

Close Reading Of Informational Texts: Assessment-Driven Instruction In Grades 3-9
by Sunday Cummins A Review by Joan E. Masaryk

This book takes on the incredible challenge of demonstrating how to enable students to grapple with informational text, to read across a range of informational sources in order to engage in complex problem solving.

Sunday Cummins accomplishes this by incorporating essential best practices. These include an assessment-driven structured approach to teaching which include the following components: (page 12)

- Assessment of students' strength and needs
- Lesson preparation and text study
- A focus lesson - explaining the instructional objectives and modeling
- Guided practice
- Independent practice
- Student self-assessment

Cummins demonstrates brilliantly the characteristics of each of these components for whole class, ELL, and Special Ed. This demonstration includes teacher preparation for lessons, lesson plans, many examples of students' work and valuable follow-up resources.

She shows how writing also is an important component of teaching. (page 33) Writing during reading helps us keep track of what is important. Writing after reading is an important tool for deepening our understanding of text.

On page 111, Cummins notes the importance of assessing student responses during Guided Reading. She shows how to use those assessments to guide teacher support by responding with carefully crafted language. "*Tell me more. What made you think that? What can you do to solve the problem?*" are some examples of teacher language that can help students succeed.

The resources in this book are extremely valuable. Page 63 gives many examples of possible prompts for coaching. Page 64 lists descriptions of the stages of development in students' written responses (attempting, approaching, meeting, exceeding). There are plenty of students' examples and suggestions for both recognizing a student's present development and how to support students in moving to a higher level.

I was especially impressed with how in Chapter 4 Cummins demonstrates how to use text features such as titles, headlines, photos, captions, charts, maps, diagrams, to understand the central ideas of the text.

Self-monitoring is also essential for student learning. Page 119 gives codes for helping students' monitor their thinking and wonderful examples of how to implement with students: + new information, * I already know this information, ? I wonder, ! Wow

The lessons and assessments in this book are **outstanding**. Cummins shows multiple ways to help teachers assess, plan, coach, and guide students to success. Each lesson's focus is on critical thinking about text and about processing how one reads. I find very

powerful her lessons on interactive read-alouds that model critical thinking and invite student engagement.

In the past, students read text and answered questions or submitted a summary. The demand today is far more complex. Students need to read to establish the author's purpose, identify the central ideas, give evidence supporting purpose, what is important, draw conclusions and contrasts, and identify writer's craft. Students need to express these complex ideas through both oral and written language. Sunday Cummins' book thoroughly and brilliantly addresses all these concerns with assessments, lesson plans, reflections, and student work based on research and experience. I have only touched on a few of the treasures in this book. This book is a valuable tool for all educators and a **must** for staff development and student teachers.