

A Few General Question Sheets for Thinking Through Narratives

Based on *The Art of Comprehension* by Trevor A. Bryan

Dear Educators, Parents, and Students!

What an unbelievable situation we find ourselves in. First, above all else, I hope that you and your loved ones, and those in your community are safe and healthy. I can't even begin to imagine how difficult this situation is for some.

I put this packet together hoping that, in some way, it could be helpful. Being that everyone's circumstances are different, I don't want to say how it should be used. I think it could be utilized in a variety of ways by educators, parents, and even students themselves. I tried to write it in a way that is as friendly to as wide an audience as possible.

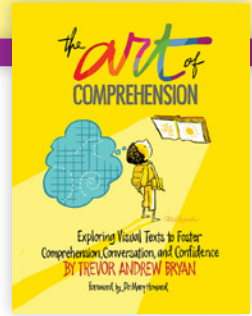
The document is broken into six sections. These sections could be introduced/done one at a time, a couple at a time, or – if being used by older students – possibly all at once. Again, there is not a singular, “correct” way to use these.

If you have questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to me. I can be found on Twitter, Facebook, through the Stenhouse website, or through my blog, Four O'Clock Faculty. I'm also happy to meet up virtually if you and your colleagues need help getting started. Also, if you find these documents to be helpful, please feel free to share them.

Stay safe! Stay healthy!

Trevor @trevorabryan





SECTION ONE:

Getting Started

Stories are told through mood. This means that how characters feel and why they feel the way they do is essential to comprehending narratives. By monitoring how a character feels and why and how their moods change over the course of a story, readers and audiences will not only have a concrete way to work toward comprehending narratives, they will also have a way to think concretely about how the narratives were crafted and structured.

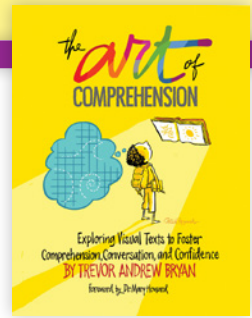
On the following page is an illustrated version of the Access Lenses, illustrated by Peter H. Reynolds. Whether you are reading a picture book, a graphic novel, chapter book, or watching a movie or TV show, you can use the Access Lenses to help you find textual evidence that helps you think about and identify (infer) how characters are feeling and why they may be feeling that way.

The first three lenses—Facial Expressions, Action/Body Language, and Colors—are generally the easiest to use. So if you are new to using the Access Lenses and thinking about narratives through mood, these three lenses might be the easiest place to start.

How characters are feeling and why they are feeling that way helps put you into the heart of the story.

To see some examples of how these Access Lenses work with texts, you can visit Trevor Bryan's YouTube channel at:

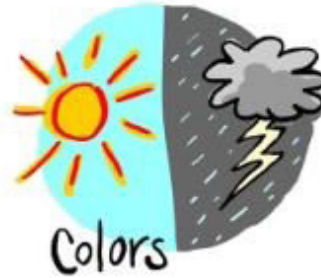
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCuO4tG5Lfitzn3emOg_3r-Q



the ACCESS LENSES

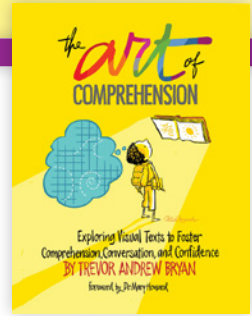
Thinking about **MOODS** is an excellent way to access a text.

Artists, Writers & Performers show **MOODS** using the following information...



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Don't forget to make strong connections through moods, lenses and symbols.



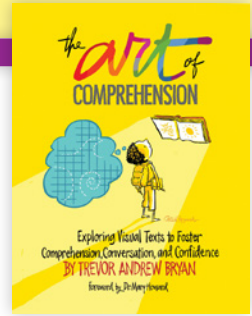
SECTION ONE:

Getting Started Question and Answer Sheet

Once you have a narrative selected—either one you chose, or one assigned by your teacher—start reading or watching and answer the questions below. Remember, your thinking should focus mainly on the main character(s) or how other characters are feeling about the main character(s). Use the Access Lenses to help you to think about key details that are written, drawn, or acted that will give you clues about the mood. Oh, and don't forget about the music in TV shows and movies!

1. How is the main character feeling or how are the main characters feeling?

2. If applicable, how are other characters feeling about the main character?

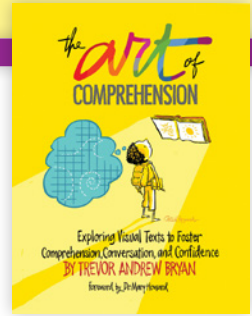


3. What Access Lenses did you notice that the author, actor or illustrator use to help you know how the main character or characters are feeling?

4. Why is (are) the main character(s) feeling this way?

5. If applicable, why are other characters feeling the way they are about the main character(s)?

Note: For shorter, simpler narratives questions number 2 and 5 might not be applicable. Sometimes you will only have to focus on questions 1, 3, and 4.



SECTION TWO:

Making Predictions

In narratives, moods change. One way to think about making a prediction is to think about what would make a character's mood change. For instance, if a character is feeling upset because no one wants to play with them, an event that would change their mood is if someone asked them to play. Good predictions take the character's mood, and what is causing their mood, into account.

There are two main story or chapter structures that often occur:

Moods usually go from **negative to positive**, for example:

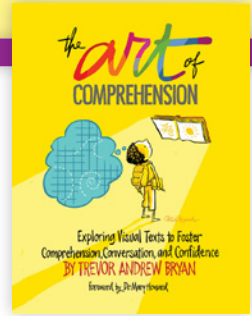
- Sad to happy
- Left out to included
- Stuck to unstuck
- Nervous to confident

Or Moods go from **positive to negative to positive**, for example:

- Excited to disappointed to happy
- Confident to disaster to wiser
- Normal to crazy back to a new normal (and changed)

In longer stories, chapters or scenes can go from **positive to negative** too.

These aren't the only ways that moods can go, but hopefully they get you started thinking about how some of your favorite stories are structured. The important thing is to start noticing that moods change, why they changed, and how the author, actor, or illustrator showed the mood change.



SECTION TWO:

Making Predictions Answer Sheet

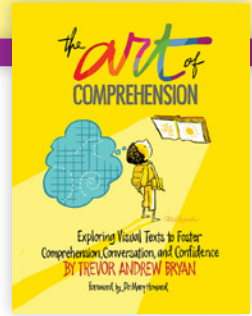
Once you have identified the mood of a character or characters and what is causing their mood, think about what would cause their mood to change. Remember, link your prediction to both the mood and the cause. For instance, if a character is feeling frustrated because they can't ride their bicycle, a good prediction would be that someone comes to help them (a symbol of hope) or that someone gives them a new way to practice so they can be successful or that they take a break and come back later when they are ready.

Mood:

The reason for the mood:

Prediction Time!

What could cause the character's mood to change?



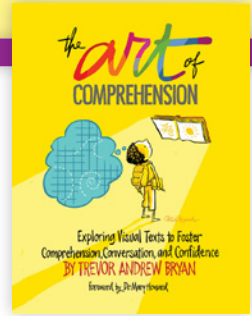
SECTION THREE:

The Next Mood...

Once you've identified a mood, what is causing the mood, and maybe even made a prediction, your next job as a reader or audience member is to identify the next mood or a change in the mood. You can use the same questions that you thought about earlier when reading the beginning to do this work.

Identifying when and/or why moods are established and how and/or why they change is one way to help think about key moments in stories.

- 1. How is the main character feeling or how are the main characters feeling?**
- 2. How are other characters feeling about the main character?**
- 3. What Access Lenses did you notice that the author, actor or illustrator use to help you know how the main character or characters are feeling?**
- 4. Why is the main character(s) feeling the way they are?**
- 5. Why are other characters feeling the way they are about the main character?**



SECTION FOUR:

Identifying Themes Through Mood

One way to think about themes or big ideas is to combine a character's mood and what is causing their mood. For example, imagine that the main character in a story felt nervous because it was their first day of school and they didn't know anyone.

Mood: Nervous, scared

Reason for the mood: They are going to a new school and don't know anyone.

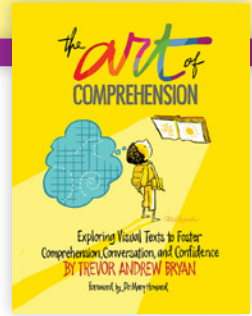
Theme or Big Idea: When we go somewhere new and don't know anyone, it can make us feel nervous or even scared.

Now let's imagine that this same character was having a terrible morning until another student asked her to play at recess and they became friends (change of mood).

Mood: Happy, included, relieved

Reason for the mood: Someone reached out and included them.

Theme or Big Idea: When someone is lonely or nervous, one person can change their whole day.



SECTION FOUR:

Identifying Themes Through Moods Answer Sheet

Once you've identified a mood and what is causing the mood, combine them into a sentence that makes it less specific and more universal. One trick that may help is to start with what is causing the mood and then state how it can make us feel.

Mood: Excited

Reason for the mood: Grandma sent a surprise package in the mail.

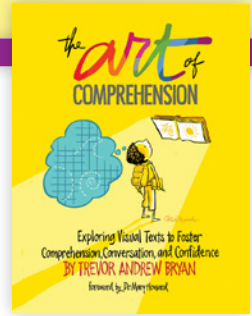
Theme or Big Idea: When we receive an unexpected gift, it can make us feel excited.

Your Turn!!

Mood:

Reason for the mood:

Rewrite it into a Universal Theme or Big Idea:



SECTION FIVE:

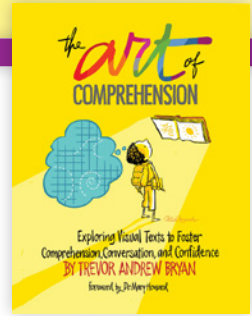
Identifying Symbols

Two kinds of symbols that you can look for in narratives are symbols of hope and support (positive symbols) or symbols of obstruction and destruction (negative symbols). Another character, a setting, an event, or an object can be a positive or negative symbol.

If a character(s), setting, event, or object impacts the character's mood then it can be thought of as symbolic. For instance, in the previous example of the character being nervous for her first day at a new school, the school—a setting—could be thought of as a negative symbol because it made the girl feel nervous or scared. Similarly, the first day at the school—an event—could also be thought of as a negative symbol because of how it negatively impacted the girl.

The classmate that invited the girl to play and who made her feel happy and included, could be thought of as a positive symbol (hope and support) because she changed the girl's mood. Presumably, this character also changed the symbolism of the school for our main character from a negative to a positive place.

Most stories will have negative and positive symbols. And just like with moods, symbols often change from negative to positive or from positive to negative. Thinking about symbols and how they impact the characters, especially the main character, is a good thing to think about as a reader or audience member.



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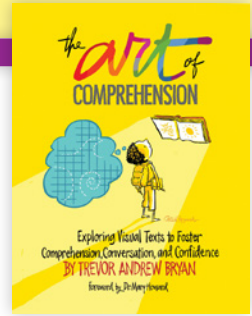
Identifying Symbols Answer Sheet

Once you have identified a mood of a character or characters think about what is causing the character(s) to feel that way. Ask yourself if they are feeling positive (a good mood) or negative (a bad mood). Whatever it is that is making the character feel this way, another character, a setting, an event, or an object can be thought of as a symbol.

Identify a character(s) mood:

Explain whether it is another character(s), a setting, an event, or object that is causing the character to feel that way:

Explain why this character(s), setting, event, or object is a positive or negative symbol:



SECTION SIX:

Making Connections Through Mood and Symbols

Making meaningful connections to narratives is an important part of being a reader or audience member. There are three main types of connections that you can make: text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world.

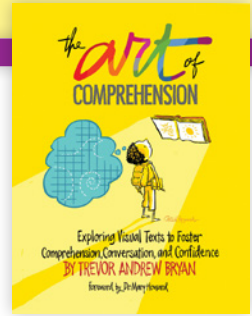
Text-to-text: A text-to-text connection is one where the text that you are reading or watching reminds you of another book, article, TV show, or movie.

Text-to-self: A text-to-self connection is one where the text that you are reading or watching reminds you of something from your own life.

Text-to-world: A text-to-world connection is one where the text that you are reading or watching reminds you of something from out in the world, perhaps a famous person or a news event.

One way to think about making a connection is to think about the mood of the character and what is causing the mood (a symbol) and make a connection to either the mood or symbol.

For instance, to make a **text-to-self** connection to a character who is feeling peaceful and relaxed at the beach, think of a place that makes you feel relaxed, perhaps it's the beach or perhaps it's somewhere else. In this sense, you are connecting to the mood and to a symbol because wherever your place is that makes you feel relaxed is a symbol of relaxation.



SECTION SIX:

Making Connections Through Moods and Symbols Answer Sheet

Once you have identified a mood and what is causing the mood in a character or characters, think of a time that you have felt the same way and what has made you feel that way. If you can, then this is an example of making a **text-to-self** connection.

Once you have identified a mood and what is causing the mood in a character or characters, think of a character or characters from another story, TV show, or movie that feels a similar way for a similar reason. If you can, then this is an example of making a **text-to-text** connection.

Once you have identified a mood and what is causing the mood in a character or characters, think of a real-life situation where someone, perhaps from the news, has felt similarly for a similar reason. If you can, then this is an example of making a **text-to-world** connection.

Your Turn! Make a text-to-self, text-to-text, or text-to-world connection. Be sure to explain the mood, the reason for the mood in the written or visual text and how these two things are similar to your thinking: