Reading Like a Writer: Charting

Charting is an interactive reading–writing strategy that can be used to help students learn to read like writers and, ultimately, improve their own writing. It generates a high level of student engagement with text and helps them delve deeper into an author's meaning and writing style or craft.

Charting models how good readers stop periodically to think as they read. It helps students to further analyze what they have read and deepen their understanding. It is typically used with expository text and helps students develop metacognitive knowledge, which is an awareness and understanding of how one thinks and uses strategies.

In this version, charting involves mapping or graphically representing different aspects of a text to facilitate analysis and evaluation. After students finish a first reading of a text, they can apply the charting strategy as they reread each paragraph. On a graphic organizer, students identify the key ideas, summarize what the author is saying in the paragraph, and develop a deeper understanding of the author's style of writing.

When teaching and using charting, focus on the thinking and reasoning behind responses. If students do not agree, help them to work toward consensus, citing the text as evidence to support their responses. Foster an understanding that there is more than one way to chart a text.

1. First, conduct a first reading of an expository or persuasive essay. Read through the selection once. The purpose of this reading is to gain a general understanding of what the author is saying.

2. Number each paragraph of the essay (write number in margin or on sticky notes). Then, list the paragraph numbers in the first column of the chart.

3. Then, reread each paragraph. Identify key words/phrases in the paragraph. Write the key words/phrases in the second column of the chart. Ask the following questions:

    - What words/phrases are related to the development of the topic?
    - Which words/phrases occur more than once or most often (ignore pronouns and synonyms)?

4. For each paragraph, summarize the content, or what the author is saying, in the corresponding column on the chart.

    - Use the key words/phrases to write a summary statement of the content, or what the author is saying (the essential information in the paragraph). Link the key words with necessary articles and other words needed for coherence. Students may use any form of the key words and may put the words in any order to create a sentence that makes sense and conveys the author's message of the paragraph.
    - Reread the completed summary sentence. Ask questions that include the following:
        - What is the author's message?

- Have I included key words/phrases in my summary statement?
- Have I paraphrased the essential information?

- Revise your summary statement, if necessary.

5. Reread each paragraph. In the Style/Craft column, write what you notice about the author's writing style/craft OR how the paragraphs are written. Ask the following questions:

- What do you notice about the way the author writes?
- How does it affect you, the reader?
- How does the author interest/engage/motivate you?
- Which stylistic devices do you want to try in your own writing?

6. Discuss in groups or as a whole class how the text was charted.

- Summary statements using key words
- Comments on the author's writing style or craft
- Specific techniques and stylistic devices to emulate in your own writing

REFERENCES: Tompkins & Blanchfield, 2005; Jendian, 2007.

Solidarity and Support

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Not since the Great Depression have so many young adults turned to their immediate relatives as an economic lifeline. In the 1960s, for example, independence was the strived-for virtue; returning home, "unthinkable." If children didn't grow up, find jobs and live independently, parents were seen as enablers, the children as failures. That stigmatized view has faded fast during the recession.

Family of origin has become a lifeboat for roughly one in five 25- to 34-year-olds who move in with parents to wait out the economic storm. Sure, there are potential complications and emotional minefields left over from the parenting years, but once the kinks are sorted out, the benefits for young and old are clear.

Some argue that living with parents stunts development and prolongs adolescence. I see the camaraderie as an opportunity to get to know each other in ways not possible when living together as parent and child. Delayed maturity in young adults happens only if parents continue to cater to their adult children's needs as if they were still 10-year-olds. Living with parents as young adults provides the chance to know parents as people and similarly for parents to see their adult children as grownups with ideas, skills and talents to admire.

Bunking in with parents allows struggling young adults to save for an apartment or house, to hold out until they find a meaningful job, or to start to pay down student loans — the average being $24,000, but soaring over $100,000 for some. In return, most adult children assist parents in-kind.

Rather than having a negative effect, the recession has renewed values with the emphasis on family solidarity and support. The advantages of the multigenerational family, a model immigrant families have always practiced, will keep more parents and young adults together. Even when young adults can afford a place of their own, many say, "I'm still here." Money will be saved on housing but will be spent on consumer goods, aiding the economy. However, living under the same roof for the long or short haul will remain a configuration that defines American families in the foreseeable future.

REFERENCE: Newman, 2011. Reprinted with permission from *The New York Times*.

Charting Graphic Organizer

¶	Key Words and Phrases	Content (essential information)	Author's Style or Craft (stylistic devices)
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