







Thinking Inside/Outside the Box

PURPOSE – Extending Thinking: Students analyze an assessment question or text by identifying the most important details inside the box and make inferences about words, visuals, answers, and mistakes outside the box.

Step-by-Step Instructions

1. Students draw a large square in the middle of a sheet of paper and write 1 2 3 4 5 as a list in the center. (option... use the provided template)
2. Project an assessment item and ask student partners to think **INSIDE** the box as they think, talk, and write the 5 most important facts or details represented in the question in the center of the paper.
3. Students then mix-freeze-group to get a new partner to think **OUTSIDE** the box as they think, talk, write about the important **WORDS** they see in the item. “The words I need to know are _____.”
4. With the same partner, students think, talk, write about the stimuli (visual) in the item by finishing the phrase, “If this visual could talk, it would tell me ...”. Students write the 3 most important elements of the visual outside the box.
5. Students mix-freeze-group to get a new partner to continue thinking **OUTSIDE** the box as they think, talk, write to justify the correct answer. “The correct answer is _____ because _____.”
6. With the same partner, students think **OUTSIDE** the box to think, talk, write about potential mistakes. “Beware! Beware! Beware! I should be careful about _____.”
7. Teacher takes pop-out responses and clarifies/verifies as necessary.
 - Option: Teachers may change the **OUTSIDE** the box questions to include different prompts, such as “I wonder ... I predict ... I conclude ... I can justify ... etc.”
 - Option: RLA special template provided to think inside and outside the box using a text as the stimuli.

Helpful Hints:  classroom mgmt  differentiation  tech connections  [staar 2.0 connections](#)  [lead4ward connections](#)

-  Model how to work with a seated partner for thinking **INSIDE** the box, and model how to get 2 new partners in the mix-freeze-group rounds for the **OUTSIDE** the box thinking.
-  Model a think aloud for this activity several times before students participant independently.
-  Provide the inside the box important facts, and/or provide sentence stems for the outside the box thinking if necessary.
-  Consider capturing students’ responses electronically.
-  Select a released test item to use with the strategy. Associate the strategy with the thinking required in many of the new item types (i.e., multipart, multiselect, inline choice, hot spot, hot text, and drag and drop).
-  Select released test items from the IQ Tool as the prompt and address common mistakes from the Field Guides.

Materials: Notebook paper for students to replicate the projected template.

Think It Up

Choose a Think It Up question as an exit ticket or a journal entry as evidence of learning. Encourage students to use lead4ward’s [Thinking Stems](#) or [Spanish Thinking Stems](#) to frame responses.

- **Predict** how this strategy could help you answer a complex question on a test.



templates available at lead4ward.com/playlists