

## Group Memory

Writing is something we think of having our students do after reading as a response to literature. Group Memory incorporates writing as a collaborative prereading activity suitable for use when students have some background knowledge or even some misassumption about the topic they will be studying. This is an ideal strategy to provide writing across the curriculum opportunities for your students. **Group Memory** builds on and links the prior knowledge students have to the new information in the reading. This is an essential component for comprehension to happen. It further sets the stage for students to develop questions about what they want to learn, which facilitates setting purposes for reading.

The following are the steps for **Group Memory**:

1. **Write.** The directions for students are “Write anything you know about the topic. Write what you know in narrative form using sentences. You have three minutes.” The actual process of having students write what they know in narrative form makes clear the notion that to really know something you need to be able to paraphrase and state it in your own language. For younger children, we ask them to **Draw** what they know about the topic.
2. **List individual questions .** “At the bottom of your paper list some questions that you have about the topic that you would like answered.”
3. **Share or borrow.** “Next in groups read your paper to your group. As each person shares you may borrow, or write down anything you were reminded of or knew but may have forgotten to write down.”

At this point have students share what they noticed when they shared in their groups. By having students describe the process, we are able to point out and help students become aware of the value of taking time before reading to write about and discuss what they know. Eventually our goal is to have students internalize this procedure, so that will become strategic readers and take the time to evaluate and consider their prior knowledge when they are reading on their own without the support of the teacher.

4. **Compile group questions.** Students then compile their unanswered questions and share them with the whole class. We record these questions, as a class, on the board or butcher paper. These are the students’ own purpose setting questions for the reading and studying they are about to do. Helping students to transfer the responsibility for asking questions and seeking information is a powerful way of fostering strategic independent reading. The important part of this process is developing student-centered questions.
5. **Check questions that were answered.** After reading, students return to their individual questions, discuss as a group, and mark those that were answered. These **Group Memory Sheets** are then stapled together and turned in when everyone in the group is finished.

Many of the questions students pose may not be answered in the literature. These unanswered questions become topics of research projects. We find out who is interested in pursuing some of this information as part of a cooperative research project. Students select topics that interest them, become specialists on particular aspects of a topic, and make unique brief presentations to the class.