

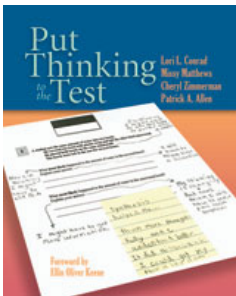
Professional Booklist



Better Answers: Written Performance That Looks Good and Sounds Smart, by Ardith Davis Cole, 2nd ed. (Portland, ME: Stenhouse, 2009)

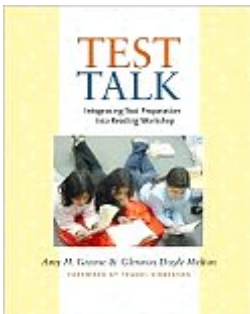
In *Better Answers*, Ardith Davis Cole presents a five-step protocol for producing effective written-response answers that can be used across the curriculum. Through vignettes and suggested activities, Cole shows how to use a scaffolded instructional framework to help students "look good and sound smart." Topics include recognizing thick questions, which call for an in-depth response, and thin questions, which elicit a brief response. Cole also suggests that students make an "answer sandwich"—a graphic tool that helps students remember to restate the question, provide a gist answer, give evidence for the answer, and refer to the question again for a concluding statement. Extensive appendices offer additional lesson plans, sample responses, assessment tools, and resources for high-interest stories, essays, and articles. The new edition has been reorganized making it even easier to use. Lessons have been added specifically addressing self-based and text-based responses. A CD is also included featuring everything needed to teach the Better Answers protocol: lesson plans, charts, visuals, classroom PowerPoint slides and more. Slated to be released in mid-January, the second edition is currently available online:

<http://www.stenhouse.com/0748.asp?r=n154>



Put Thinking to the Test, by Lori L. Conrad, Missy Matthews, Cheryl Zimmerman, and Patrick A. Allen. (Stenhouse Publishers, Portland, ME, 2008)

The same comprehension/thinking strategies that we teach to help students become proficient readers can help them think through standardized tests in all subject areas. The authors advocate thoughtfully using released test items to teach students about format and content issues along with test-specific vocabulary and procedural issues. They address the importance of stamina and show how to use workshop structures to develop "stick-with-it-ness." Detailed craft lessons demonstrate how strategy instruction in questioning, mental images, inferring, synthesizing, background knowledge, determining importance, and self-monitoring can be linked to teaching the test as a genre throughout the year. For instance, in talking about thinking as test takers, students may consider "When there's a multistep or multipart question on a test, how does synthesis help us?" Students learn not only to "put thinking to the test," but also the thinking needed to succeed in any learning task.



Test Talk: Integrating Test Preparation into Reading by Amy H. Greene and Glennon Doyle Melton (Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers, 2007)

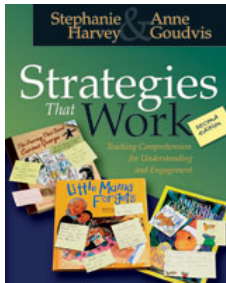
When lower than expected test scores indicated that their school might not meet AYP, the teachers at Annandale Terrace Elementary School responded in a way that significantly increased scores and morale. Agreeing that "hope is not a strategy," the staff set out to teach test taking as a life skill by

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integrating test preparation into their existing reading and writing workshops instead of letting it take over the curriculum.

Fundamental beliefs about preparing students for testing guided their planning: Successful test takers must first be smart readers and be able to translate the “test talk” or unique language of the test. Also, they insisted that learning to be a successful test taker could be fun.

While *Test Talk* does not specifically address constructed response questions, it provides a model of how a staff committed to powerful reading instruction worked together to create fully integrated lessons that made test taking meaningful. Each unit (e.g. inferring, author’s intent) features the same components: an innovative concept review plan, a test talk lesson, and practice with texts. The gradual release of responsibility approach used throughout helps students build their confidence for the actual test.



Strategies That Work: Comprehension for Understanding and Engagement by Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis, 2nd ed. (Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers, 2007)

In this substantially revised edition of their popular resource, Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis offer several new chapters plus twenty comprehension lessons drawn from actual classrooms. A handy, expanded table of contents highlights these additions. The importance of engagement and activating background

knowledge are stressed throughout all the strategies described

The link between the strategy of determining importance and the genre of nonfiction is explored in depth. Explicit techniques for helping students distill the essence of a text by discriminating between key topics and supporting details are shared through numerous examples.

An entire section is devoted to “Comprehension Across the Curriculum.” This section features a chapter entitled “The Genre of Test Reading” that is filled with tips for building good readers and test takers all year long including ways to increase reading stamina and a discussion of the benefits of flooding the room with nonfiction. Using a sample informational passage and its accompanying test questions, the authors provide a detailed example of how they would conduct a test reading mini-lesson. Detailed sidebars and annotations show how they would think through and approach the test themselves.

Appendices provide extensive ideas for nonfiction and fiction reading with annotated lists of great books for teaching content across the curriculum along with suggestions for magazines, newspapers, and websites. A separate appendix provides sample anchor charts for the comprehension strategies.

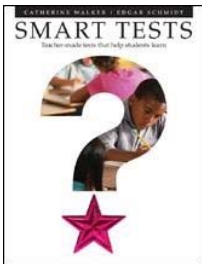
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QAR Now: Question Answer Relationships by Taffy E. Raphael, Kathy Highfield, and Kathryn H. Au (Scholastic, New York, 2006)

Professional resources on reading instruction frequently recommend teaching students to use question-answer relationships (QARs), a research-based comprehension strategy. Twenty-five years of working with QAR have shown the authors that it can provide a powerful and coherent framework for all comprehension instruction. Raphael, Highfield, and Au stress the importance of using the same QAR language for kindergarten through high school. First, students need to understand the two primary-source QARs: In the Book and In My Head. Then, they can move on to the next level, the four core QARs: Right There, Think and Search, Author and Me, and On My Own. A gradual-release-of-responsibility instructional model is offered for teaching students to use QAR to develop the metacognitive knowledge to form their own questions and select appropriate comprehension strategies to answer types of questions posed to them in a variety of contexts.

Raphael, Highfield, and Au offer suggestions for teaching QAR across grades and content areas with example vignettes from middle and high school science classes. Compelling arguments are made for how QAR can be used to deconstruct released items for standardized tests and provide responsible, embedded test preparation across the curriculum. After sharing the story of how one large Chicago school in a high-poverty setting successfully used QAR on a schoolwide basis to focus meaningful instruction on high-level thinking and preparation for high-stakes tests, the authors present additional specific suggestions for using QAR for systematic whole-school change. A teacher study group guide features questions for use before, during, and after reading each chapter.



Smart Tests by Catherine Walker and Edgar Schmidt (Portland, ME: Stenhouse, 2004)

What are smart tests? According to Walker and Schmidt, they are teacher-made tests that provide rich assessment data for making sound judgments about learning. The authors show how to make these tests an engaging, motivating, and integral part of the learning environment. The book provides guidelines for developing good test questions along with useful examples of questions written in various formats. Rubrics are offered for assessing questions that involve various visual organizers. There are tools for teachers, students, and parents. These include a map-your-point organizer, a parent reflection guide, advice on what to do when you're stuck or stressed, and instructions for doing a splashdown or brain drain before answering a constructed-response question. Finally, there are tips for what teachers can do on test day to enhance student performance, as well as guidelines for reporting and using test results. Although the examples are drawn from grades 2-6 classrooms, teachers of older students will find useful ideas for reflecting upon their own assessment practices and for teaching students test smarts that can be applied to tests of all kinds. The book is currently available for preview online at <http://www.stenhouse.com/shop/pc/viewprd.asp?idcategory=58&idproduct=8166>.