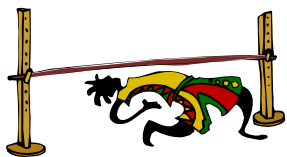


HOW LOW CAN YOU GO? PRIMARY APPLICATIONS FOR CRISS®



As many of you know, we originally developed CRISS as a secondary reading program, *Content Reading In Secondary Schools*. After presenting workshops across the country for several years to high school teachers, the middle school and upper elementary folks started sneaking into our workshops, and they found CRISS to be successful for them. In another few years, it was the lower elementary teachers who found success using CRISS. Because we don't have much in our training manual for the lower elementary grade teachers, we thought it would be a good idea to devote an issue of *COMMENTS* to some successful, lower grades applications. We extend a big THANKS to our two authors and CRISS trainers, Rosie Crocco (Virginia) and Teri Marshall (Texas).

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GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS - GREAT FOR PRIMARY STUDENTS

by Rose Marie Crocco

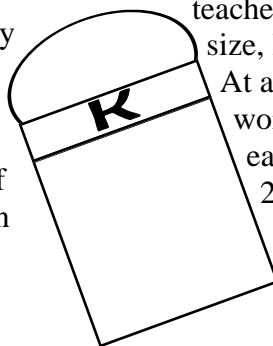
What do you mean, you use graphic organizers with your primary students? It's a question I'm often asked. Years ago, I was asking the same question. Not anymore. I embraced their use from the first time Master Trainer Evelyn Maycumber visited our school district in Virginia. Everyone in the room was a middle school or high school teacher but I. What was it that made me see the benefits of these graphic organizers for the young learner? First, I examined my own learning style. I'm a hands-on learner who likes to play with stuff, manipulate it, feel it. I like to tinker, explore, give ideas a new twist, change them, and apply them to new situations. At the same time, I like organization, making lists, getting visual clues to support my learning. I relished the discussion that resulted from an opinion-proof or Frayer model vocabulary map. Using Venn diagrams and webs made learning fun and meaningful. I believed that my first graders

would learn more and retain more using these visual graphics. I challenged my students. I'm a possibility thinker!

I model and scribe, first and often.

Whenever I work with primary grades teachers in a CRISS workshop, I always tell them, "The first step in building success into your lessons is...MODEL, MODEL, MODEL!" **I model and scribe, first and often.** In other words, I model by showing my students a sample application while talking about my thinking process to complete the task. I scribe or write out their applications of the strategy while having them talk about their thinking. I don't just do this first, before they try to apply the strategy, but often, as they are in the process of making the strategy their own.

Another very helpful step for primary teachers is the creation of a set of large-size, laminated graphic organizer posters. At all my "make and take" CRISS workshops, I show teachers how to put each graphic organizer on a piece of 24" x 36" manila oak tag paper, then laminate it. The posters can be used and reused when the teacher



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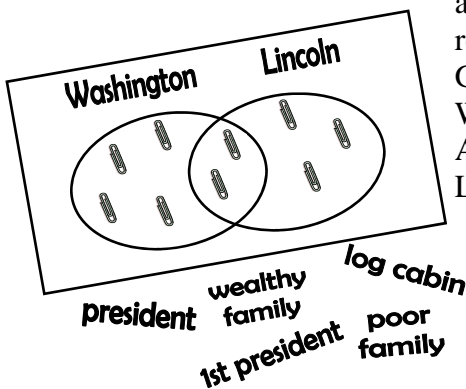
scribes with non-permanent ink markers. These graphic organizers work well with small groups or the whole class, and they project a large visual image everyone can see.

Let me walk you through some graphic organizers that my primary students use regularly.

Know—Want to Learn—Learned (KWL).

Whether we are reading a story from the basal, a trade book, or a piece of nonfiction, I always begin with a pre-reading activity (K). "Tell me what you already Know about..." I use the information generated to guide my lesson planning and to help me understand the students' knowledge base. With your young learners, make sure to take small steps. For example, when working on the "K" part of the KWL chart, fold back the "W" and "L" to get your students to focus only on the "K". I record everything they say. We correct erroneous information as the unit develops. Before reading, we also brainstorm and record everything we Want to learn about the topic. I write this in the "W" section, which I have isolated by folding back the "K" and "L" parts. Finally, after reading, we record the information we have Learned in the "L" section of our chart, then check and change any wrong information in the "K" part of our chart.

Venn Diagram. I introduce the Venn diagram by comparing two of my students. **I model and scribe** the placement of the various pieces of information we learn about each student. Then,



after many shared readings about George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, we create a Venn as a whole class project. This Venn has paper clips inserted into slits to hold

word cards. I distribute word cards among the children. Great conversations result when the students move around and interact with each other as they sort the various facts about the two presidents. When they agree on the placement of the word card, I clip it in place on the Venn.

Two or Three-Column Notes. My primary grade colleagues are often apprehensive about using two- or three-column notes with primary students. Remember, **I model and scribe first**

Question	Answer	Examples
What is a holiday?	A holiday is a special day when we honor someone or something.	Columbus Day Thanksgiving Memorial Day

and often. At the beginning of the school year, I talk about holidays. I show my students how we can ask a question, talk about possible answers, and then list the holidays we know. I always support my lessons with lots of fiction and nonfiction shared readings. I display these support books on the chalk ledge, in baskets, and in our classroom library. We frequently return to the two- (without examples) or three-column note chart before reading and during reading as new questions come up.

Definition Frame. When I teach a unit on farming, I find the definition frame works really well. To complete this graphic organizer, I developed six lessons (one per day). Each lesson is preceded by and followed with a shared reading of a farm story. *Day one:* I ask the children to write their definition for "farm." Each student writes his or her own definition, then shares it with the class. Afterwards, I read a definition from our *real* dictionary. We choose the student definition that best matches the one in the dictionary, and I record it on our chart. This becomes the working definition we use throughout the duration of the unit. *Day*

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What is a farm?				
Kinds of farms	Tools	Animals	Animal Sounds	Products

two: The students tell me all the different kinds of farms there are, and I record their information on the chart. *Day three:* The students name all the tools a farmer uses. This information comes both from their readings and their background knowledge. *Day four:* Students name animals that live on a farm. *Day five:* Students list the sound each farm animal makes. *Day six:* They list the products we get from the farm animals. Each day we refer to the chart, review the previous days' work, and add new information.

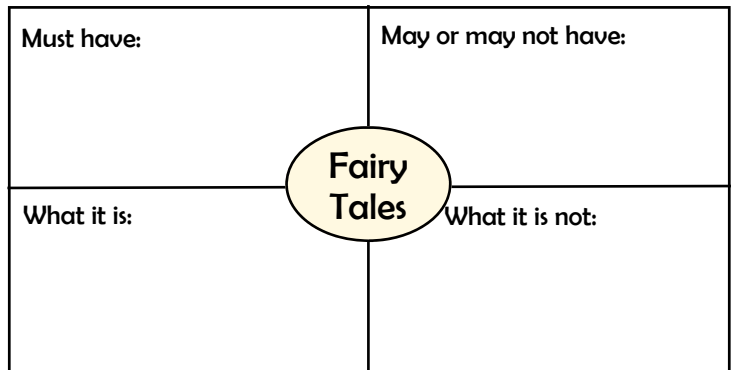
The Frayer model vocabulary map.

Typically, the Frayer model vocabulary map looks at four aspects of a term, 1) essential characteristics, 2) non-essential characteristics, 3) examples, and 4) non-examples. To simplify this terminology for my students, I have them determine 1) what characteristics the concept *must have*, 2) what characteristics it *may or may not have*, 3) *what it is*, and 4) *what it is not*. My initial **model and scribe** is with a concrete object like a book or a pair of jeans. By observing many samples of the object, they begin to discern the essential vs. the nonessential characteristics. Once the students are comfortable with the types of information we are looking for, I can easily use it for more demanding tasks.

For example, I always introduce my fairy tale unit with the Frayer model. This strategy stirs up lots of discussion as we debate the "must have" and "may or may not have" characteristics. In the "what it is" section children tend to list the Disney fairy tales they have seen on videos, *Cinderella* or *The Little*

Mermaid. In the "what it is not" section, *Green Eggs and Ham*, *Strega Nona*, *Dog Breath*, and *No David* top the list. In succeeding days of shared readings, we continually refer to our model and verify the elements found in the stories. When we are done with a selection, we add it to either the "what it is" or "what it is not" list.

In my experience, most young children tend to group fairy tales and folk tales into the same genre. One distinction that students may uncover is that magic is present in fairy tales

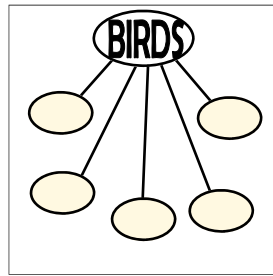


like *Cinderella* and *Snow White*, whereas there is no magic in *The Three Little Pigs* and *Goldilocks*. Some of my more well-read students make a strong distinction between the two forms.

Chart Party. Once your students have a working understanding of the models, a chart party (on a Friday afternoon) is a powerful assessment tool. Using content from a unit the students experienced earlier in the year, have students create their own strategy posters. You might use the strategies of a Venn diagram, a vocabulary map or frame, and three-column notes. Students work in cooperative groups and use the laminated charts with non-permanent ink markers. For example, group one uses a Venn to create a comparison between birds and mammals. The second team creates a vocabulary map with birds, while the third team completes one on mammals. The fourth and fifth teams develop three-column notes—one team takes birds, the other, mammals. Allow a

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fair amount of time for sharing and discussion. At this stage, I'm looking for independent thinking, writing, and organization of ideas.



And finally . . . Can you imagine the depth and breath of learning if our students are introduced to these graphic organizers in the primary grades? What might they be able to do, categorize, theorize, and conclude by the time they are in middle or high school? What a wonderful thought!

One last bit of advice: **Take one graphic organizer at a time. Model it, practice it well. Then, continue to add other models to your repertoire. Remember, model first and often.** Challenge your students to be possibility thinkers, too.

About the author: Rosie Crocco is a District Level CRISS Trainer living in Stafford, VA. She has taught first grade for 33 years in Stafford and is currently teaching at Anne E. Moncure Elementary School. Also, she is an adjunct instructor at Old Dominion University in Quantico, VA, and a contributor to the PEGASUS reading series published by Kendall/Hunt Publishers.

FIRST GRADERS FIND SUCCESS WITH HIGHLIGHTING AND THE VENN

by Dr. Teri Marshall

Saint Mary's Hall is an independent coeducational college preparatory school in San Antonio, Texas. It has a student body of roughly 950 students, from Montessori through 12th grade, and a more diverse population of students than one might expect in a private school. Project CRISS training began with the teachers in the Lower School, grades 1-5, in May of 2001, and now, almost 80% of all the faculty has gone through at least three full days of the workshop. No one is more excited about the strategies than the first grade teachers!

Not a Coloring Contest!

Amy Read, Lois McMaken, and Donna Inscore teach first grade, self-contained classes in the Lower School of Saint Mary's Hall. One of the first Project CRISS strategies they tried with their students was *selective underlining and highlighting*. They used it with the rules of grammar from their McGraw-Hill Language Arts Book. [NOTE: These students can write in their books because they own them, however, placing a transparency or piece of laminating plastic over the page works just as well.] Using the Language Arts Book as the text to introduce the CRISS strategy of selective underlining and highlighting, the children were expected to:

- ✓ survey an instructional page.
- ✓ identify the complete set of directions.
- ✓ highlight the key words in that set of directions.
- ✓ complete the assignment as per the directions.
- ✓ underline or highlight the key words within the page's text.

"The children were...excited about the highlighters...! They listened attentively, so that they could use them as quickly as possible."

Each teacher introduced the highlighters and explained their use and purpose. Using the text of the Language Arts Book, each teacher guided the children step by step, so that the order of surveying a page was emphasized. The students were asked a series of questions to help them identify the title of the page, predict what the page might be about, discuss what they thought they would be expected to do in the assignment, and locate and selectively underline the critical parts within the directions for that page. The selective underlining was done to visually reinforce where the directions were on the page and to help the teacher see that the students were working with the complete set of directions. Students and

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teachers discussed which words were most important and why.

In reflecting on the strategic assignment, the teachers remarked how excited the children were about using the highlighters and how quick they were to tell stories of how they had seen their siblings and/or parents use them. The children were also excited about the highlighters themselves! They listened attentively, so that they could use them as quickly as possible. The children were guided so specifically with this initial introduction that few mistakes were made, and the teachers noted that the students felt very grown-up and successful.

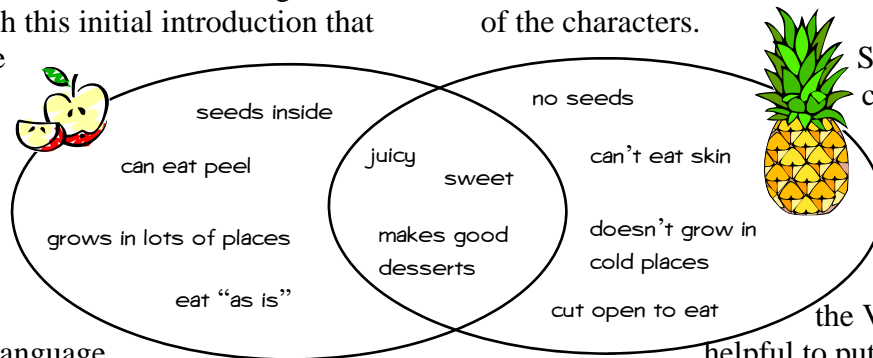
In follow-up lessons with the Language Arts Book, the teachers noticed that the children continued to demonstrate their knowledge of the left-to-right order of the printed words as they surveyed the text. They quickly located the directions, chose the key words to highlight, and were now able to use this skill with the actual text pages in a more independent manner.

Nothing Missing Here!

Amy, Lois, and Donna were so excited about the success of the selective underlining and highlighting that they decided to try out another strategy – the *Venn diagram*. Their plan was to have each student create a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the characters in Miss Nelson is Missing by James Marshall.

The teachers began by reading Miss Nelson is Missing aloud to the students. The children brainstormed, as a class, the physical and personality traits of the two main characters, Miss Nelson and Miss Swamp. Each teacher recorded the students' responses on the chalkboard. Then, each student was given a paper plate as a template for drawing the circles of the Venn diagram on a large piece

of unlined white paper. The circles were made with two primary colors that blended into a secondary color area in the middle to highlight the similarities. In order to compare and contrast Miss Nelson and Miss Swamp, each student chose any five to seven traits from the brainstormed list for each character and wrote them in the appropriate location on his or her Venn diagram. Students were then asked to take the organized information and compose sentences about the similarities and differences of the characters.



Some of the children, who were having trouble placing the character traits in the middle section of the Venn, found it helpful to put a category word in the middle or similarities section and a detail in the contrast areas. For example, both characters had hair, so some children wrote "had hair" in the middle for both, and then wrote "blonde hair" for Miss Nelson and "black hair" for Miss Swamp.

In their next unit on "friends," the teachers used the Venn diagram in much the same way with the book, Frog and Toad Are Friends by Arnold Lobel. Later on, in the same unit, the students created Venn diagrams in their wall pocket-charts using the characteristics of a 1st grader and a 5th grade buddy.

As an assessment for the students' understanding of this particular CRISS strategy, Amy had her first grade children create a Venn diagram during the Johnny Appleseed unit. The assessment was set up to be as independent as possible for the children. Each student was asked to pick an apple from the ones brought to class, and then everyone sat together to visualize another fruit of their choice. Each child imagined sitting at home at the dinner table and seeing Mom bring out a favorite fruit snack. The students were asked to envision

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INFORMATIONAL TEXTS IN KINDERGARTEN

how the fruit would look, how it would be prepared, where it came from, and how it was grown. The children thought it was fun to imagine smelling the fruit and then taking a big bite of it! Would it be juicy, crispy, squishy, or what?

When everyone had used their senses to imagine the fruit, and everyone remembered all the facts known about the fruit, each student worked independently to make a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the apple and the imagined favorite fruit snack.

Amy was amazed at how seriously the children took the assignment and how well they did with it. Amy noted that this time, the children did a much better job of lining up the comparison and contrast items. She did not make spelling an issue for them. She wanted their thinking and comparison skills to be paramount in their work, so she lightened their load by telling them not to worry about spelling. However, each student was allowed to come to her to have Amy put any word the student was worried about on a sticky note, so that the child could make his or her Venn diagram as perfect as possible. They all had a fun time, did a great job, and were very proud of their work!

I am pleased and excited to see the wonderful learning happening in the classrooms of Amy Read, Lois McMaken, and Donna Inscore. They have definitely proven to me that CRISS belongs in the lower grades.

About the author: Dr. Teri Marshall is the English Department Chair for Saint Mary's Hall, an independent K-12 school in San Antonio, Texas. In addition, Teri is a National level trainer for Project CRISS.

Last spring after deciding that the fall issue of the COMMENTS newsletter would be on primary adaptations of CRISS, I read this great article, “Informational Texts in Kindergarten” by Donald J. Richgels, which appeared in the March, 2002, issue of *The Reading Teacher* (International Reading Association Journal). I found it particularly appropriate, since I had been told by a district interested in our program that they would use us for grades 3 - 12, but that the primary grades were focusing on learning to read, so those teachers would not attend – content reading and comprehension would come later. Early in the article, Richgels shares a statement from Andrea Guillaum (1998 - another very good article!), “Content area reading is not the sole territory of those who are already proficient readers. Teachers of children of all ages have the important job of helping learners interact with text to produce meaning.” (p. 476) Although Guillaum worked with students in grades one through three, others have replicated her work and broadened “children of all ages” to include preschoolers and kindergartners.

Richgel’s article shares classroom lessons from Mrs. Poremba’s kindergarten class, which Richgel observed for 164 of 174 school days. The lessons focus on three areas: 1) The use of informational books with other informational text forms (such as labels, signs, recipes, posters, and even student-made text) and with narrative texts; 2) the functional use of informational texts as they relate to the

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