

CHAPTER 1

Guess Yes or No

In 1978, Harold Herber, a pioneer in the field of content-area reading, proposed that teachers focus students' attention on key information in a text by presenting them with statements and having them guess which statements were true. Students then read the text, determined which of their guesses were correct, and turned false statements into true statements. Guess Yes or No is based on Herber's anticipation-guide strategy, a prereading tool to engage students and build new knowledge.

In Guess Yes or No lessons, students learn to read closely to determine whether statements are true or false, make logical inferences, and cite textual evidence to support their responses. Before students read the text, they read the statements together, and the teacher helps them use context and morphemic clues when appropriate to determine word meanings. Using the gradual release of responsibility model of instruction, Guess Yes or No combines student trios and teacher-led conversations to discuss various aspects of the text's content.

A Sample Guess Yes or No Lesson

Miss G.'s class is about to read an article on Japan from the student news magazine the class has a subscription to. She wants students to read the article closely and pay attention to the facts they learn about Japan. To plan the Guess Yes or No lesson, she reads the article and constructs a sheet with ten statements, some true and some false. (See figure 1.1, page 12.) She writes the false statements so that they can be turned into true statements by changing a word or two. In addition, she includes some statements that require students to make logical inferences to decide whether they are true or false. She also includes key vocabulary words students need to be able to pronounce and understand in order to fluently read the text.

Guess Yes or No: Japan	
_____	1. Japan is on the continent of Europe.
_____	2. Mt. Fuji is a volcanic mountain in Japan.
_____	3. Japan has one of the lowest life expectancies in the world.
_____	4. The capital of Japan is Tokyo.
_____	5. Rice, fish, and seaweed are staples of the Japanese diet.
_____	6. Most people in Japan live in large houses out in the country.
_____	7. Japan is made up of thousands of islands in the Atlantic Ocean.
_____	8. Japan is the world's largest economy.
_____	9. Japan's national sport is Sumo wrestling.
_____	10. Karaoke is a very popular recreational activity in Japan.

Figure 1.1: Sample Guess Yes or No sheet on Japan.

TIP

Try having your students work in trios—with a few duets or quartets—if your class doesn't divide equally by three. In many classrooms, if the group size is too large, some students spend time vying for control of the group, and other students just sit and let the bossy ones do the work!

This is the first Guess Yes or No lesson Miss G. has taught to her students. Miss G. follows the gradual release of responsibility model when teaching comprehension lessons. The class will watch and listen as she models how to figure out whether the first two statements are true or false. Students will help her figure out the next two as a class. Then, the students will work together in their trios to complete the final six statements. Miss G. has assigned students to trios so there is at least one good reader and one struggling reader in each trio.

Purpose Setting and Vocabulary Building

The lesson begins with Miss G. working with the whole class. The student assistant for the day hands out the Guess Yes or No: Japan sheet to everyone so each student has a copy.

Miss G. then sets the purpose for the lesson.

She says, "Today we are going to be learning about Japan. I have written ten statements here about Japan, but some of them are not true facts. Before you read, you are going to guess whether each statement is true or false. You are going to write your guesses in pencil so that you can change them based on what you read in the article. It doesn't matter how many you guess right before you read. What matters is that you can use your close-reading skills to figure out what the true facts are and change your guesses. Before we read, however, we need to read all ten statements together and make sure we know how to pronounce all the words and what they mean. Everyone read the first one with me."

The students all read the first sentence: “Japan is on the continent of Europe.”

It is clear to Miss G. that some students don't know the words *continent* and *Europe* because their voices drop off at those words. *Continent* and *Europe* are two key vocabulary terms Miss G. intends to focus on.

Once the class reads the first statement, Miss G. asks vocabulary-building questions: “Who knows how many continents there are in the world? Can we name them all? What continent do we live on? Has anyone ever been to another continent?”

The students share their accumulated knowledge about continents, and then Miss G. asks them to write *yes* or *no* to show whether they think Japan is on the continent of Europe. Some students are hesitant to guess and protest that they don't know the answer. Miss G. assures them that they aren't supposed to know and that that is why the lesson is called Guess Yes or No. She waits until everyone has written *yes* or *no* on the line before going to the next sentence.

When everyone has guessed, the class reads the second sentence together: “Mt. Fuji is a volcanic mountain in Japan.”

Again Miss G. asks vocabulary-building questions: “What is a volcanic mountain? Do we have any volcanic mountains nearby us?”

She writes the words *volcano* and *volcanic* on the board and asks if anyone has ever seen a volcano. She also helps students understand how *volcano* and *volcanic* are related, saying, “A volcanic mountain is a mountain that was formed by a volcano.”

She then waits for everyone to write his or her guess before having students read the next sentence chorally: “Japan has one of the lowest life expectancies in the world.”

Miss G. helps students determine the meaning of *life expectancy* and makes the morphemic connection with *expect*. She then asks them what they think the current life expectancy is for them and their parents. The students have varied answers, and this question clearly intrigues them. Miss G. tells them that since what they are going to read is about Japan, the article probably won't tell them about life expectancies in the United States. One student quickly interjects, “We can google it!”

The students write their *yes* or *no* guess, and everyone reads the next sentence chorally: “The capital of Japan is Tokyo.”

Miss G. asks students what the capital of the United States is and what the capital of their state is. She explains that the capital is the place where government happens. She writes the words *capital* and *capitol* on the board and helps students distinguish between these words that sound alike but have different meanings.

Students record their guesses and read the next sentence together: “Rice, fish, and seaweed are staples of the Japanese diet.”

Miss G. asks students to name some staples of their diet. Students express amazement that anyone might eat seaweed, but several students think Japanese people probably eat a lot of rice and fish. As they are making their guess, they want to know if all three have to be staples of the Japanese diet if they guess *yes*. She assures them that a *yes* guess has to include all three. It is clear from their response that they are eager to read the magazine article and see if Japanese people eat a lot of seaweed.

Before proceeding to the next sentence, Miss G. picks up the stapler from her desk and helps the students realize that they know another meaning for *staples*. One student chimes in that it can also be the store Staples.

The lesson continues as Miss G. leads the students to read each sentence chorally, builds meaning vocabulary, and has students guess *yes* or *no* for each of the remaining statements.

I Do, and You Watch

When the class has read all the statements, and Miss G. has developed all the key vocabulary, Miss G. asks students to gather in their assigned trios and hands the magazine to one student in each trio who quickly positions him- or herself in the middle between the other two students. Miss G. has learned that students work together and interact more when they have only one copy of the text to share. Even though she has enough copies of the magazine for everyone, students will only use one per trio for this lesson.

When the students are positioned in their trios, she has everyone turn to the page where the article begins and draws students' attention to the map at the beginning of the article. She models how to determine if the first statement is true by thinking aloud about the map and letting them listen in on her thinking.

She says, "Here is a map, and I find Japan here. I see that Japan is in Asia, so the first statement must be false. Japan is not on the continent of Europe. It is in Asia. I will change the first statement to make it true." (See figure 1.2.)

TIP

Have the less able reader hold the text and sit in the middle. This increases the chances that the student will be engaged, and holding the text confers status!

Guess Yes or No: Japan	
_____	1. Japan is on the continent of Europe <i>Asia</i> .
_____	2. Mt. Fuji is a volcanic mountain in Japan.
_____	3. Japan has one of the lowest life expectancies in the world.
_____	4. The capital of Japan is Tokyo.
_____	5. Rice, fish, and seaweed are staples of the Japanese diet.
_____	6. Most people in Japan live in large houses out in the country.
_____	7. Japan is made up of thousands of islands in the Atlantic Ocean.
_____	8. Japan is the world's largest economy.
_____	9. Japan's national sport is Sumo wrestling.
_____	10. Karaoke is a very popular recreational activity in Japan.

Figure 1.2: Sample Guess Yes or No sheet with revisions.

"Now, I will read this paragraph and see what I can find out about any of the other statements."

She reads the paragraph aloud and then explains her thinking. "This paragraph tells us that there are many volcanoes in Japan, and that Mt. Fuji is the tallest mountain and has not erupted in hundreds of years, but scientists think it could erupt at any time. I conclude that Mt. Fuji is a volcanic mountain, so I don't need to change the second statement because it is true."

I Do, and You Help

After modeling how to determine the truth of the first two statements, she invites students to help her with the next two.

"Let's read the next paragraph together," she says. "After we read it, we'll figure out what it tells us about any of the remaining statements."

Miss G. and her students read the paragraph and decide to make the third sentence true by changing *lowest* to *highest*. (See figure 1.3.)

Guess Yes or No: Japan	
_____	1. Japan is on the continent of Europe ^{Asia} .
_____	2. Mt. Fuji is a volcanic mountain in Japan.
_____	3. Japan has one of the lowest ^{highest} life expectancies in the world.
_____	4. The capital of Japan is Tokyo.
_____	5. Rice, fish, and seaweed are staples of the Japanese diet.
_____	6. Most people in Japan live in large houses out in the country.
_____	7. Japan is made up of thousands of islands in the Atlantic Ocean.
_____	8. Japan is the world's largest economy.
_____	9. Japan's national sport is Sumo wrestling.
_____	10. Karaoke is a very popular recreational activity in Japan.

Figure 1.3: Sample Guess Yes or No sheet with revisions.

They look at the country map of Japan and conclude that the star next to Tokyo indicates that Tokyo is the capital, which means sentence four is true and doesn't need to be changed.

You Do It Together, and I Help

"Now that you understand what to do, work together to complete the remaining statements. Read the paragraphs together, talk about any visuals, and decide together which statements are true and how to turn the false statements into true statements," Miss G. says to her students.

She circulates among the groups, making sure that students explain their thinking to justify whether a sentence is true or false. She notices one group of students changing a false sentence by simply inserting the word *not*: “Japan is *not* the world’s largest economy.”

She helps them change the sentence without using the word *not*: “Japan is the world’s *third largest* economy.”

She then makes a new rule and announces it to the class: “When making a false sentence true, the word *not* is NOT allowed!”

TIP

Don't let students take the easy way out and use the word not to make false statements true. Disallowing the word not requires students to think about how to make a false statement true.

The Class Debriefs

After the trios finish reading, verifying, and changing sentences, the class regroup and focuses on the last six statements. If students believe that statements were already true, Miss G. has them locate and read aloud the place in the text that confirms these statements. They also read aloud portions of the text that let them decide that statements were false and share their thinking to determine that.

One student says, “You can see on the map that Japan is made up of lots of islands in the Pacific Ocean—not the Atlantic Ocean!”

Students express amazement that seaweed is indeed eaten almost every day in Japan and point out that the article didn’t talk about life expectancies in the United States, which they intend to find out. (See figure 1.4 for a sample student-completed sheet.)

Guess Yes or No: Japan	
<u>no</u>	1. Japan is on the continent of Europe ^{Asia} .
<u>yes</u>	2. Mt. Fuji is a volcanic mountain in Japan.
<u>no</u>	3. Japan has one of the lowest ^{highest} life expectancies in the world.
<u>yes</u>	4. The capital of Japan is Tokyo.
<u>yes</u>	5. Rice, fish, and seaweed are staples of the Japanese diet.
<u>no</u>	6. Most people in Japan live in large houses ^{apartments} out in the country ^{city} .
<u>no</u>	7. Japan is made up of thousands of islands in the Atlantic ^{Pacific} Ocean.
<u>no</u>	8. Japan is the world's largest ^{third} economy.
<u>yes</u>	9. Japan's national sport is Sumo wrestling.
<u>yes</u>	10. Karaoke is a very popular recreational activity in Japan.

Figure 1.4: Sample student-completed Guess Yes or No sheet.

To conclude the lesson, Miss G. asks students to look back at the article and write one more true statement or find one that they can easily turn into a false statement. She asks students to do this individually and not to tell anyone whether their statement is true or false. When students have had two minutes to write this new statement, she lets several students read theirs to the class and call on other students to guess whether it is true or false and to turn false statements into true statements.

TIP

Creating these statements helps students read carefully and supports the development of close reading.

Planning and Teaching a Guess Yes or No Lesson

Create ten statements about the text using key vocabulary, including false statements that can easily be turned into true statements. Write some statements that require students to make logical inferences. Use the following seven steps when teaching a Guess Yes or No lesson. The first time or two, it helps to have ten statements so there are several to use for the “I do, and you watch” and “I do, and you help” modeling. Later, when students do all of them in trios or individually, you may want to have fewer statements.

1. Tell students the purpose of the lesson: “Today we are going to use our close-reading skills to determine which statements are true and which are false, and we are going to use the details from the text to turn false statements into true statements.”
2. Have students read each statement with you, and ask students questions to build meaning for vocabulary. Point out morphemic connections students should understand. Help students use the context of the sentence to determine the appropriate meaning of multimeaning words, and help them clarify the meanings of homophones.
3. Have students use pencils to write a *yes* or *no* next to each statement to indicate their guesses. Assure them that they can erase any incorrect guesses and change them to correct guesses as they read.
4. Model (“I do, and you watch”), and then have students work with you (“I do, and you help”) to complete the first several statements. Be sure to locate evidence in the text to verify your answers.
5. Have students work in trios to read and decide whether each remaining statement is true or not. Have them turn the false statements into true statements without using the word *not*. Observe their interactions, and intervene and coach as necessary as the students work together (“You do it together, and I help”). Use your observations to formatively assess their close-reading and inferencing skills.
6. Gather your students and have them read each statement and share how their trios turned false statements into true statements. Have them read parts of the text that prove statements are false.
7. Have each student write one or two new sentences that are true or false. Let a few students share their sentences and call on other students to tell if they are true or false and to turn false statements into true statements.

Guess Yes or No Lessons Across the Year

In subsequent lessons as students demonstrate their ability to make predictions, to support and change their predictions based on information from the text, and to apply this strategy by creating one new true or false statement, you should fade teacher modeling and turn over the responsibility for all ten statements to the trios. Continue, however, to begin every lesson by having students read each statement chorally with you to build academic and subject-area vocabulary. When your observations of the group interaction indicate that most of your students can successfully complete most of the statements most of the time, have students do the lesson independently (“You do, and I watch”). Use the results of this assessment to determine which students can meet the standards and which students need continued work on that skill.

How Guess Yes or No Lessons Teach the Standards

Guess Yes or No lessons teach Reading anchor standard one (CCRA.R.1) because students learn to read closely to determine whether statements are true or false, to make logical inferences, and to cite textual evidence to support their responses. These lessons also teach Reading informational text and Language anchor standards four (RI.4, CCRA.L.4). Before students read, they read the statements together, and the teacher helps them use context and morphemic clues when appropriate to determine word meanings. The lessons teach Speaking and Listening anchor standard one (CCRA.SL.1), as well, because they use a combination of small-group (trios) and teacher-led collaborative conversations with diverse partners to discuss various aspects of the content of the text.