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How To Transform Confusion Into Understanding While Reading

In my last article, you learned the importance of using schematic clues to read and understand text. Just what constitutes these clues in text? Both nouns and verbs in text constitute its schematic clues. Nouns offer information about the people, places, and things while verbs describe any actions that are taking place. The first step towards increasing your reading speed is to make a habit of looking for the people, places, and things doing the activities. Fortunately your brain is well suited for selectively filtering any information that you consciously command it to detect. Let me prove this to you with a simple experiment.

Take a look about you and make a mental picture of all the red objects you can see. Look very carefully and make a detailed map of these items. Next you are going to close your eyes and picture everything around you that is colored blue. Notice what your brain just did? It said, “wait a minute, you told me to look for red so how am I supposed to remember anything colored blue?” Your brilliant brain searches and finds exactly what you tell it to look at. The same thing transpires while reading. You must tell your brain to look for people, places, and things and their actions. And it will seek and it will find.

There are some very useful filters that instantly empower your brain with the ability to spot important schematic information. These are the same filters you were taught to use in school when writing. These filters are the questions: who, what, where, when, why, and how. While reading you must constantly ask yourself these questions to get the following related outcomes:

- *who is this about*
- *what is this about*
- *why is this happening*
- *where is this taking place*
- *when is this occurring*
- *why is this important*
- *how can I use this information*

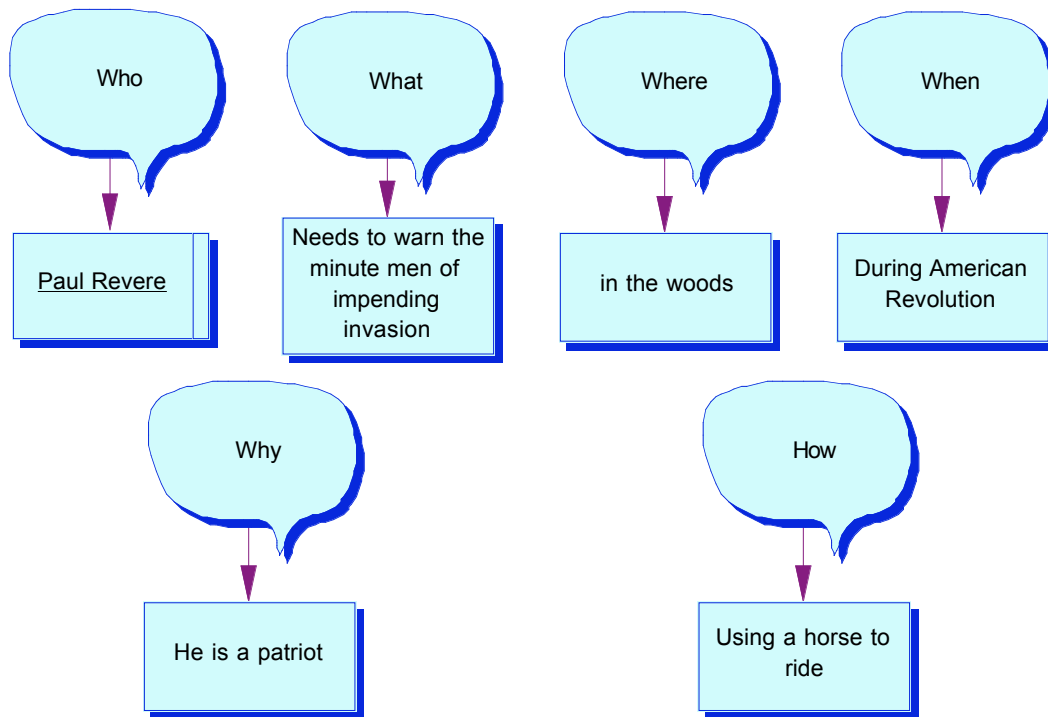
A simple and effective way for remembering this information is to **picture** these key questions floating in your mind on cartoon shaped balloons linked to their appropriate data. The more visual you make your important information the faster you will be able to read and later recall it.

For example, if I am reading about Paul Revere riding his horse to warn the Minute Men about the impending British invasion during the American Revolution, then I would do the following:

- I see Paul Revere's name pasted on the who balloon,
- I paste a picture of him warning the minute men on the what balloon,
- I see him riding into the woods on my where balloon.
- It is during the American Revolution so I paste this on my when balloon

- He does this because he is a patriot so I paste this on my why balloon.
- Paul is using a horse to accomplish his task so this gets pasted on my how balloon.

The following is a graphic illustration of what I am suggesting you do in your imagination:



Now that you can easily spot schematic clues in our next column you will learn how to use these clues to increase your reading speed.

Howard Stephen Berg is the world's fastest reader and Vice President of Gateway Preparatory School. For information about Gateway's online curriculum for High School & Junior High school, Accelerated Learning Programs, and College

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