

VISUALIZATION MOVE 3: THE FEVER CHART

A fever chart (also called a time-series chart) is a graphical representation of how a variable changes over time. The purpose of a fever chart assignment is to track important changes in a character, situation, force, or concept over the course of reading a text or a series of texts. The fever chart tracks the evolution of a character (or idea) through a journey by helping students identify important moments in each character's narrative in real time and the causes of particular changes or movements. The cause of change, in return, offers valuable cues to theme and an author's generalization about life.

When creating fever charts, students should be positioned as designers. Fever charts can be designed to track a variety of elements in a text—relationships between characters, mental and emotional changes for individuals, crises and stress levels, progress toward a goal (like achieving civil rights or justice), family status, level of power, and so on. Once students have selected the element(s) they will track, they set up a visual with a y -axis and an x -axis. On the y -axis, they place a scale that relates to their chosen element, and on the x -axis, they place a measurement of time (chapters, paragraphs, passage of time, changes in situation/setting, etc.).

This strategy can be used to track literary elements like character, setting, and plot, but also to track concepts, forces, and trends in other content areas. The process for creating the fever chart can be adjusted to give students opportunities to apply the expert mental model they are focusing on in the unit of study. For example, pausing at selected points in the text to make predictions for future data points requires them to do so based on data trends they have noticed so far in the reading, a key strategy for reading a text or indeed any data set.

Here are the steps for helping students to create their own fever charts:

Step 1: Based on purpose, text, and available time, decide if students will create a simple or complex fever chart. (Once students are familiar with the technique, we favor the complex charts.) And decide on grouping configurations (e.g., small groups, partners, or individuals).

Step 2: Articulate the expert mental model or skills students will apply in creating their fever chart (typically, this involves analyzing and inferring, seeing patterns and relationships, identifying cause and effect or problem–solution trends, etc.).

Step 3: Brainstorm with students a list of elements they could track over the course of reading one text or multiple texts and why this would be worth tracking.

Step 4: Provide a model for students, or have them help you to create one. For the model, students can create a fever chart based on personal experience, like levels of stress in a school day. If this chart is related to the unit, so much the better!

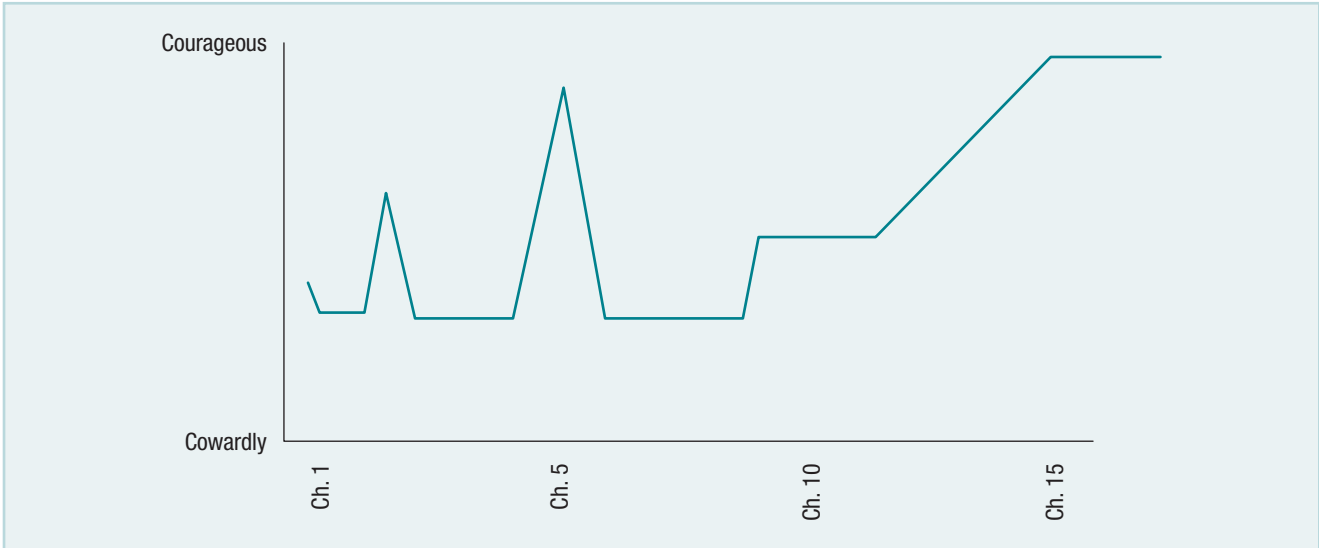
Step 5: Support students in selecting what elements to track in their fever charts and in justifying what might be learned through tracking of the relationship between these elements.

Step 6: Support students in deciding what will be represented on the x - and y -axes. Articulate what type of data students will use to support where points are placed on the chart (direct quotes from the text, paraphrased evidence, inferences from data, etc.).

As always, and consistent with culturally responsive teaching and restorative practice, students can first do a personal example, such as a fever chart of their energy or stress level throughout a school day or school year, their feelings of esteem or success over time, or their civil rights status over time. Students can then track the changes in a chosen character or concept over the course of a text or series of texts (e.g., the level of Annemarie’s courage throughout *Number the Stars* [Figure 9.5], or Hamlet’s level of sanity [Figure 9.6]). Students can draw a quick fever chart such as those shown in Figures 9.4 and 9.5, or a more complex chart that requires them to provide specific textual examples to support the placement of items and to explain causes for character change.

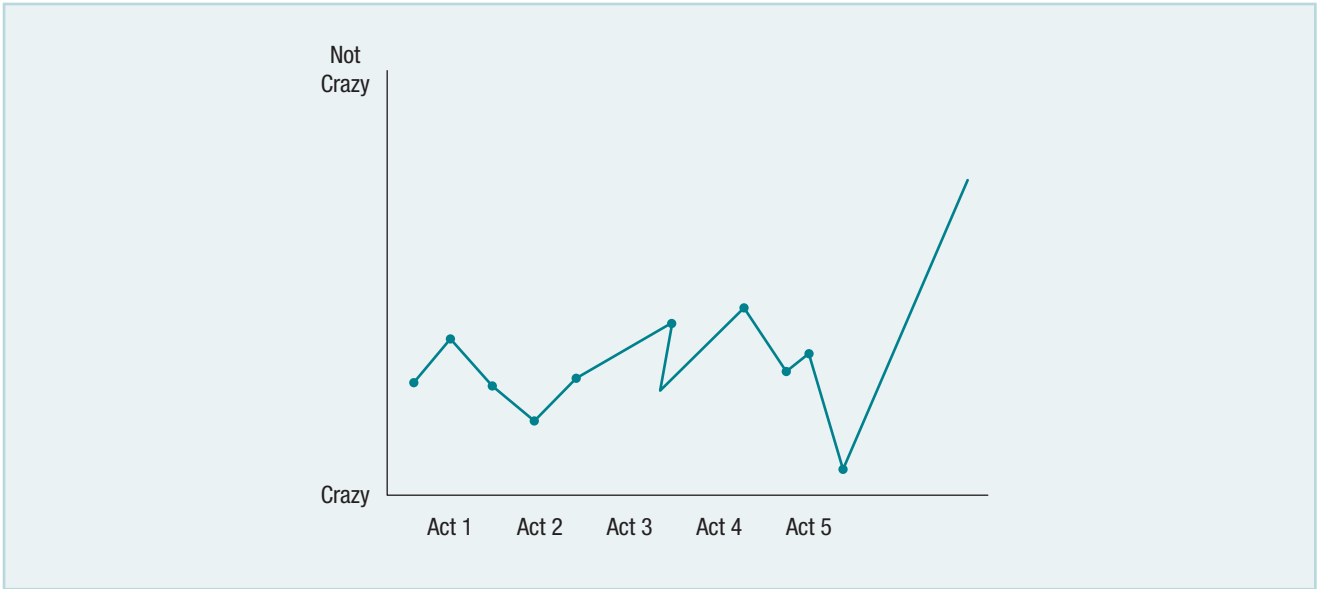
■ **FIGURE 9.5: FEVER CHART FOR NUMBER THE STARS**

Here is a basic example of a fever chart tracking Annemarie’s courage throughout *Number the Stars*. Students are asked “What makes you say so?” to help them cite data for where they plotted the points on the chart.



■ **FIGURE 9.6: FEVER CHART FOR HAMLET**

Here is a basic example of a fever chart tracking Hamlet’s sanity over the course of the play, but the basic idea can be expanded and modified in a number of ways.



The fever chart format supports students in representing the progression of changes in the chosen aspect throughout a reading. They can also see relationships between two salient elements as well as other patterns, which can motivate them to explain patterns that may promote understanding or be revealing of theme and main idea. Charts such as those for Hamlet and Ophelia, or for Annemarie and a civil rights figure such as Martin Luther King Jr., can be compared to see what they reveal about a particular theme like dealing with stress, or about how character can promote civil rights.

Consider, too, using fever charts in other disciplines, such as the following:

Historical Texts:

- Relationship between the writer or speaker's emotion/tone and the metaphors used
- Relationships between entities involved in any kind of conflict, issue, or alliance
- Strength of political parties or social trends over time tied to events and other causes
- Strength of the economy over time related to various events and forces
- Relationship between technology (or other forces and innovations) and overall progress or social regression on various metrics like health, psychic health, and bullying

Scientific Texts:

- Scientific theories over time (e.g., about evolution or climate change)
- Scientific progress over time (e.g., in terms of effective medical care)
- Relationship between technological invention and various kinds of progress or regression, like environmental degradation