

# SCIENCE <sup>OF</sup> LEARNING

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# **Explicit Instruction for English and the Humanities**

**Rebecca Birch**



# Learning intentions

- Understand the theoretical frameworks that apply to explicit teaching in the humanities
- Understand the features of explicit instruction models and what they look like in the humanities
- Understand the strengths and limitations of explicit instruction in the humanities



# The Humanities

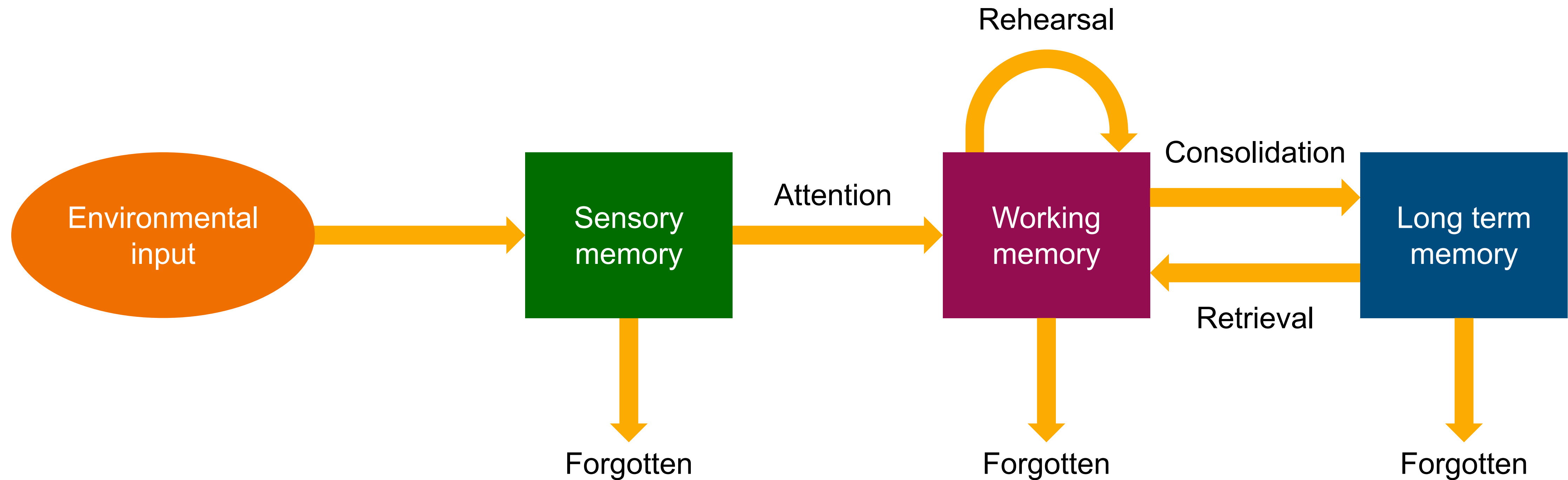
- English
- History
- Social sciences



# Theoretical framework

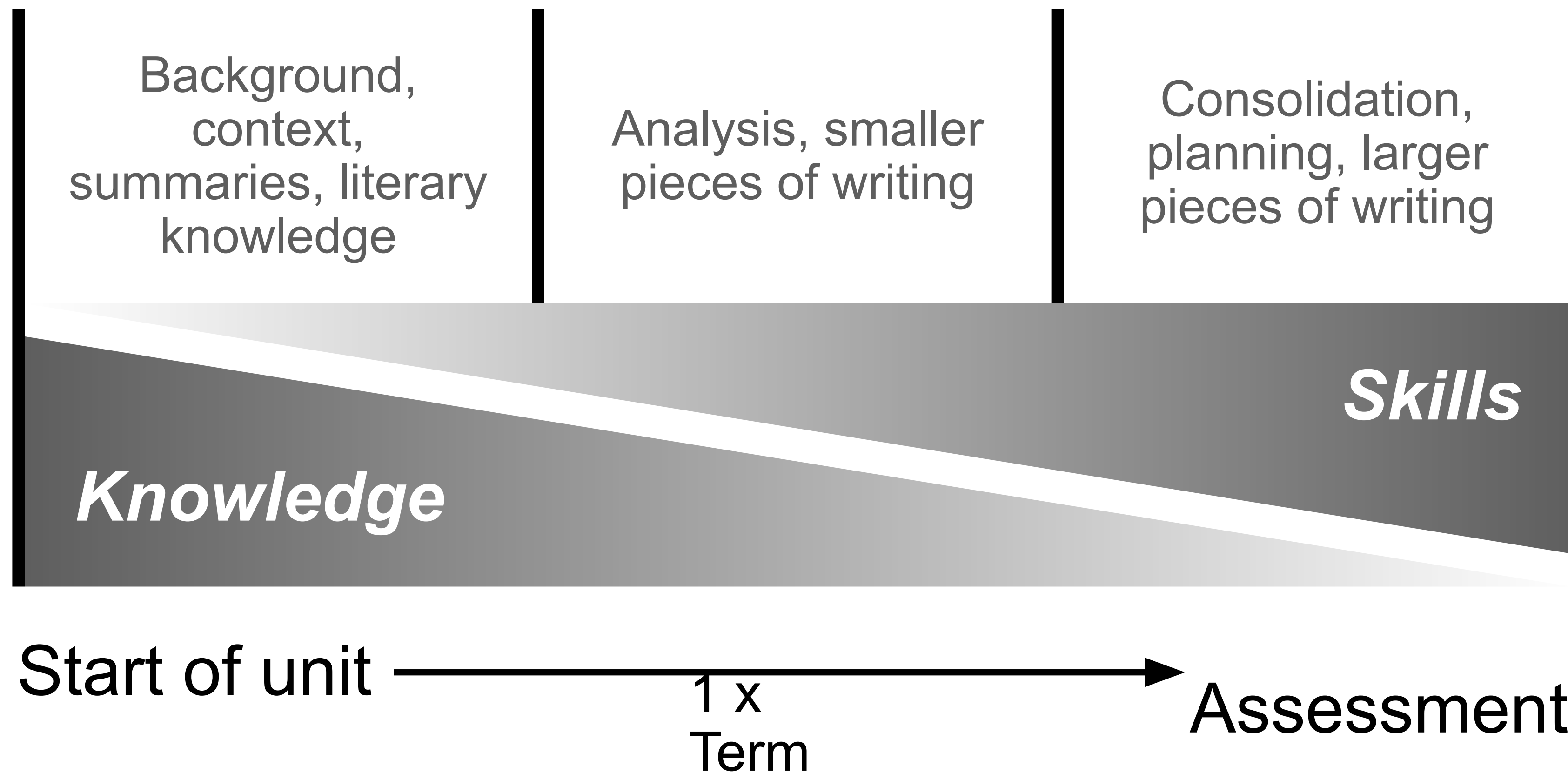


# Multi-store memory model



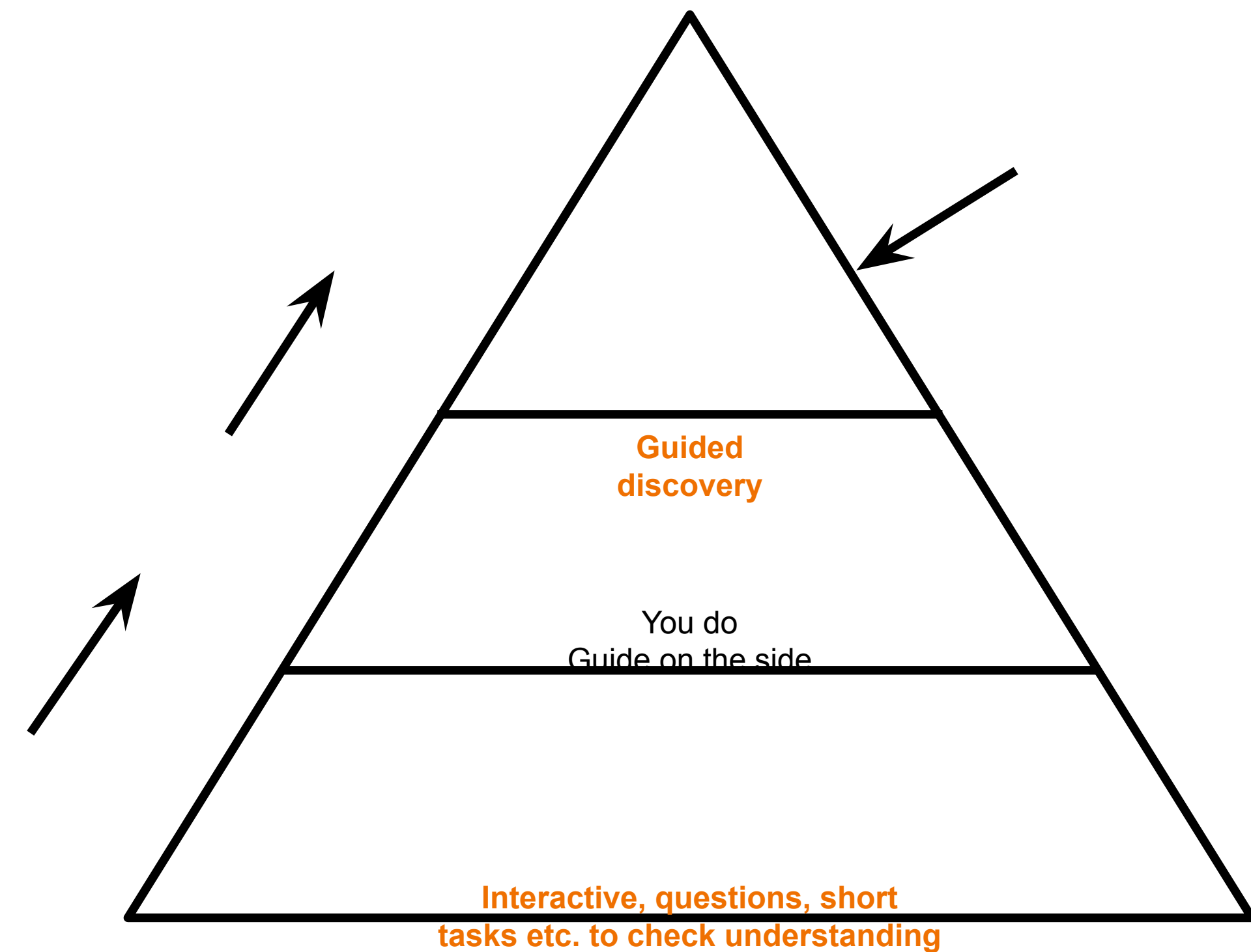
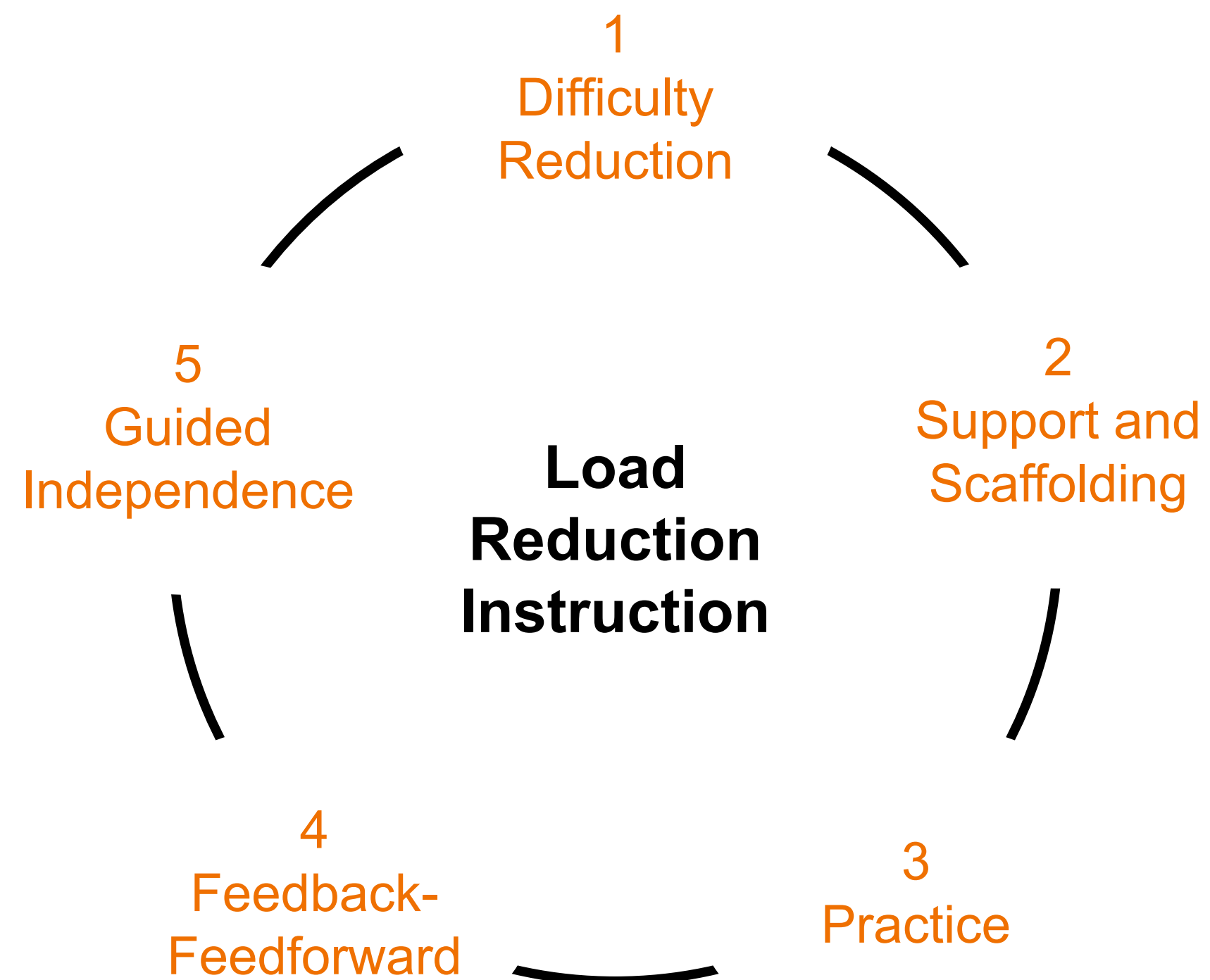


# Model of explicit teaching in the Humanities





# Load reduction instruction



We do  
Meddler in the middle



# Scarborough's Reading Rope

## Language Comprehension

**Background Knowledge**  
(facts, concepts, etc.)

**Vocabulary**  
(breadth, precision, links, etc.)

**Language Structures**  
(syntax, semantics, etc.)

**Verbal Reasoning**  
(inference, metaphor, etc.)

**Literacy Knowledge**  
(print concepts, genres, etc.)

## Word Recognition

**Phonological Awareness**  
(syllables, phonemes, etc.)

**Decoding**  
(alphabetic principle,  
spelling-sound correspondences)

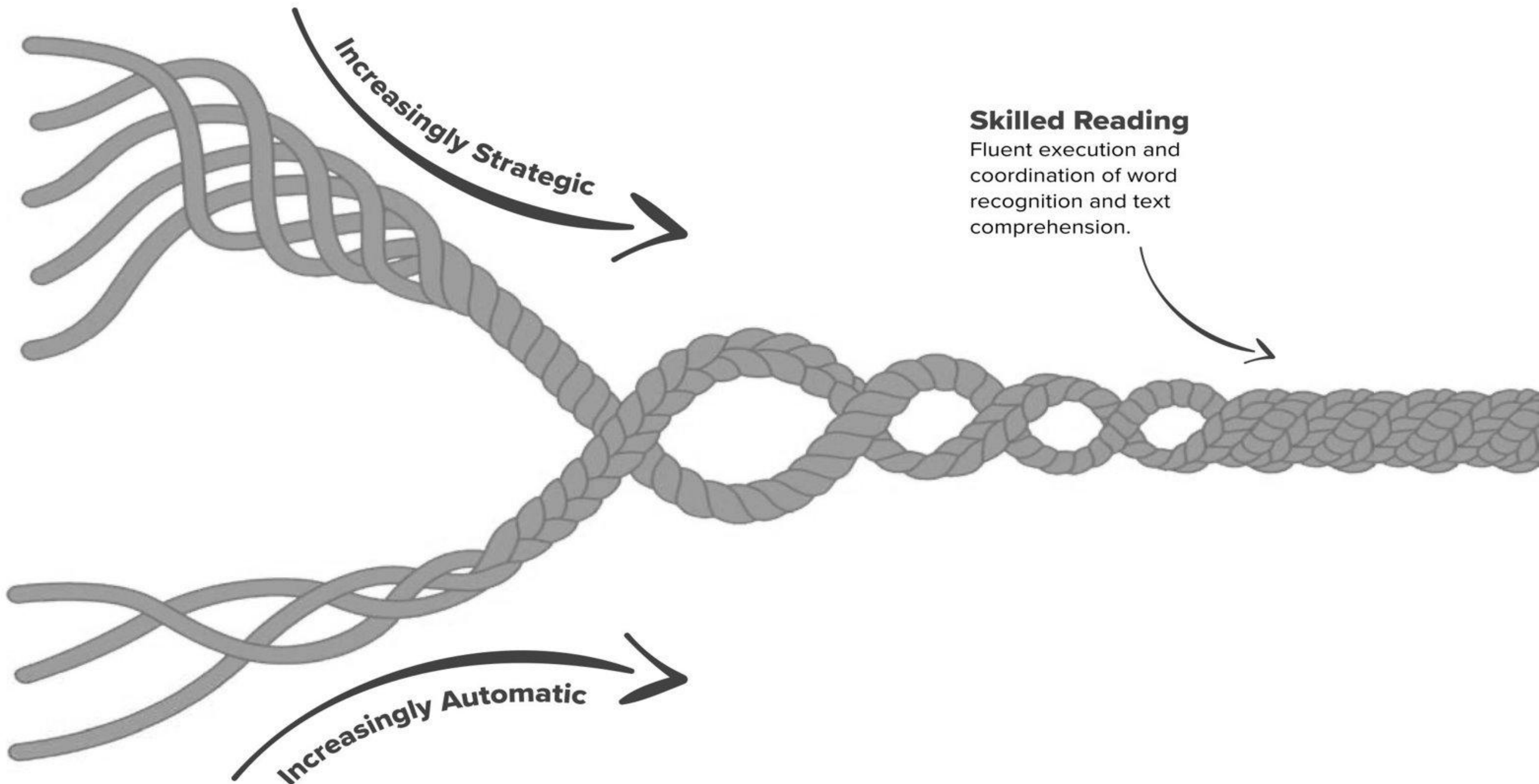
**Sight Recognition**  
(of familiar words)

*Increasingly Strategic*

*Increasingly Automatic*

## Skilled Reading

Fluent execution and  
coordination of word  
recognition and text  
comprehension.





# Explicit + English = Explicit-ish

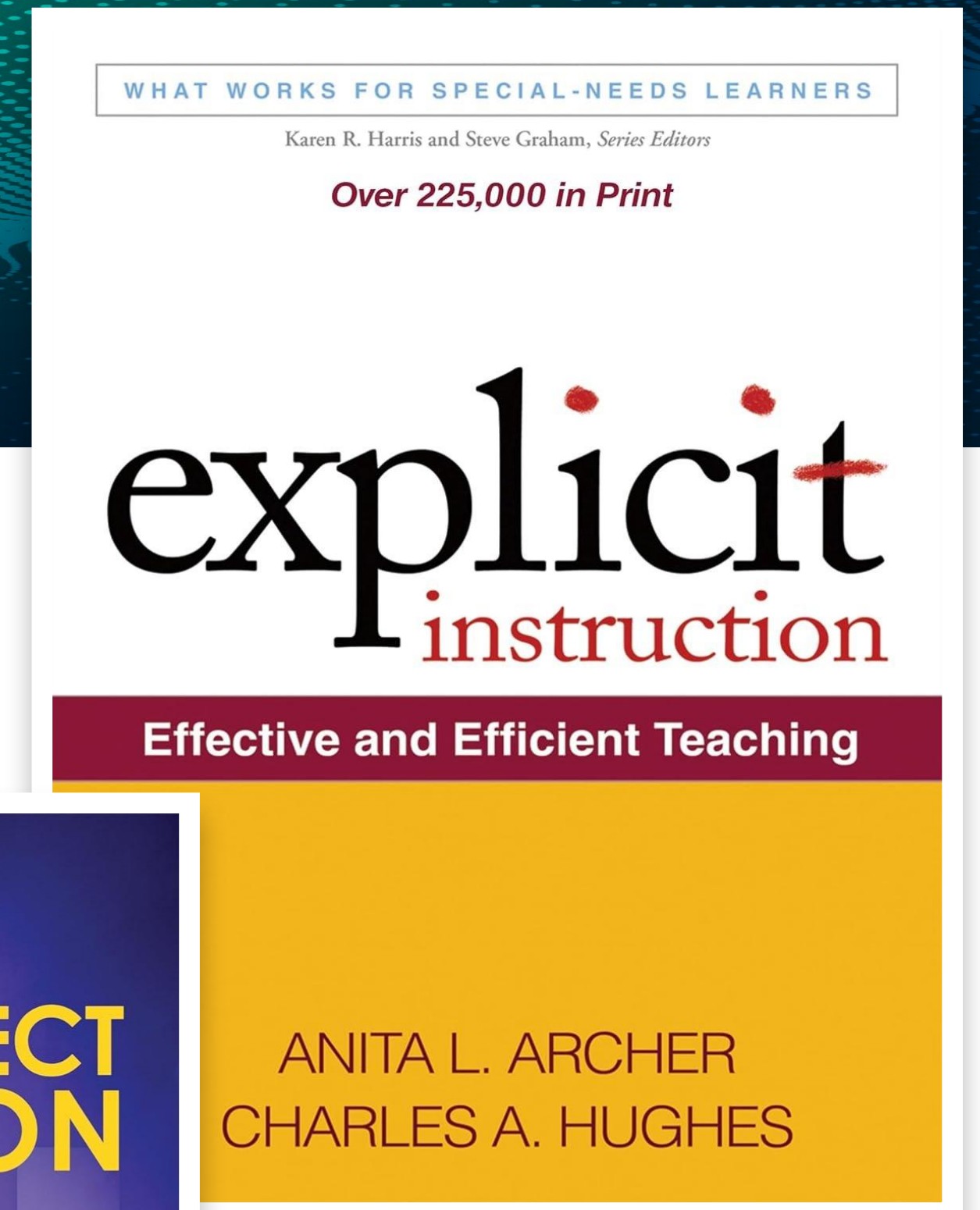
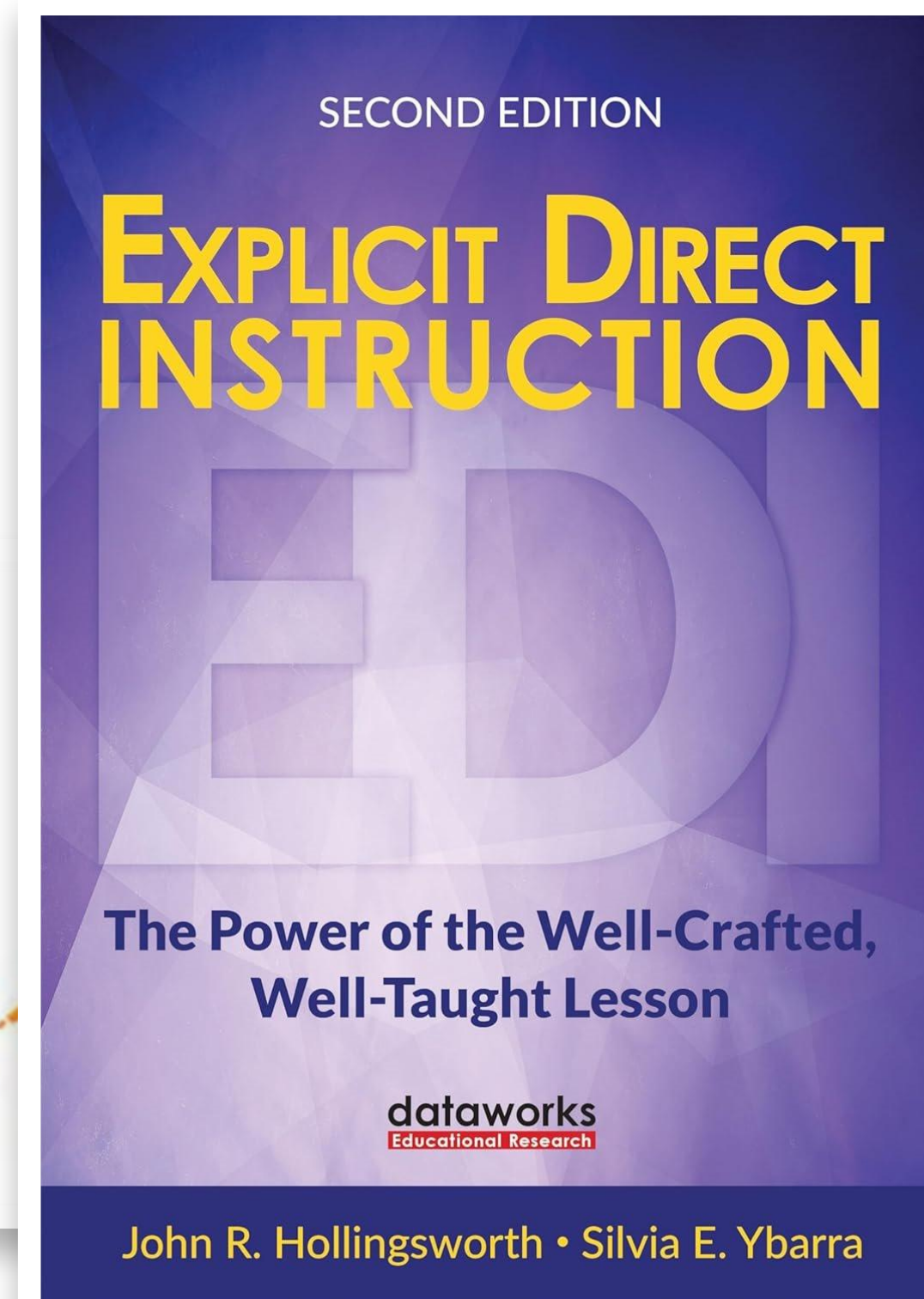
Why the humanities are special

- Range of right answers
- Questioning the author
- Time for experimentation and risk
- Limitations noted throughout



# Models of explicit teaching

- Rosenshine's Principles
- Explicit Direct Instruction
- Anita Archer's Explicit Instruction





# What do good models have in common?

1.
  - a. Beginning lessons with retrieval practice and
  - b. Activating prior knowledge



# Explicit instruction dealbreakers

The what, why, and how





# Retrieval

1. a. Beginning lessons with retrieval practice
- b. Activating prior knowledge



# 1a. Beginning lessons with retrieval practice

The 'Do now'



- Short activity set and ready for when students walk in
- Enables daily, weekly and monthly review
- Can be used to consolidate previous day's lesson
- Can be used to activate prior knowledge schema



# Do now

## Why does it work?



### COMBATING THE FORGETTING CURVE



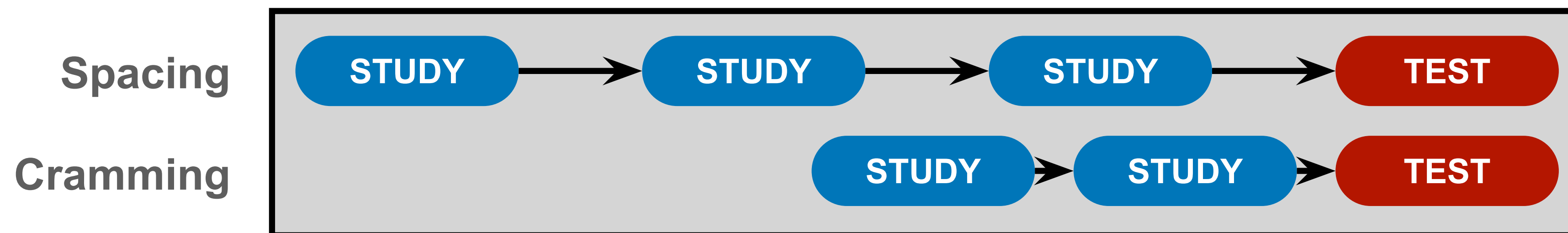


# Do now

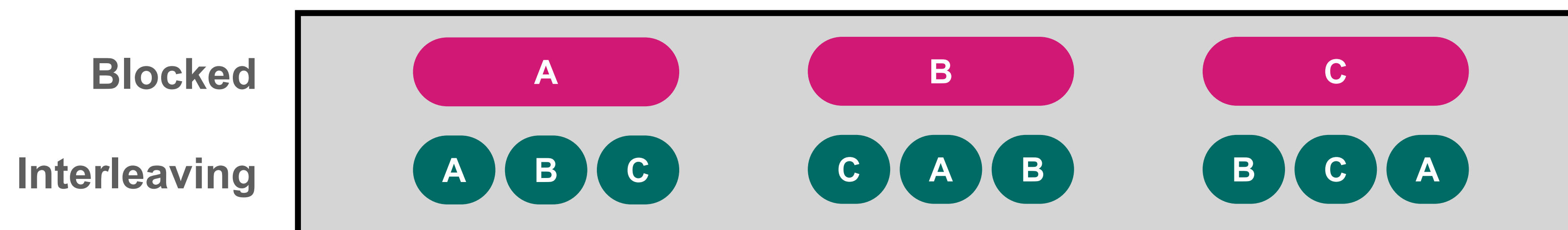
## Why does it work?



### Spacing



### Interleaving



Bjork, E. L., & Bjork, R. A. (2011). Making things hard on yourself, but in a good way: Creating desirable difficulties to enhance learning. In Psychology and the real world: Essays illustrating fundamental contributions to society (pp. 56–64). Worth Publishers.



# Do now

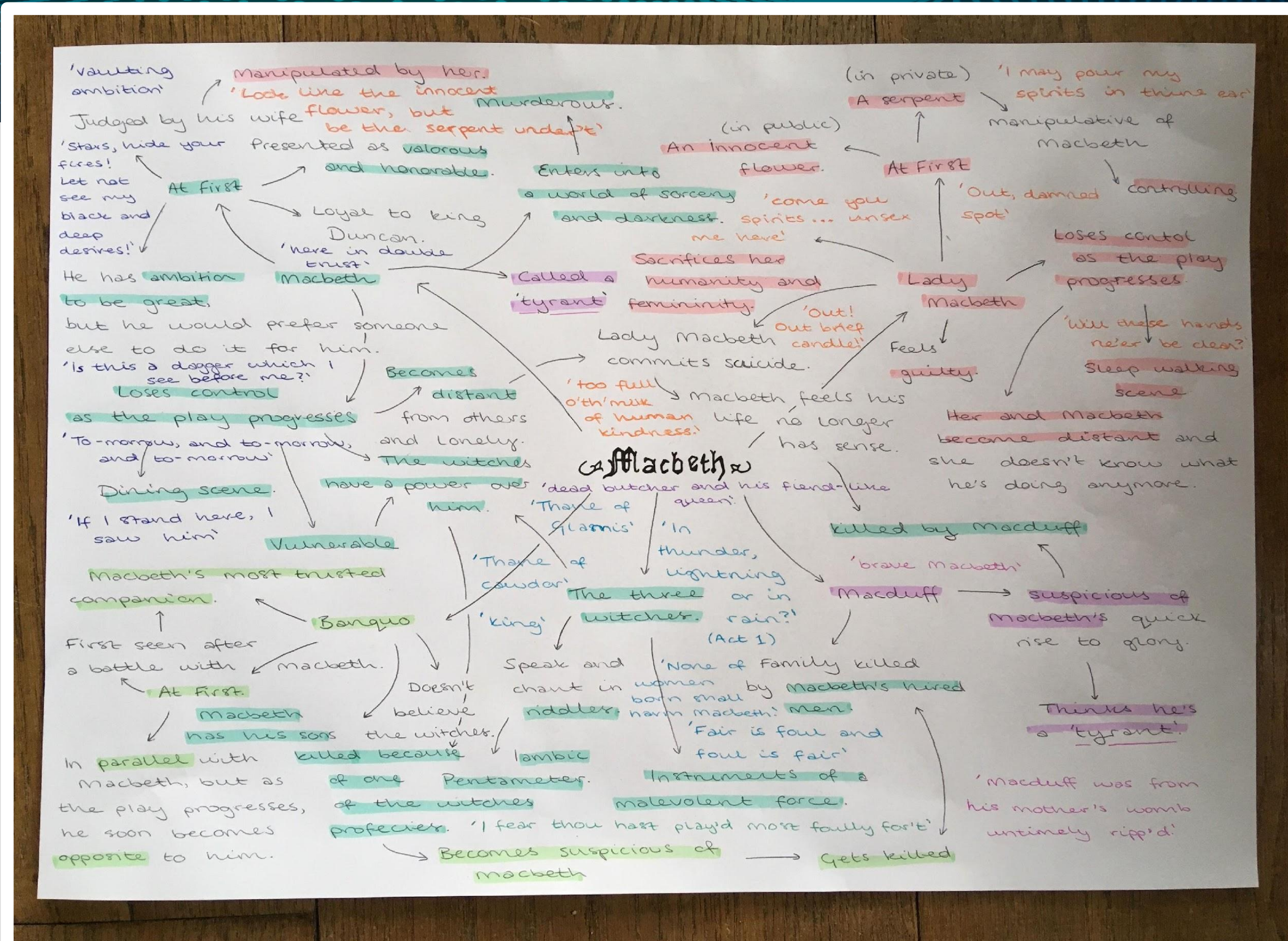


- **Don't** use any materials other than paper and pen
- **Don't** introduce a new technique that needs instruction – e.g. brain dump in Year 7
- **Don't** quiz content or skills students have not been taught
- **Do** decide what's worth remembering and practicing
- **Do** insist on silence
- **Do** give late entering students silent or very quiet instructions – Golden Silence



# Do now

- Brain dump
- Different to mind map – looks the same
- All from memory
- Can add forgotten material after





# Do now



- Grid: **day** **week** **month**
- Complete in any order

<b>Define biome</b>	<b>Name three causes of climate change</b>	<b>Write one way humans use rivers</b>
<b>What do contour lines show on a map?</b>	<b>Explain the water cycle in four steps</b>	<b>Describe one impact of coastal erosion</b>



# Do now



- The Black Death spread quickly because ...
- The Black Death spread quickly, but ...
- The Black Death spread quickly, so ...



# Do now



- The Black Death spread quickly because people lived in crowded, unhygienic towns where disease could easily pass from person to person.
- The Black Death spread quickly, but some villages were isolated and avoided infection, so not everyone was affected immediately.
- The Black Death spread quickly, so a large portion of Europe's population died, leading to major social and economic changes.



# 1b. Activating prior knowledge

Review prior skills and knowledge before beginning instruction



Anita Archer says,

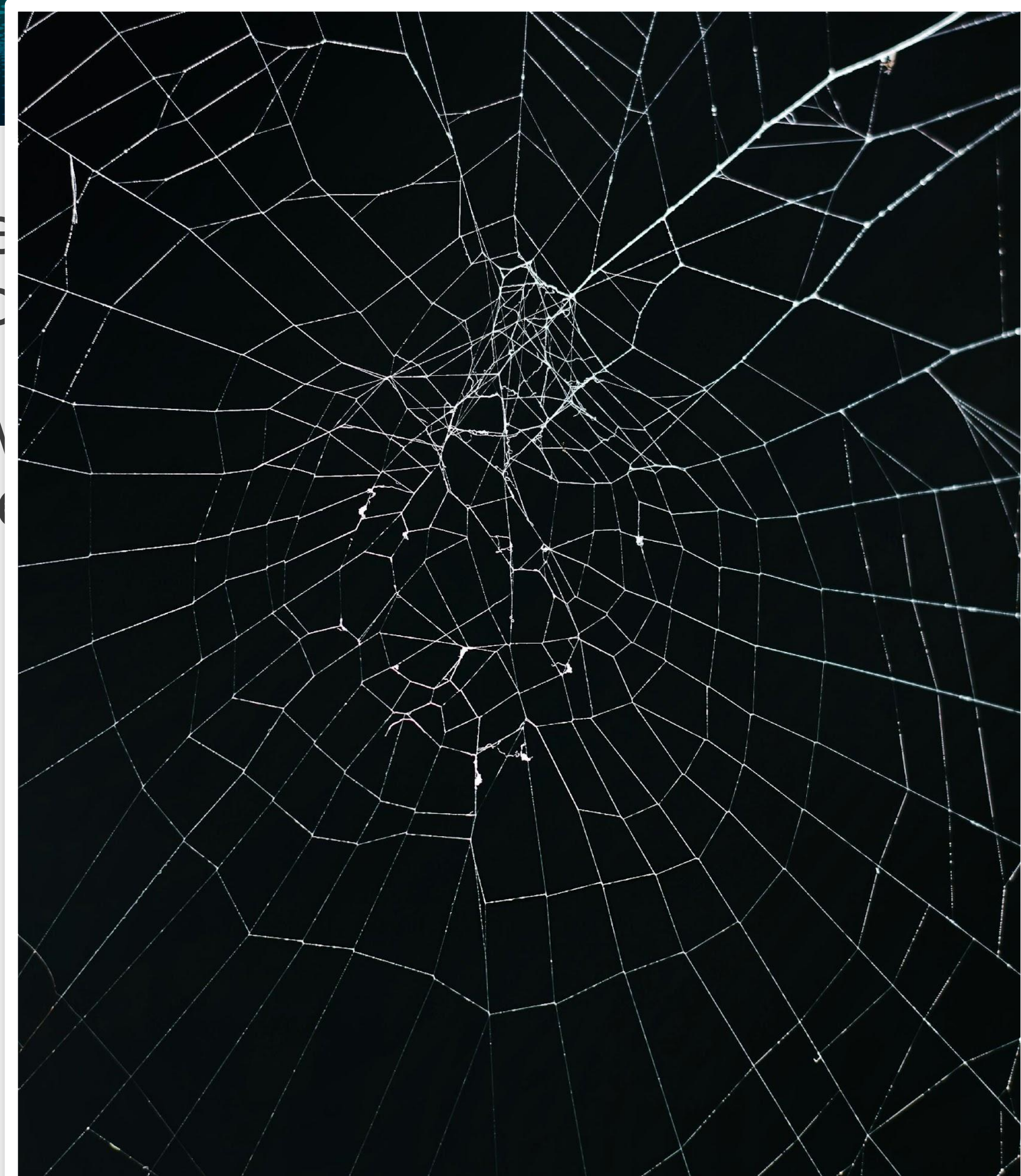
Provide a review of relevant information. Verify that students have the prerequisite skills and knowledge to learn the skill being taught in the lesson. This element also provides an opportunity to link the new (knowledge) with the other related (knowledge).



# 1b. Activating prior knowledge

How do schema work?

- Schemas are like networks made of memories we have about a topic
- Just like a spider web, new knowledge, making it easier to recall





# Advance organisers

For activating prior knowledge



There are four types of advance organisers...

- 1. Expository**
- 2. Narrative**
- 3. Skimming**
- 4. Graphic**



# Advance organisers

For activating prior knowledge



## 1. Expository

Think of a chessboard. Each piece has its own role, strengths, and limitations – but it's the player behind the pieces who decides how to move, when to sacrifice, and how to win. In the real world, rulers and leaders also have to make strategic decisions, sometimes using power in ways that others might consider ruthless or cunning. In this unit, you'll explore the ideas of Niccolò Machiavelli.



# Advance organisers

For activating prior knowledge



## 2. Narrative

Imagine you're 19 years old in the 1960s. A letter arrives: you've been conscripted to fight in Vietnam. You don't fully understand why, but you're told it's part of stopping communism. Some Australians support the war – others protest. What is this war really about, and why did Australia get involved?



# Advance organisers

For activating prior knowledge



## 3. Skimming

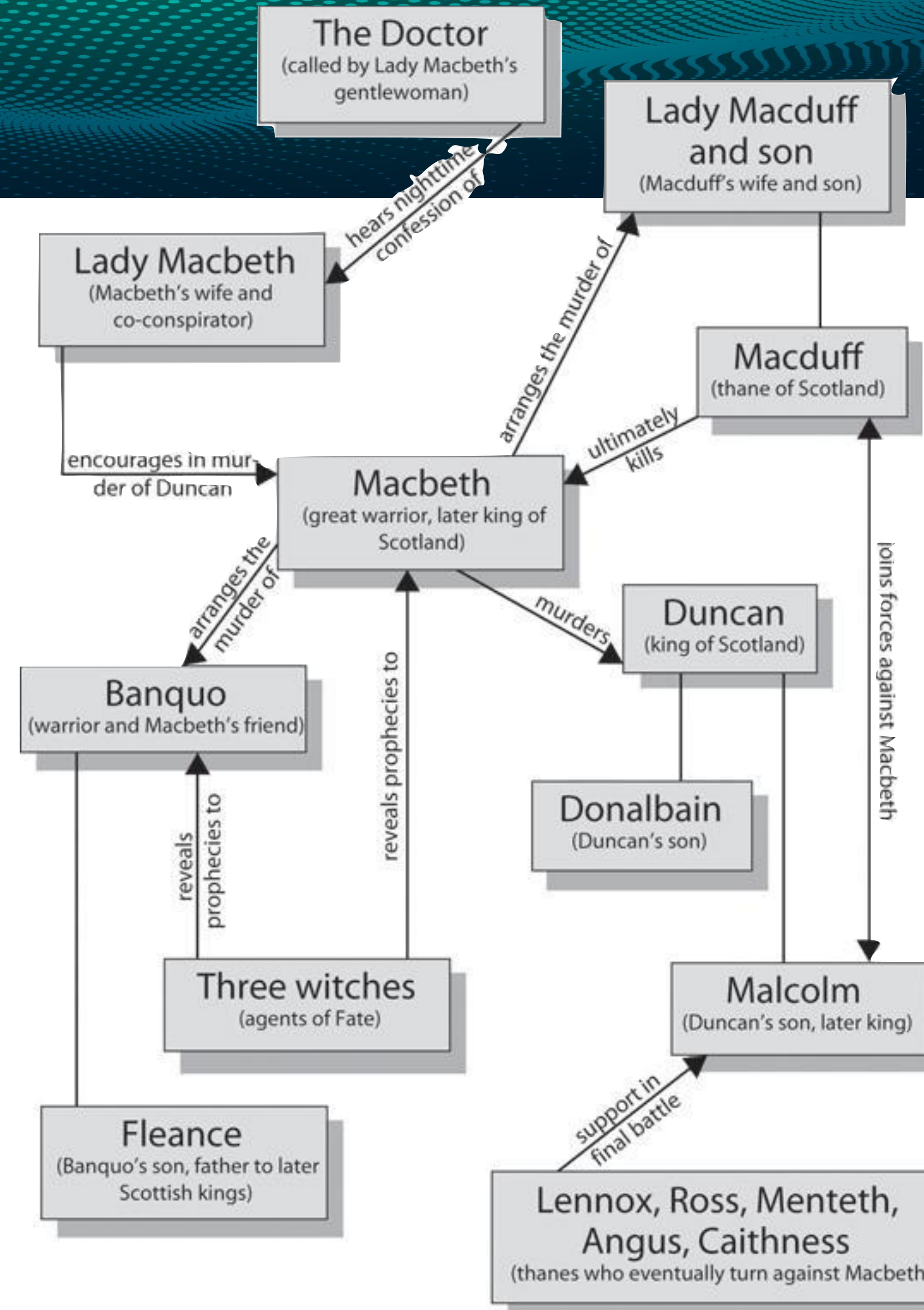
- Model skim reading
- Ask students to skim read
- Check for basic understanding using pair share
- Students re-read



# Advance organisers

For activating prior knowledge

## 4. Graphic organisers





## 2. Providing clear learning goals



- An outcome is to be achieved over a Stage
- A learning intention sets out what can be achieved in a lesson
- Content points are sometimes too broad for one lesson



## 2. Providing clear learning goals



- Explicit Direct Instruction says to use a verb connected to the activity, e.g. describe
- Learning goal must have clear links with CfU and learning task
- This can have limitations with complex ideas that might go over a week's lessons and have multiple ways to CfU
- May need more than one verb e.g. select and analyse



## 2. Providing clear learning goals



- Tells students what success looks like
- Shapes the types of evidence of learning that we seek - in other words, should shape curriculum
- Also giving a rationale supports student autonomy - they feel the activity is useful, relevant or justified



# A good learning intention contains...



1. **Concept** – e.g. **Romanticism** in English
2. **Skill verb** – more than one if closely related, e.g. **identify** and **explain**)
3. **Context** (sometimes) – e.g. **by using sources** in History



# A good learning intention contains...



1. **Concept**
2. Skill verb
3. Context

Identify **character traits** in a story and provide evidence from the text to support ideas

Adapted from Hollingsworth, T. R., & Ybarra, S. (2009). Explicit direct instruction (EDI); the power of the well-crafted, well taught lesson. Corwin Press Inc.



# A good learning intention contains...



1. Concept
2. Skill verb
3. Context

**Describe** the different types of environments found in Australia and  
**identify** plants that live there

Adapted from Hollingsworth, J. R., & Yarra, S. (2009). Explicit direct instruction (EDI); the power of the well-crafted, well taught lesson. Corwin Press Inc.



# A good learning intention contains...



1. **Concept**
2. **Skill verb**
3. **Context**

Interpret topographic maps **using contour lines, scale and grid**  
**references**

Adapted from Hollingsworth, J. R., & Ybarra, S. (2009). Explicit direct instruction (EDI); the power of the well-crafted, well taught lesson. Corwin Press Inc.



# Learning intentions CfU



1		2
Identify character traits in a story and provide evidence from the text to support ideas.		Direct characterization and indirect characterisation.



# Learning intentions CfU



1		2
We're learning about the Black Death.		Explain the key causes of the Black Death.



# 2. Providing clear learning goals

What does it look like for students?



- I can define “sustainability”.
- I can explain the economic problem and decision-making process.
- I can describe tropical rainforest habitats.
- I can analyse how hypocrisy is represented in To Kill a Mockingbird.
- I can select suitable evidence for use in a paragraph.



# **Skill teaching**

3. Presenting new information in chunks or small steps
4. Modelling, think alouds and I do, we do, you do



# The sequence of explicit skill teaching



- Skill demonstration – **I do**
- Teacher-supported practice – **We do**
- Independent practice – **You do**



# I do – skill demonstration



- Worked examples
- Think alouds e.g. modelling processes and conditions (why)
- Live demo



# We do – teacher-supported application



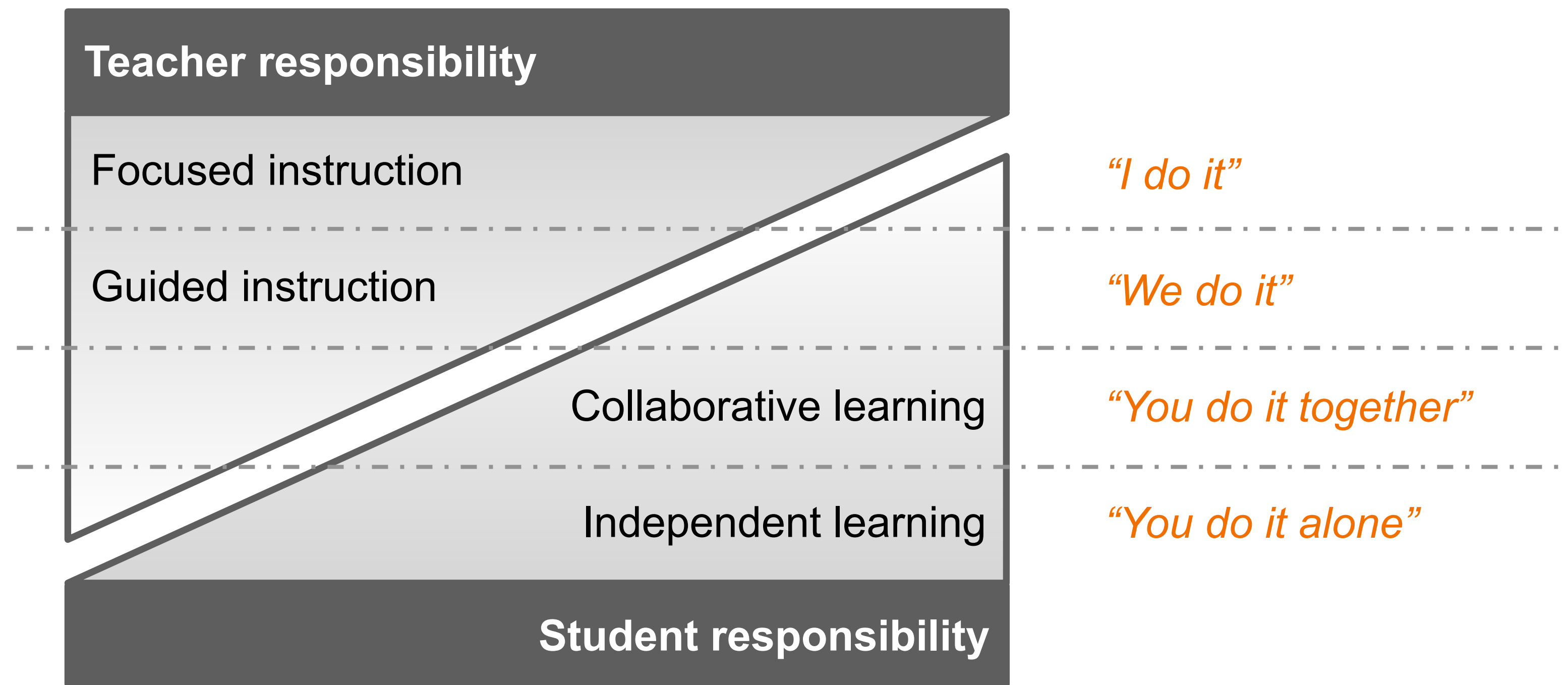
- May be asking students to give you the next step
- May be partially completed example, like a sentence stem
- May be co-constructing, as in a paragraph



# Gradual release of responsibility



“A systematic approach for shifting the cognitive work from teacher to learner.”





# We do – tips



- **Simplify** examples and student problems so the cognitive work is spent on the right thing e.g. syntax instead of vocabulary
- Use **matched pairs** where the student just needs to focus on the steps, less on the content
- **Start simple** and when you add a step, model it and CfU after each step
- **Don't** block practice where extra steps are added without demonstration.
- Further reading: **Rule of Two**



# Why is explicit teaching of writing important?

## ‘We can use the word illiterate’: The writing crisis in Australian schools



Jordan Baker

October 18, 2022 – 5.00am

Most year 9 students are structuring sentences at a level expected of those two years their junior and are using punctuation like children in year 3, which leaves them struggling to meet curriculum standards and unprepared for senior high school or life beyond it.

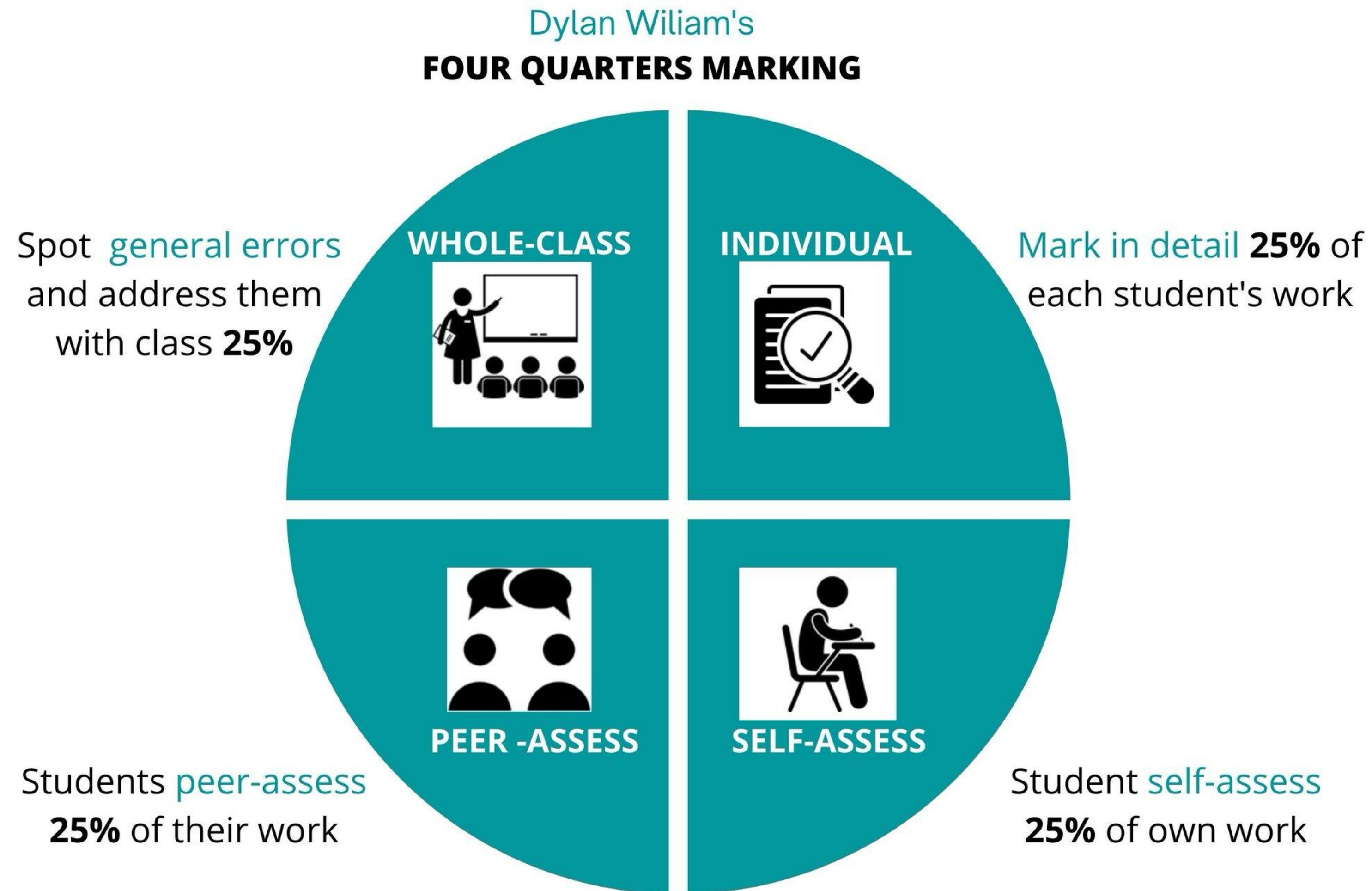
A review of 10 million NAPLAN year 3-9 writing results and more than 350 persuasive writing samples by the government-funded Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) has found students' writing declined significantly in every key skill area but spelling over seven years to 2018.

### KEY POINTS

- Writing skills declined overall from 2011 to 2018, but the decline was steepest in years 7 and 9
- There has also been a noticeable decline in the writing skills of high-achieving students
- The gap between low- and high-achieving students is widening



# Why is explicit teaching of writing important?





# Why is sentence-level instruction important?

Only one of the following sentences is correct. Select it.

- A) The bus was late I missed the register. 18.3%
- B) A lot of us were on that bus we were all late. 13%
- C) We all got a detention, it was so annoying. 52.4%
- D) All of us in the room. 4.3%
- E) **We left.** 8.8% ✓



# Why is sentence-level instruction important?

Only one of the following sentences is correct. Select it.

- A) The purple car. 5.3%
- B) The car skidded, but the passengers were fine. 57.2% ✓
- C) It was icy, the car skidded. 10.3%
- D) The passengers were fine the tyres were not. 12.4%
- E) It got warmer, the ice melted. 11.7%



# Adverbial phrases

Learning intention



Today we are going to learn how to use adverbial phrases to integrate context and form.



# Adverbial phrases

## Bullet-proof definition



An adverbial phrase gives further information about **why**, **when**, **where**, and **how** a verb was done.



# Adverbial phrases

## I do – examples



An adverbial phrase gives further information about **why**, **when**, **where**, and **how** a verb was done.

---

- At the start of each day, Georgia walks her dog.
- In order to relax, Ms Birch has a hot bath.
- By setting her alarm earlier, Charlotte was able to make it to class on time.



# Adverbial phrases

## I do – examples



An adverbial phrase gives further information about **why**, **when**, **where**, and **how** a verb was done.

---

- In Jacobean England, concerns with ambition and power were particularly resonant, reflecting the desire for societal stability at the time.
- To appease King James, Shakespeare incorporated elements that would appeal to the monarch in the aftermath of the failed Gunpowder plot.



# Adverbial phrases

I do – examples for form



An adverbial phrase gives further information about **why**, **when**, **where**, and **how** a verb was done.

---

- In his final soliloquy, Macbeth reflects on the futility and meaninglessness of life, expressing a profound sense of despair and nihilism, lamenting... (can continue with quote)
- At the point of his anagnorisis, Macbeth realises the true nature of the witches' prophecies and the extent of his own downfall, recognizing that his overreaching ambition and subsequent actions have led to his inevitable doom.



# Adverbial phrases

We do



- In an aside, ...
- In the exposition, ...
- Contrary to the trope of the tragic victim, ...



# Adverbial phrases

You do



You could write about

- Jacobean era attitudes (when)
- Analysis (how) By using x, Shakespeare...
- Certain points in the tragedy (when)



# Analysis

I do – think aloud



'Bottlebrush combs of red and orange hung defiant in the still, hot afternoon. Banksia blooms weighed down their branches, leaked sap into the kitchen garden below the verandah.' (p. 17)

- What words/phrases are unexpected?
- What do you associate with those colours?
- Which senses are activated and why?
- What overall impression does the second sentence give?
- How can this be linked to an overall message within the text?



# Analysis

We do – through class questioning, pair share



'August wandered the property, pausing only to listen more closely to the familiar soundtrack playing, encasing the world, in cicada friction and bird whip.' (p. 18)

- What words/phrases are unexpected?
- Which senses are activated?
- How are these sounds portrayed differently to what you've read before?
- How can this be linked to an overall message within the text?



# You do

Prompts provided to cue



'The oil in the gums, warm karrajong fruit splitting, the hot flesh-baring seeds, banksia flowers heavy with sugar – the syrup seeping off stuck stamens, and stigmas and ovaries.' (p. 56)

- What words/phrases are unexpected?
- Which senses are activated?
- What overall impression does this quote give of the bush?
- How can this be linked to an overall message within the text?



# Checking for understanding

5. Asking a large number of questions
6. Giving immediate feedback



# Checking for Understanding

Why is this important?

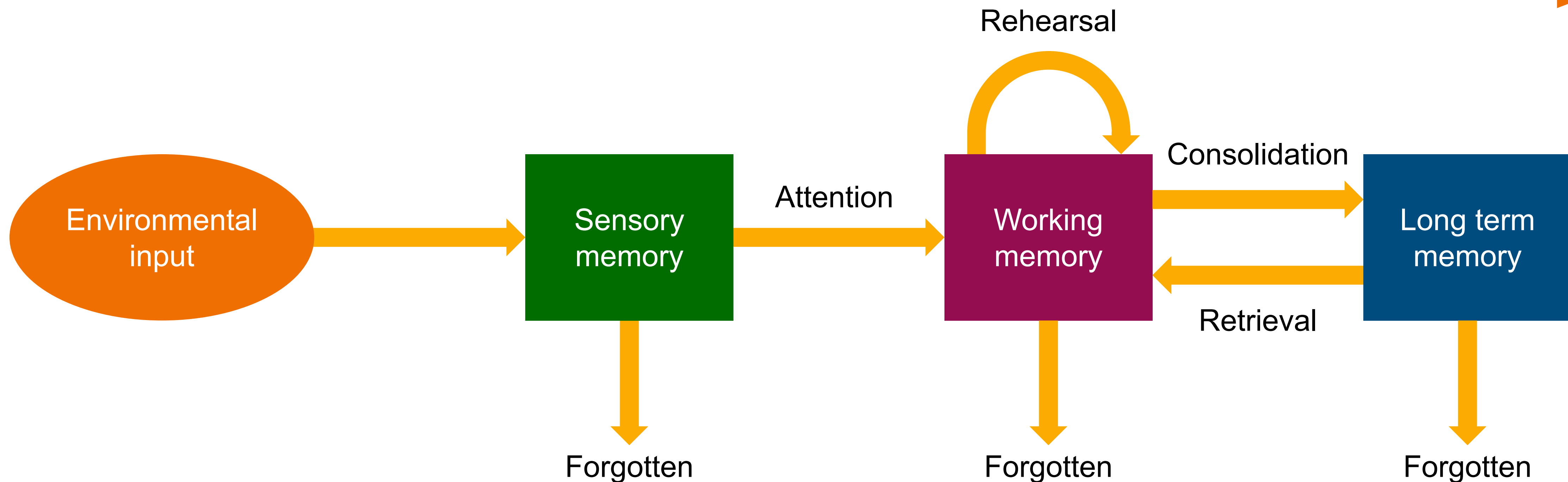


1. Need understanding to be able to move on to more complex skills/knowledge
2. Students may encode errors
3. High participation is a key feature of explicit instruction



# We remember what we think with

— paraphrased from Daniel Willingham





# Checking for Understanding

## Key principles




1. Pre-plan questions
2. Teach first
3. Ask a question
4. Use a strategy that will tell you if about 80% have understood
5. Do it frequently- check after small chunk



# TAPPLE

- T** = Always teach first
- A** = Ask a question (wait time)
- P** = Pair-share (or variations)
- P** = Pick a non-volunteer
- L** = Listen (common errors, 80%)
- E** = Effective feedback (correct errors)



## LESSON DELIVERY

Verify students are learning while you're teaching!

**T** **Teach First**  
before you ask the question so students are equipped to respond.

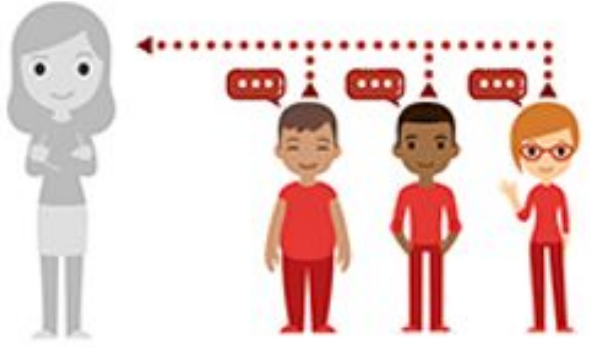



**A** **Ask a Question**  
specific to what you just taught.

**P** **Pair-Share**  
with a partner so students practice their response to the question.

**P** **Pick a Non-Volunteer**  
randomly to verify that everyone is learning.

**L** **Listen**  
to student responses so you can make real-time instructional decisions.

**E** **Effective Feedback**  
Elaborate, explain or reteach based on student responses.



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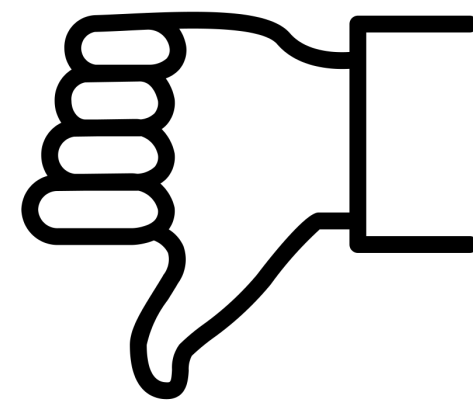
# Checking for Understanding

## Anachronism



Belongs in Ancient Egypt?

**Car**





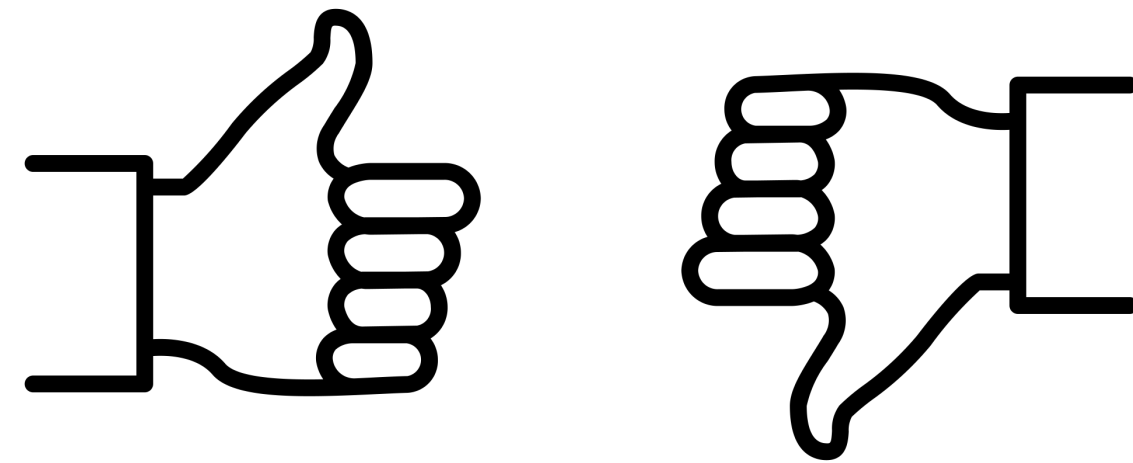
# Checking for Understanding

## Anachronism



Belongs in Ancient Egypt?

**Barge (boat)**





# Check for understanding

1. Direct characterisation ~or~ 2. Indirect characterisation

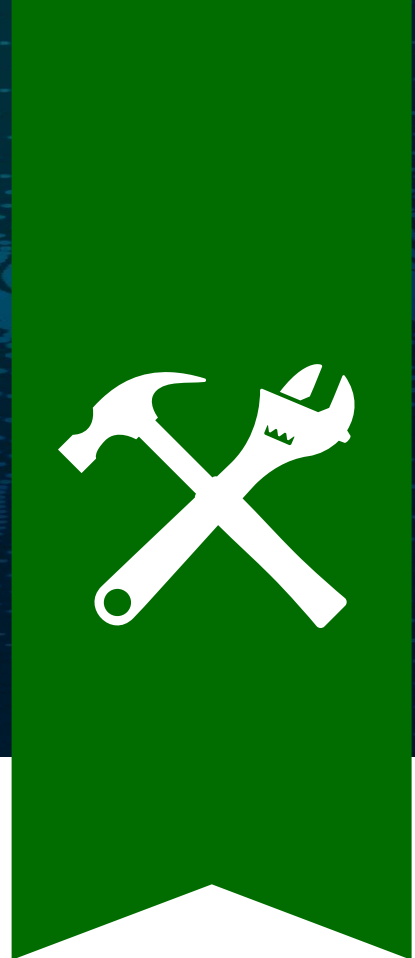


The blacksmith worked in steady, deliberate movements, his hammer ringing out in measured beats. When a young boy approached with a broken toy, he knelt without a word and mended it with careful hands. Though he rarely joined in town gossip, people often found reasons to linger near his forge.



# Check for understanding

Multiple choice



What shift in war poetry occurred after Brooke’s death?

Option 1		Option 2
Poetry became more romantic and sentimental		Poetry adopted a more realistic tone
Option 3		Option 4
Poets continued to glorify war without change		War poetry declined in popularity



# Check for understanding

## Explanation

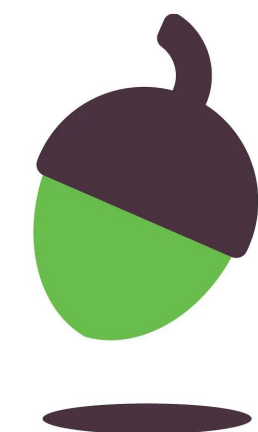


### What is the water cycle?

The amount of water on Earth never

The water cycle does not create new  
added to the water cycle.

So, the water we drink today was o





# Check for understanding

Check – true or false?



**What is the water cycle?**

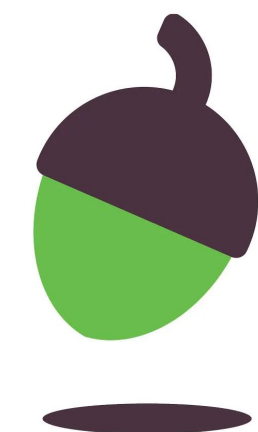
The water cycle does not create new water.

**True** ✓

**False**

**Justify your answer**

- a. Water is moved around Earth by the water cycle.
- b. The amount of water on earth never changes, it always remains the same.





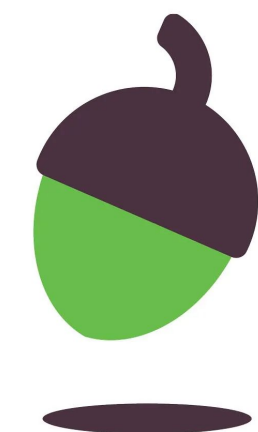
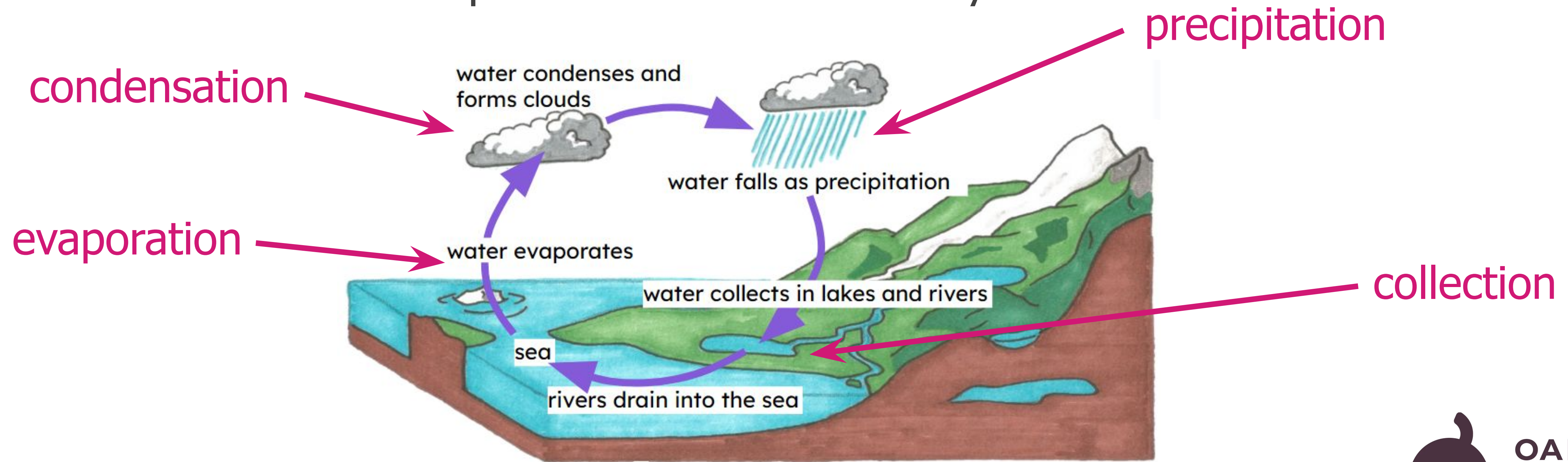
# Check for understanding

## Explanation



### What processes happen in the water cycle?

There are four main processes in the water cycle.





# Check for understanding

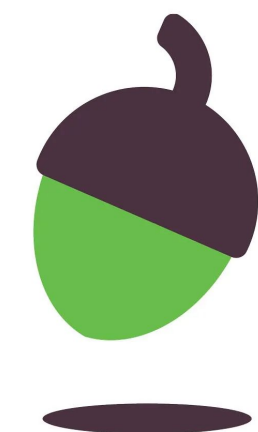
Check – multiple choice



**What processes happen in the water cycle?**

Which of these are **processes** in the water cycle?

- a. evaporation, condensation, precipitation ✓
- b. raining, swimming, sailing
- c. vapour, droplets, rain







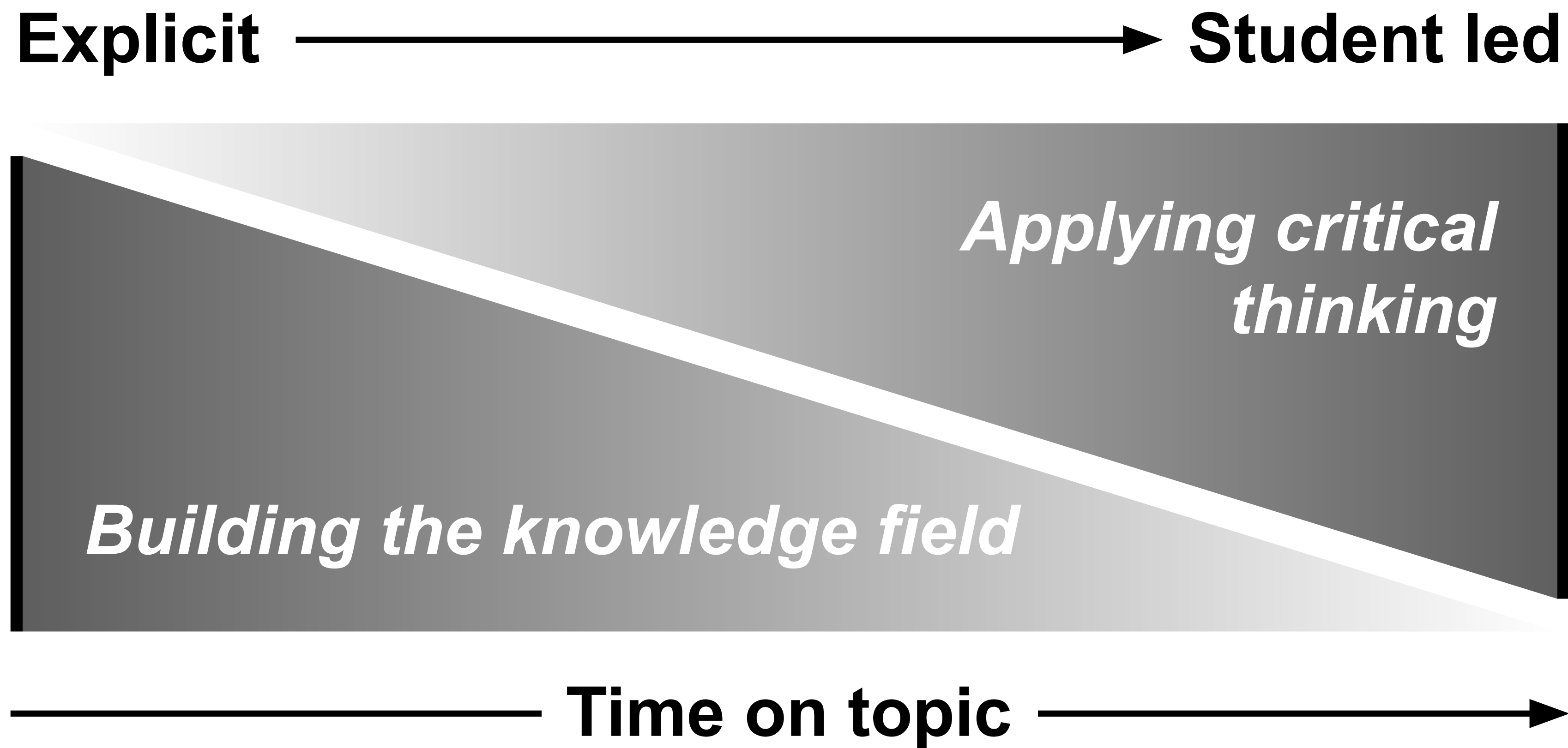
# Caveats and solutions

Explicit teaching in the humanities



# When EDI is not enough

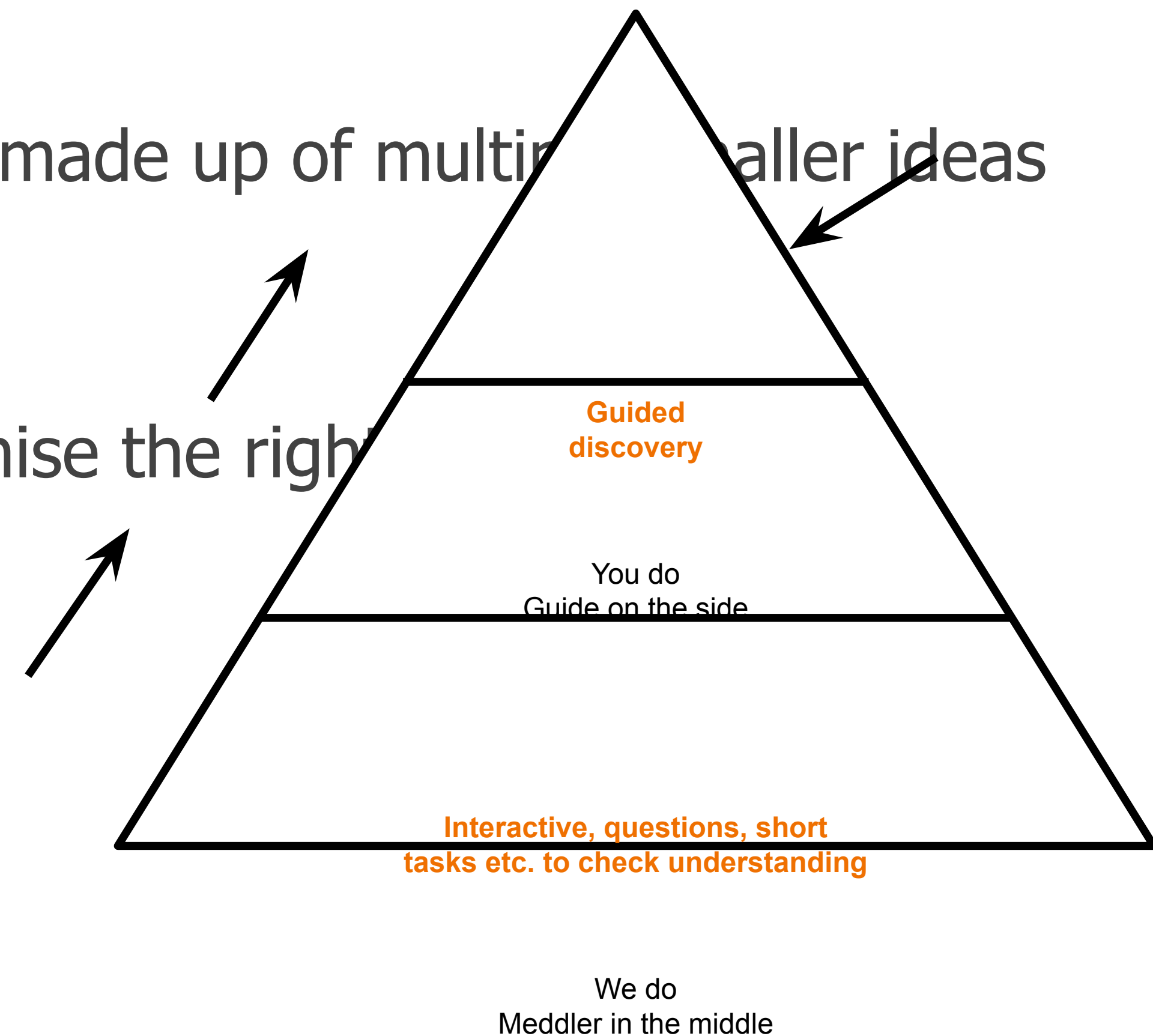
How critical thinking happens





# When EDI is not enough

- The humanities are often dialogic
- We work towards big ideas that might be made up of multiple smaller ideas
- We work towards large pieces of work
- Eventually we need to transfer and recognise the right

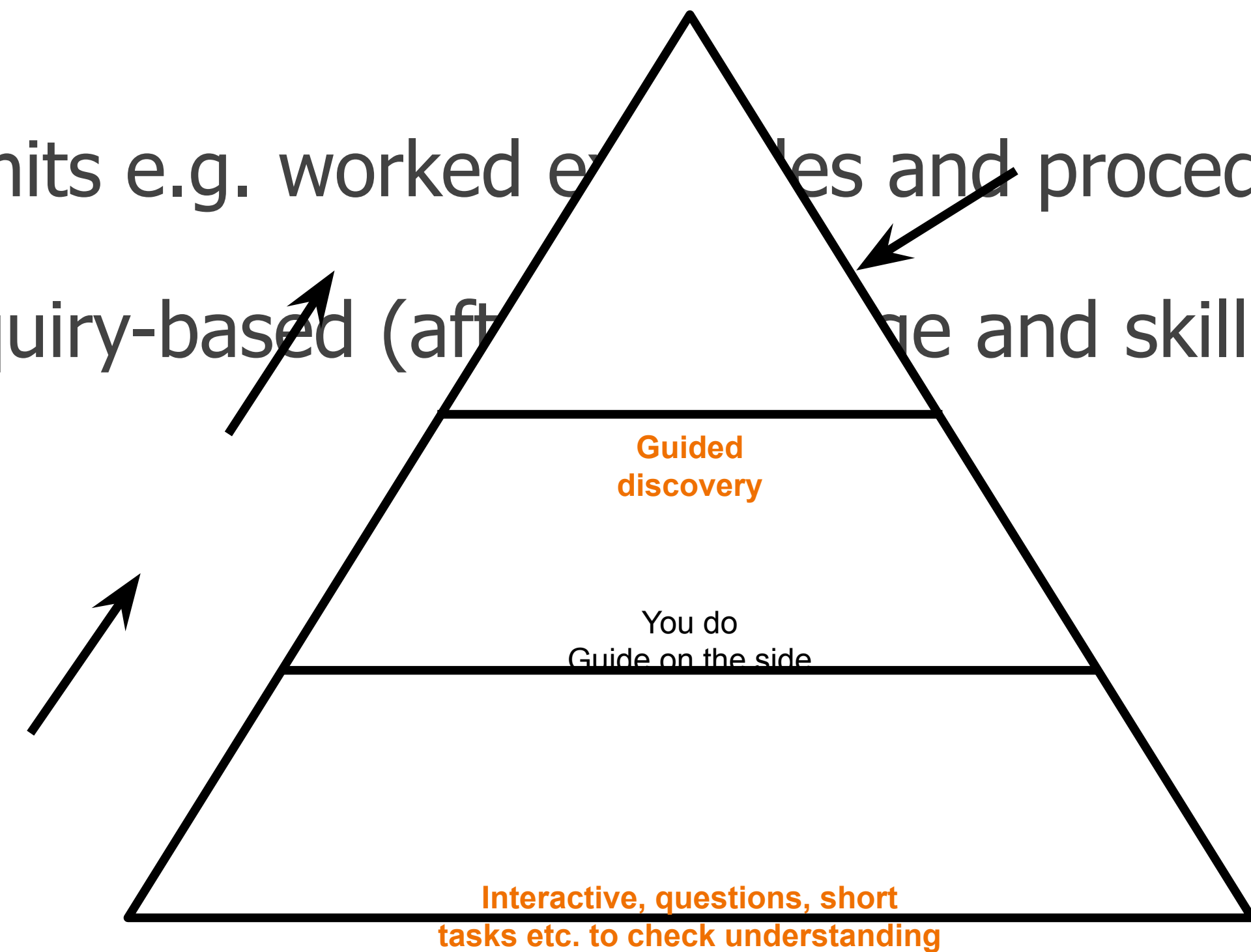




# When EDI is not enough

How do we maintain support and structure?

- Success criteria and rubrics
- Breaking down larger tasks into smaller units e.g. worked examples and procedures
- Milestone and procedures for anything inquiry-based (after language and skills secure)
- Purposeful questioning about texts (see Questioning the Author)



We do  
Meddler in the middle



# Stay in touch

<https://rebeccabirch.au>





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