



## Three-Column Note-Taking

### Overview:

An important element of reading comprehension is the ability to organize text. Organizing requires readers to focus on the major elements of a text and not only to decide what is important but also what needs to be investigated further.

Three-Column notes are an adaptation of the Cornell system. Information is grouped according to its type, and then arranged in columns.

### Procedure:

1. The Three-Column Notes graphical organizer can be organized in the following ways:

- **In the first column**, write the main subjects or topics from the text.
- **In the second column**, write significant details you learned from reading the text, from research or discussion.
- **In the third column**, jot down opinions, observations, thoughts, etc.

2. This strategy can be used as a during-reading activity or post-reading activity after students complete a unit of study. (*See samples and adaptations below.*)

3. Often, three-column notes can form the basis for (small or whole) class discussion about the reading and can help the teacher informally assess students' understanding of key concepts. In addition, class discussions will reflect students' personal ideas, inquiries, and questions. While evaluating the students' written work, it's important to keep in mind the following responses:

- Did students include key or relevant concepts/ideas to the topic at hand?
- Did they use this strategy accurately?
- How did they organize their responses from text?
- Do their notes show active engagement with text?
- Were there any content or conceptual gaps reflected in their notes that the instructor will need to follow-up with?
- Discuss the responses with the class—focus on how responses show understanding of the topic at hand.

<b>Goals of Government: Preamble to the U.S. Constitution</b>		
<b>ensure domestic tranquility</b>	Security for property, person, peaceful neighborhood, investigate and punish criminals	<i>Would guarding the national borders from illegal workers be considered protection of employment opportunities?</i>
<b>provide for the common defense</b>	Ensure adequate supplies, training, and maintenance of equipment necessary for our armed forces, Providing for the draft, when needed,	<i>I heard a news story about troops in Iraq needing better vests, but they are too costly for the Pentagon to purchase.</i>

## **SAMPLE CATEGORY HEADINGS**

[ presented in a columnar format! ]

**WHAT THIS IS:** Following you'll find a three-column chart that lists a range of headings...for 3-column charts. For instance, you might have students complete a 3-column chart where they list each key topic in the left column; provide an explanation of each topic in the middle column; and add relevant details or elaboration in the right column.

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3
TOPIC	EXPLANATION	DETAILS
VOCABULARY	DEFINITION	USE IN A SENTENCE
QUESTIONS	BOOK NOTES	CLASS DISCUSSION
CAUSE	EFFECT	EXPLANATION
LEGISLATION	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
KEY TERM/CONCEPT	IN MY OWN WORDS	PICTURE