Student name : \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Reading Signposts

Knowing these reading signposts will help you…

* Draw inferences about the conflict and plot
* Identify and trace a theme of the story
* Pick up on foreshadowing for what will happen later
* Notice the small details that give meaning to the story

1. Contrasts & Contradiction —Something unexpected happens
2. AHA Moment —Someone suddenly realizes something important
3. Words of the Wiser —Wise character gives important advice to the protagonist
4. Again & Again —A word, phrase, or image is repeated over and over
5. Memory Moment —The story pauses to show a flashback to the past
6. Tough Questions —The protagonist wrestles with a difficult and important question

Reading signposts: Contrasts & Contradictions

*When a character does something that contrasts with what you’d expect or contradicts his earlier acts or statements, STOP and ask, “Why is the character doing that?” The answer will help you make predictions and draw inferences about the plot and conflict.*

Explanation:

* A “Contrast & Contradiction” is when a character does something that contrasts with (is different from) what you’d expect the character to do.
* This might occur with a character you already know. If you’ve been led to believe one thing about a character, and then they suddenly act “out of character,” this would be a “Contrast & Contradiction.” The character is contradicting (going against) how they’ve acted in the past, and it’s probably for an important reason.
* This can also happen with a character you don’t know. If you suddenly meet a character who reacts to a situation much differently than how other characters react or how you’d expect most people to act, that also could be a “Contrast & Contradiction.”
* Writers often uses these contrasts to give you more clues about what the character is like, where the plot is going, and what types of conflict are occurring in the story.

Example from *Star Wars*:

* “Strike me down, and I will become more powerful than you could possibly imagine” – Obi Wan
* Yoda acting like a little weirdo when Luke first meets him on Dagoba

Reading signposts: AHA Moments

*When a character realizes, understands, or finally figures out something, STOP and ask yourself, “How might this change things?” If it is about a problem, it tells you something about the conflict; if it is a life lesson, it tells you something about the theme.*

Explanation:

* An “AHA Moment” is when a character realizes something. If you’re the kind of person who likes cartoons, this is when the light bulb pops up above the character’s head.
* Writers will often make it really easy to spot “AHA Moments.” If you read that a character “suddenly realizes,” “began to understand,” or “finally figured out” something, the writer is trying to get your attention.
* An “AHA Moment” often focuses around a theme in the work. The character’s “AHA Moment” may even relate to one of the “Tough Questions” in the work (that’s another signpost). A character’s “AHA Moment” might make a big difference in how the character thinks and acts for the rest of the story, and that might affect the plot in huge ways. Pay attention to what’s being realized, because it might be the work’s “message.”

Example from Star Wars:

* “Luke, I am your father” – Darth Vader
* “That’s no moon” – Obi-Wan Kenobi
* “It’s a trap!” – Admiral Ackbar

Reading signposts: Words of the Wiser

*When a character (probably older and wiser) takes the main character aside and offers serious advice, STOP and ask, “What’s the life lesson and how might it affect the character?” This lesson is probably the theme of the story.*

Explanation:

* “Words of the Wiser” occurs when a main character(s) is given important, possibly life-changing advice.
* “Words of the Wiser” has a clear giveaway: the advice is almost always given by someone much older than the main character(s). In many stories, this would be called a “sage” character—a wise grandpa, a community elder, a life-worn wizard, etc.
* With “Words of the Wiser,” the advice the elder gives to the main character(s) changes the story. If they take the advice, they might be learning an important life lesson (\*cough\*thethemeofthework\*cough\*), and if they reject the advice… Well, let’s just say that might be some foreshadowing of something bad in the future.

Example from Star Wars:

* “Fear is the path to the Dark Side. Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to hate. Hate leads to suffering” – Yoda
* “Do or do not. There is no try” - Yoda
* Yoda, Obi-Wan, and Qui-Gon in general.

Reading signposts: Again & Again

*When you notice a word, phrase, or situation mentioned over and over, STOP and ask yourself, “Why does this keep happening again and again?” The answer will tell you about the theme and conflict, or will foreshadow what might happen later in the story.*

Explanation:

* “Again & Again” occurs when a writer keeps bringing something up again and again—it might be a word that appears multiple times throughout a paragraph or a story or a phrase (Could even be an advice from an elder, such as in “Words of the Wiser”).
* Even an entire situation can be repeated “Again & Again.” If characters keep ending up in similar situations or doing similar things, there is probably an important reason behind it.
* Remember that most authors tend to write purposefully. If something is being said over and over, or something keeps getting repeated in one way or another, it’s probably in there so much because it matters. Noticing what keeps happening “Again and Again” can help you notice foreshadowing and discover themes in the work.
* The signpost “Again & Again” is more commonly known as repetition. Types repetition include extended metaphors, motifs, and symbols.

Example from Star Wars:

* The everlasting theme of light vs. dark (as in sides of the Force)
* Repeating “May the Force be with us” and “Luke, use the Force”

Reading signposts: Memory Moment

*When the author interrupts the action to tell you about a memory, STOP and ask yourself, “Why might this memory be important?” The answer will tell you about the theme and conflict, or will foreshadow what might happen later in the story.*

Explanation:

* “Memory Moments” occur when a writer inserts something from a character’s past into the story. They’re usually very easy to spot, because the reader will suddenly be taken out of the present storyline in a sudden and clear way.
* A “Memory Moment” can occur in a first person story, journal, autobiography, etc. This happens when the narrator goes from talking about things in the present to talking about something in the past. The narrator might even tell you what the connection is between the stuff in the past and the stuff happening now, or he/she might leave it up to you to draw your own connections.
* These “Memory Moments” can also happen when a 3rd person narrator describes something from the past. A “Memory Moment” can also happen when a character describes in dialogue something from the past. If it’s an elder character telling a story about their past in order to point something out to another character, this might be connected to the “Words of the Wiser” signpost.
* A “Memory Moment” is more commonly known as a flashback.

Example from Star Wars:

* “Did you ever hear the tragedy of Darth Plagueis The Wise? I thought not. It’s not a story the Jedi would tell you. It’s a Sith legend. Darth Plagueis was a Dark Lord of the Sith, so powerful and so wise he could use the Force to influence the midichlorians to create life… He had such a knowledge of the dark side that he could even keep the ones he cared about from dying. The dark side of the Force is a pathway to many abilities some consider to be unnatural. He became so powerful… the only thing he was afraid of was losing his power, which eventually, of course, he did. Unfortunately, he taught his apprentice everything he knew, then his apprentice killed him in his sleep. Ironic. He could save others from death, but not himself.” – Chancellor Palpatine to Anakin

Reading signposts: Tough Questions

*When a character asks himself a very difficult question, STOP and ask yourself, “What does this question make me wonder about?” The answer will tell you about the conflict, and help you think about what might happen later in the story.*

Explanation:

* A “Tough Question” is exactly what it sounds like. A character will ask himself or herself a very difficult question. The question might not even be answered in the entire story, or the character might only learn the answer after undergoing some type of trial.
* The question might tell you a lot about the conflicts the character is experiencing: internal conflicts as well as external conflicts. When an author spells out a difficult question and has the main character grapple with it, it’s also likely that this question is connected to an important theme the author wants to get across in the story.
* A “Tough Question” might also foreshadow something that will happen later in the story. A “what if” scenario that a character thinks about earlier in the story might just come true later…

Example from Star Wars:

* “Give yourself to the Dark Side. It is the only way you can save your friends. Yes; your thoughts betray you. Your feelings for them are strong” – Emperor Palpatine
* Although this is not the typical case of a “Tough Question,” Palpatine is referring to a question that Luke is having to grapple with. Their conversation reveals his own internal conflicts.