6 Comprehension Strategies

Prior Knowledge and Prediction

Thoughtful readers use **relevant prior knowledge** to **predict** when reading, and when deciding what they think might occur next. When reading they bring knowledge from their own life experiences and any knowledge about the text, and form predictions based on this prior knowledge before and during reading.

In order to form predictions, students may:

- Often read the front and back covers or skim a text.
- Compare their predictions with ideas in the text, evaluate and modify their predictions as they read.
- Reflect on their predictions and what they have read, and create new understandings.

Questions and Questioning

Questioning is a very important strategy in developing comprehension.

Questioning helps students to:

- Become more engaged in their reading;
- Explore the text on a deeper level;
- Clarify meaning of words, phrases and what happens in the text itself;
- Become more critical thinkers, and be more reflective.

Think-aloud

Think-aloud is when readers identify and talk out loud about the process that is occurring in their head, as they read. Students observe teachers modelling their thinking aloud, and can begin to change their own thinking to help achieve clearer comprehension.

Teachers model thinking out loud about anything related to comprehension when reading. It is a comprehension strategy that actually includes all the other comprehension strategies, as the teacher uses this think aloud to explain the thinking necessary for questioning, predicting, visualising, summarizing, and what they know about text structures and features – all the strategies necessary for become smart, thinking readers.

Text Structures and Features

Students need to be able to identify text structures and features in order to be able to read and understand a text. Comprehension is greater if the student understands how a text is organized and for what purpose.

The text structure is the framework of the text and the text features are the elements of the writing that accompany each text type. This includes:

- The language (tense, vocabulary, participants, signal words for time and order)
- The type of supports - artwork (illustrations, photographs, diagrams, graphs) - aids to organization or language (contents, index, headings, glossary, references).
- Factual text types (recounts and procedures)
- Fictional text types (imaginative recounts, fables and folk tales).

Visualising

Visualising is a powerful thinking tool in comprehension. When used in conjunction with the other Comprehension strategies, visualising is a powerful way to really understand and comprehend the text the student is reading. Think of visualising as running a 'movie' of the text in your head, where you feel like you are actually in the text, the text comes to life. Students are encouraged to get a mental image of the text by using their senses to feel, hear, see, taste and touch in the same way as what the characters are. This helps them to relate to what the characters are feeling, and understand the text at a much deeper level. It is also much more enjoyable to make connections and feel like you are a part of the excitement of what you are reading. When students enjoy reading , they simply read more!

Summarization

Summarizing is reducing a text to its simplest form by understanding it and putting what you have read into your own words. It is a condensed version of another person's text that includes all of the main points of the original text but without all the unnecessary detail.

When summarizing, students must:

- Keep the main points of the text;
- Delete unimportant ideas;
- Maintain the author's point of view;
- Sequence the information in logical order.

Summarizing is one of the hardest comprehension strategies to grasp. Students often like to retell every minute detail, but in summarizing they must only tell the main ideas of a text.

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With information adapted from the 'Teaching Comprehension' CD, Developed by Diane Snowball (Aussie Interactive)