



Silver Strong & Associates
Thoughtful Education Press

Dear colleague,

At Silver Strong & Associates, our goal has always been to help teachers bring the best practices into their classrooms. This goal is founded on a recognition that too often goes unstated: **teaching is hard work**. That's why we've spent over 35 years working with educators to turn the best educational research into practical techniques that are easy to implement in the classroom. We call these techniques *tools* because they're designed to make the hard work of teaching easier and more effective.

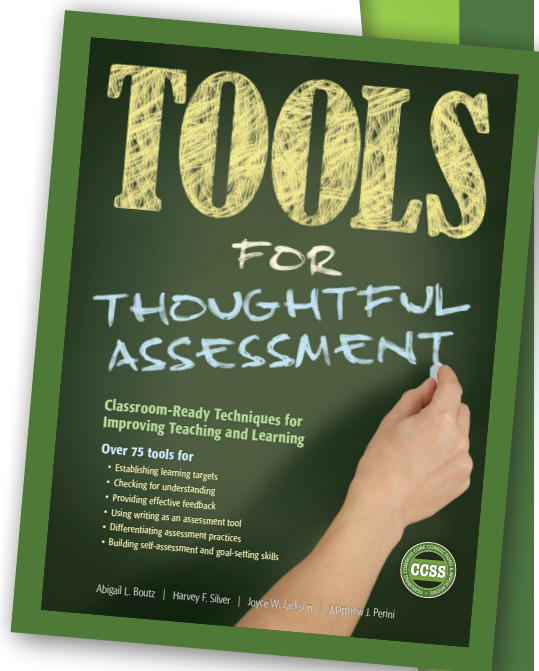
In your hands are excerpts—including six complete tools—from *Tools for Thoughtful Assessment*, the newest book in our award-winning Tools series. This book contains **over 75 classroom-ready techniques** that can help teachers at all grade levels raise student achievement through improved formative and summative assessment.

Along with the release of this text, we are pleased to introduce **a new line of workshops** that highlights ways this book can help teachers achieve key assessment goals—goals like engaging students in the assessment process, addressing the Common Core State Standards, and using assessment to promote learning as well as evaluate it.

We hope you enjoy this preview of *Tools for Thoughtful Assessment*, and we encourage you to try the six sample tools in your classroom or school. If you're interested in ordering this book or learning more about the training and coaching opportunities that support it, **please call us at 1-800-962-4432** or visit the Tools page of our website: www.ThoughtfulClassroom.com/Tools.

Sincerely,

Harvey F. Silver
President, Silver Strong & Associates
Author of *Tools for Thoughtful Assessment*



Dr. Harvey F. Silver

To order your copy, call **800.962.4432**
or order online at www.ThoughtfulClassroom.com/Tools

SELECTED EXCERPTS *from*

TOOLS

FOR THOUGHTFUL ASSESSMENT

**Classroom-Ready Techniques for
Improving Teaching and Learning**

Over 75 tools for

- Establishing learning targets
- Checking for understanding
- Providing effective feedback
- Using writing as an assessment tool
- Differentiating assessment practices
- Building self-assessment and goal-setting skills



Abigail L. Boutz | Harvey F. Silver | Joyce W. Jackson | Matthew J. Perini

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Introduction

Assessment: A Continuous Journey Toward Improved Learning

Over the last two decades, the meaning of the word *assessment* in education has been changing—and for the better. Today’s educators know that assessment means much more than assigning and grading student work. They know assessment is an ongoing process that involves regularly gathering information about student learning, using that information to make better instructional decisions, and inviting students to take responsibility for monitoring and improving their learning.

This shift in assessment priorities goes by various names, most notably *formative assessment* and *assessment for learning*. Jan Chappuis, Rick Stiggins, Steve Chappuis, and Judith Arter (2011), who helped popularize the term assessment for learning, describe the overall approach as one of helping students ask and answer three questions:

- Where am I going? (What learning targets am I trying to achieve?)
- Where am I now? (What is my current level of understanding or mastery?)
- What can I do to close the gap? (How can I use feedback, self-assessment, and learning opportunities to reach my learning targets?)

To do this well—to take students on a continuous journey toward improved learning and higher achievement—teachers need a collection of effective assessment techniques that will integrate seamlessly into their overall instructional design. This book is that collection of techniques.

We call the techniques in this book *tools* because, in the most general sense, a tool is something designed to make work easier and more effective. And what this book does is provide teachers with more than 75 tools that can help them more easily accomplish the many jobs associated with the assessment-for-learning journey—jobs like establishing clear learning targets, teaching students how to assess their own learning, and helping students understand how to produce quality work. It also includes tools that can be used to evaluate student learning at the end of a learning episode.

In developing the content and structure of this book, we’ve been influenced by three groups of experts. The first includes the educational researchers who have shown, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that using assessment to advance rather than simply evaluate student learning leads to very real gains in achievement. Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam’s (1998a) review of nine years’ worth of data from hundreds of studies spanning the full range of grade levels and subject areas revealed that formative assessment leads to dramatic gains in achievement, “amongst the largest ever reported for educational interventions” (p. 61). More recently, Robert Marzano (2006) surveyed the major research on classroom assessment and concluded that “formative classroom assessment is one of the most powerful tools a classroom teacher might use” (p. 11).

The second group of experts whose work has informed ours includes authors and scholars like Rick Stiggins, Jan Chappuis, Anne Davies, Susan Brookhart, Connie Moss, and W. James Popham, who have helped teachers translate the research on assessment for learning into effective classroom practice. These important experts have helped us—and the larger field of education—understand how to harness the power of assessment so that students become active participants in their own learning.

The third group of experts is the most important group of all: the teachers who are charged with making assessment work in their classrooms. In developing this book, we invited hundreds of teachers to review, test-drive, and help us refine our collection of tools. From these teachers, we learned four key lessons.

Four Lessons About Assessment Tools

Lesson One: Make sure the tools respond to the challenges that teachers face. So what are these challenges? To find out, we asked teachers from around the country to identify the key challenges associated with making assessment work in their classrooms. We then cross-referenced their responses against the major literature on assessment for learning and assessment in general. Out of this work, we identified twelve critical challenges. Finally, we turned each challenge into a question, and we made these twelve questions the chapters in our book. Here are the twelve questions:

1. How will I identify and communicate learning goals to students?
2. How will I use pre-assessments to inform and enhance instruction?
3. How will I prepare students to produce high-quality work?
4. How will I check for understanding *while* presenting new information?
5. How will I check for understanding *after* presenting new information?
6. How will I help students review, practice, and check their grasp of the material?
7. How will I help students improve their work through feedback and self-assessment?
8. How will I help students monitor their learning and establish goals and plans for moving forward?
9. How will I use writing tasks to help students synthesize and show what they know?
10. How will I develop high-quality culminating assessment tasks and evaluation frameworks?
11. How will I differentiate assessment to promote success for all students?
12. How will I help students reflect on, learn from, and celebrate their achievements?

Lesson Two: Make the tools practical. When it came time to create a standard design for the tools in this book, the overwhelming theme in teachers' feedback was *make each tool as practical and classroom-ready as possible*. And so we created a common format that provides the precise information teachers need to decide if a tool meets their purpose and put the tool to work in the classroom. This common, recurring format also makes it easy for teachers to find what's important to them within each tool. Using the 3-2-1 tool as an example, Figure 1 shows how every tool answers four crucial questions.

Figure 1: The Four Questions Every Tool in This Book Answers

- 1. What is it?**
A brief description of the tool and its purpose
- 2. What are the benefits?**
A one-paragraph explanation of the problem/challenge the tool addresses and how the tool enhances student learning
- 3. What are the basic steps?**
For ease of use, we made sure that each tool includes seven steps or fewer.
- 4. How is the tool used in the classroom?**
This section provides greater clarity on how the tool can be used and typically includes specific examples from different grade levels and content areas.

Extras: In addition to the four critical questions, many tools include **Teacher Talk** (tips and suggestions for getting more out of the tool) and **reproducibles**. Copies of the reproducibles and other downloadable “extras” can be found at www.ThoughtfulClassroom.com/Tools.

Because the tools are organized around crucial challenges (Lesson One) and follow a common format (Lesson Two), this book offers educators an entirely flexible approach to enhancing classroom assessment. *Tools for Thoughtful Assessment* is not meant to be read cover to cover, and there is no need to implement the tools in any particular order. Instead, we encourage you to identify the challenges that resonate most with you and then skim to find the tools that will be the best fit for your goals, content, and students. We also encourage you to adapt the tools as needed to make them work in your classroom (e.g., feel free to simplify existing language to make a tool more primary-grade appropriate).

Lesson Three: Don’t forget the Common Core. Just as we were about to move from development into production, something happened. That something was the Common Core State Standards. What had been a whisper in the wind, a “thing that was coming” became a reality for teachers across the country. And so a new and very important question popped up: How is all of this connected to the Common Core State Standards? In response to this question, we went back through all the tools and looked for connections. Many of these connections were natural and merely had to be documented. Others required us to make revisions, add variations, or even include some new tools that did a better job of helping teachers address the new standards. The result of these changes is that many of the tools in this book now feature Common Core applications and connections. As you read and use these tools, keep an eye out for these Common Core connections, which are highlighted in different sections of the individual tools.

Lesson Four: Highlight the connections between instruction and assessment. Many teachers asked us to address the relationship between instruction and assessment. Responding to this request was an easy one since assessment and instruction go hand in hand. They *need* each other, in the same way that Romeo and Juliet need each other, which is to say, quite desperately. Using the information that we and our students derive from classroom assessments, we can adjust our plans—slow down, speed up, take a step back, try a new approach—so as to improve teaching and learning.

The tools in this book have been organized in support of this intimate relationship between instruction and assessment. In thinking through this relationship, we relied heavily on our “Five Episodes of Effective Instruction” model (Silver Strong & Associates, 2012), which synthesizes the preeminent instructional design models (Hunter, 1984; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005; Marzano, 2007) into a single, universal design. This model, which is illustrated in Figure 2, outlines five “episodes” that every well-designed instructional unit includes.

Figure 2: The Five Episodes of Effective Instruction

<p>Preparing students for new learning</p> <p>During this episode, teachers establish purpose, spark interest, and help students activate prior knowledge.</p>		
<p>Deepening and reinforcing learning</p> <p>During this episode, teachers help students solidify their understanding of the content and practice new skills.</p>	<p>Presenting new learning</p> <p>During this episode, teachers present new material and help students engage with/acquire the content.</p>	<p>Reflecting on and celebrating learning</p> <p>During this episode, teachers help students look back on, learn from, and celebrate their learning.</p>
<p>Applying and demonstrating learning</p> <p>During this episode, teachers challenge students to synthesize, apply, and demonstrate their learning.</p>		

So how does assessment fit into this instructional model? During each of these five episodes, there are specific assessment questions that teachers should ask themselves. By asking yourself these questions throughout the instructional process, you can seamlessly integrate assessment into your larger instructional design.

When you’re **preparing students for new learning**, these are the key assessment questions:

1. How will I identify and communicate learning goals to students?
2. How will I use pre-assessments to inform and enhance instruction?
3. How will I prepare students to produce high-quality work?

When you’re **presenting new learning**, these are the key assessment questions:

4. How will I check for understanding *while* presenting new information?
5. How will I check for understanding *after* presenting new information?

When you're **deepening and reinforcing student learning**, these are the key assessment questions:

6. How will I help students review, practice, and check their grasp of the material?
7. How will I help students improve their work through feedback and self-assessment?
8. How will I help students monitor their learning and establish goals and plans for moving forward?

When you're asking students to **apply and demonstrate their learning**, these are the key assessment questions:

9. How will I use writing tasks to help students synthesize and show what they know?
10. How will I develop high-quality culminating assessment tasks and evaluation frameworks?
11. How will I differentiate assessment to promote success for all students?

When you're helping students **reflect on and celebrate learning**, this is the key assessment question:

12. How will I help students reflect on, learn from, and celebrate their achievements?

If you take a peek at the Table of Contents, you'll notice not only that these twelve assessment questions correspond to the twelve chapters in this book, but also that these twelve questions are organized around the Five Episodes of Effective Instruction (each episode gets its own section). As a result, you can quickly select tools based on your immediate assessment objectives *and* based on where you are in your instructional sequence.

Thoughtful Assessment—Now More Than Ever

With the Common Core State Standards shaping the national landscape in education, it might be tempting for some to dismiss assessment for learning as too far removed from the day's concerns, as a "nice thing" to get to if time allows. This would be a terrible mistake. If we want our students to read more rigorous texts, produce more powerful writing, create engaging multimedia presentations, develop sophisticated mathematical practices, and, in general, develop the skills and habits needed for success in the 21st century, then we'll need to redouble our commitment to assessment for learning. We'll need to create clear learning targets derived from our standards. We'll need to use pre-assessment before instruction begins to find out what students know and how they think. We'll need to use formative assessment throughout the instructional process to monitor and advance student learning. We'll need to teach students how to distinguish average work from exemplary work. We'll need to give students feedback they can use to improve their work. We'll need to teach them how to become quality-control managers who can use self-assessment and reflection to grow and get better. We'll need to design high-quality culminating assessment tasks that require the same kinds of higher-order thinking as those found in the Common Core State Standards. And to do all of this well, we'll need a trusty set of tools.

Speedy Feedback

What is it?

A tool that prepares us to teach more effectively by giving us on-the-spot feedback about students' grasp of the material

What are the benefits of using this tool?

If students are struggling, it's better to find out sooner rather than later. With Speedy Feedback, you don't have to wait for end-of-unit test scores to find out how students are doing—you can get this feedback *while* you're teaching, and you can get it from the entire class at once! By alerting you at the first sign of trouble, Speedy Feedback allows you to clarify misconceptions before they take root in students' minds and adjust instruction before students become hopelessly lost. The tool also prepares students to become more proactive and successful learners by getting them in the habit of assessing their understanding of the material as instruction is happening.

What are the basic steps?

1. Familiarize yourself with the four different Speedy Feedback Methods described on p. 73: Whiteboards, Letter Cards/Clickers, Hand Signals, and Word Cards.
2. Decide which method you'll use to assess students' grasp of the material. Explain the method to students and provide them with whiteboards, cards, or electronic clickers if needed.
3. Explain that your goal in gathering feedback is to improve instruction—not to grade or judge.
4. Begin teaching. Stop at various points to ask questions that will help you check your students' understanding of the material.
5. Give students at least three seconds to think after posing a question. Then have them share their answers using whatever feedback method you selected (whiteboards, clickers, etc.).
Optional: Invite students who have different answers to explain their reasoning (don't say who is correct). Encourage everyone to listen and rethink their original answers. Then do a revote.
6. Examine students' responses and adjust instruction accordingly. *Think:* Should I back up and reteach? Give more examples? Ask students who "get it" to help those who don't? Move forward?
7. Take advantage of the fact that Speedy Feedback offers information about every single student in the class:
 - Identify individual students who are really struggling and offer them extra assistance. Doing this can help close the gap between low and high achievers.
 - Identify students who are excelling and find ways to challenge them. Doing this can keep these students from getting bored and losing motivation.

How is this tool used in the classroom?

- ✓ To assess students' grasp of the material in real time and adjust instruction accordingly
- ✓ To have students monitor their understanding of the material as instruction is happening

Speedy Feedback Methods

Whiteboards

Before starting a lesson, give each student a whiteboard or pad of paper and a marking pen. Stop at various points in your presentation to ask content-related questions or give students problems to solve. Have students record their responses in large print, show their work if appropriate, and hold up their boards/pads for you to see.

Sample questions: If you have three toys and a friend gives you two more, how many toys will you have?

What word helps us remember the space notes in the treble clef?

If a ball falls freely from rest, how far will it fall in the first two seconds?

Letter Cards/Clickers

Before beginning a lesson, give each student a set of eight index cards labeled *A, B, C, D, True, False, Yes, and No*. (If you have access to electronic clickers, use them instead.) Stop at various times throughout your presentation to ask questions (multiple-choice, yes/no, true/false) about the material you've presented. Have students hold up the card that reflects their response or enter a response on their clickers.

Sample questions: Yes or no: Is the solution shown on the board the correct solution to this problem?

True or false: If you translate this sentence into Latin, the underlined word should be *pueri*.

Was that a demonstration of Newton's (a) First, (b) Second, or (c) Third Law of Motion?

Hand Signals

Similar to Letter Cards except that students respond using simple hand signals rather than index cards (e.g., thumbs up/thumbs down instead of yes/no or true/false—or one, two, three, or four fingers up instead of *A, B, C, D*)

Word Cards

Similar to Letter Cards except that students' cards have content-related vocabulary terms printed on them

Example 1: A first-grade teacher used Word Cards as follows to test her students' ability to distinguish long from short vowel sounds (Common Core RF.1.2a): "Do you hear a long sound or a short sound when I say the word 'meet'? Hold up your long card or your short card to show me."

Example 2: Following a unit on animal classification, a teacher read the names of various animals aloud (mouse, frog, snake...) and had students hold up the appropriate "category card"—mammal card, reptile card, amphibian card, etc.

Example 3: An English teacher used Word Cards to help his students review and clarify their understanding of six terms from the previous week's vocabulary list (vivacious, brawny, resourceful, lethargic, altruistic, reserved). After having students write the vocabulary words on index cards—one word per card—he described characters from popular movies and asked students to hold up the word that best described each character. For example:

- No matter how many times James Bond got captured, he always managed to figure out how to escape. He was an extremely ____ guy. (answer = *resourceful*)
- Hugh Jackman worked out for months to develop the muscular, chiseled body that he needed to play Wolverine. By the time cameras rolled, Jackman was one ____ guy. (answer = *brawny*)

Association Triangles

What is it?

A tool that assesses big-picture understanding by challenging students to explain the connections between important terms or concepts

What are the benefits of using this tool?

Checking if students can explain how key concepts and terms relate to one another is an important part of checking for understanding. We know this, yet we often test students' knowledge of isolated facts, terms, and ideas instead of asking students to make these bigger-picture connections. This tool puts the focus back on the big picture by challenging students to explain the relationships between three things they've learned about. Asking students to make these kinds of connections serves both to develop and test their depth of understanding.

What are the basic steps?

1. Select three important terms from a lesson, unit, or reading assignment. Note that "terms" can be anything from concepts to events to real or fictional characters (pictures are also fine).
Other options: Give students a list of terms to choose from (have them pick three) or invite them to choose their own terms from a given topic or text.
2. Instruct students to draw a triangle on a piece of paper and record one term on each of its points.
3. Ask students to explain how adjacent terms on the triangle relate to one another. Have students record their explanations along the side of the triangle that connects the two terms.
4. Challenge students to think about how *all three* terms are connected. (Do they share a common theme? Fit into a bigger picture?) Have them record their ideas in the middle of the triangle.
5. Invite students to share and refine their ideas with a partner and/or as a class. Use students' responses, as well as their completed triangles, to gauge their understanding of key relationships and their sense of the big picture. Help them fill in any gaps.



Teacher Talk

- To have students draw connections between two terms instead of three, use Vocabulary Bridges rather than Association Triangles. (Draw a picture of a bridge, put one term on either side, and have students explain the connection across the length of the bridge.) For four terms, use the Four-Corners variation. (List each term on the point of a square and have students connect the points.)
- This tool can be used to target various Common Core State Standards. To target Reading Anchor Standard 5, for example, put individual lines/stanzas/scenes from an assigned text on the points and ask students to explain how these textual elements relate to each other and to the text as a whole. For other ideas, see Examples 1 and 2.

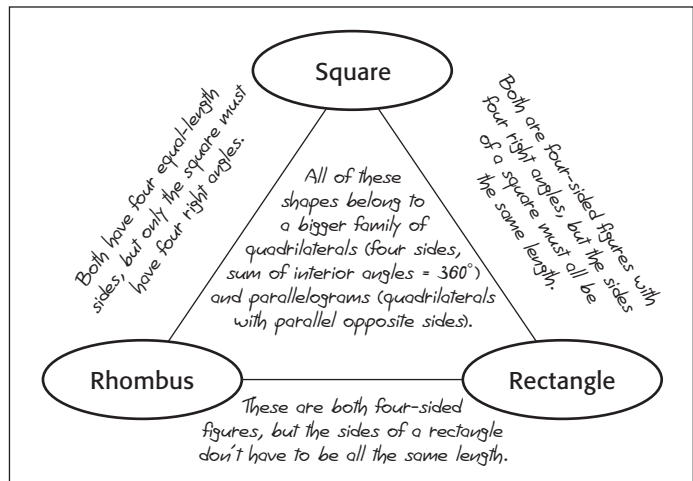
How is this tool used in the classroom?

- ✓ To check (and have students check) their understanding of key concepts and ideas

The examples below show how Association Triangles can be used in different grade levels and content areas. Additional examples are available at www.ThoughtfulClassroom.com/Tools.

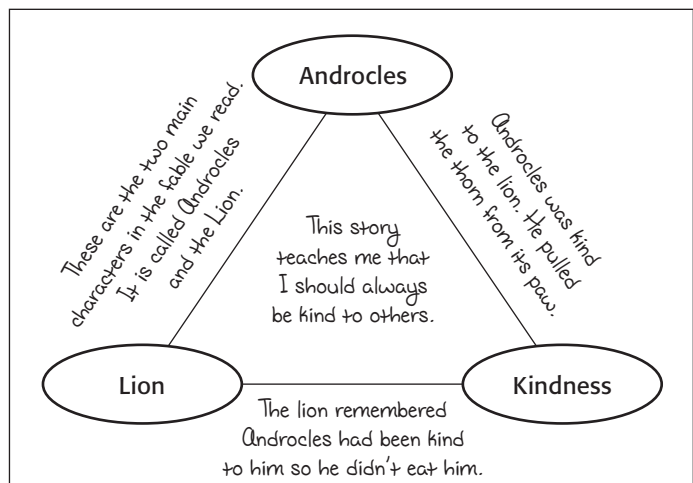
EXAMPLE 1: Math triangle

A fourth-grade teacher designed this triangle to develop and test his students' ability to reason with shapes and their attributes (Common Core 4.G.2, building on 3.G.1).



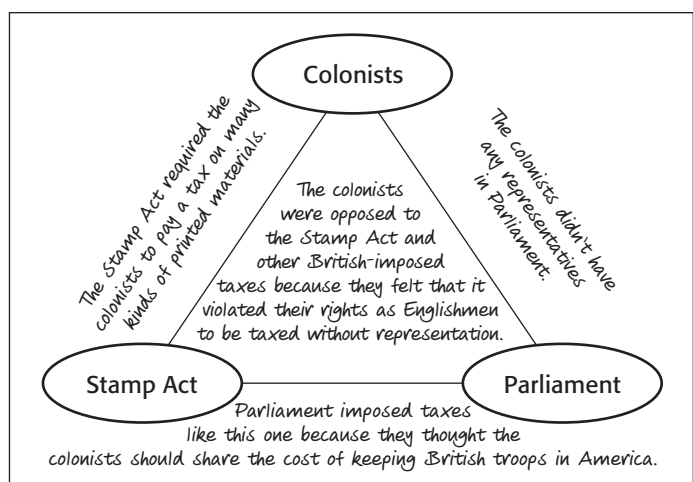
EXAMPLE 2: Literature triangle

A third-grade teacher used this triangle to see how well his students had understood the plot and central message of a fable (Common Core RL.3.2).



EXAMPLE 3: History triangle

A history teacher had her students complete Association Triangles like this one for homework throughout a unit on the American Revolution. Her goal was to reinforce and test students' understanding of key people, events, documents, and themes.



Stop, Read, Revise

What is it?

A process that enhances the quality of student writing by having students read and revise their work

What are the benefits of using this tool?

What students *actually* write isn't always the same as what they think they've written. When students take the time to review their writing, they often find that important words are missing or that their ideas aren't as clear as they thought. Stop, Read, Revise gets students in the habit of reading their own writing so they can root out mistakes and communicate their ideas with greater power and precision.

What are the basic steps?

1. Talk to students about the importance of reading what they write. Help them generate a list of reasons why the reading-after-writing habit is so good to develop.
2. Give students a writing task. Tell them to skip lines so they'll have room to revise their work.
3. Ask students to read their completed pieces to themselves. Tell them to check their work for "The Seven Cs" (explain the Cs beforehand; adjust them as needed for specific kinds of writing tasks):
 - Completeness*: Did I leave out any words, details, or big ideas?
 - Coherence*: Are my ideas presented in a logical and orderly way? Do they make sense?
 - Clarity*: Are my ideas clear and easy to understand? Is my writing clear and easy to read?
 - Correctness*: Are there any spelling, grammar, and/or factual errors that I need to correct?
 - Composition*: Do I have a topic sentence/thesis, supporting information, and conclusion?
 - Congruence*: Does my response address the specific question or task I was given?
 - Communication skills*: Would someone who's unfamiliar with this topic understand what I wrote?
4. Instruct students to revise their work as needed.
5. Invite students to reflect on and share what they learned by reading their own writing.
6. Teach students that the Stop, Read, Revise process is one that they can and should use on their own. Help them make it habitual by having them use it as often as possible.

How is this tool used in the classroom?

- ✓ To help students evaluate and improve the quality of their written work



Teacher Talk

- The Seven Cs reinforce many Common Core writing and language skills—skills like adjusting writing to fit task, purpose, and audience; presenting ideas in a clear and logical way; using the conventions of Standard Written English; and improving writing via editing and revision.

4-2-1 Summarize

What is it?

A tool that solidifies and tests students' grasp of what they've learned from readings, lectures, etc., by having them identify, discuss, and summarize the key points with their classmates

What are the benefits of using this tool?

Identifying and summarizing the key ideas/details from a text is an important skill for students to develop (Common Core Reading Anchor Standard 2). This tool uses a collaborative summarizing process to help students hone (and let us assess) this critical skill. It also gives us insight into how well students have understood what they've read and learned by having them synthesize and summarize the key points in writing.

What are the basic steps?

1. Ask students to record the *four* most important points from a reading, lecture, or other learning episode on a 4-2-1 Summarize Organizer (p. 159).

Note: Before using this tool, discuss and model strategies that students can use to identify important information within a text or presentation. ("When looking for important information, remember to check out section headings, topic sentences, and summary paragraphs.")

2. Ask students to share and compare their ideas with a partner and come to an agreement about the *two* that are most important. Explain that they can pick and choose from their original ideas, combine their original ideas, and/or add ideas that were missing from their original lists.
3. Pair up the pairs. Have each group of four reach a consensus about the *one* most important idea.
4. Invite students to share their most important ideas (and the strategies that they used to arrive at those ideas) with the class. Help them refine or refocus these main ideas if needed.
5. Choose (or let students choose) one of these main ideas to write about. Have them synthesize and summarize what they learned about this idea/topic in a written paragraph. Encourage them to use some or all of the ideas they generated during Steps 1 and 2 as supporting details.
6. Use students' paragraphs to assess their content knowledge (did they get the key points?) and/or writing skills (do they have strong topic sentences, supporting details, and conclusions?).
7. Address any deficiencies in content knowledge, writing skills, or identifying main ideas.

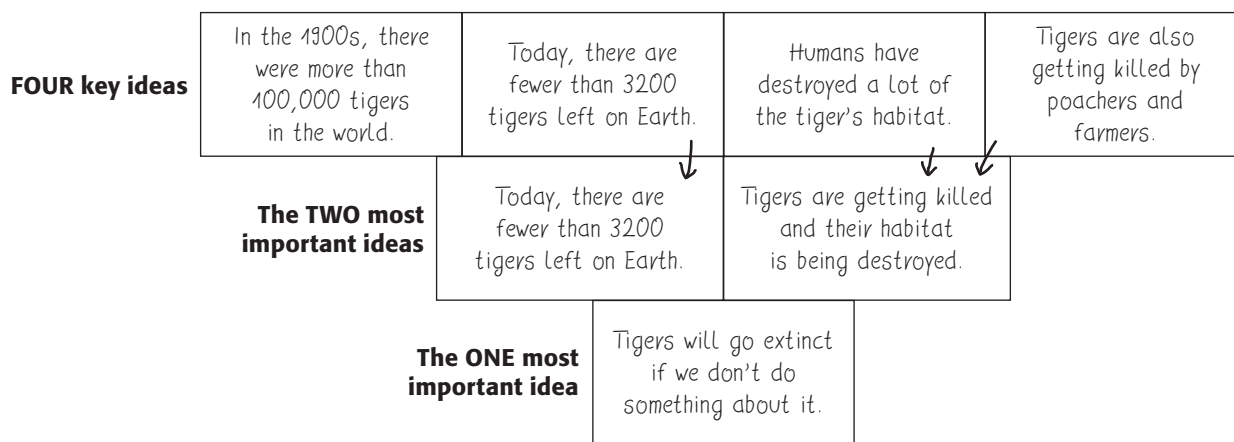
Variation: 4-2-1 Freewrite

Have students "freewrite" about their main ideas instead of writing formal summary paragraphs. The goal is to have them get everything they know or feel about the topic (thoughts, questions, reactions) down on paper without worrying about the quality or correctness of their writing.

How is this tool used in the classroom?

- ✓ To have students summarize the key ideas from a lecture, text, or other learning experience
- ✓ To check students' understanding of material they've read or learned about
- ✓ To assess students' ability to identify main ideas and support them with details/examples

EXAMPLE: Here is the organizer that a fifth grader completed after reading an article on endangered tigers. Notice that in negotiating the key ideas down from four to one, this student and his partners kept some of his original ideas (*there are fewer than 3200 tigers left on Earth*), combined some of his original ideas (*tigers are getting killed and their habitat is being destroyed*), and wrote one idea—the final main idea—from scratch (*tigers will go extinct if we don't do something about it*).



Summary paragraph: *What did I learn by reading this article?*

Tigers are in big trouble. If we don't do something about it, they will go extinct. Last century, there were over 100,000 tigers in the world. Today, there are fewer than 3200. Tigers need lots of space and the places where they live are getting destroyed by humans. In the last ten years, about half of their habitat has been destroyed. Another problem is that tigers are getting killed by poachers. Killing the tigers is illegal, but the poachers do it anyway because they want to sell tiger skin and tiger claws and tiger teeth for money. Thinking about a world with no more tigers makes me sad. If we don't do something about this problem, kids 100 years from now might not even know what a tiger is.

Teacher Talk

- ➔ 4-2-1 Summarize is an ideal way to help students process the different kinds of texts that are highlighted in the Common Core State Standards. Use it with articles, speeches, essays, etc.
- ➔ This tool has other Common Core connections as well. It develops students' ability to identify and summarize key ideas/details from a text (Reading Anchor Standard 2), it engages students in peer-to-peer conversations about grade-appropriate topics and texts (Speaking and Listening Anchor Standard 1), it teaches students to develop and strengthen their writing via planning (Writing Anchor Standard 5), and it builds explanatory writing skills (Writing Anchor Standard 2).

Name: _____

Date: _____

Topic or text: _____

4-2-1 Summarize Organizer

**FOUR
key
ideas**

--	--	--	--

**The TWO most
important ideas**

--	--

**The ONE most
important idea**

--

Summary paragraph:



Writing Frames

What is it?

A collection of customizable writing frames that can be used to assess and extend student learning

What are the benefits of using this tool?

With the Common Core State Standards' emphasis on writing, it's more important than ever to get students writing on a daily basis. This tool makes that easier to do by presenting a collection of writing frames and prompts to choose from. Teachers from all grade levels and content areas can use these frames and prompts to

- get a reading on students' understanding of key content at any time in a learning sequence;
- assess a wide range of critical thinking skills, (especially by rotating through the various frames throughout the year); and
- build students' competence in producing the kinds of writing required on standardized assessment tests (e.g., comparison pieces, arguments, summaries).

What are the basic steps?

1. Identify the content knowledge/skills you want to assess. Then think about the kind of assessment you're looking to do. (Do you want to do a quick check for understanding in the middle of a lesson? Evaluate big-picture understanding at the end of a unit? Something else?)
2. Decide which of the writing frames in Figure 3 (p. 175) best meets your needs. Pick one of the corresponding writing prompts and customize it to fit your content area and goals.
Another option: Create (or have students create) a prompt for the selected frame from scratch.
3. Present the writing prompt to students and help them determine what it's asking them to do. For example, are they being asked to make a comparison? Summarize data? Argue a position?
4. Tell students how and when to respond. Should they tackle the writing prompt with a partner? On their own? During class? For homework? Is there a time limit? Do they need to polish their writing?
Note: The length and format of students' responses will depend on the writing prompt you select.
5. Discuss the criteria for success. Make it clear that a high-quality response should demonstrate students' knowledge of the content *and* their command of the relevant thinking and writing skills.
6. Review students' responses to determine whether there are any aspects of the content material or thinking/writing skills that you should review or reteach.

How is this tool used in the classroom?

- ✓ To assess students' grasp of key content
- ✓ To develop critical thinking and writing skills

Writing frames can be used in many different ways and for different purposes:

- *They can be used to deepen and check students' grasp of critical content at any point in the instructional process* (start, middle, or end of a lesson/unit).
- *They can be used for both formative and summative purposes.* Use them to check for understanding mid-lesson and adjust instruction accordingly or to evaluate learning at the end of a unit.
- *They can be used to develop specific kinds of thinking and writing skills.* To do this, select a frame that matches a skill you're trying to develop and use that frame repeatedly. To develop students' comparative writing skills, for example, you could use the *Compare & Contrast* frame to design a series of writing tasks.
- *They can be used to differentiate assessment and boost student engagement.* To do this, simply give students a choice about how to demonstrate their learning. Options include giving them a choice of prompts to respond to, giving them a sample prompt and letting them customize it by filling in the blanks, giving them a writing frame and letting them generate their own prompts, or letting them choose a frame and prompt on their own.
- *They can be used to target Common Core State Standards.* Taken together, the thirteen frames can be used to address Writing Anchor Standard 10 (write routinely for a wide range of tasks). Taken individually, they can be used to target other standards as well. For example:
 - Try the *Interpret/Analyze* frame for Reading Anchor Standard 3 (analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text).
 - Try the *Explain* frame for Writing Anchor Standard 2 (write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately).
 - Try the *Evaluate* or *Validate* frames for Reading Anchor Standard 8 (evaluate the argument and claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence), Writing Anchor Standard 8 (assess the credibility and accuracy of print and digital sources), or Standard 3 from the Standards for Mathematical Practice (construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others).



Teacher Talk

- ➔ Prepare students to be successful by teaching and modeling the thinking and writing skills that each writing frame requires. (“To write a compare and contrast essay, we’d begin by...”) Continue the teaching and modeling process until students are capable of crafting quality responses on their own.
- ➔ To see examples of math-specific writing prompts, check out *Math Tools, Grades 3–12: 60+ Ways to Build Mathematical Practices, Differentiate Instruction, and Increase Student Engagement* (Silver, Brunsting, Walsh, & Thomas, 2012).

Figure 3: Writing Frames to Choose From: Thirteen CREATIVE IDEAS

FRAMES	WRITING PROMPTS ASK STUDENTS TO...
C ompare & contrast	<i>Compare and/or contrast two or more items using specific criteria. For example:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare and contrast these two items using the following criteria... • Are ___ and ___ more alike or more different? Support your answer using specific examples. • Which of these items are most similar? Which are most different? Explain your reasoning.
R elate personally	<i>Connect with the content on a personal level. For example:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you feel/what would you do if you were in ___'s shoes? • How is this relevant to your life? • Have you (or someone you know) ever seen/felt/experienced ___? What was it like?
E valuate	<i>Assess or judge something using specific criteria. For example:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which idea/strategy/solution/product/model is best? What criteria did you use to make your decision? • Did this person/character make the right decision? Why? • Does this work satisfy the assessment criteria we discussed? Why or why not? Be specific.
A ssociate	<i>Generate associations or explain how given items/ideas are connected. For example:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What comes to mind when I say ___? What comes to mind when you see/hear/taste/touch/smell ___? • In what way are ___ and ___ connected in your mind? • How is ___ like a ___?
T race/ sequence	<i>Arrange and present information in order. For example:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trace the development of ___ (an event, character, argument, idea, invention, etc.). • Trace the sequence of events leading up to ___. • Describe the sequence of steps you used to ___.
I nterpret/ analyze	<i>Interpret or analyze information. For example:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What can you conclude from this data? Why? • What is the meaning of this passage/parable/image/law/quotation/dream? Why do you think so? • What point or message is this artist/writer/speaker trying to convey? Why do you think so?
V alidate	<i>Validate (or evaluate the validity of) a conclusion, statement, source, etc. For example:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you know that ___ is the case? Describe your evidence. • How did you check the validity/reliability of your information? Explain. • Is this a valid ___ (argument, solution, conclusion, criticism, model)? Why or why not?
E xplain	<i>Explain what, why, or how. For example:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you know about ___? Write an explanatory paragraph. • Why ___? • How ___? How could you explain ___?
I dentify & describe	<i>Describe an object, observation, individual, or event. For example:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the properties or components of ___ (e.g., properties of a mineral, components of a computer). • Describe what you observed. What did you see, hear, touch, taste, or smell? • Describe who/how/what happened ___. (Example: Describe what Ping chooses to do and why.)
D efine	<i>Demonstrate their understanding of a critical term or concept. For example:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define the following concept or term in your own words: ___. • What are the defining characteristics of a ___? (Example: What are the critical attributes of a reptile?) • What makes a ___ a ___? (Example: What makes a sonnet a sonnet?)
E xplore possibilities	<i>Explore alternatives, possibilities, and "what if" scenarios. For example:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is another way of ___? What is another explanation for ___? How many possible ways can you ___? • What if ___? What might be the consequences if ___? (Example: What if the decimal point didn't exist?) • Why or how might ___? (Example: How might we design a more efficient computer program?)
A rgue a position	<i>Take a position and provide evidence to support it. For example:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State your position on ___ and provide evidence to support it. • Do you agree or disagree with ___? Explain your answer using specific evidence, examples, or details. • The reason why ___ is ___. (Example: Babe Ruth is the greatest baseball player of all time because...)
S ummarize	<i>Briefly recap what they have observed, heard, or experienced. For example:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To summarize, what I read/heard/learned was ___. • The most important point or takeaway message was ___. • Draw a picture that summarizes what you learned. Then explain your drawing.

What? So What? Now What?

What is it?

A technique that uses three simple writing prompts (What? So what? Now what?) to help students reflect on what and how they learn

What are the benefits of using this tool?

Getting students to reflect on their learning experiences in a thoughtful and meaningful way can sometimes be challenging. This tool increases the productivity and usefulness of classroom reflection sessions by using three simple writing prompts to guide and focus student thinking:

- What?* → What did you do during this learning experience?
- So what?* → What did this experience teach you about yourself or the content?
- Now what?* → How can you apply, extend, or benefit from what you learned?

What are the basic steps?

1. Select a learning experience for students to reflect on (e.g., a lecture, test, homework assignment).
2. Have students reflect on what this experience taught them about the content *or* about themselves and how they learn. Initiate the reflection process by having them do the following:
 - Summarize what they did during the learning experience. (*What?*)
 - Describe what they learned about themselves or the content material. (*So what?*)
 - Explain how they could apply, extend, or benefit from what they learned. (*Now what?*)

How is this tool used in the classroom?

- ✓ To help students reflect on and learn from their classroom experiences

This tool can be used to have students reflect on what they learn about the content (Example 1). It can also be used to have students reflect on themselves and how they learn (Example 2).

EXAMPLE 1: Here, a student reflects on what he learned from a classroom activity:

What: We re-enacted the Federalist vs. Anti-Federalist debate over the Constitution.

So what: I realized that the current debate about the rights of individuals vs. states vs. federal government has been going on for centuries!

Now what: I wonder if I can find other examples of conflicts over state/federal/individual rights this semester.

EXAMPLE 2: Here, a student reflects on her experience with a new note-taking technique:

What: We learned to take notes using pictures as well as words.

So what: It's easier for me to remember stuff after I draw a picture of it.

Now what: I will try using the words and pictures technique to take notes in my other classes.

TOOLS

FOR THOUGHTFUL ASSESSMENT

Today's educators know that assessment means more than assigning and grading student work. They know assessment is an ongoing process that involves regularly gathering information about student learning, using that information to make better instructional decisions, and helping students take responsibility for their own learning. To do this work thoughtfully, teachers need a collection of effective assessment techniques that will integrate seamlessly into their everyday instructional practice.

Tools for Thoughtful Assessment is that collection. It contains over 75 easy-to-use tools that help teachers at all grade levels respond to the key challenges associated with classroom assessment.

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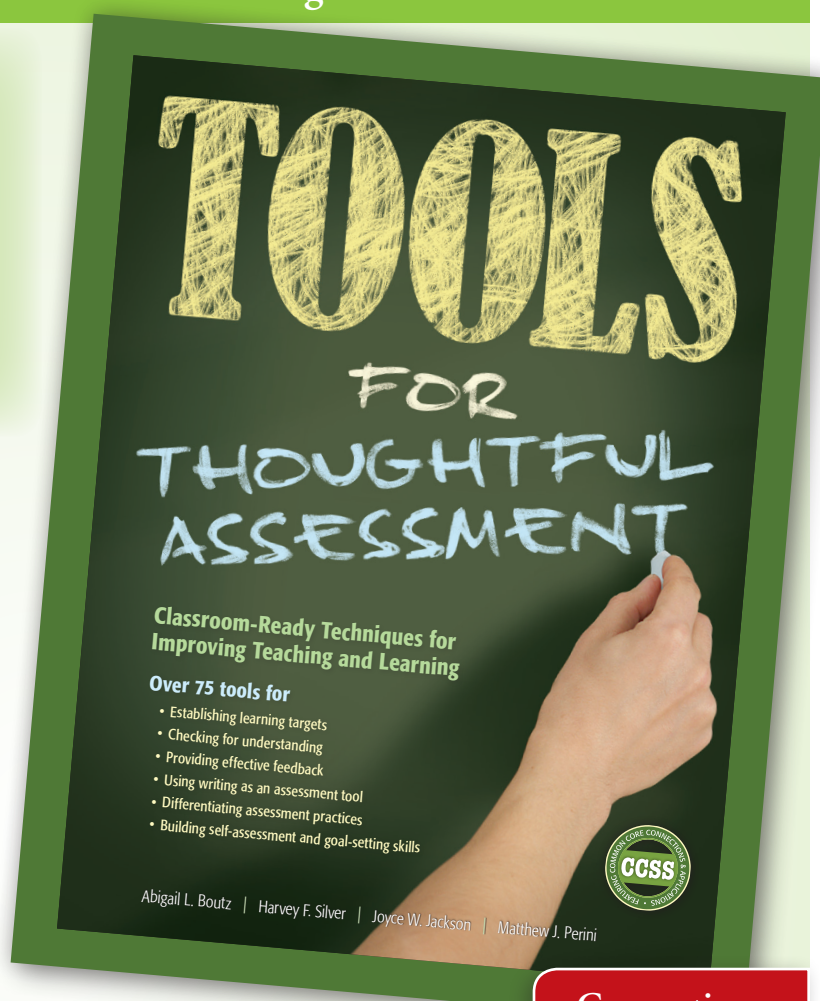
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Tools for Thoughtful Assessment is that collection. It contains over seventy-five easy-to-use tools that help teachers respond to twelve key assessment questions. Each question is addressed by a different chapter in the book:

- Chapter 1:** How will I identify and communicate learning goals to students?
- Chapter 2:** How will I use pre-assessments to inform and enhance instruction?
- Chapter 3:** How will I prepare students to produce high-quality work?
- Chapter 4:** How will I check for understanding *while* presenting new information?
- Chapter 5:** How will I check for understanding *after* presenting new information?
- Chapter 6:** How will I help students review, practice, and check their grasp of the material?
- Chapter 7:** How will I help students improve their work through feedback and self-assessment?
- Chapter 8:** How will I help students monitor their learning and establish goals and plans for moving forward?
- Chapter 9:** How will I use writing tasks to help students synthesize and show what they know?
- Chapter 10:** How will I develop high-quality culminating assessment tasks and evaluation frameworks?
- Chapter 11:** How will I differentiate assessment to promote success for all students?
- Chapter 12:** How will I help students reflect on, learn from, and celebrate their achievements?



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Teachers today face more demands than ever before. In response, we've worked with thousands of educators from across the country to develop tools—ready-to-use instructional techniques that

- are designed to respond to the challenges classroom teachers face.
- can be used in all grade levels and content areas; classroom examples illustrate this diversity.
- are simple and teacher friendly. All tools include seven steps or fewer, and most require little or no advance planning.
- are informed by research on effective instruction and assessment.
- can be used during all stages of the instructional process, and for both formative and summative purposes. In addition, the organization of the book is designed to highlight the connection between instructional design and assessment design.

4

How is this tool used in the classroom?

- ✓ To get immediate feedback about the effectiveness of classroom lessons
- ✓ To assess students' understanding of key facts and main ideas
- ✓ To have students review, synthesize, and demonstrate what they've learned

EXAMPLE 1: A world history teacher used 3-2-1 at the start of class to see how well her students had understood and remembered the key points from the previous day's lesson on early cave art.

Three facts that I learned during today's lesson:

Thousands of years ago, artists painted on caves, not paper.
Cave paintings can show us what life was like in the past.
Cave paintings are both realistic and symbolic.

Two questions that I have:

Why did people make these paintings?
What did the artists use for paint?

The single most important point of today's lesson seemed to be:
You can learn a lot about people by examining their art.

Great question, Paul!
We don't actually know the answer,
but we can discuss some
possibilities in class.

EXAMPLE 2: A kindergarten teacher used 3-2-1 to check students' understanding of a science unit on observation and patterns (their ideas about, shape, and color).

3 things we observed:

2 questions we have:

1 main idea:

EXAMPLE 3: A US history teacher used 3-2-1 at the end of class when they'd discussed students' review and discussion of the material and goals. He asked students to write down the 3 most important aspects of Lincoln's life.

The 3 most important aspects of Lincoln's life were:
1. He was a great leader.
2. He was a great speaker.
3. He was a great writer.

EXAMPLE 4: The big picture tool was used to help students recognize that after reviewing the material, they realized that most of the positive aspects of the following day, but not the negative aspects.

80 Tools for Thoughtful Assessment

3-2-1

What is it?

A tool that tells us what students are getting out of their learning experiences by having them record three things they learned, two questions they have, and one main idea.

What are the benefits of using this tool?

Checking for understanding and adjusting instruction accordingly are two of the most important things we can do as educators. Because it's not necessary or feasible to do in-depth checks all the time, it's important to have quick-check tools like 3-2-1 in our repertoires. In a matter of minutes, 3-2-1 gives us specific feedback about what students have learned, what they have questions about, and whether they've grasped the big picture. It benefits students as well since the process of recording facts, questions, and big ideas helps them review and synthesize what they've learned.

What are the basic steps?

1. Present information to students via lecture, video, reading assignment, etc.
2. Help students review and synthesize what they learned by having them record the following:
THREE key facts → "Three important things that I learned are..."
TWO questions → "Two questions that I have are..."
ONE main idea → "The main idea of today's lesson seemed to be..."
3. Review students' responses. Use what you learn to gauge the effectiveness of your lesson. (Did students remember the key facts? Get the big picture? What kinds of questions do they have?)
4. Revisit any material that students missed, misunderstood, or asked questions about.

Teacher Talk

- Adjust the 3-2-1 stems as needed to fit your content and goals; use Example 3 as a model.
- Use students' questions to identify areas of interest as well as areas of confusion. Address interest-driven questions during future lessons (a good strategy for boosting engagement) or encourage students to pursue these questions on their own.
- When using this tool with very young students, you can have them complete the 3-2-1 stems as a class (students speak their ideas aloud, you help refine and record them). If students aren't ready to identify main ideas on their own, use questions and prompts to help them.

Chapter 5 | How Will I Check for Understanding After Presenting New Information? 79

Every Tool Answers Four Questions

1. **What is it?** A brief description of the tool and its purpose
2. **What are the benefits of using this tool?** A one-paragraph explanation of the problem or challenge the tool addresses and how the tool enhances learning
3. **What are the basic steps?** A step-by-step guide for putting the tool into practice
4. **How is this tool used in the classroom?** A section that provides greater clarity on how the tool can be used and typically includes examples from different grade levels and content areas

Extras: In addition to the four critical questions, many tools include **Teacher Talk** (tips and suggestions for getting more out of the tool) and **reproducibles**. Copies of the reproducibles and other downloadable "extras" can be found at www.ThoughtfulClassroom.com/Tools.

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