KWL focuses on the student as a strategic learner and is based on three principal components: (1) recalling what is known, (2) determining what students want to learn, and (3) identifying what is learned (Carr & Ogle, 1987; Ogle, 1986). We strongly endorse this strategy because it can be carried out before, during, and after reading. Before reading, the student activates background knowledge and sets a purpose for reading; during reading, the student thinks critically about information and monitors learning; and after reading, the student integrates and consolidates the information read. Here we focus on the before-reading benefits of the strategy.

To give you a better idea of the kind of thinking involved in the KWL strategy, let us assume you were asked by the professor using the book to employ the strategy for Chapter 5, the chapter you are reading now. First, you would be directed to read the title, "Initiating Students to New Learning," and in small cooperative groups or as a whole class, you would brainstorm and discuss ideas and information you already hold in prior knowledge about the topic. Through discussion, a good deal of known information will be generated, and unanswered points and unanswered questions also will likely emerge. These will be saved and referred to later as issues about which you desire further information. So, after brainstorming and discussing, you would have a collection of ideas and facts about the chapter topic listed on a chart in the K (what is known) column.

In the next phase before reading, you would be asked to generate questions based on questions you would like answered by the text. Questions come from the brainstorming and discussion, as well as anticipated information you think will be encountered in the text. These questions comprise the entries in the second column on the chart: W (what you want to learn). By developing questions in this way, you will tend to define for yourself your purpose for reading. The result is that your reading and self-monitoring during reading will be more focused. As you read, you will pause periodically to monitor your comprehension by checking the questions from the W column that can be answered by what you have read. As new information is encountered, additional questions can be added to the list. Thus, purposes are refined and extended throughout reading.

Figure 5.2 depicts what you might have generated for the first two columns of the KWL chart. As you read, you would note in the L column new information and information that helps answer the questions you posed in the W column. After reading, you would be asked to discuss what you have learned from your reading. You would review the questions asked before and during reading to determine if and how they were answered. For example, in Figure 5.2, the first three questions in the W column can be answered fairly thoroughly with the information in this chapter. For the last question, which would remain unresolved because this chapter does not specifically discuss the Directed-Reading-Thinking-Activity strategy, you would be encouraged to conduct some personal research to gather further information about this aspect of the topic. Perhaps the professor would direct you to additional secondary reading methods textbooks or to journal articles that deal with the topic of using Directed-Reading-Thinking-Activity as a prereading strategy.