

CLASS PRESENTATION CRITICAL THINKING AND READING COMPREHENSION

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Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is understanding a text that is read, or the process of "constructing meaning" from a text. Comprehension is a "construction process" because it involves all of the elements of the reading process working together as a text is read to create a representation of the text in the reader's mind. Reading comprehension is an active, unobservable, mental, making-meaning process. It is what real readers do in the real world in order to make meaning.

The purpose of reading is to connect the ideas on the page to what you already know. If you don't know anything about a subject, then pouring words of text into your mind is like pouring water into your hand. You don't retain much. It is easy to read when you have prior knowledge and some elements of structure. You have a framework in your mind for reading, understanding and storing information.

Reading comprehension requires motivation, mental frameworks for holding ideas, concentration and good comprehension strategies and techniques.

Reading isn't really **reading** if students don't understand what they have read.

Good readers are extremely active as they read and early childhood is the best time to capitalize on this strength children have. Children have to be taught how to "fish" for meaning as they go through text by using strategies that turn them into good readers.

Reading comprehension strategies are tools that students can use to help determine the meaning of what they read. Teaching comprehension as a strategic process enables readers to make connections and move beyond literal recall. Some of the most important reading comprehension strategies are described as follows:

Strategy #1- Making Predictions



Before you begin to read the selection, look at the main title, scan the pages to read the major headings, and look at any illustrations. Based on these clues, try to guess what the article or story is going to be about.

Now start reading the selection to see whether your first prediction was correct. Later, you can stop at several points during your reading in order to figure what will happen next based upon what has already happened. When you continue reading, you can find out how closely the content of the actual story or article fit your prediction.

You can make as many predictions as necessary.

To make a prediction, you must combine clues in a story plus your own experience to make a reasonable guess.

Good readers make and revise predictions about characters, setting, and plot as they read.



Strategy #2 - Making Connections

Students connect their background knowledge to the text they are reading.

Purpose of the strategy:

Readers comprehend better when they actively think about and apply their knowledge of the book's topic, their own experiences, and the world around them. When children understand how to connect the text they read to their lives, they begin to make connections between what they read and the larger world. This motivates them to think about bigger issues beyond their universe of home, school and neighborhood."

How to help your student use this strategy:

To help your student make connections while they are reading, ask him/her the following questions:

- What does the book remind you of?
- What do you know about the book's topic?
- Does this book remind you of another book?



Strategy #3 – Asking Questions

Through the use of questioning, students understand the text on a deeper level because questions clarify confusion and stimulate further interest in a topic.

Purpose of the strategy:

Through questioning, students are able to wonder about content and concepts before, during and after reading by:

- constructing meaning
- enhancing meaning
- finding answers
- solving problems
- finding specific information
- acquiring a body of information
- discovering new information
- propelling research efforts
- clarifying confusion

How to help your student use this strategy:

- model questioning in your own rereading
- ask "I wonder" questions (open-ended)
- ask your student to come up with questions before reading to see if it's answered in the text
- keep track of questions verbally or in an informal question log
- stop and predict what will happen next
- discuss what questions you still have after reading

Strategy #4 – Creating Images

Students create mind pictures and visualizations when they read. Students draw what they visualize.

Purpose of the strategy:

The reader uses the text material and their own prior knowledge to create their own mind pictures of what is happening in the text. "Visualizing personalizes reading, keeps us engaged and often prevents us from abandoning a book."

How to help your student use this strategy:

To help you student visualize while reading, try the following:

- share wordless picture books with your student - have your student tell the story
- make frequent stops while reading aloud to describe the pictures in your minds
- after reading time at home has your child draw what they see in their mind



Strategy #5 - Inferring

Students make inferences about text they are reading to interpret meaning and develop deeper understanding.

Purpose of the strategy:

Readers comprehend better when they make connections and construct their own knowledge (using prior experiences, visualizing, predicting and synthesizing) to interpret the "big idea." It is like a mental dialogue between the author and the student.

How to help your students use this strategy:

Ask them:

"How did you know that?"

"Why did you think that would happen?"

"Look at the cover and pictures, then make predictions."

"Discuss the plot and theme."

"What do you think this story was about?"

"How do you think the character feels?"

"Does it remind you of anything?"

Strategy #6 - Determining Importance

When students are reading nonfiction they have to decide and remember what is important from the material they read.

Purpose of the strategy:

The purpose is to teach students to discriminate the most important information from the less important details in a text. When kids read and understand nonfiction, they build background for the topic and acquire new knowledge. The ability to identify essential ideas and salient information is a prerequisite to developing an insightful mind.

How to help your student use this strategy:

To help you students determine importance while they are reading:

- Initiate discussion before reading by asking what your students know about the topic and what they would like to learn.
- After reading discuss what important information they have learned.
- While reading, help your students look for clues in the text to determine importance.

Pay attention to:

- first and last lines of a paragraph
- titles
- headings
- captions
- framed text
- fonts
- illustrations
- italics
- bold faced print

Strategy #7 – Summarizing/Synthesizing

Students weave together what they read and their own ideas into new complete thoughts.

Purpose of the strategy:

Readers comprehend better when they sift through information to make sense of it and to act upon it - such as judging or evaluating the author's purpose to form a new idea, opinion, or perspective. This is the highest and most complex form of comprehension.

How to help your student use this strategy:

- Use questioning strategies such as, "How has your thinking changed from reading that piece?"
- Discuss current events with an emphasis on judgments and opinions.
- Ask questions with no clear answers

GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS are an instructional strategy that is used to support reading comprehension.

What are graphic organizers?

Graphic organizers are visual representations that support understanding of text (e.g. webs, t-charts, Venn diagrams, KWL charts). These organizers are arranged according to the reading strategy, comprehension skill, or learning process they best facilitate. The majority of the organizers can be adapted for use in all classrooms and for learners of all abilities.

Graphic organizers can be used in all phases of learning from brainstorming ideas to presenting findings. There is a wide range of effective organizers that may be tailored to most classrooms or students in order to enhance comprehension.

A **STORY MAP** is an example of a graphic organizer whose purpose is to make a visual representation of the settings, sequence of the major events of the story, plot, and sequence of actions of story characters. This procedure enables students to relate story events and understand structure in literary selections. Story maps can be used as frameworks for storytelling or retellings, and as outlines for story writing.

<http://www.eduplace.com/graphicorganizer/>

How can I implement this strategy?

- ▶ Introduce story mapping as a collaborative activity.
- ▶ Introduce this strategy using a story with an uncomplicated plot.
- ▶ Read the selections to students.
- ▶ Encourage the students to visualize the characters, settings and events as they listen.
- ▶ Discuss and chart the main characters and story events.
- ▶ Review the chart, focusing the students' attention on the sequence of main events.
- ▶ Emphasize what happened first, next, and then ...
- ▶ As students agree upon the order of listed events, number these in sequence.
- ▶ Individuals or groups could each illustrate one story event.
- ▶ Display completed illustrations in sequence.
- ▶ This pattern or framework can be used for retelling the story.
- ▶ Students can retell the story for their own enjoyment, to a partner, to a small group or to the class.
- ▶ Once students become familiar with this procedure, they can create a sequence of illustrations that will provide an outline for storytelling or for writing original stories.

CLASS ACTIVITY

Retell a story using a story map

Objective: Students will retell the story using the story elements.

Procedure:

1. - Students read the story in pairs.
2. - Have the students complete the story map while they read the story.
3. – Review the students’ comprehension of story elements by asking questions such as:
 - a. Who are the main characters of the story?
 - b. What is the setting?
 - c. What problem does the main character have to solve?
 - d. How is the problem resolved?
- 4.-When done, have the groups retell the story using the recorded information.

Assessment & Evaluation Considerations

At the end of this activity,

- ▶ the teacher will note students’ ability to identify main story characters and events.
- ▶ the teacher will note students’ ability to sequence story events.
- ▶ the teacher will assess if story maps reveal students’ level of comprehension of story events and structure.
- ▶ The teacher will prove how variations among students’ story maps illustrate their personal interpretations.

