

Word-Phrase-Sentence

A routine for capturing the essence of a text.

As an individual, review a text and then select a:

- **Word** that captured your attention or struck you as powerful
- **Phrase** that moved, engaged, or provoked you
- **Sentence** that was meaningful to you, that you felt captures the core idea of the text

As a group, discuss and record your choices. Begin by sharing your words, then phrases, then sentences. Explain why you made the selections you did. Looking at your group's collective choices of words, phrases, and sentences, reflect on the conversation by identifying:

- What themes emerge?
- What implications or predictions can be drawn?
- Were there aspects of the text not captured in your choices?

PURPOSE

What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?

This routine provides structure for a conversation. It can be used as both a discourse and as a thinking routine.

APPLICATION

When and where can I use it?

This routine helps learners engage with and make meaning from text with a particular focus on capturing the essence of the text or “what speaks to you.” However, the power and promise of this routine lies in the discussion of why a particular word, a single phrase, and a sentence stood out for each individual in the group as a catalyst for discussions.

LAUNCH

What are some tips for starting and using this routine?

1. Set up. Give time to read selected texts in advance unless text is short and can be read on spot. Encourage active reading and highlighting. Not necessary to read with word-phrase-sentence protocol in mind.
2. Select a word-phrase-sentence. Ensure what is selected is meaningful to the reader. Note: some teachers like to change the order to sentence-phrase-word and this is okay.
3. Share selections. In groups of 4-6 people, ask learners to share and record their choices, explaining why they selected them. Sharing and discussion should occur in rounds, so the discussion is facilitated. First participant shares a word and explains why she chose it, inviting others to comment and discuss. The words are recorded and then the next person shares, records, and discusses until everyone has their turn. The group then moves to phrases and finally to sentences.
4. Invite reflection on the conversation. Each group looks at its documented responses. They identify common themes that emerge from these responses and then the implications and/or predictions they suggested. Finally the group identifies any aspects of the text that were not represented in their choice of sentences, phrases, and words.
5. Share the thinking. Post documentation from all the groups. Allow time to look at the sentences, phrases, and words chosen and the themes and implications drawn. Invite each group member to reflect briefly on his or her current understanding of the text and how using the routine contributed to his or her understand understanding of it.

It is not essential to complete all three steps to achieve the purpose, sentence, and word.

This thinking routine was adapted from the Text Rendering Experience from the School Reform Initiative by the Cultures of Thinking project at Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education. Explore the full PZ Thinking Routine Toolbox at pz.harvard.edu/thinking-routines.