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SEL Story 001

# SKY HIGH

Social-Emotional Learning: **Self Awareness, Self Management**

Reading Strategy: **Making Connections**

SEOT: **Strategy** (Overcoming Fear)

version: v2022-09-30

## START HERE

👋 Need a hand? Email me! [Mike@educircles.org](mailto:Mike@educircles.org)

### INSTRUCTIONS:

- Print this PDF file. It has all of the handouts.
- Look at the bottom of the handouts to see which differentiated version it is.
- Grades below are estimated using [Hemingway Editor](#).

### WHAT'S IN THIS PDF:

- This title page and links to files (File Table of Contents)
- Handout A - grade 4
- Handout B - grade 6
- Handout C - grade 8
- Handout D - grade 10
- Answer key to questions in the handout
- BONUS Answer Key for teachers using the Making Connections reading strategy graphic organizer. (The graphic organizer is available in the [Making Connections Reading Bundle](#))
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Instructions

What's in this  
PDF

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# Print this PDF

(it has all of the handouts)

# File Table of Contents

What do I need	File Name	File type	Get the file
SEL Story + Overcoming Fear from an SEOT perspective (STRATEGY) + Discussion Questions	<b>Handout A - Grade 4</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reading time: 4 min 33 sec</li><li>• Speaking time: 8 min 46 sec</li><li>• 1140 words, 98 sentences, 24 paragraphs</li></ul> <i>virtual online handout:</i>	PDF	<a href="#">one-click copy</a>
		Google Docs	<a href="#">one-click copy</a>
		Microsoft Word <sup>(1)</sup>	<a href="#">one-click copy</a>
		Easel by TpT	<a href="#">one-click copy</a>
	<b>Handout B - Grade 6</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reading time: 4 min 58 sec</li><li>• Speaking time: 9 min 34 sec</li><li>• 1243 words, 88 sentences, 24 paragraphs</li></ul> <i>virtual online handout:</i>	PDF	<a href="#">one-click copy</a>
		Google Docs	<a href="#">one-click copy</a>
		Microsoft Word <sup>(1)</sup>	<a href="#">one-click copy</a>
		Easel by TpT	<a href="#">one-click copy</a>
	<b>Handout C - Grade 8</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reading time: 5 min 04 sec</li><li>• Speaking time: 9 min 45 sec</li><li>• 1267 words, 71 sentences, 24 paragraphs</li></ul> <i>virtual online handout:</i>	PDF	<a href="#">one-click copy</a>
		Google Docs	<a href="#">one-click copy</a>
		Microsoft Word <sup>(1)</sup>	<a href="#">one-click copy</a>
		Easel by TpT	<a href="#">one-click copy</a>
	<b>Handout D - Grade 10</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reading time: 5 min 30 sec</li><li>• Speaking time: 10 min 35 sec</li><li>• 1378 words, 67 sentences, 24 paragraphs</li></ul> <i>virtual online handout:</i>	PDF	<a href="#">one-click copy</a>
		Google Docs	<a href="#">one-click copy</a>
		Microsoft Word <sup>(1)</sup>	<a href="#">one-click copy</a>
		Easel by TpT	<a href="#">one-click copy</a>
Answers	<b>Answers</b> Answers to discussion questions in handout (included)	PDF	<a href="#">one-click copy</a>
	<b>BONUS Answers</b> Sample answers for the MAKING CONNECTIONS reading strategy graphic organizer  If you would like a copy of this graphic organizer, please upgrade to the <a href="#">Making Connections Bundle</a>	PDF	<a href="#">one-click copy</a>

Google Docs

Word

Easel by TpT

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# SKY HIGH

SEL Story #001



## 1. Keeping A Level Head When Anxiety Is Sky-High

1. Lt. Col. Rob 'Waldo' Waldman has dedicated his life to flying. He is a highly-decorated fighter pilot with over 65 combat missions. He's also the author of the New York Best Seller Never Fly Solo. Oh, and did I say he's also an ex-aerophobe? "What's that?" I hear you ask. You'll hardly believe it, but it's someone who fears flying.
3. Seems pretty unbelievable, right? But trust me, it's a real-life journey worth strapping in for. The story begins with Waldman as a young boy looking up to his father. His dad was part of the naval airforce and worked as a mechanic at John F. Kennedy International Airport. Waldman would go with his father to work, taking in the surroundings with awe. He remembers his dad coming home after 16-hour shifts. His dad would have cuts on his hands and smelled like jet oil.
4. "I loved that smell," he says. He was fascinated on his first airport trip with his father. The rumble of the engines and birds flying above captivated him. His dad sat him in the cockpit of one of the jets. At that moment, the dream was decided. He would grow up to fly planes.
5. There was only one issue! Waldman was afraid of heights.
6. But still, firmly, he decided his passion was more significant than his fear. So, in his first year of college, he applied to the Air Force Academy. And thus came his first run-in with anxiety over his long career. A 33-foot high diving board stood in the way of Waldman and graduation. Either he jumped, or he failed. One by one, Waldman watched his classmates leap from the board, 35lbs pack in tow, into the waters below. He was afraid, but there was no way a 33-foot board would stop him from achieving his dreams. So he leaped last, but he jumped, and that's all that matters.

Paragraphs  
match

# Handout A page 1

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Simple words  
Simple sentence structure

Sophisticated vocabulary  
Complex sentence structure



7. Due to his bravery, Waldman gained access to pilot training. But unfortunately, there were only a few slots. He missed out on the chance to be a fighter pilot. So, not one to be deterred, Waldman made the wise choice to become an instructor pilot. Still, in the back of his mind, he would always hope that he'd get to fly his beloved F-16 one day.
8. So far, so good. Waldman had conquered his fear of heights and would spend his days teaching pilots. But the next challenge was around the corner. Tragedy struck when Waldman went scuba diving with his friends. Fresh into the water, Waldman already felt out of his depth. He lost control of the situation. He began to flail. Next, he recalls his mask separating from his face. Waldman breathed in a lungful of burning salt water. Panic set in.
9. He would later note, "No combat mission could come close to that day." Even though he swam to the top and was physically fine, the mental scars had been etched.
10. The next time Waldman took to the air, it was a bleak day. He began to panic as he flew. Even though he was thousands of feet in the air, he felt the same way as when he was hundreds of feet underwater. And it was then that he realized he had claustrophobia. However, this fear wouldn't be overcome by a leap. Instead, it grew.
11. He would say, "Words can't describe the passion I had for flying jets, living my dream, but words also can't describe some of the fears and doubts I faced every time I strapped into that jet to fly." As his fear grew bigger than his passion, Waldman knew the answer: keep flying and focus on others. So instead of looking inward, he turned his focus outward. His secret weapon was to become focused on his students. He would help them spread their wings and become the best pilots they could be.
12. With the wind in his wings, Waldman kept flying. And, despite struggling with occasional claustrophobia, he was ranked number one pilot. Finally, he could choose the jet of his dreams. And, in his own words, "He didn't want to take the easy way out." He proudly picked the plane of his dreams. He advised everyone to "choose your F-16 every day; that's what's going to get you your wings."
13. These days, Waldman works as a public speaker. He shares his inspiration with others. His story has inspired hundreds to take control of their fear and reach their potential.

# Handout A page 2



SEL Story 001 Sky High - Handout A - Page 2 of 5

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Simple words  
Simple sentence structure

Sophisticated vocabulary  
Complex sentence structure



#### 14. OVERCOMING FEAR From An SEOT Perspective

15. Now we'll take a moment to break down Waldman's incredible story of conquering his fears to achieve his goals. We'll also look at how we can follow his example by adopting a growth mindset.

16. Waldman knew what he wanted from the start. Still, he didn't quite understand how to get there. Nonetheless, as hurdles arose along the way, Waldman faced them down.



17. There are two life lessons we can learn from this story. One strategy to overcome obstacles is to see if the pros outweigh the cons. This works great when you're calm, and you can think things through. Another plan to get you out of panic mode is to focus on the task at hand.

#### 18. Strategy #1: Smart Strategizing

19. Waldman analyzed his situation, allowing him to solve problems with ease. In the end, instead of listening to his fears, he used them to his advantage. And his secret was simple: smart strategizing.

20. When he needed to overcome his fear of heights to graduate, he took a step back. He thought about what he had to gain and lose from this one action. And, he decided his future mattered more than the present moment. His on-the-spot strategizing helped him to realize that fear could be beaten. Instead of letting a moment of panic win, he proved to himself that he was capable of great bravery. This moment of bravery saw him through the rest of his career. It allowed him to take to the skies daily and teach new pilots.

#### 21. Strategy #2: Focus On The Immediate Task At Hand

22. To fight his claustrophobia, Waldman focused on the task at hand. Only focusing on one thing helped push out the fear and let him get through the tough times. Instead of letting his fear take control, Waldman ignored his fear and focused on what he could. He then his thoughts into action. This strategy slows racing thoughts as actions take center stage in your mind.

23. Sometimes, if we can reason with our fears, we can create a strategy to beat them. This approach can help us to change over time.

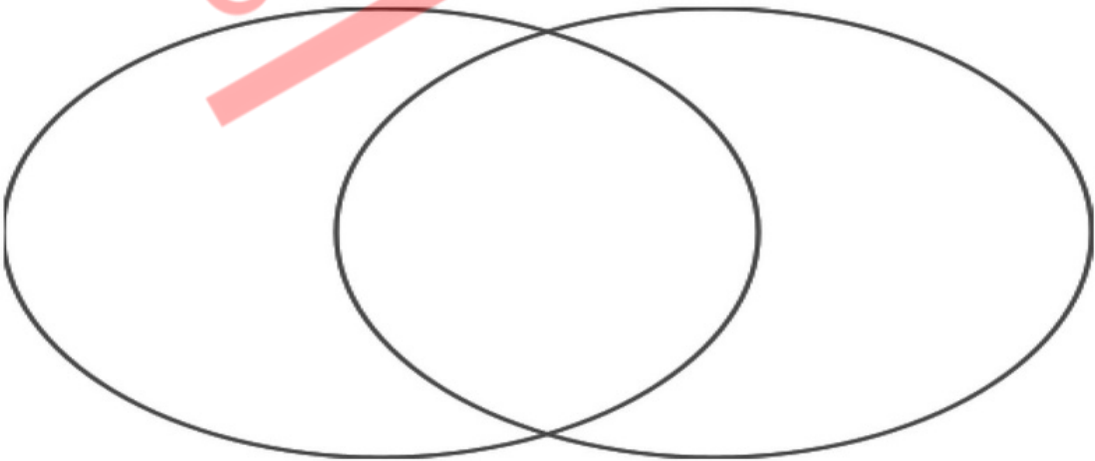
24. Other times, if we're panicking, focusing on the immediate task can help us focus.

# Handout A page 3



Questions

1. What was the problem that Lt. Col. Rob 'Waldo' Waldman faced up in the air? [RECALL]
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
2. Why might hyper-focusing on his students help him overcome his fear? [UNDERSTAND]
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
3. Think about a time in your life when you were afraid. What were you worried about at the time? What could you have focused on instead? Would that have made a difference? [APPLY]
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
4. Use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the two different strategies Waldman uses to overcome fear. What are the pros and cons of each approach? [ANALYZE]



Handout  
A  
page 4



Questions

5. Why might focusing on the task at hand not have worked at the pool? Likewise, why might focusing on the BIG PICTURE not have worked up in the air? [EVALUATE]

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6. Plan a scenario for yourself where one of the strategies from this text would help you overcome a fear. Create a self-talk script to help yourself overcome your fear before you get into that situation. [CREATE]

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# Handout A page 5



# Questions



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# SKY HIGH

SEL Story #001



## 1. Keeping A Level Head When Anxiety Is Sky-High

1. Lt. Col. Rob 'Waldo' Waldman has dedicated his life to flying. He is a highly-decorated fighter pilot with over 65 combat missions. Not to mention that he's also the author of the New York Best Seller Never Fly Solo. Oh, and did I say he's also an ex-aerophobe? "What's that?" I hear you ask. You'll hardly believe it, but it's someone who fears flying.
3. Seems pretty unbelievable, right? But trust me, it's a real-life journey worth strapping in for. The story begins with Waldman as a young boy looking up to his father. His dad was a Navy veteran and worked as a mechanic at John F. Kennedy International Airport. Waldman would go with his father to work, taking in the surroundings with awe and wonder. He lovingly recalls memories of his father coming home after 16-hour shifts, cuts on his hands, and smelling like jet oil.
4. "I loved that smell," he says. He was fascinated on his first airport trip with his father. The rumble of the engines and birds flying above captivated him. His dad sat him in the cockpit of one of the jets. At that moment, the dream was decided. He would grow up to fly planes, and nothing else would do.
5. There was only one issue: Waldman was cripplingly afraid of heights.
6. But still, firmly, he decided his passion was more significant than his fear. So, in his first year of college, he applied to the Air Force Academy. And thus came his first run-in with anxiety over his long career. A 33-foot high diving board stood in the way of Waldman and graduation. Either he jumped, or he failed. One by one, Waldman watched his classmates leap from the board, 35lbs pack in tow, into the waters below. He was afraid, but there was no way a 33-foot board would stop him from achieving his dreams. So he leaped last, but he jumped nonetheless.

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Paragraphs  
match

Handout  
B

page 1



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Simple words  
Simple sentence structure

Sophisticated vocabulary  
Complex sentence structure

7. Due to his bravery, Waldman gained access to pilot training. But unfortunately, due to a limited number of slots, he missed out on the chance to be a fighter pilot. So, not one to be deterred, Waldman made the wise choice to become an instructor pilot. However, in the back of his mind, he would always harbor the hope that he'd get to claim ownership of his beloved F-16 one day.
8. So far, so good. Waldman conquered his fear of heights. He would spend his days instructing the next generation of pilots. But the next challenge was just around the corner. Tragedy struck when Waldman went scuba diving with his friends. Fresh into the water, Waldman already felt out of his depth. He lost control of the situation as he began to flail. Next, he recalls his mask separating from his face as he breathed in a lungful of burning salt water. Panic set in.
9. He would later note, "No combat mission could come close to that day." And while he resurfaced physically unscathed, the mental scars had been etched.
10. The next time Waldman took the air, it was a bleak day. He began to panic as he flew, feeling the same thousands of feet in the air as he'd felt hundreds of feet underwater. And it was then that he realized: he had claustrophobia. However, this fear wouldn't be overcome by a leap. Instead, it grew.
11. He would later say, "Words can't describe the passion I had for flying jets, living my dream, but words also can't describe some of the fears and doubts I faced every time I strapped into that jet to fly." As his fear became larger than his passion, Waldman knew only one thing would help: keep flying and focus more on others. So instead of looking inward, he turned his focus outward. His secret weapon was to become maniacally focused on his students. He wanted to help them to spread their wings and in his own words, "I became maniacally focused on them - how can I teach them, how can I instruct them and serve them and help them live their dream."
12. With the wind in his wings, Waldman kept flying. And, despite still struggling with occasional claustrophobia, he was ranked number one pilot. Finally, he could choose the jet of his dreams. And, in his own words, "He didn't want to take the easy way out." He proudly picked the plane of his dreams and advised everyone to "choose your F-16 every day; that's what's going to get you your wings."
13. These days, Waldman works as a public speaker. He shares his inspirational story far and wide. His story has inspired hundreds, if not thousands, to take control of their fear and fulfill their potential.

# Handout B

## page 2



Simple words  
Simple sentence structure

Sophisticated vocabulary  
Complex sentence structure



#### 14. OVERCOMING FEAR From An SEOT Perspective

15. Now we'll take a moment to break down Waldman's incredible story of conquering his fears to achieve his goals. We'll also consider how we can follow in his footsteps by adopting a growth mindset.

16. Waldman knew his destination from the get-go. However, he didn't quite understand how he'd get there. Nonetheless, as hurdles arose along the way, Waldman faced them down.



17. There are two life lessons we can adopt from this story. One strategy to overcome obstacles is to see if the pros outweigh the cons. This works great if your rational mind is still in the picture and can help you think things through. Another strategy to get through tough times when you're in panic mode (like when you're flying a jet and you suddenly realize you're claustrophobic) is to hyper-focus on the task at hand.

#### 18. Strategy #1: Smart Strategizing

19. He analyzed his situation, allowing him to problem-solve with ease. In the end, instead of being suffocated by his fears, Waldman used them to his advantage. And his secret was simple: smart strategizing.

20. When he needed to overcome his fear of heights to graduate, he took a step back. He considered what he stood to gain and lose from one action and decided his future mattered more than the present moment. His on-the-spot strategizing helped him to realize that on the opposite end of fear is often success. And, instead of allowing one moment of anxiety to get the better of him, he proved to himself that he was capable of confronting the fear. This moment of bravery saw him through the rest of his career, allowing him to take to the skies daily while passing on his expertise and invaluable experience to generation after generation of pilots.

#### 21. Strategy #2: Focus On The Immediate Task At Hand

22. To combat his claustrophobia, Waldman focused unflinchingly on the task at hand. By believing something mattered more than his fear (such as the success of his students), he could pass over his heightened emotions. So, instead of giving his thoughts control over his state of mind, Waldman took control of his thoughts and channeled them into action. This strategy helps quiet racing thoughts as actions take center stage in your mind.

23. Sometimes, if we're able to reason with our fears, we can put in place sustainable strategies to combat them that help us to adapt gradually.

24. Other times, if we're panicking and out of control, hyper-focusing on the immediate task at hand might help us get through to the other side where success is waiting.

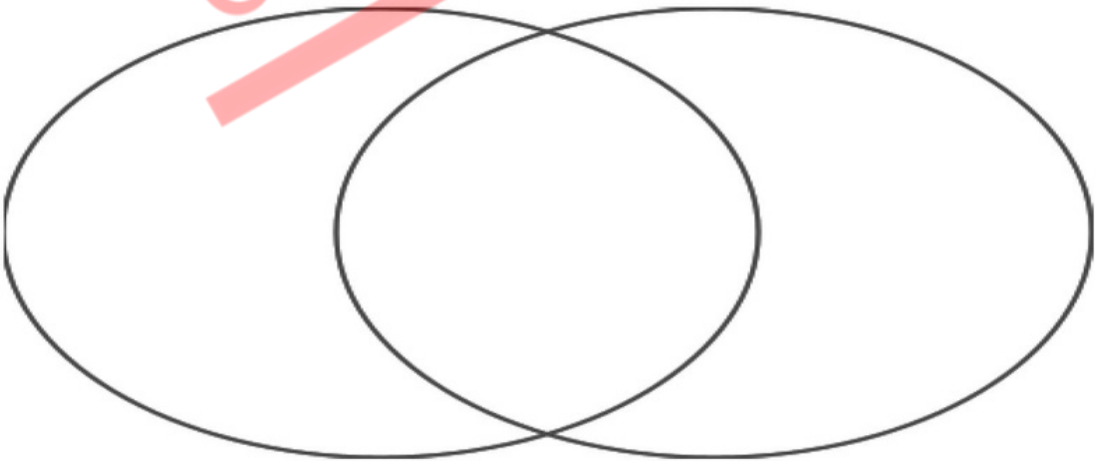
# Handout B page 3





Questions

1. What was the problem that Lt. Col. Rob 'Waldo' Waldman faced up in the air? [RECALL]
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2. Why might hyper-focusing on his students help him overcome his fear? [UNDERSTAND]
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- 
3. Think about a time in your life when you were afraid. What were you worried about at the time? What could you have focused on instead? Would that have made a difference? [APPLY]
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- 
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- 
4. Use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the two different strategies Waldman uses to overcome fear. What are the pros and cons of each approach? [ANALYZE]



Handout  
B  
page 4



Questions

5. Why might focusing on the task at hand not have worked at the pool? Likewise, why might focusing on the BIG PICTURE not have worked up in the air? [EVALUATE]

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6. Plan a scenario for yourself where one of the strategies from this text would help you overcome a fear. Create a self-talk script to help yourself overcome your fear before you get into that situation. [CREATE]

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# Handout B

## page 5



# Questions

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# SKY HIGH

SEL Story #001



## 1. Keeping A Level Head When Anxiety Is Sky-High

1. Lt. Col. Rob 'Waldo' Waldman has dedicated his life to flying, so much so that he has become a highly-decorated fighter pilot with over 65 combat missions over his career. Not to mention that he's also the author of the New York Best Seller *Never Fly Solo*. Oh, and did I say he's also an ex-aerophobe? "What's that?" I hear you ask. You'll hardly believe it, but it's someone with a chronic fear of flying.
3. Seems pretty unbelievable, right? But trust me, it's a real-life journey worth strapping in for. The story begins with Waldman as a young boy looking up to his father, a Navy veteran and mechanic at John F. Kennedy International Airport. Waldman would accompany his father to work, taking in the airport surroundings with great awe and wonder, in what would become a hugely influential moment in his life. He lovingly recalls memories of his father coming home after 16-hour shifts with cuts on his hands and smelling noticeably like jet oil.
4. "I loved that smell," Waldman reminisces. He was fascinated on his first airport trip with his father - the rumble of the engines and birds flying above captivated him. His dad sat him in the cockpit of one of the jets, and the dream was decided: he would grow up to fly planes, and nothing else would do.
5. There was only one issue: Waldman was cripplingly afraid of heights.
6. But still, firmly, he decided his passion was more significant than his fear. So, in his first year of college, he intrepidly applied to the Air Force Academy. And thus came his first run-in with anxiety over his long career as he faced down a 33-foot high diving board, which stood in the way of himself and graduation. Either he jumped, or he failed. One by one, Waldman watched his classmates leap from the board with 35lbs pack in tow into the deep waters below, but he remained afraid. Still, there was no way a 33-foot board would stop him from achieving his dreams, so he leaped last, but he jumped nonetheless.

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Paragraphs  
match

# Handout C page 1



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Simple words  
Simple sentence structure

Sophisticated vocabulary  
Complex sentence structure



7. Due to his act of bravery, Waldman gained access to pilot training, but unfortunately, due to a limited number of slots, he missed out on the chance to be a fighter pilot. So, not one to be deterred, Waldman made the wise choice to become an instructor pilot. However, in the back of his mind, he would always harbor the hope that he'd get to claim ownership of his beloved F-16 one day.
8. So far, so good. Waldman had conquered his fear of heights and would spend his days instructing the next generation of pilots, but the next challenge was just around the corner as tragedy struck when Waldman went scuba diving with his friends. Fresh into the water, Waldman already felt out of his depth. He lost control of the situation as he began to flail; he recalls his mask separating from his face as he breathed in a lungful of burning salt water. Panic set in.
9. He would later note, "No combat mission could come close to that day." And while he resurfaced physically unscathed, the mental scars had been etched.
10. The next time Waldman took the air, it was a bleak day, and he began to panic as he flew, feeling the same thousands of feet in the air as he'd felt hundreds of feet underwater. And it was then that he realized: he had claustrophobia. However, this fear wouldn't be overcome by a leap. Instead, it grew.
11. He would later say, "Words can't describe the passion I had for flying jets, living my dream, but words also can't describe some of the fears and doubts I faced every time I strapped into that jet to fly." As his fear became more significant than his passion, Waldman knew only one thing would help: keep flying and focus more on others. So instead of looking inward, he turned his focus outward. His secret weapon was to become maniacally focused on his students, helping them to spread their wings and become the best pilots they could possibly be.
12. With the wind in his wings, Waldman kept flying, and, despite still struggling with occasional claustrophobia, he finally achieved the rank of number one pilot. At last, he could choose the jet of his dreams. And, in his own words, "He didn't want to take the easy way out." He proudly picked the plane of his dreams and advised everyone to "choose your F-16 every day; that's what's going to get you your wings."
13. These days, Waldman works as a public speaker, sharing his inspirational story far and wide, and in doing so, his story has inspired hundreds, if not thousands, to take control of their fear and fulfill their potential.

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# Handout C page 2



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Simple words  
Simple sentence structure

Sophisticated vocabulary  
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#### 14. OVERCOMING FEAR From An SEOT Perspective

15. Now we'll take a moment to break down Waldman's incredible story of conquering his fears to achieve his goals. We'll also consider how we can follow in his footsteps by adopting a growth mindset.
16. Waldman knew his destination from the get-go. However, he didn't quite understand how he'd get there. Nonetheless, as hurdles arose along the way, Waldman faced them down.
17. There are two life lessons we can adopt from this story. One strategy to overcome obstacles is to see if the pros outweigh the cons. This works great if your rational mind is still in the picture and can help you think things through. Another strategy to get through tough times when you're in panic mode (like when you're flying a jet and suddenly realize you're claustrophobic) is to hyper-focus on the task at hand.
18. Strategy #1: Smart Strategizing
19. He analyzed his situation, allowing him to problem-solve with ease. In the end, instead of being suffocated by his fears, Waldman used them to his advantage. And his secret was simple: smart strategizing.
20. When he needed to overcome his fear of heights to graduate, he took a step back to look at the bigger picture of his situation. He considered what he stood to gain and lose from one action and ultimately decided his future mattered more than the present moment. His on-the-spot strategizing helped him to realize that on the opposite end of fear is often success. And, instead of allowing one moment of anxiety to get the better of him, he proved to himself that he was capable of affronting the fear. This moment of bravery saw him through the rest of his career, allowing him to take to the skies daily while passing on his expertise and invaluable experience to generation after generation of pilots.
21. Strategy #2: Focus On The Immediate Task At Hand
22. To combat his claustrophobia, Waldman focused unflinchingly and keenly on the task at hand. By believing something mattered more than his fear (such as the success of his students), he could pass over his heightened emotions. So, instead of giving his thoughts control over his state of mind, Waldman took control of his thoughts and channeled them into action. This strategy helps quieten racing thoughts as actions take center stage in your mind.
23. Sometimes, if we're able to reason with our fears, we can implement sustainable strategies to combat them that help us to adapt gradually.
24. Other times, if we're panicking and out of control, hyper-focusing on the immediate task at hand might help us get through to the other side where success is waiting.

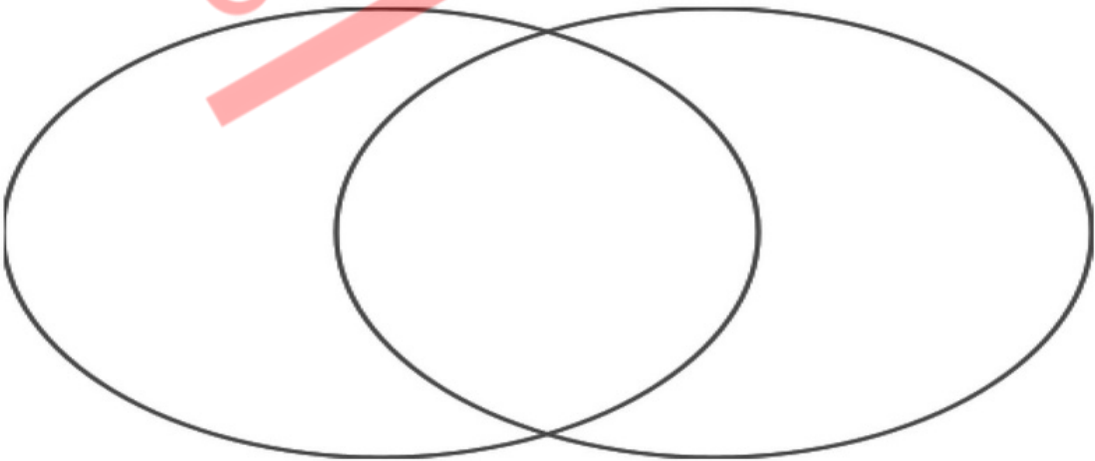


# Handout C page 3



Questions

1. What was the problem that Lt. Col. Rob 'Waldo' Waldman faced up in the air? [RECALL]
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
2. Why might hyper-focusing on his students help him overcome his fear? [UNDERSTAND]
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
3. Think about a time in your life when you were afraid. What were you worried about at the time? What could you have focused on instead? Would that have made a difference? [APPLY]
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
4. Use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the two different strategies Waldman uses to overcome fear. What are the pros and cons of each approach? [ANALYZE]



Handout  
C  
page 4



Questions



5. Why might focusing on the task at hand not have worked at the pool? Likewise, why might focusing on the BIG PICTURE not have worked up in the air? [EVALUATE]

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6. Plan a scenario for yourself where one of the strategies from this text would help you overcome a fear. Create a self-talk script to help yourself overcome your fear before you get into that situation. [CREATE]

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# Handout C page 5



# Questions

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# SKY HIGH

SEL Story #001



## 1. Keeping A Level Head When Anxiety Is Sky-High

1. Lt. Col. Rob 'Waldo' Waldman has dedicated his life to flying, so much so that he has become a highly-decorated fighter pilot with over 65 combat missions over his career. Not to mention that he's also the esteemed author of the gripping New York Best Seller Never Fly Solo. Oh, and did I say he's an ex-aerophobe? "What's that?" I hear you ask. You'll hardly believe it, but ironically, it's the official term for someone who suffers from a chronic fear of flying in all of its forms.
3. Seems pretty unbelievable, right? But trust me, it's a real-life journey worth strapping in for. The story begins with Waldman as a young boy looking up to his father, a Navy veteran and mechanic working out of John F. Kennedy International Airport. Waldman would accompany his father to work, taking in the airport's surroundings with great awe and wonder, in what would become a hugely influential moment in his life. He lovingly recalls memories of his father coming home after 18-hour shifts with cuts on his hands and smelling noticeably like jet oil - a scent that would intrigue the young boy.
4. "I loved that smell," Waldman reminisces. He was fascinated on his first airport trip with his father, describing the grumbly rumble of the jet engines and how the birds flying above the airport captivated him. His dad sat him in the cockpit of one of the jets, and he felt instantly that he was where he belonged, and the dream was decided: he would grow up to fly planes, and nothing else would do.
5. There was only one issue: Waldman was cripplingly afraid of heights.
6. But still, firmly, he decided his passion was more significant than his fear, so, in his first year of college, he intrepidly applied to the Air Force Academy. And thus came his first run-in with anxiety over his long career as he faced down a 33-feet high diving board, which stood in the way of himself and graduation - either he jumped, or he failed. One by one, Waldman watched his classmates leap from the board with 35lbs packs in tow into the deep, semi-choppy waters below, but nonetheless, he was still gripped by his fear. Still, he decided that there was no way a 33-foot board would stop him from achieving his dreams, so he leaped last, but he jumped nonetheless, conquering his fear in the process.

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Paragraphs  
match

# Handout D page 1



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Simple words  
Simple sentence structure

Sophisticated vocabulary  
Complex sentence structure

7. Due to his act of bravery, Waldman gained access to pilot training, but unfortunately, due to a limited number of slots, he missed out on the chance to be a fighter pilot. So, not one to be deterred, Waldman made the wise choice to become an instructor pilot; however, in the back of his mind, he would always harbor the hope that he'd get to claim ownership of his beloved F-16 one day.
8. So far, so good. Waldman had conquered his fear of heights and would spend his days instructing the next generation of pilots, but the next challenge was just around the corner as tragedy struck when Waldman went scuba diving with his friends. Fresh into the water, Waldman already felt out of his depth. He lost control of the situation as he began to flail wildly; next, the flight instructor recalls his mask separating from his face as he breathed in a lungful of burning salt water. Panic set in.
9. He would later note, "No combat mission could come close to that day," and while the naval officer resurfaced physically unscathed, the mental scars had been etched.
10. The next time Waldman took the air, it was a bleak day, and he began to panic as he flew, feeling the same thousands of feet in the air as he'd felt hundreds of feet underwater. And it was then that he realized he had claustrophobia; however, this time, the fear wouldn't be overcome by a single leap - instead, it grew.
11. He would later say, "Words can't describe the passion I had for flying jets, living my dream, but words also can't describe some of the fears and doubts I faced every time I strapped into that jet to fly." As his fear became more significant than his passion, Waldman knew only one thing would help: keep flying and focus more on others. So instead of looking inward, he turned his focus outward. His secret weapon was to become maniacally focused on his students, helping them to spread their wings and become the best pilots they could possibly be.
12. With the wind in his wings, Waldman kept flying, and, despite still struggling with occasional claustrophobia, he finally achieved the rank of number one pilot. At last, he could choose the jet of his dreams. And, in his own words, "He didn't want to take the easy way out." He proudly picked the plane of his dreams and advised everyone to "choose your F-16 every day; that's what's going to get you your wings."
13. These days, Waldman works as a public speaker, sharing his inspirational story far and wide, and in doing so, his story has inspired hundreds, if not thousands, to take control of their fear and fulfill their potential.

# Handout D page 2



Simple words  
Simple sentence structure

Sophisticated vocabulary  
Complex sentence structure



#### 14. OVERCOMING FEAR from an SEOT perspective

15. Now we'll take a moment to break down Waldman's incredible story of conquering his fears to achieve his goals. We'll also consider how we can follow in his footsteps by adopting a growth mindset.

16. Waldman knew his destination from the very get-go. However, he didn't quite understand how he'd get there, nor did he have any clear roadmap outlining the necessary steps. Nonetheless, as hurdles arose along the way, Waldman faced each of them down with great bravery and intention.



17. There are two life lessons we can adopt from this story. First, one good strategy to overcome obstacles is to measure the pros and cons mentally. This approach works great if your rational mind is still in the picture and free of panicked or stressed thoughts. Another strategy to get through times of panic (such as when you're flying a jet and suddenly realize you're claustrophobic) is to hyper-focus on the task at hand.

#### 18. Strategy #1: Smart Strategizing

19. He analyzed his situation, considering how it would affect him in the short and long term, allowing him to problem-solve with ease. In the end, instead of being suffocated and paralyzed by his fears, Waldman leveraged them to use to his advantage. And his secret was simple: smart strategizing.

20. When he needed to overcome his chronic fear of heights to graduate, he took a step back to get a better view of the bigger picture. He considered what he stood to gain and lose from one action and astutely decided his future mattered more than the present moment. His on-the-spot strategizing helped him to realize that on the opposite end of fear and its stifling effects is often success. And, instead of allowing one moment of anxiety to get the better of him, he proved to himself that he was capable of confronting, and thus overcoming, the fear. This moment of bravery saw him through the rest of his career, allowing him to take to the skies daily while passing on his expertise and invaluable experience to generation after generation of pilots.

#### 21. Strategy #2: Focus On The Immediate Task At Hand

22. To combat his claustrophobia, Waldman focused unflinchingly on the task at hand. By believing something mattered more than his fear (such as the success of his students), he could pass over his heightened emotions. So, instead of giving his thoughts control over his state of mind, Waldman took control of his thoughts and channeled them into action. This strategy helps quieten racing thoughts as actions take center stage in your mind.

23. Sometimes, suppose we're able to reason with our fears. In that case, we can implement sustainable strategies to combat them that help us to adapt gradually.

24. Other times, if we're panicking and out of control, hyper-focusing on the immediate task at hand might help us get through to the other side where success is waiting.

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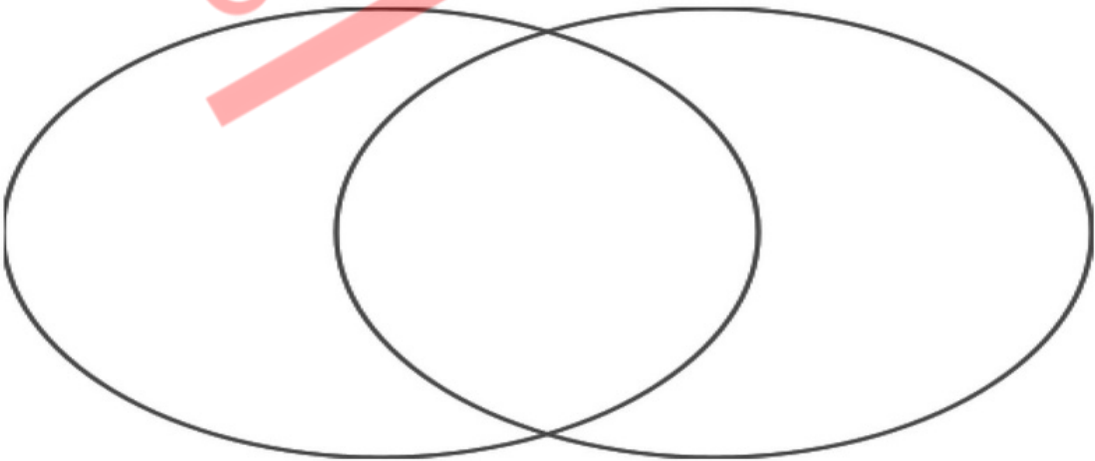
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# Handout D page 3



Questions

1. What was the problem that Lt. Col. Rob 'Waldo' Waldman faced up in the air? [RECALL]
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
2. Why might hyper-focusing on his students help him overcome his fear? [UNDERSTAND]
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
3. Think about a time in your life when you were afraid. What were you worried about at the time? What could you have focused on instead? Would that have made a difference? [APPLY]
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
4. Use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the two different strategies Waldman uses to overcome fear. What are the pros and cons of each approach? [ANALYZE]



Handout  
D  
page 4



Questions

5. Why might focusing on the task at hand not have worked at the pool? Likewise, why might focusing on the BIG PICTURE not have worked up in the air? [EVALUATE]

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6. Plan a scenario for yourself where one of the strategies from this text would help you overcome a fear. Create a self-talk script to help yourself overcome your fear before you get into that situation. [CREATE]

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# Handout D page 5



# Questions





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SEL Story 001

# SKY HIGH

Social-Emotional Learning: **Self Awareness, Self Management**

Reading Strategy: **Making Connections**

SEOT: **Strategy** (Overcoming Fear)

version: v2022-09-30

## ANSWERS / DISCUSSION GUIDE

**NOTE:** I came up with these answers based on my lived experiences and professional experiences as a Grade 8 Teacher in Ottawa, Canada. Like all question and answer keys, this document contains bias. Teaching resources and discussion guides normalize power inequities, single stories, and social norms.

I create content. I'm part of a system that needs a little help to amplify stories and perspectives that we don't often hear. I have unconscious bias. I don't know what I don't know.

If you think an answer in this resource is missing, biased, or incorrect, please email me at [Mike@educircles.org](mailto:Mike@educircles.org) with your perspective. This way, I can update this document to benefit from each other's perspectives, lived experiences, and teaching experiences. (If you like this note, you'll love this [Who is Invisible](#) slideshow.)

### Questions

1. What was the problem that Lt. Col. Rob 'Waldo' Waldman faced up in the air? [RECALL]

[Redacted answer area]

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page 1



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# Answers / Discussion Guide

2. Why would hyper-focusing on his students help him overcome his fear? [UNDERSTAND]

- 
- | Government          | Percentage |
|---------------------|------------|
| Current government  | 85%        |
| Previous government | 15%        |

3. Think about a time in your life when you were afraid. What were you worried about at the time? What could you have focused on instead? Would that have made a difference? [APPLY]

Answers will vary, but there are three things to look for.

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SEL Story 001 Sky High - Answers - Page 2 of 6

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page 2



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# Answers / Discussion Guide





5. Why might focusing on the task at hand not have worked at the pool? Likewise, why might focusing on the BIG PICTURE not have worked up in the air? [EVALUATE]

[Redacted content]

page 4



6. Plan a scenario for yourself where one of the strategies from this text would help you overcome a fear. Create a self-talk script to help yourself overcome your fear before you get into that situation.  
[CREATE]

Answers will vary. If we continue the example from above.

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Or...



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# Answers / Discussion Guide




## MAKING CONNECTIONS

**Making Connections** is a comprehension strategy we use to develop a *deeper* understanding of something we are reading. The goal is to try to create an AH-HA moment and figure out something new about the text we are reading by relating it to something we already know.


As you read, try comparing a character or event in the text with something that is similar *but different*. How does thinking about the similarities and differences in your connection help you better understand what is happening in the text you are reading?

Title of today's text: Keeping A Level Head When Anxiety Is Sky-High

**MAKING CONNECTIONS**



1. **Connect with**
  - things you've read (**text to text**)
  - things you've experienced (**text to self**)
  - things people know (**text to world**)
2. **Avoid simple connections.** Find things that are same *same but different*.
3. **Use one of these thought patterns:**
  - **This is like that, but... so...**
  - **A is like B, and B is \_\_\_ so A is probably \_\_\_**
4. Stop after every heading or paragraph and make a connection

 **R<sub>1</sub>** Reading for **MEANING**  
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Before Reading

Before you read the article, look at the title and any illustrations. Let's do some thinking to turn our minds on and activate any prior knowledge before we read. Try to make at least one of each of the different types of connections (text to text, text to self, and text to world connections.)

- 1. Write down the title of the article  
 Keeping A Level Head When Anxiety Is Sky-High
- 2. Make a connection to the title using this thought pattern: **This is like that, but... so...**

This	is like that	but...	so...
<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>
<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>

- 3. Make a connection using this pattern: **A is like B, and B is \_\_\_ so A is probably \_\_\_**

A	is like B.	B is ___	So A is probably ___
<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>
<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>

STOP and CHECK!

☐ I made 3 different types of connections:

☐ text to text

☐ text to self

☐ text to world

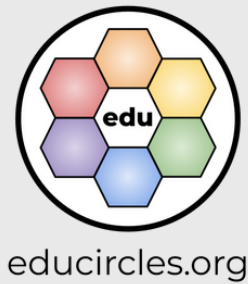
☐ I connected the text I am reading to things that are similar **but different**

☐ I used both patterns: ☐ this is like that but... so... ☐ A is like B. B is \_ so A is probably \_

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**During Reading**

Use the **Making Connections** strategy as you read. Try to find an ah-ha moment where you figure out something new about the text by Making Connections. Try to make all three different types of connections. (At least 1 text to text, 1 text to self, and 1 text to world connections.)

1. Make a connection to the text using this thought pattern: **This is like that, but... so...**

This	is like that	but...	so...

2. Make a connection using this pattern: **A is like B, and B is \_\_\_\_ so A is probably \_\_\_\_**

A	is like B.	B is ____	So A is probably ____

**STOP and CHECK!**

- ☐ I made 3 different types of connections: ☐ text to text ☐ text to self ☐ text to world
- ☐ I connected the text I am reading to things that are similar **but different**
- ☐ I used both patterns: ☐ this is like that but... so... ☐ A is like B. B is \_ so A is probably \_
- ☐ I stopped after every heading or paragraph to make a connection.

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After Reading

Now that you have read the entire article, let's look at the big picture. (It's like looking back at the entire forest, instead of individual trees in the forest.)

What is the main message of the text? What is this article trying to do? Try to make a connection to the big picture of this article and fill out one of the tables below.

Option 1: This is like that, but... so...

This	is like that	but...	so...

Option 2: A is like B, and B is \_\_\_\_ so A is probably \_\_\_\_

A	is like B.	B is ____	So A is probably ____

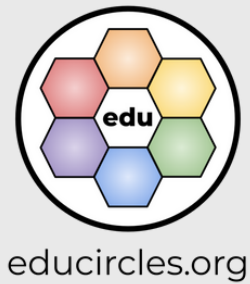
STOP and CHECK!

- ☐ What type of connection did you make?
- ☐ text to text   ☐ text to self   ☐ text to world
- ☐ I connected the text I am reading to things that are similar *but different*
- ☐ I connected to the big idea of text. (What is the point of this article?)

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Rubric - Making Connections

Everyone will have different connections because everyone has different life experiences. A connection isn't "right" or "wrong" - what we're looking at here is how well you *explain* the connection and how it *helped you to understand* something about the text you are reading.

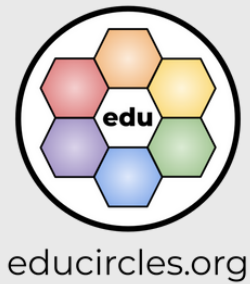
	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
R1. Reading for Meaning	You answered all of the guiding questions.	You answered all the guiding questions.	You tried to answer the guiding questions.	You answered few of the guiding questions.
Ideas	You very clearly explain your connection with strong support. It's a very insightful connection that shows you really get the article.	Your connection makes sense and you have good support.	Your connection is a little bit confusing because there's not enough support or there are irrelevant details.	I'm not sure how this connection helps you understand the text better.  There's not enough support or there are too many irrelevant details.

	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
R4. REFLECTING on reading skills and strategies	You answered all of the guiding questions.	You answered all the guiding questions.	You tried to answer the guiding questions.	You answered few of the guiding questions.
Ideas	You very clearly explain how you used this strategy with strong support.	You explained how you used this strategy and you have good support.	How you used this strategy is a little bit confusing because there's not enough support or there are irrelevant details.	It doesn't seem like you used this strategy based on what is given here.  There's not enough support or there are too many irrelevant details.

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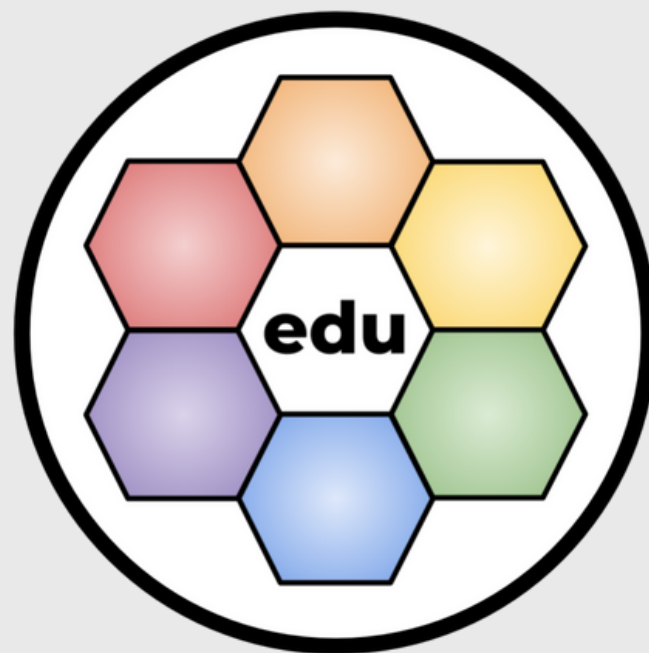
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- Differentiated text (four grades)
- Single PDF (with File Table of Contents and all handouts)
- Bonus answer key for reading strategy

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