



Comprehension Strategy Units

How Can I Teach Comprehension Strategies Effectively?

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In last week's Tip of the Week, the importance of teaching comprehension strategies was highlighted. The question then arises: What are effective ways to teach comprehension strategies? *LPEY* employs several proven techniques that help you teach young students about these thinking processes. Below are two methods you will find most often in Read Aloud and Shared Reading lesson plans.

a.) Think Alouds

One of the most effective ways to teach comprehension strategies is through the use of "think alouds". Think alouds can be demonstrated during Read Aloud or Shared Reading lessons. They involve modelling the thought processes of a proficient reader. Think alouds occur before, during, or after reading as the teacher stops, places the book in his/her lap and says aloud what is happening as he/she is reading. Thus, students are able to hear what is going on in the mind of a good reader.

Prior to reading a text aloud, read through the lesson plans and determine two or three places which would best illustrate the focused strategy. Mark those with a sticky note. You will want to ensure that your think alouds are deliberate and genuine so whatever the strategy focus happens to be, ensure that you can make your own personal connections to the text. If the suggested think alouds don't work for you or your class, decide on something more appropriate. Say what you need to say as clearly and concisely as you can and then continue reading. Even with very young readers, it is important to use precise language and appropriate terminology to describe strategies (e.g., making connections, analyzing, evaluating, etc.).

b.) Discussions

With younger students, comprehension practice takes place orally. As students talk about high quality literature, poetry, and non-fiction texts, they naturally use the kinds of strategies that develop comprehension. During Read Alouds and Shared Reading, teachers can enhance the comprehension process by posing questions for students to think about while listening to or reading texts. Thoughtful questions invite students to go back into the text to consider literary elements, to make connections, to analyze illustrations, and to think about the author's message. Questioning enables students to make new, deeper insights into the meaning of the text. Encouraging students to explain the thinking behind their answers enhances metacognitive abilities.

In the *LPEY* teaching plans, you will find many discussion opportunities in the "After Reading" section and the "Focussed Rereading" sections. As the teaching plans are extensive in nature, you may find that the suggestions for the "Before Reading" and "During Reading" parts of the lesson are all that can be accomplished during one lesson. If so, revisit the text the following day to provide opportunities for students to deepen their comprehension and to begin to apply their strategies. Here is an example that demonstrates the type of higher thinking questions provided during follow-up sessions: "How did Bibi deal with the bull? Do you think this was a good solution? Why or why not?" In this case, Kindergarten students are using the **Evaluating Strategy** after listening to the text, *Bibi and the Bull*.

***Literacy Place for the Early Years* Tip of the Week is going on summer holidays! Stay tuned for more Tips of the Week during the next school year. Don't forget to check out the Scholastic Professional Resources catalogue for great summer reading! Have a relaxing and rejuvenating summer vacation!**

If you have a question you would like answered, please email your request to: workshops@scholastic.ca.