

# Give Students a Tool for Chat Room Discussions about Texts

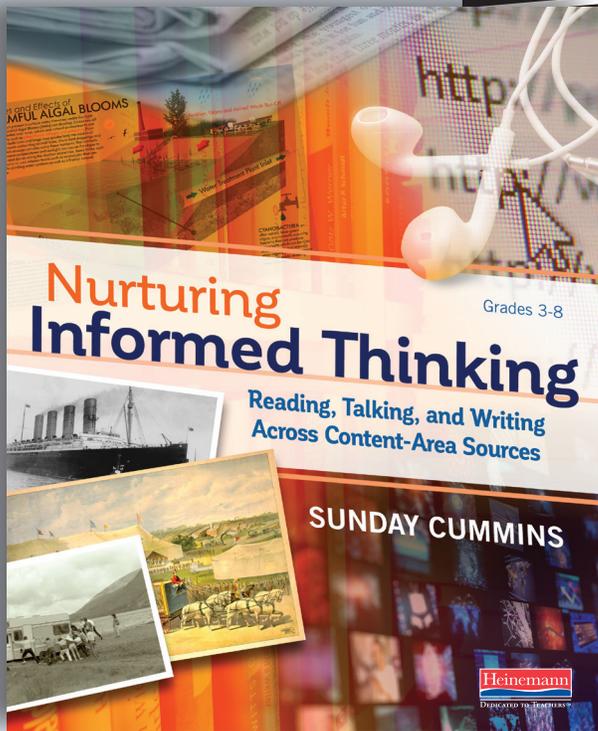


From Sunday Cummins, author of *Nurturing Informed Thinking: Reading, Writing, and Talking Across Content-Area Sources*

## A Note from Sunday Cummins

**Constructive student-led conversations about texts** can be hard to nurture in-person and may prove even harder as students meet in virtual chat rooms this school year. To give students a way into the conversation, consider repurposing a familiar tool. The lesson that follows shows how to use the THIEVES mnemonic, which was originally designed to help students make predictions about a text based on its **T**itle, **H**eadings, **I**ntroduction, **E**very first sentence, **V**isuals and vocabulary, and **E**nd of text, as well as the students' own initial **S**ummary of their thinking. In this new context, though, students can use THIEVES as a way to start conversations before they read sources on a topic and then continue that conversation after reading. Below I've included suggestions for how to integrate THIEVES into virtual student-led conversations:

- After students have read (or viewed) and discussed the first source in a set, teach them how to use the THIEVES mnemonic collaboratively to preview and make predictions about what they might learn in a second source.
- With older students, encourage one member of each group to share their screen and document their predictions using a word processing program.
- Encourage students to use the lesson's list of "Questions to Push Kids' Thinking" to sustain conversations with each other before, during, and after reading or viewing each source.
- Engage students in conversations about how to use the THIEVES mnemonic flexibly. Pose questions for the groups to discuss like:
  - What is the value in using THIEVES as a conversation tool? What thinking or learning did you gain with your peers that you might not have gained on your own?
  - How can we use THIEVES (and what we have learned in other sources on a particular topic) with a variety of sources including infographics and video?
  - Do we need to look at every single feature listed in the THIEVES mnemonic? What is just enough to help us get a conversation started? Or to get our own analysis of a source started?



## Lesson 2

## Lesson Idea 3

# Be THIEVES to Make Informed Predictions

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### TYPE OF SOURCE

Two texts with multiple features (e.g., title, subheadings, visuals) that can be previewed before reading

### TIME

Two 40-minute lessons

### STRATEGY

Students use the THIEVES mnemonic (adapted from Manz 2002).

### GETTING READY

1. **Select sources:** This strategy works best with texts on a similar topic that have strong features. The examples in this lesson are about the impact of the ivory trade.

2. **Study the sources:**

- What is an important question that is answered in both texts that can serve as the purpose for reading? A question for the sample articles might be *What is being done to save the elephants?*
- How will the title and features in the second text trigger your students' thinking about what they read in the first text?
- Will the features or first sentence in each section of the text offer similar information, add to information from the first text in some way, or maybe even offer contrasting information?

3. **Prepare materials:** Create an anchor chart for the THIEVES mnemonic (see Figure 3.5) or copy bookmarks the students can easily reference. Provide access to both texts and a simple way for students to

write notes about their predictions—on sticky notes or lined paper.

### BEGINNING THE LESSON

*I think of thieves as people who feel like they need something to get ahead in life. We can get ahead of an author by being THIEVES—by previewing the text before we read it. Then we will know a little bit about what we are going to learn when we read the text. When we do this again with a second text, we'll also be thinking about what we learned from the first text.*

Refer to the anchor chart or the bookmark and

briefly discuss each part of a text that can be previewed—title, headings, introduction, every first sentence in a section, visuals and vocabulary, and end of the text. Highlight the last step—*summarize*—by discussing how readers can summarize their predictions or what they have learned based on their preview of the text.



**Figure 3.5 THIEVES Mnemonic Classroom Bookmark (Cummins 2017)**

## Teaching with Source 1

Let's use *THIEVES* to help us preview. We can start by looking at the title to think about the topic or central idea.

Think aloud with the text (see Figure 3.6). For example: *The title says, "Cracking Down on the Illegal Ivory Market Is Key to Saving Elephants." I think this is going to be about the ivory tusks that elephants are frequently killed for. A "market" is a means for selling something. Maybe the author is going to tell me about dealing with or getting rid of these ways people sell ivory illegally. I'm wondering, if it were harder to sell ivory, would people not kill elephants? I have some idea of what this text might be about and how it might help me understand our question about saving the elephants. Let's look back at the *THIEVES* chart to see what else we might preview.*

Continue guiding the students to use *THIEVES* to preview and predict. Ask the students how just previewing the text helps them begin thinking about how to answer their essential question. Capture predictions in writing, as a group or individually. Let the students read independently to confirm, expand on, or adjust their predictions and discuss or write in response to the essential question.

**Figure 3.6**  
Examples of a title and headings that students might preview using the *THIEVES* mnemonic

### Cracking down on the illegal ivory market is key to saving elephants

By Daniel Stiles, The Guardian, adapted by Newsela staff  
11/29/2016

Word Count 852

It appears certain that almost all legal domestic ivory markets will be closed in an effort to protect elephants.

This is plan A for a large group of animal rights and welfare organizations. The goal is to stop elephant poaching, or illegal hunting. Animal rights leaders share the belief that legal trade provides cover for illegal trade. They also believe legal sales increase demand.

Get rid of legal trade, say supporters, and fewer people will buy ivory products. Ivory is made from elephant tusks. Any elephant ivory seen for sale will be illegal. This clarity will make it easy for law enforcement to take action and for consumers to avoid buying an illegal product.

#### Sale Of Ivory Around The World Will End

Increasingly this is a majority position. In September, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature recommended closing the sale of ivory around the world. In October, a similar proposal was adopted at the 17th Conference of the Parties of CITES. It is the international convention that regulates wildlife trade.

Animal welfare proponents believe that selling ivory legally creates a cover for laundering. Laundering the ivory means hiding where it came from.

"It's a pity that countries with existing legal domestic ivory markets ignored the risks legal markets may bring to elephant populations," said Grace Ge Gabriel. She works for the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW). The illegal laundering is made to look like legal selling, she said.

#### Most Countries Are On Board

President Xi Jinping of China and U.S. President Barack Obama announced last year that they would stop ivory sales, as far as national laws in each country would allow. They apparently agree with the argument of the Wildlife Conservation Society and IFAW that legal trade promotes illegal trade. Most European Union countries are also further restricting sales of ivory. In Africa, all but a few countries have banned ivory trade, as have most countries in Asia.

In the near future, there is a good chance that almost all major ivory-buying countries will have domestic ivory bans in place. So, will these bans solve the elephant poaching problem? Probably not.

Tom Milliken is an ivory expert from the wildlife trade monitoring group Traffic. He said all the protection in the world is not going to make up for poor law enforcement, widespread dishonesty and weak management.

#### Demand For Ivory In China Is High

I led a study of the drivers of ivory demand in eastern Asia in 2015. We found that roughly 200 metric tons (440,925 pounds) of illegal ivory were smuggled annually into China-Hong Kong from 2009 to 2014. This time is considered the peak of the elephant poaching crisis. We estimated that only about 10 metric tons (22,046 pounds) of it was processed a year to meet consumer demand. The balance of 190 metric tons (418,878 pounds) a year was most likely stockpiled by speculators. These were people apparently betting that ivory prices would remain high.

The study estimated that about 3.5 metric tons (7,716 pounds) of ivory was consumed in China legally each year. It came from ivory purchased in 2008 in Africa in a CITES-approved sale. That makes total consumer consumption about 13.5 metric tons (29,762 pounds) a year in China. Doing the math, three-quarters by weight of all ivory sold in China was illegal from 2009 to 2014.

If you count by pieces rather than weight, more than 90 percent of ivory sold in China was illegal. That's because legal outlets produce and sell much larger pieces than illegal ones. Illegal markets sell more jewelry items and trinkets, which weigh less.

#### Cracking Down On The Black Market

What is the plan B solution for closing the illegal market in China? The country takes in an estimated 70 percent of all poached elephant tusks from Africa. Closing the legal market will account for only 10 percent of the ivory consumed in China. The illegal ivory that consumers buy will increase from 90 to 100 percent of the market. Have the groups that want close legal ivory markets made plans for stopping the much larger black market?

I posed this question to Alexander Rhodes, head of Stop Ivory, at the 105-metric ton (231,485-pound) ivory-burning event in Kenya last April. Stop Ivory is a close partner with WCS and IFAW. He said, "Yes, that is something to think about."

Studies have found that the majority of illegal ivory is sold online in secret chat rooms and through social media sites. It is difficult to monitor those sites.

#### Elephants Will Still Be Illegally Killed

The goal of a total ban on legal international and domestic ivory markets is in sight. However, waving the victory flags is perhaps hasty. Elephants still have to worry that their tusks will continue supplying the huge black market. The difference is that they will come exclusively from illegal killing.

If speculation and stockpiling of tusks, rather than high demand, is driving poaching, plan B must take this fact into consideration. Plan B had better be good.

*Daniel Stiles has been investigating ivory markets around the world for more than 15 years.*

## SOURCE 1

## Teaching with Source 2

We can use what we learned in the first text to help us make informed predictions about a second text on the same topic. One way we can do this is to be THIEVES again. We'll think about what we learned in Source 1 while we preview Source 2.

Here's an example of a think-aloud with the second article: *The title is "Saving Africa's Elephants," so I'm already thinking about what I learned in the first text. I'm wondering if this article will address the legal and illegal sales of ivory.*

Continue guiding the students in previewing the text and making comparisons. Figure 3.7 shows examples of the kinds of annotations we might model writing or thinking aloud about in front of students or that students might make on their own. Ask the students to read and annotate the second text, keeping in mind the purpose for reading as well as new information they are learning.

Encourage small-group student-led discussion of the similarities and differences between the texts. You might refer back to the purpose question, asking students to think about what they learned in response to that question.

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**Figure 3.7**  
Excerpts from  
"Saving Africa's  
Elephants"  
(Scholastic  
News 2017) with  
examples of  
annotations

The screenshot shows a news article titled "Saving Africa's Elephants" dated January 18, 2017. The article discusses the impact of ivory bans on elephant populations in Africa. Handwritten annotations in green sticky notes are placed over the text and images. One note says, "The 1st article did not include info about where elephants lived." with an arrow pointing to a map of Africa. Another note says, "The 1st article did not mention burning ivory tusks. I wonder if this discourages the illegal sale of ivory." with an arrow pointing to a photo of a ranger watching a fire. A third note says, "This may have to do with ban I read about in 1st article." with an arrow pointing to the article's title. A fourth note says, "The 1st author said we have to crack down on illegal sales or there's no hope." with an arrow pointing to the article's title. The article text includes: "China bans the trading of ivory to help protect elephants. Last month, the worldwide effort to save elephants took a big step forward when China banned the buying and selling of ivory, which comes from elephant tusks. China, the world's largest market for ivory, is the latest country to outlaw the ivory business. In July 2016, the United States toughened its laws on trading ivory. The goal of these bans is to help save Africa's elephants before they become extinct. Global demand for ivory leads to tens of thousands of elephants being killed each year for their tusks. This latest move by China is partly the result of an agreement it made with the U.S. in 2015. That year, President Barack Obama and China's president pledged to work together to end the ivory trade in their countries. Wildlife conservation groups have praised both countries' actions. Carter Roberts, the president of the World Wildlife Fund, stated that China's ivory ban "is a game changer for elephant conservation." The End of Elephants? At one time, African elephants numbered in the millions. Today, experts estimate that fewer than 500,000 are left. Years of illegal hunting by poachers have put elephants at risk of vanishing. A survey released this past August called the Great Elephant Census shows just how dire (extremely serious) the situation is. The number of Africa's savanna elephants dropped by one-third since 2007. "Sadly, wherever these animals exist in the wild, they are threatened," says Andrea Heydlauff, who works for a conservation group called 500 Elephants. To help save elephants, nations around the world signed an agreement in 1989. That made it illegal to buy or sell most ivory taken from elephants after that year. But these rules haven't stopped poachers. Every day, about 100 elephants in Africa are

SOURCE 2

## Questions to Push Kids' Thinking

- *How does what you previewed in Source 2 connect with what you learned in Source 1?*
- *Let's look at this feature (e.g., title, heading, photograph) in Source 2 together and think about how this compares to what we learned in Source 1.*
- *Were your predictions about the second source confirmed? Or did you need to adjust them?*
- *How do both texts help you answer the essential question?*

## When Texts Are Tricky

- The topics for these two texts do not have to be exactly the same. They could simply complement each other. For example, one teacher chose an informational article on how buildings are engineered to withstand earthquakes and then a second text that was a short fictitious story about the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. Students used what they learned in the informational article to help them make predictions about what they would be reading in the story.
- Not every text has the features in the THIEVES mnemonic. Teach students to be flexible in their use of THIEVES. Students do not have to preview the source using each part of the mnemonic in a lockstep fashion, and they do not have to preview every part of the source. The goal is for students to be strategic and make informed predictions. For more information, see a blog entry I wrote on this topic at <http://bit.ly/2F1kyBX>.