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The Six TRACKS

TRACKS gives students six dependable places to look for tangible evidence inside a passage. The categories organize evidence without deciding the thinking level for the student.

- Define each TRACK in teacher-friendly and student-friendly language.
- Distinguish evidence categories that are commonly confused.
- Choose the primary job a detail performs in the response.

TRACKS tells us what evidence is available. The prompt tells us which evidence earns a place in the answer.

The Six Evidence Categories

TRACK	What it includes	Student question
T - Time	Historical or cultural era, chronology, sequence, duration, or when something happened.	When did it happen, how long did it last, or what time context matters?
R - Reactions	Responses, effects, solutions, resolutions, outcomes, or what happened because of something else.	How did someone or something respond, and what effect, solution, or resolution followed?
A - Actions	Events, decisions, problems, conflicts, causes, or what someone or something did.	What happened, what caused it, what problem occurred, or what decision was made?
C - Characters / Concepts / Creatures	The person, idea, subject, or living thing that is central to the passage.	Who or what is central, and which traits, features, roles, or ideas matter?
K - Key Knowledge	Important facts, details, definitions, explanations, or information the reader needs.	What fact, definition, detail, or explanation must the reader know?
S - Settings	Place, scenery, surroundings, conditions, and sensory details that shape what happens.	Where did it happen, and what conditions, scenery, or senses shaped it?

TRACKS Is Not a Ranking System

One TRACK is not better than another. The strongest choice depends on the prompt. A Time detail may be the best evidence for a question about historical context. A Reaction may be strongest for a question about an effect. A Setting detail may become essential when the prompt asks how an environment influenced an event.

One Detail May Touch More Than One TRACK

Evidence categories can overlap. The sentence, "After three dry months, the river dropped below the dock," contains Time, Setting, and a Reaction or effect. The teacher should not turn the categories into a guessing game. Ask which job the detail performs in the student's answer.

C: Characters, Concepts, and Creatures

C evidence identifies the person, idea, subject, or living thing at the center of the passage. It works across literary, informational, historical, and scientific texts.

- Use C evidence beyond traditional character traits.
- Separate the central subject from facts about the subject.
- Connect characteristics, roles, and perspectives to Actions and Reactions.

C tells us who or what is central. Higher-level thinking explains how that central subject shapes the evidence around it.

What C Evidence Can Include

- a literary character, narrator, speaker, or historical figure;
- a concept such as erosion, fairness, migration, or responsibility;
- a creature, organism, species, or living system;
- traits, features, roles, motivations, perspectives, or relationships;
- the central subject the other evidence helps the reader understand.

C Across the Five Levels

Level	Evidence behavior	What appears in the writing
Foundational	Identify the central character, concept, or creature and a stated feature.	Reports who or what the passage is about.
Emergent	Name a relevant trait, role, feature, or perspective.	Describes the central subject.
Visible	Choose C evidence that directly supports the answer.	Uses a trait or feature as relevant proof.
Independent	Explain how the characteristic, role, or perspective influences an Action, Reaction, or idea.	Develops meaning around the subject.
Reflective	Connect the central subject with several TRACKS to analyze change, relationships, or significance.	Constructs a deeper interpretation.

CASE SCENARIO: CHARACTER EVIDENCE IS MORE THAN A TRAIT WORD

PASSAGE

Jonas was known for finishing every task alone. During the bridge project, he first refused help. When the model collapsed, he listened as Maya explained a new support design. Jonas rebuilt the base with the group and later asked each student to describe the part they had contributed.

PROMPT: How does Jonas change during the project?

Student	Response	Evidence reading
Luke	Jonas was independent.	Emergent C: names a trait but misses the change.
Lane	Jonas moves from refusing help to asking others to explain their contributions.	Independent C + A: uses Actions to explain the change.
Jake	The bridge model collapsed.	Foundational A: finds the event that triggered change but not the character change itself.

Evidence Partners

Some prompts can be answered with one precise TRACK. Others require a relationship between two evidence types. Evidence partners help students explain why or how instead of stacking unrelated details.

- Decide when one TRACK is enough.
- Use common TRACKS pairings to make relationships visible.
- Avoid requiring multiple pieces of evidence only for quantity.

Use a second TRACK because the thinking needs it, not because the paragraph looks too short.

When One TRACK Is Enough

A precise TAP question may ask for the detail that best supports an idea. One Action or one piece of Key Knowledge may answer completely. A short constructed response may also need only one strong detail when the student explains it fully. Do not weaken a clear response by forcing extra evidence into it.

When Evidence Needs a Partner

WHY and HOW prompts often require two evidence jobs. One TRACK provides the idea to be explained. Another shows the cause, effect, context, influence, or relationship. The partner is useful when it completes the reasoning.

Evidence partners	What they often help explain
A + R	cause and effect; problem and solution; decision and consequence.
C + A	motivation; trait and behavior; concept and application.
C + R	character response; change; impact on a living thing or central idea.
T + A	historical context and event; duration and decision; sequence and cause.
T + R	change over time; long condition and resulting effect.
S + A	environment and behavior; conditions and event.
S + R	conditions and effect; place and response.
K + A	knowledge and decision; fact and process.
K + R	fact and effect; information and response.
K + C	important knowledge about a central person, concept, or creature.

Move One Level to the Right

The purpose of the Evidence Matrix is not to name a level and stop. It is to identify the smallest useful move that helps the student use evidence more independently and more deeply.

- Teach the next evidence behavior rather than the whole matrix at once.
- Model, guide, remove support, and check transfer.
- Use the same TRACK in reading and writing so the move becomes visible.

The best next lesson is usually one level to the right, not five levels away.

The Four Evidence Bridges

Current to next	Teacher focus	Teacher question
Foundational to Emergent	Move from finding a detail to naming its evidence job.	What kind of TRACK is this, and what does it tell us?
Emergent to Visible	Move from a related detail to the detail that best proves the answer.	Which TRACK answers this prompt most directly?
Visible to Independent	Move from support to explanation.	What does this evidence prove, and why does it matter?
Independent to Reflective	Move from one explanation to connection, evaluation, or significance.	How do these TRACKS work together, and what larger idea do they reveal?

A Simple Teaching Cycle

1. Show the difference. Place the current response beside a response one level to the right.
2. Name the move. Use one clear verb: name, choose, explain, or connect.
3. Think aloud. Model why one TRACK is more useful or how two TRACKS relate.
4. Guide practice. Ask the student to perform the move with support.
5. Remove support. Use a fresh detail, prompt, or passage.
6. Check the writing result. Look for the move inside the final response.