a slave in America.• A frightened but strong slave girl.• A slave becoming a survivor.
What is the Occasion?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Slavery.• Mid-1700's.• Author was inspired by her trip to Ghana.• White strangers arriving at Anani's remote village in Africa.• The slave ship.• The plantations in America.
Who is the Audience?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All readers, especially teens.• All of us need to "feel" what Anani and millions of other slaves felt during the slave trade years.
What is the Purpose?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The story of a teen (15 y.o.) female slave and of her struggle to become free and come out on the other side stronger.• To tell the horrors of slavery. To become a voice for the millions of voiceless slaves.• To educate people about the thousands who died, suffered, and endured slavery.• To give honor to so many who were not honored.• To increase our awareness of social injustices.• To never forget the past.• To not underestimate the price of freedom.
What is the Subject?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• African slave trade.• Slavery.• Freedom.• Friendship.• Hope in hopeless situations.• Inhumanity, degradation, greed, and racial and social injustice.

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Additional Instructional Extensions:

Teaching students how to identify the “author’s tone” will help them to “listen for the author’s tone” in written text. This is a challenging task and it requires critical thinking skills. Students often have difficulties with identifying tone as it is not stated explicitly in written text. A reader will have to infer the author’s tone by looking at certain details while reading the text. As students learn how to identify the author’s tone, they will develop better understanding of text. Identifying the author’s tone will help readers to:

- Clarify the author’s attitude toward the topic/subject.
- Is the author emotional, objective, or biased about this topic/subject?
- What types of details, language, and sentence structure “tell” the author’s feelings about the topic/subject?
- If you were the author and were to read the passage aloud, describe the tone of his/her

voice.

Assessment:

Focus on observation, anecdotal note taking, and listen to students as they use and discuss SOAPS individually or in their small group. Use the SOAPS template as a form of informal assessment and assess what aspects of the SOAPS are more challenging for students to identify. Then, teach those elements of text using a variety of texts (narrative and expository). Review students' discussions and reflections to provide additional feedback, teaching, and support as needed.

Resources:

A lesson for Grades 9-12 using the SOAPS strategy.

http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=942

Strategies for reading comprehension.

<http://www.readingquest.org/strat/>

Comprehension Instruction: What Makes Sense Now, What Might Make Sense Soon: An article by Michael Pressley.

http://www.readingonline.org/articles/art_index.asp?HREF=handbook/pressley/index.html

Modeling what good readers do by Cris Tovani.

www.adlit.org/multimedia/Modeling_What_Good_Readers_Do

A report on the benefits of questioning the author reading strategy.

www.fcrr.org/FCRRReports/PDF/QuestioningAuthorFinal.pdf

Learn about how to question the author.

<http://www.adlit.org/strategies/19796>

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