



# Social Studies Strategies: Paraphrasing

## What:

*Paraphrasing* is a strategy to help students to understand information given in a text or problem.

## Why:

Students usually have difficulty restating information in their own words, and often resort to plagiarism to disguise this difficulty. *Paraphrasing* enables students to understand and summarize information from either a text or problem.

## How:

Explain that *paraphrasing* means putting another person's ideas into the reader's or listener's own words. This involves thinking about meaning of the text or problem before writing a summary or solving the problem. To do this well, the student must have at least a general purpose for reading the text or doing the problem so that they can understand what the information means.

*Active Prior Knowledge:* Ask students to identify what they know and want to know about the topic or concept.

### *Set Purpose:*

- Place the text or problem into the broader context. Read the title of the passage and have students identify a purpose for reading. If there is no title, ask students to identify the broad topic or concept that they are currently studying to identify a purpose for the problem.
- Identify a general purpose for the text or problem. In processing text, the general purpose is to understand what the information means so that it can be used in the future. In problem solving, the general purpose is to understand the problem in order to solve it.

### *Read:*

- Have students read or listen to the text or problem. Reading the text or problem out loud helps students because they can hear it as well as see it as it is read.
- After reading or listening, have students put the text or problem away and write or discuss what they remember.
- Have them retell the text or problem using the author's own words. The retelling should be shorter than the original text or problem, but must include key words used by the author.



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## *Summing It Up:*

- In order to demonstrate their learning, have students restate the text or the problem in their own words.
- In order to practice paraphrasing, have students restate and transform the text or problem in one of several ways:
  - Restating or rewriting a statement as a question.
  - Restating or rewriting a question as a statement.
  - Restating it as a visual presentation (picture, drawing, diagram, etc.)
  - Restating it by acting out the text or problem.
- Use paraphrasing often so students can practice all the different ways of restating in order to demonstrate their understanding of a text or problem.

## **When:**

Use the *Paraphrasing* strategy when students are having difficulty understanding a concept or processing text. The strategy can also be used before and during the gathering and summarizing of information and during the research process.