



Linda G. Allen & LeAnn Nickelsen

ABC Brainstorm
from Making Words Their Own:
Building Foundations for Powerful Vocabulary
by Linda G. Allen & LeAnn Nickelsen

What do your students already know about the topic you're about to teach? What do they know, for example, about canoes, Mounties, Loonies, an Olympic torch, the Bluenose, totem poles or igloos? Some may have a lot of background knowledge while others may know very little. But how do you know before handing a book to a student that they lack information and will struggle with comprehension, or have lots of background knowledge and could be a mentor to others? ABC brainstorm is a great type of formative assessment to use at the beginning as a *pre-assessment or formative assessment*, and can be repeated mid-cycle to see if content-specific vocabulary has increased.

ABC Brainstorm accomplishes two important goals. First, it gives students a global understanding of the types of words they associate with a topic. If they have wide background knowledge of the topic, you'll see that they've listed a variety of words related to the content. Students with little prior knowledge will have fewer words recorded on the organizer, and these will be more general.

The second goal is that it activates prior knowledge. When students process what they think they know about a topic, share the information, and debrief with the class, they bring to the frontal lobes of the brains information that will be the pegs for new learning. Do this activity prior to the start of a new unit, and students will be subconsciously making connections before you even start to teach content! (Allen & Nickelsen p 12)

ABC BRAINSTORM

by: _____

Topic: Canoes...

Try to fill out as many canoe-related vocabulary terms as possible on your own.
Then flip through the book for additional words.

A _____

B boat, birch bark, bow

C canoe, canvas

D _____

E _____

F First Nations

G gunwhales

H hull

I _____

J _____

K _____

L life jacket, lake

M marine

N _____

O ocean

P paddle, portage

Q _____

R row, rapids

S sea, supplies, steer, stern

T tip over!

U _____

V voyageurs

W wood, whitewater

X _____

Y Yukon River

Z _____

ABC BRAINSTORM

by: _____

Topic: _____

A _____

B _____

C _____

D _____

E _____

F _____

G _____

H _____

I _____

J _____

K _____

L _____

M _____

N _____

O _____

P _____

Q _____

R _____

S _____

T _____

U _____

V _____

W _____

X _____

Y _____

Z _____