

Analyzing Documents

Purpose

Students will analyze the differences in structure and purpose between various categories of informational materials.

Materials

For the class: seven different types of informational materials, such as history textbook, newspaper, newsmagazine, manual for a VCR or videodisc player, encyclopedia volume, TV listings guide, foreign language dictionary; seven rulers; copies of Black Line Master (BLM) *Earthling Document Analysis*; pens or pencils

Activity

A. Pre-Activity Preparation and Discussion

1. Ask students to list different types of printed information. Help students to think of less obvious ones, such as menus, maps, and grade reports.
2. Focus on a few of the publications students mentioned. For each one, ask students to identify its purpose and describe how it meets that purpose. Ask students to describe the way in which each publication organizes information (e.g., the purpose of a menu is to identify what kind of food is for sale – items are grouped according to type, such as appetizer or entrée, so diners can find the kind of food they want for each part of their meal).

B. Analyze Informational Materials

1. Form seven groups of students.
2. Tell students to imagine that they are all teams of anthropologists from another galaxy. Explain that they read some English, but they do not know much about the different publications that Earthlings produce. Explain that their task is to examine an Earth publication and report on it to their colleagues (the larger class).
3. Explain that each team will get one type of publication to analyze. Direct teams to look at how information is organized and determine what the publication's purpose might be.
4. Give each group one publication and a ruler and have each student complete a copy of the BLM *Earthling Document Analysis*.

(continued)



connecting
across the
curriculum

Music

Have students examine sheet music to identify ways in which information is conveyed by looking at letters and words in the notation and determining how the end of the piece is shown.



MEETING
INDIVIDUAL
NEEDS

Have visual learners examine the use of pictures to convey information in several types of publications, such as *USA Today*, technical manuals, science textbooks, and history textbooks. Have students identify five common techniques, such as the use of color, labeled arrows, and exploded views.

Standards Links
7.4.4, 7.7.3

Activity (continued)

5. When students have completed their forms, have each group designate a spokesperson.
6. Have the spokesperson read one analysis item at a time to the class without showing the publication that was analyzed.
7. After a spokesperson reads an analysis, give the class a chance to guess what type of publication is being described.





C. Close the Activity

1. Have students discuss how well the organization of the publication meets its purpose.
2. Discuss how useful the publication would be if it used a different type of organization (e.g., how useful would a history textbook be if it listed events alphabetically?).

Classroom Assessment

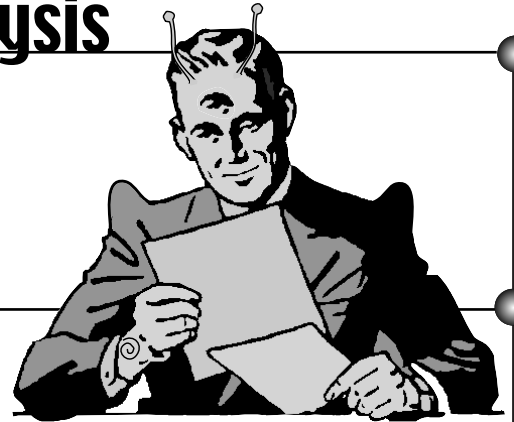
Basic Concepts and Processes

After students complete the activity, ask them the following questions:

-  Why do different publications organize information in different ways?
 -  What kind of book or publication might organize information alphabetically?
 -  How useful was the table of contents in your publication?
 -  How was information in your publication organized? Why was it organized in this way?
-

Name: _____

Earthling Document Analysis



1. Organization of information:

- alphabetical
- by location on the planet
- by date
- by time
- by steps in a process

2. Use of pictures:

- There are few or no pictures.
 - Pictures show several views of the same thing.
 - Pictures show several different people, places, and things.
- Type of people, places, or things shown: _____

3. Advertisements:

- There are no advertisements.
- There are advertisements.

Advertisements are for products that: _____

4. Table of contents:

- There is no table of contents.
- The table of contents is useful for only part of the publication.
- The table of contents is very useful.

Example of a heading in the table of contents: _____

5. Index:

- There is no index.
- There is an index.

Topic or heading from the index: _____

6. Sentences:

- Most of the information is written in complete sentences.
- Some of the information is in complete sentences.
- There are almost no complete sentences in the publication.

Example of a phrase or sentence from this publication: _____

7. Languages:

- Most of the publication is in English.
- A lot of the publication is in another language.

8. Size:

Publication is ___ inches tall, ___ inches wide, and ___ inches thick.

9. Interesting detail from this publication: _____

Earthling Document Analysis

Teacher Directions

Divide students into seven groups. Give each student a copy of the BLM *Earthling Document Analysis*. Have each student complete the BLM for one publication type. Direct each group to choose a spokesperson who will read the items one at a time to the class, giving the class a chance each time to guess the type of publication. If the class has not guessed correctly after the last item, the spokesperson should describe the apparent purpose of the publication and let the class guess again. Discuss how the organization of information serves the publication's purpose.

Answer Key

Answers will vary.