

# Learning English

## **American Stories** ***A Municipal Report*** **by O. Henry**

Lesson Plan  
*by Jill Robbins, Ph.D.*

# Introduction

This lesson plan is to accompany the American Stories series episode, *A Municipal Report* by O. Henry.

A transcript of the story is included at the end of this lesson to print so students can read as they listen. Teachers who cannot play the audio from the website can read the story aloud or have students read it.

This lesson plan is based on the CALLA Approach. See the end of the lesson for more information and resources on teaching with the CALLA approach. The following slide shows the five parts of this lesson plan.

# Lesson Elements

**Prepare**

**Present**

**Practice**

**Self-Evaluate**

**Expand**

# Prepare

Introduce the story. “Today we will read *A Municipal Report* by O. Henry. This story takes place in Nashville. Nashville is a city in the state of Tennessee. What have you heard about Nashville? Our story says it is a ‘sleepy southern town.’ What do you think that means?”

Listen to students’ responses. If they do not know about Nashville, explain that it is a southern city, and is currently known for country music. In 1904, when this story was written, however, there was no country music industry in Nashville. It was ‘sleepy’ because not much happened there.

Teach the vocabulary for the story. Show the map of Nashville’s location.

# Vocabulary

**continually** - *adv.* doing something without interruption, not stopping or ending

**rainbow** - *n.* a curved line of different colors that sometimes appears in the sky when the sun shines through rain

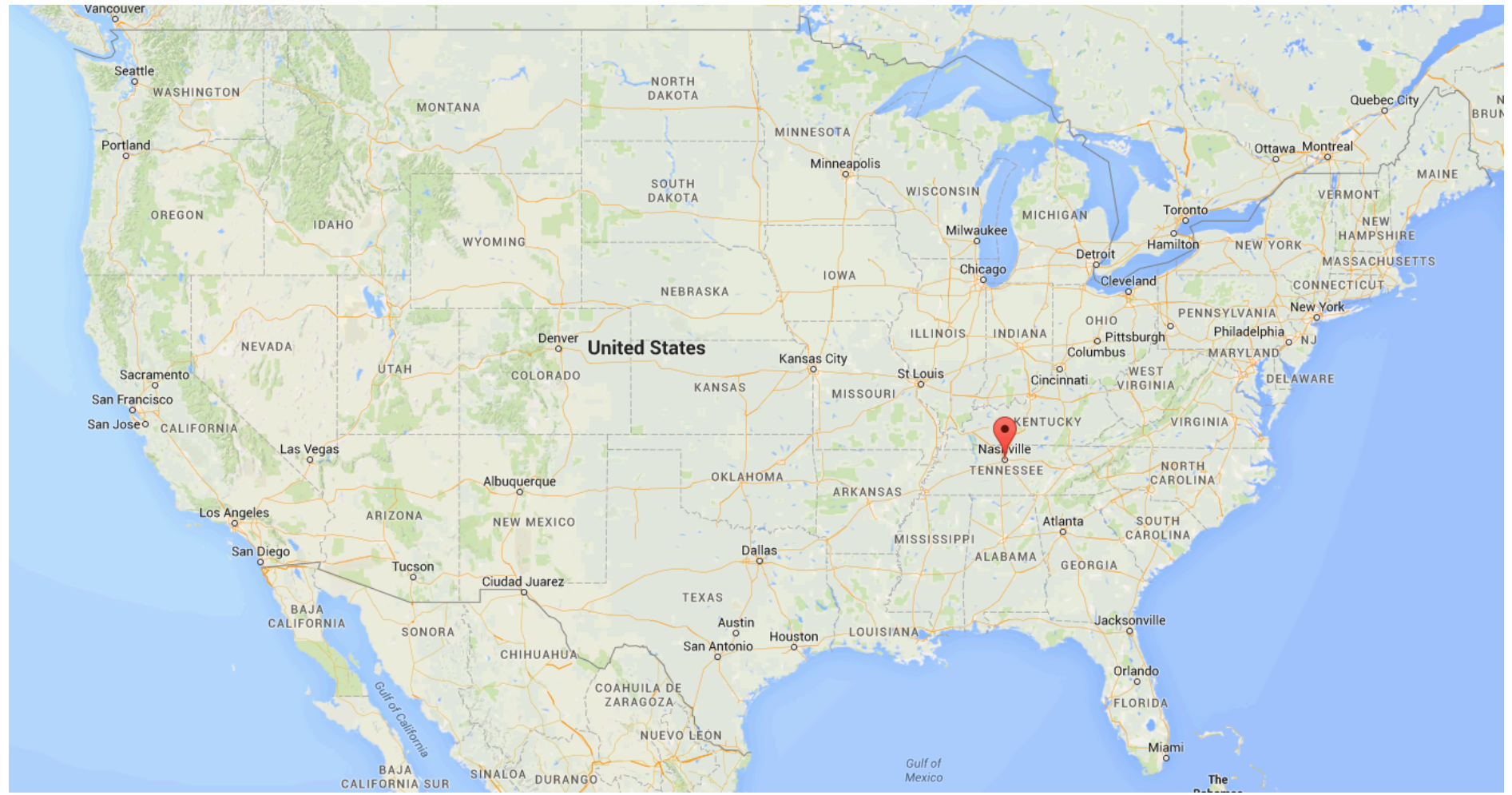
**publisher** - *n.* a person or company that produces books, magazines, etc.

**faint** - *v.* to suddenly become unconscious

**slave** - *n.* someone who is legally owned by another person and is forced to work for that person without pay

**fist** - *n.* the hand with its fingers bent down into the palm

# Nashville, Tennessee



# Present

Introduce the task to students: “You shouldn’t judge this story by its title. You would think “The Municipal Report” is about a city. But that’s far from true. It’s really about the people in that city. This story asks us to think about our reactions to the people we meet. As we read the story today, we will look for how the storyteller reacts to the characters in the story. We will practice the strategy, *focus on the details*. When we *focus*, we look for details, or small things the writer tells us in the story. This helps us understand the whole story better. I’ll show you how to do this.”

Play or read aloud to “I said good night.”

Tell students, “I’m going to *focus* on the details now about Major Wentworth Caswell. I ask myself, what tells me how the storyteller feels about Wentworth Caswell?”

Write notes as you list details on a screen or the board.

“Here is the first detail I noticed: the narrator (storyteller) says Caswell is a big, heavy man. The narrator says Caswell reminds him of a hungry dog looking for a bone. I think this means he looks down on him because Caswell is looking for someone to talk to. Then he says Caswell talks ‘continually.’ He is tired of listening to Caswell. This sentence tells me that: ‘By this time, I had decided that I wanted no more of him.’



# Details

Character	Description	Feelings
Major Worthington Caswell	A big, heavy man...He had a big, fat, red face and a sleepy expression in his eyes	Something about the way he moved made me think of a hungry dog looking for a bone
	Talks continuously	By this time, I had decided that I wanted no more of him.'

# Practice

Tell students, “Now it’s your turn. Find a partner. Take out a sheet of paper. As we read the next section, focus on the details. What do they show you about how the storyteller feels? Then I will ask you to share your notes with your partner.”

Play or read aloud to ‘Just step in and I’ll take you there right away.’

“Now, sit with your partner and write on your paper. What details do we have about Uncle Caesar?”

Give students time to write. Then ask them to tell their partner about the details they noticed. Ask several students to share these with the class.

# Details

Character	Description	Feelings
Uncle Caesar	big, old black man with fuzzy gray hair wearing the strangest coat ... Only one of the buttons was left. It was yellow and as big as a fifty cent coin.	It's not clear. Maybe he thinks the man is poor and feels pity for him.
	old man asked "Why do you want to go there?"	"What business is it of yours?" I said angrily. – Storyteller doesn't want to be friendly with Uncle Caesar.

Instruct students to listen again. “With your partner, listen to the next part of the story. Keep focusing on the details. In this part of the story, we meet the writer our storyteller is looking for: Azalea Adair.”

Play or read aloud to ‘We said good-bye. I went back to my hotel.’

Ask students to write the details they noticed on their paper. ask several students to say what they think the narrator feels from how he describes Azalea Adair.

# Details

Character	Description	Feelings
Azalea Adair	She was about fifty years old. Her white hair was pulled back from her small, tired face. She wore a pale yellow dress. It was old, but very clean.	The narrator respects Azalea Adair.
	I heard the man's rough voice and her gentle one.	The narrator thinks she is gentle, and the man is unkind.

Ask students to look for one other detail – the dollar bill. “This dollar bill appeared two times in the story so far. What do you think happened to the dollar bill?”

Give students time to answer the question alone or with their partners.

Ask students to listen again and focus on the details about the characters and the dollar bill.

Play or read aloud to the end of the story.

Ask students to write the details they noticed. Write them on the screen or board. Ask students, “Why didn’t the narrator show the button to the police?”

# Details

Character	Description	Feelings/ Understanding
Azalea Adair	She fainted – she doesn't eat much	The narrator feels pity for Azalea Adair.
Major Caswell	he's a hopeless drunk who takes even the small amount of money that Uncle Caesar gives her	This helps explain the dollar bill to the narrator
Uncle Caesar	A yellow button...the one from Uncle Caesar's coat.	Uncle Caesar killed Major Caswell

# Self-Evaluate

Ask, “Now I’d like to ask – what do you think about using this strategy, *focus*, when you read? Did it help you understand the story?”

Give students time to discuss their reaction to using the strategy. Find out if focusing on the details helped them understand how the narrator felt about the characters in the story.



# Expand

Ask students, “Are there other times when you can *focus on the details* in your school work or outside of school?”

Listen to students’ responses.

Continue, “This strategy is helpful in both reading and listening. Focusing on the details makes us slow down a little, and think carefully about what we are reading.”

“Try using this strategy tonight when you do your homework, or in your next class. Let me know how it goes!”

A Municipal Report by O. Henry | American Stories | VOA Learning English

*Our story today is called "A Municipal Report." It was written by O. Henry and first published in 1904. Here is Shep O'Neal with the story.*

It was raining as I got off the train in Nashville, Tennessee -- a slow, gray rain. I was tired so I went straight to my hotel.

A big, heavy man was walking up and down in the hotel lobby. Something about the way he moved made me think of a hungry dog looking for a bone. He had a big, fat, red face and a sleepy expression in his eyes. He introduced himself as Wentworth Caswell -- Major Wentworth Caswell -- from "a fine southern family." Caswell pulled me into the hotel's barroom and yelled for a waiter. We ordered drinks. While we drank, he talked continually about himself, his family, his wife and her family. He said his wife was rich. He showed me a handful of silver coins that he pulled from his coat pocket.

By this time, I had decided that I wanted no more of him. I said good night.

I went up to my room and looked out the window. It was ten o'clock but the town was silent. "A nice quiet place," I said to myself as I got ready for bed. Just an ordinary, sleepy southern town."

I was born in the south myself. But I live in New York now. I write for a large magazine. My boss had asked me to go to Nashville. The magazine had received some stories and poems from a writer in Nashville, named Azalea Adair. The editor liked her work very much. The **publisher** asked me to get her to sign an agreement to write only for his magazine.

I left the hotel at nine o'clock the next morning to find Miss Adair. It was still raining. As soon as I stepped outside I met Uncle Caesar. He was a big, old black man with fuzzy gray hair.

Uncle Caesar was wearing the strangest coat I had ever seen. It must have been a military officer's coat. It was very long and when it was new it had been gray. But now rain, sun and age had made it a **rainbow** of colors. Only one of the buttons was left. It was yellow and as big as a fifty cent coin.

Uncle Caesar stood near a horse and carriage. He opened the carriage door and said softly, "Step right in, sir. I'll take you anywhere in the city."

"I want to go to eight-sixty-one Jasmine Street," I said, and I started to climb into the carriage. But the old man stopped me. "Why do you want to go there, sir? "

"What business is it of yours?" I said angrily. Uncle Caesar relaxed and smiled. "Nothing, sir. But it's a lonely part of town. Just step in and I'll take you there right away."

Eight-sixty-one Jasmine Street had been a fine house once, but now it was old and dying. I got out of the carriage.

"That will be two dollars, sir," Uncle Caesar said. I gave him two one-dollar bills. As I handed them to him, I noticed that one had been torn in half and fixed with a piece of blue paper. Also, the upper right hand corner was missing.

Azalea Adair herself opened the door when I knocked. She was about fifty years old. Her white hair was pulled back from her small, tired face. She wore a pale yellow dress. It was old, but very clean.

Azalea Adair led me into her living room. A damaged table, three chairs and an old red sofa were in the center of the floor.

Azalea Adair and I sat down at the table and began to talk. I told her about the magazine's offer and she told me about herself. She was from an old southern family. Her father had been a judge.

Azalea Adair told me she had never traveled or even attended school. Her parents taught her at home with private teachers. We finished our meeting. I promised to return with the agreement the next day, and rose to leave.

At that moment, someone knocked at the back door. Azalea Adair whispered a soft apology and went to answer the caller. She came back a minute later with bright eyes and pink cheeks. She looked ten years younger. "You must have a cup of tea before you go," she said. She shook a little bell on the table, and a small black girl about twelve years old ran into the room.

Azalea Adair opened a tiny old purse and took out a dollar bill. It had been fixed with a piece of blue paper and the upper right hand corner was missing. It was the dollar I had given to Uncle Caesar. "Go to Mister Baker's store, Impy," she said, "and get me twenty-five cents' worth of tea and ten cents' worth of sugar cakes. And please hurry."

The child ran out of the room. We heard the back door close. Then the girl screamed. Her cry mixed with a man's angry voice. Azalea Adair stood up. Her face showed no emotion as she left the room. I heard the man's rough voice and her gentle one. Then a door slammed and she came back into the room.

"I am sorry, but I won't be able to offer you any tea after all," she said. "It seems that Mister Baker has no more tea. Perhaps he will find some for our visit tomorrow."

We said good-bye. I went back to my hotel.

Just before dinner, Major Wentworth Caswell found me. It was impossible to avoid him. He insisted on buying me a drink and pulled two one-dollar bills from his pocket. Again I saw a torn dollar fixed with blue paper, with a corner missing. It was the one I gave Uncle Caesar. How strange, I thought. I wondered how Caswell got it.

Uncle Caesar was waiting outside the hotel the next afternoon. He took me to Miss Adair's house and agreed to wait there until we had finished our business.

Azalea Adair did not look well. I explained the agreement to her. She signed it. Then, as she started to rise from the table, Azalea Adair **fainted** and fell to the floor. I picked her up and carried her to the old red sofa. I ran to the door and yelled to Uncle Caesar for help. He ran down the street. Five minutes later, he was back with a doctor.

The doctor examined Miss Adair and turned to the old black driver. "Uncle Caesar," he said, "run to my house and ask my wife for some milk and some eggs. Hurry!"

Then the doctor turned to me. "She does not get enough to eat," he said. "She has many friends who want to help her, but she is proud. Mrs. Caswell will accept help only from that old black man. He was once her family's **slave**."

"Mrs. Caswell." I said in surprise. "I thought she was Azalea Adair."

"She was," the doctor answered, "until she married Wentworth Caswell twenty years ago. But he's a hopeless drunk who takes even the small amount of money that Uncle Caesar gives her."

After the doctor left I heard Caesar's voice in the other room. "Did he take all the money I gave you yesterday, Miss Azalea?" "Yes, Caesar," I heard her answer softly. "He took both dollars."

I went into the room and gave Azalea Adair fifty dollars. I told her it was from the magazine. Then Uncle Caesar drove me back to the hotel.

A few hours later, I went out for a walk before dinner. A crowd of people were talking excitedly in front of a store. I pushed my way into the store. Major Caswell was lying on the floor. He was dead.

Someone had found his body on the street. He had been killed in a fight. In fact, his hands were still closed into tight **fists**. But as I stood near his body, Caswell's right hand opened. Something fell from it and rolled near my feet. I put my foot on it, then picked it up and put it in my pocket.

People said they believed a thief had killed him. They said Caswell had been showing everyone that he had fifty dollars. But when he was found, he had no money on him.

I left Nashville the next morning. As the train crossed a river I took out of my pocket the object that had dropped from Caswell's dead hand. I threw it into the river below.

It was a button. A yellow button...the one from Uncle Caesar's coat.

*You have just heard the story "A Municipal Report." It was written by O. Henry and adapted by Dona de Sanctis. Your narrator was Shep O'Neal.*

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### **Words in This Story**

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**rainbow** - *n.* a curved line of different colors that sometimes appears in the sky when the sun shines through rain

**publisher** - *n.* a person or company that produces books, magazines, etc.

**faint** - *v.* to suddenly become unconscious

**slave** - *n.* someone who is legally owned by another person and is forced to work for that person without pay

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# About the CALLA Approach

The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) is an instructional model for second and foreign language learners based on cognitive theory and research.





CALLA integrates instruction in priority topics from the content curriculum, development of the language skills needed for learning in school, and explicit instruction in using learning strategies for academic tasks.

The goals of CALLA are for students to learn essential academic content and language and to become independent and self-regulated learners through their increasing command over a variety of strategies for learning in school. CALLA can be used in ESL, EFL, bilingual, foreign language, and general education classrooms.






CALLA was developed by Anna Uhl Chamot and J. Michael O'Malley, and is being implemented in approximately 30 school districts in the United States as well as in several other countries.

See a list of language learning strategies below.

# Metacognitive Strategies







CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
<b>METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES</b>		
Plan / Organize	 <p>Planner</p>	<p>Before beginning a task:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Set goals.</li> <li>-Plan the task or content sequence.</li> <li>-Plan how to accomplish the task (choose strategies).</li> <li>-Preview a text.</li> </ul>
Monitor / Identify Problems	 <p>Check</p>	<p>While working on a task:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Check your progress on the task.</li> <li>-Check your comprehension as you use the language. Do you understand? If not, what is the problem?</li> <li>-Check your production as you use the language. Are you making sense? If not, what is the problem?</li> </ul>
Evaluate	 <p>I did it!</p>	<p>After completing a task:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Assess how well you have accomplished the learning task.</li> <li>-Assess how well you have used learning strategies.</li> <li>-Decide how effective the strategies were.</li> <li>-Identify changes you will make the next time you have a similar task to do.</li> </ul>
Manage Your Own Learning	 <p>Pace Yourself</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Determine how you learn best.</li> <li>-Arrange conditions that help you learn.</li> <li>-Seek opportunities for practice.</li> <li>-Focus your attention on the task.</li> </ul>

# Task-Based Strategies


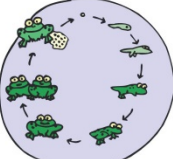
CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
<b>TASK-BASED STRATEGIES</b>		
		
Use Background Knowledge	 I know.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Think about and use what you already know to help you do the task.</li> <li>- Make associations between new information and your prior knowledge.</li> <li>-Use new information to clarify or modify your prior knowledge.</li> </ul>
Make Inferences	 Use Clues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Use context and what you know to figure out meaning.</li> <li>-Read and listen between the lines.</li> <li>-Go beyond the text to understand its meaning.</li> </ul>
Make Predictions	 Crystal Ball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Anticipate information to come.</li> <li>-Make logical guesses about what will happen in a written or oral text.</li> <li>-Make an estimate (math).</li> <li>-Make a hypothesis (science).</li> </ul>
Personalize	 Me	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Relate new concepts to your own life, to your experiences, knowledge, beliefs and feelings.</li> </ul>




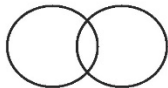


# Task-Based Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
<b>TASK-BASED STRATEGIES</b>		
Transfer / Use Cognates	 Coffee/Café	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Apply your linguistic knowledge of other languages (including your native language) to the target language.</li> <li>-Recognize cognates.</li> </ul>
Substitute / Paraphrase	 Make it work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Use a synonym or descriptive phrase for unknown words or expressions.</li> </ul>
  <b>USE YOUR SENSES</b>		
Use Images	 See it in your mind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Use or create an actual or mental image to understand and/or represent information.</li> <li>-Use or draw a picture or diagram.</li> </ul>
Use Sounds	 Sound Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Say or read aloud a word, sentence, or paragraph to help your understanding.</li> <li>-Sound out/vocalize.</li> <li>- Use your "mental tape recorder" to remember sounds, words, phrases, and/or conversations.</li> </ul>






# Task-Based Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
<b>TASK-BASED STRATEGIES</b>		
Use Your Kinesthetic Sense		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>--Act out a role, for example, in Readers' Theater, or imagine yourself in different roles in the target language.</li> <li>-Use real objects to help you remember words, sentences, or content information.</li> </ul>
  <b>USE YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS</b>		
Find/Apply Patterns	 abacus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Apply a rule.</li> <li>-Make a rule.</li> <li>-Recognize and apply letter/sound, grammar, discourse, or register rules.</li> <li>-Identify patterns in literature (genre).</li> <li>-Identify patterns in math, science, and social studies.</li> </ul>
Classify/Sequence	 Life cycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Categorize words or ideas according to attributes.</li> <li>-Classify living things; identify natural cycles.</li> <li>-Identify order and sequences in math, science, and social studies.</li> <li>-Sequence events in history.</li> </ul>

# Task-Based Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
<b>TASK-BASED STRATEGIES</b>		
Take Notes	 <p>PDA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Write down important words and ideas while listening or reading.</li> <li>-List ideas or words to include in speaking or writing..</li> </ul>
Use Graphic Organizers	 <p>A Venn diagram</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Use or create visual representations (such as Venn diagrams, time lines, webs, and charts) of important relationships between concepts.</li> </ul>
Summarize	 <p>Main Idea</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Create a mental, oral, or written summary of information.</li> </ul>
Use Selective Attention	 <p>Focus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Focus on specific information, structures, key words, phrases, or ideas.</li> </ul>

# Task-Based Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
<b>TASK-BASED STRATEGIES</b>		
 		
<b>USE A VARIETY OF RESOURCES</b>		
Access Information Sources	 <p>Look it up!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Use the dictionary, the internet, and other reference materials.</li> <li>-Seek out and use sources of information.</li> <li>-Follow a model</li> <li>-Ask questions</li> </ul>
Cooperate	 <p>Together</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Work with others to complete tasks, build confidence, and give and receive feedback.</li> </ul>
Talk Yourself Through It (Self-Talk)	 <p>I can do it!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use your inner resources. Reduce your anxiety by reminding yourself of your progress, the resources you have available, and your goals.</li> </ul>