

Notice and Note Signposts for Fiction

Kylene Beers and Robert E. Probst

Signpost Name	Look For...	Anchor Question	Used to...
Contrasts and Contradictions	When you're reading and a character says or does something that's opposite (contradicts) what s/he has been saying or doing all along, you should stop and ask yourself...	"Why is the character doing that?"	The answers could help you make a prediction or make an inference about the plot and conflict.
Aha Moment	When you're reading and suddenly a character realizes, understands, or finally figures something out, you should stop and ask yourself...	"How might this change things?"	If the character just figured out a problem, you probably just learned about the conflict. If the character understood a life lesson, you probably just learned the theme.
Tough Questions	When you're reading and the character asks himself a really difficult question, you should stop and ask yourself...	"What does this question make me wonder about?"	The answers will tell you about the conflict and might give you ideas about what will happen later in the story.
Words of the Wiser	When you're reading and a character (who's probably older and lots wiser) takes the main character aside and gives serious advice, you should stop and ask yourself...	"What's the life lesson, and how might it affect the character?"	Whatever the lesson is, you've probably found a theme for the story.
Again and Again	When you're reading and you notice a word, phrase, object, or situation mentioned over and over, you should stop and ask yourself...	"Why does this keep showing up again and again?"	The answers will tell you about the theme and conflict, or they might foreshadow what will happen later. They might also be examples of symbolism.
Memory Moment	When you're reading and the author interrupts the action to tell you a memory, you should stop and ask yourself...	"Why might this memory be important?"	The answers will tell you about the theme, conflict, or might foreshadow what will happen later in the story.

Notice and Note Signposts for Nonfiction

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Signpost Name	Look For...	Anchor Question	Used to...	Helpful Hints
Contrasts and Contradictions	When you're reading and the author shows you a difference between what you know and what is happening in the text, OR a difference between two or more things in the text, you should stop and ask yourself...	"What is the difference and why does it matter?"	The answer will help you see details that show you the main idea, compare and contrast, understand the author's purpose, infer, make a generalization, or notice cause and effect.	Words that Signal a Contrast or Contradiction: alternatively, by contrast, however, nonetheless, otherwise, then again, although, different from, instead, on the other hand, still, yet, unlike, etc
Extreme or Absolute Language	When you're reading and you notice the author uses language that leaves no doubt, exaggerates, or pushes to the limit, you should stop and ask yourself...	"Why did the author say it like that?"	The answers will tell you something about the author's point of view and purpose, or, you might realize the author is exaggerating to make you think a certain way.	Words that Signal Extreme or Absolute Language: all, none, never, always, completely, irrevocably, undisputable, fastest, worst, total, everyone
Numbers and States	When you're reading and you notice specific numbers, number words, or amounts, you should stop and ask yourself...	"Why did the author use those numbers or amounts?"	The answers might help you come to a conclusion, make a comparison, see the details, infer, find facts, or recognize evidence.	
Quoted Words	When you're reading and you notice the author quoted a Voice of Authority, a Personal Perspective, or cited Other's Words, stop and ask yourself...	"Why did the author quote or cite this person?"	The answer will help you think about the author's point of view, purpose, bias, or conclusions, or these words will give a perspective, facts and opinions, or a generalization.	Voice of Authority: expert view (scientists, historians, etc.) Personal Perspective: no expertise except living through the event Other's Words: showing that many people have studied the topic instead of

				highlighting one authority (sometimes paraphrased or cited instead of quoted)
Word Gaps	When you're reading and the author uses a word or phrase you don't know, you should stop and ask yourself...	"Do I know this word from someplace else?" OR "Does this seem like technical talk for experts of this topic?" OR "Can I find clues in the sentence to help me understand the word?"	The answers will help you decide if you need to look the word up, or keep reading for more information.	Common Confusions: Descriptive Language, Multiple Meanings, Distant References, Rare Words and Technical Talk