

TEACHER MODELING

STRATEGY: **Think-Alouds**FOCUS: **Explicit Demonstration of Reading as Thinking**

DESCRIPTION:

The teacher reads a passage aloud, stopping periodically to look up at students and vocalize her mental processing of the ideas she's reading. She shows how she makes sense of the material as she poses questions to herself about it, makes connections with other knowledge that she possesses, struggles with parts she doesn't understand, and rereads when she needs to, thus displaying out loud how her mind works as she reads. As she shares these comments, she will jot down words, phrases, or codes (like a question mark or exclamation point) in the margin to label her thinking. The teacher models the process first, and then students try it in pairs.

Why Use It?

We're really good at commanding kids to read—but not nearly as good at *showing* them how to read. A football coach doesn't sit on the bench and talk about how you might block an opposing lineman—he stands up, grabs your body, puts you in the correct position, and shows you how to move. Same for reading. We have to actively coach, demonstrate, and model—with material from our own subject field. And while we cannot literally open up our heads for kids to watch the neurons firing (though some of our students might enjoy the opening process), we can learn to report what is happening in our minds as we think through text.

Skillful reading is a mystery to many students, who are quite unaware of the steady, recursive mental work that happens when competent readers go to work. Because we have never shown them otherwise, they seem to think comprehension is magic, or a gift that you just have or don't have. And so they grope or pray for answers to the questions at the end of the chapter or on a pop quiz. Others mechanically read words, hoping meaning will somehow arrive. Think-alouds help students to really see how active their thinking needs to be for real understanding to develop.

Think-alouds are the most basic of all reading lessons. They are not something you just do once or twice. Recurrent lessons demonstrate to kids the whole range of mental strategies, showing very concretely how to bring the material to life, manifesting all the thinking strategies described in Chapter 2, and illustrating the kinds of thinking involved in your subject. After you demonstrate a think-aloud, students can practice orally by themselves, in whole-class discussion, or in small

groups or pairs. This will help students to begin to internalize thinking processes that may at first seem awkward or artificial, and move them toward becoming a natural part of the students' reading.

How Does It Work?

1 Plan your think-aloud carefully. Select a short passage that covers material important to the topic students are studying. Try reading it and monitoring yourself to see what sorts of thinking you actually do as you read. This can be tricky, because as competent readers in our subjects, our reading processes become automatic, and we do most of our comprehending unconsciously—unless we are struggling with the meaning ourselves (as we illustrated in Chapter 2).

Decide on several points where you will stop to share your thinking aloud. While it is more authentic to select talking points where you actually noticed yourself doing some active thinking, you may also wish to spread the stops throughout the text. Sometimes you may want to illustrate just one thinking strategy at a time, so students get a good idea of how that one works and can focus on practicing it. For instance, you might prepare a think-aloud where you just make connections between the text and your own background knowledge. But even though we value having kids practice individual strategies (questioning, visualizing, determining importance) for brief periods, we always return them to orchestrating *all* of their mental strategies in normal reading. Whatever your stopping point choices, keep in mind: a little thinking aloud goes a long way—three to five stops over three minutes of reading is usually plenty.

2 Before you begin, let students know you'll be stopping to think as you read, and indicate what they should be looking for in your demonstration—"Watch how I put together various pieces of information in the passage to figure out what's really going on. We call this *inferring*." Your goal is to show students your thinking so that later, once they've seen the entire demonstration, they can notice patterns in how you read.

3 Provide students with copies of the short reading you are going to use, or display it with a document camera so they can follow along. You may want to invite kids to skim it first so they can experience their own comprehension before the "pro" steps up. When you begin, stop at your first chosen point and share your preselected prediction, connection, question, or confusion, as appropriate.

4 When you stop to think aloud, look up at the class and shift your voice to indicate that you've moved from reading the words to sharing your own thinking. Jot brief notes in the margin to emphasize what sort of thinking you were doing—like a word, a phrase, or a quick doodle for something you visualized.

5 After modeling, talk over the process with students. What did they notice about your thinking? When do they find themselves doing the same sort of thinking or wondering? (See the “Turn and Talk” strategy on pages 134–137 on how to help get such a discussion going). Then have students try a think-aloud themselves, in pairs, using copies of another short passage or, for continuity, the following sections of the document you are already reading from. If students have difficulty knowing where to stop, point out a key spot or two where they can pause, and ask them if they have questions, are reminded of something in their own lives, etc.

VARIATION: One challenge for subject-area teachers can be the level of detail to be provided in the think-aloud. Science teacher Karen Eder, at Downers Grove High School in Chicago’s west suburbs, tried a think-aloud for solving a science problem with reading coach Amy Stoops observing. Karen had figured there were four main steps for thinking through the problem. Amy listened from a student’s point of view because she herself was not acquainted with the material. As a result, she realized there was actually much more to the process than Karen’s four steps. This enabled Karen to elaborate a more accurate explanation for how her mind worked, helping the students to better understand and learn the process. So one strategy for developing a good think-aloud is to try out your first draft on a colleague who is not in your field, to see if you’ve explained your thinking sufficiently.

Science

VARIATION: When your kids sit down to take that big state or national test, they will be required to closely read and deeply understand passages, problems, charts, data, and articles that *they have never seen before*. By definition, right? This means if you want to prepare your kids for those tests, they also need to see you thinking aloud through text you have never read before. No rehearsal, no practice, just you and your repertoire of proficient-reader strategies. Have your kids bring you some fresh subject-matter text, project it, and read it cold. Now that’s *teaching*.

Addressing the Common Core Standards

Every strategy in this chapter helps you to deliver on the promise of the Common Core State Standards for Historical, Scientific, and Technical Literacy. As we outlined in Chapter 1, the Common Core provides us with detailed standards for our different subjects, for each grade band of students, and for the state and national tests that assess our kids’ success in meeting these targets. To show how our twenty-six lessons can help your students achieve these standards, let’s take think-alouds, which we’ve just outlined, and look at how you can “backmap” this strategy to the Common Core Standards. We’ll take some commonly taught texts and show the correlations.

History/Social Studies in Middle School: Benjamin Franklin's speech to the federal convention in 1787, in which he (successfully!) urges the delegates to adopt the Constitution "with all its faults" for a variety of reasons beyond the content of the Constitution itself, is a rich primary source for a read-aloud, with opportunities for citing textual evidence (Standard 1) and identifying aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view (Standard 6). If you can connect this piece to other texts that students have read about the Constitution or its creation (and, frankly, Ben's opinions in this piece make it hard not to), you're analyzing relationships between primary and secondary sources (Standard 9). Finally, you're giving students exposure to the kinds of texts that the CCSS expect them to read (Standard 10).

Science and Technical Subjects in High School: News from current research could be a source of excitement in the classroom, but the tone of academic writing makes it difficult for students to see the fresh and provocative ideas in these texts. For instance, a recent research study investigates the possible link between larger and more damaging wildfires in the American West and drier, more unstable air being observed in the lower atmosphere. If you do a think-aloud with the study's abstract, you can cite evidence to support your analysis of the text and to explore any gaps or inconsistencies (Standard 1); determine and paraphrase the conclusions of the work (Standard 2); determine the meaning of domain-specific words (Standard 4); and help students to feel at home with real-world text in your discipline (Standard 10). The short version you read may even provide hints that will help you to analyze the authors' purpose (Standard 6) or give you an opportunity to synthesize ideas (Standard 9).

TO LEARN MORE

Daniels, Harvey et al. 2011. *Comprehension Going Forward: Where We Are, What's Next*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Harvey, Stephanie, and Anne Goudvis. 2007. *Strategies That Work: Teaching Comprehension for Understanding and Engagement* (2nd ed.). York, ME: Stenhouse.

Keene, Ellin Oliver, and Susan Zimmerman. 2007. *Mosaic of Thought* (2nd ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Routman, Regie. 2003. *Reading Essentials*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

BEFORE READING

STRATEGY: **Reading Aloud**FOCUS: **Building Enjoyment of Reading**WHEN TO USE: **Before Reading** During Reading After Reading

DESCRIPTION:

The teacher reads aloud short articles, brief passages of interesting material, or successive installments of a story, biography, or high-interest book in her subject area. Individual students, pairs, or small groups may also read passages aloud.

Why Use It?

We all know that the Common Core Standards require students to be engaged in complex and challenging nonfiction text. The Core also recommends that this close, deep reading be done with *excerpts of tough text that the teacher reads aloud* (CCSS, 2010). Indeed, lessons sponsored by standards author David Coleman (Achieve the Core, 2013) depend extensively on read-alouds by the teacher “or other competent reader” as a key activity.

But our aim in reading aloud material from our subject matter is not just to meet a standard, or even to test students’ reading or listening ability, but to let the whole class experience powerful language about important ideas. Reading aloud evokes the time-honored human experience of listening to stories, telling family and cultural histories, trading “war stories,” hearing lessons from elders—around a fire, at the dinner table, in family gatherings, at business conferences, wherever people meet in groups. People of all ages enjoy hearing stories, ideas, and beliefs told aloud. It helps students grasp the big ideas, fascinations, and questions that make our subjects meaningful to us as thoughtful adults. Good teachers have learned that reading strong writing aloud (and performing it well) draws in students who would otherwise resist engaging in school topics. And when it is students’ turn to serve as “competent” read-alouders, their experience with performing text can also build their fluency and comprehension.

How Does It Work?

1 Choose the text—and we are not talking about the textbook. To achieve all the goals above, the reading selection must explore important issues, surprising facts or experiences, or fascinating, funny, or thought-provoking problems. It must be very well written, in clear, vivid language. Every content field has examples of brilliant and beautiful language that's worth savoring in the ear as well as on the page. We think of Richard Feynman on physics, Edward O. Wilson on sociobiology, Nathaniel Philbrick on U.S. history, or David Sedaris on humorous human frailty. And whether the teacher or the students do the performing, these specially valuable texts must be read with expression and understanding. As we peruse the possibilities, we can go for pretty challenging stuff because kids will be able to understand harder text when we read it aloud than they can when reading silently and alone.

2 Rehearse! Primary-grade teachers actually value, practice, and receive training on reading aloud—and they do it with fiction and nonfiction picture books every day. They know how powerful a teacher's voice can be in helping kids fall in love with reading and ideas. In secondary education, we have little tradition or training around this, so we have to build this muscle ourselves. But what a joy to get better at this particular skill, especially since most of us are would-be entertainers anyway. And the training is just one step. When we take the stage to hook our kids on a text, to engage them in deep thinking about it, we must bring our "A" game, reading with energy, drama, and vocal variety. And that means we have to practice beforehand. Our rule of thumb: read the piece aloud five times to develop the best version before you go public with kids.

3 After you have modeled read-alouds for kids a few times, invite students to do some reading aloud of their own. Provide time for individuals or small groups to practice. Groups can use "readers' theater," in which they divide up a piece of text, doing some sentences individually, some as pairs, and some as a choral group. They can practice on video to hear themselves, try out variations, and improve with practice. (This works for us, too).

TO LEARN MORE

Trelease, Jim. 2013. *The Read-Aloud Handbook* (7th ed.). New York: Penguin.

BEFORE READING

STRATEGY: **Frontloading with Images**

FOCUS: **Visualizing Meaning**

WHEN TO USE: **Before Reading** During Reading After Reading

DESCRIPTION:

Before students embark on a reading passage (or a unit of study), the teacher projects a series of images—photographs or artworks—that help students understand the setting, context, process, problem, or people involved in the upcoming reading. To make sure that students study an image carefully, the teacher may mask and then reveal different sections one at a time, asking learners to take notes on each segment before they see the whole.

Why Use It?

We know that today's kids live in a world of vibrant, powerful images, supplied to them by a variety of devices. Sometimes we teachers even worry about those images, especially when they illustrate some homicidal video game. But we are also in competition with those images, and if kids are in some sense our customers, it's smart for us to augment the curriculum with vital, dramatic graphics. We also know that whenever we assign almost any printed whole-class text, it immediately divides the class: too hard for some, too easy for others, and "boring" for the rest. Instead, when we introduce a series of images or photos, everyone can play. The language learners, the kids with IEPs—everyone can view and study and talk about and draw inferences from and speculate about images projected on a screen. Then, once we have built background knowledge and evoked curiosity, we can make a better transition to printed material.

It's a funny thing. Everyone, even grumpy old culture critics, tends to be captivated by images. One of the great dynamics you see with this lesson is that everyone will be manifestly paying attention—you can look at your students and see every eye in the room locked onto the same focal point. When the kids are pointing at the screen and talking animatedly to a partner, you know you've got engagement.

Oh, and the anchor standards of the Common Core say that our students should be able to "integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words" (Common Core, 2010, 10). So we are not just having fun here (perish the thought!)—we are *required* to teach kids how to read visual images.

How Does It Work?

1 Based on an upcoming chunk of reading, or even a whole unit, search out a set of related images you can project to build kids' background knowledge and introduce the subject. Among many others, we've seen teachers use:

- * pictures of a variety of rooftops to illustrate the mathematical concept of "slope"
- * news photos of the integration of Little Rock Central High School, 1955
- * paintings depicting westward expansion and the idea of Manifest Destiny
- * photos of the tools of slavery, whips, shackles, chains, auction posters
- * Edward Curtis photographs of Native American tribes in the 1910s
- * the moons of different planets, objects in space, the Martian surface
- * illustrations and diagrams of the Globe Theater
- * pictures of assorted invasive species—animals, plants, bacteria
- * plans of buildings illustrating different architectural principles
- * photos and life documents of mathematicians, scientists, historians, writers
- * fifteenth-century and modern paintings that illustrate the "vanishing point"

Having used image sets for many years, we now believe that there is almost no school topic that doesn't have some kind of visual representation that can help hook kids.

Where do you find these images? Obviously the go-to place for photos is Google Images, which provides a vast selection. For artworks (think *Washington Crossing the Delaware*) you can go to a variety of museum websites, among which the Art Institute of Chicago excels. The National Endowment for the Humanities and Smithsonian websites have lots of school-friendly historical and cultural imagery as well. Smokey and Nancy Steineke developed this idea extensively in *Texts and Lessons for Content-Area Reading* (2011) and offer many suggestions for sources there.

Assemble a set of six to twelve slides that give kids the background you want them to have. In choosing from an abundance, lean toward the most dramatic, puzzling, or surprising choices available. Also look for one especially emblematic, visually complex "anchor" image for closer study. Then put these into a PowerPoint or Keynote slide show so you can project them big enough for all to watch. No captions, just the images. Are you worried about copyright issues? Here's the deal. Many of the images you'll find are not copyrighted and are fine to use. Others are under copyright (they may have a logo partly obscuring the image) but it is still OK to use them for the classroom, as long as you are not reselling the image or using it to make money. If you are a stickler, leave the credit on the screen so you'll feel better about this.

2 Now, you do not present these images like an illustrated lecture, where you do the narration. In this lesson, you'll have the kids do the reading and thinking; you won't be narrating or lecturing. Gather students together and proceed something like this:

"Later today, we are going to start reading about a new topic. But before we jump into that text, I want to show you some images that will help you understand it better. While I show you these slides, one at a time, I will pause for you to think and talk about them. Instead of talking to a partner you're going to just talk back at the screen, out loud, about what you are seeing. You'll get used to it. OK? Somebody get the lights."

Now go through the pictures one by one. If your kids haven't done this before, you have to coach them to really talk out loud, to the screen and to each other, about what they are seeing, what they think is happening, what it means, how the slides fit together. If you like, you can have kids jot down a word or phrase after they've viewed and talked about each picture, but don't make it a mechanical note-taking drill.

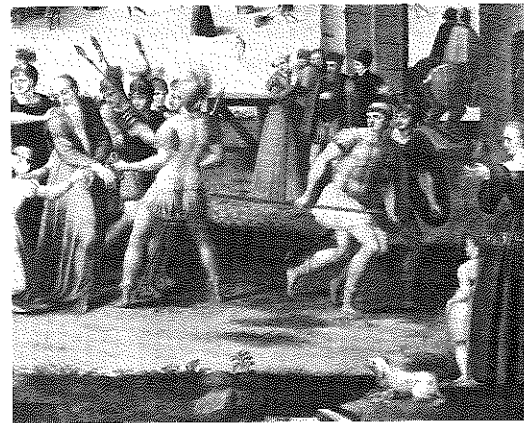
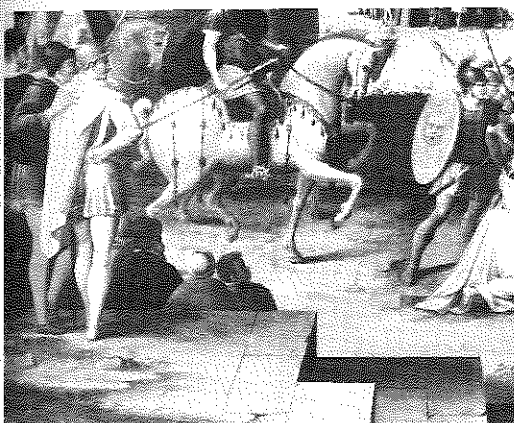
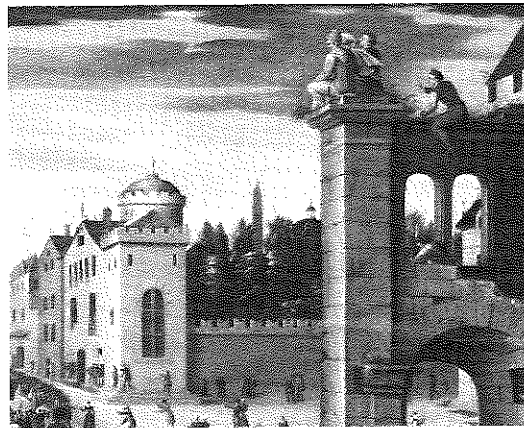
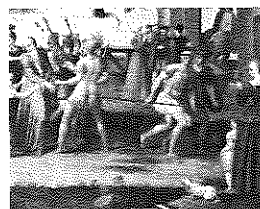
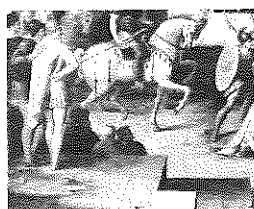
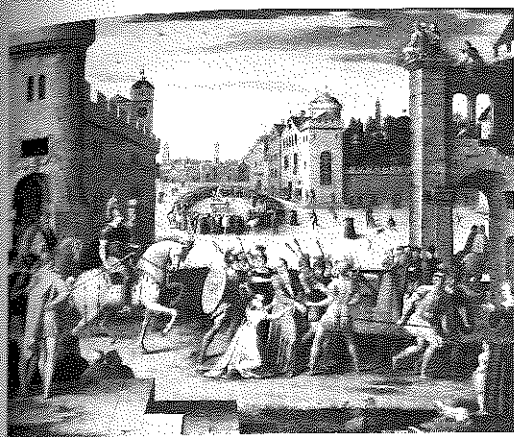
3 Just doing these activities is often plenty to prime kids for the upcoming reading. But to add depth, have kids do "close reading" of that special "anchor image" you chose. There's a little preparation here: using the cropping tool, you need to divide this image into sections—thirds or quadrants work well. When you introduce this slide to the kids, first show the whole image and let them talk as with the others. Now it's time to "reread." Start showing students the image one section at a time. Instruct them to look deeply into the image and write down every detail they notice, every thought they have, every question it raises. Give one full minute per section for viewing and note taking, challenging them to keep noticing and jotting down more thoughts until time is up. After they have seen and written about each section, then reveal the whole image again—often it will seem to jump into 3-D when you have studied the individual sections first.

Finally, invite a class discussion about what the whole set of pictures showed, what the larger theme seems to be, and how particular details contributed to this understanding. Then ask students to predict what the upcoming reading will be about. Keep a list or chart of those predictions so you can come back to it after the print reading begins.

TO LEARN MORE

Daniels, Harvey, and Nancy Steineke. 2011. *Texts and Lessons for Content-Area Reading*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

The National Gallery. 2013. "How to Read a Painting." London. <http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/learning/teachers-and-schools/teaching-english-and-drama/how-to-read-a-painting>.



"Arrest and execution of Thomas More depicted in painting by Antoine Caron." Credit: Photo.com/Jupiterimages/Getty Images/HIP

STRATEGY: **KWL**

FOCI: **Setting Purposes for Reading**
Connecting to and Building Background Knowledge

WHEN TO USE: **Before Reading During Reading After Reading**

DESCRIPTION:

The teacher leads students to list first what they think they already **Know** about a topic, then what they **Want** to know, and later, after reading, what they've **Learned**. One can ask students to create their own lists and then share items with the whole class, or simply start with a whole-class list. Thus the activity begins before the students read, but extends into the process of reading itself, and then on to reflecting on learning after the reading is completed. Some teachers substitute a **Q** for the **W**, focusing on **Questions** students can generate rather than opening up the floor to what students may or may not say they *want* to know.

Why Use It?

This classic strategy, developed by our colleague Donna Ogle, is helpful for students of all ages and achievement levels.

First, the **K** step asks students to access their prior knowledge about a topic. Again, why is "prior knowledge" so crucial? Because even when it is partial or less than accurate, it's the material a reader uses to begin building an understanding of the words he or she is taking in. Students often feel lost and confused when they encounter a concept they've never considered before; but when they can connect it with something familiar, they have an easier time making sense of the new information. As reading researchers explain it, you can only build new knowledge on top of the schema or background knowledge that you already have. This kind of connection is an essential component of comprehension, including at those times when the new information contradicts something the student previously believed.

The **W** stage, generating questions about the topic, develops purposes for reading. Building curiosity is essential to creating self-activated learners. It enables the student to anticipate the information and ideas that lie ahead, and to realize those that will be especially important. Leading students through this stage also enables the teacher to see what students know, what their misconceptions may be, and how they are beginning to think about the topic. Teachers at Downers Grove South High School regularly have students generate questions before they read. They've found that

when students are searching for answers to their own questions, they are much more attentive to the reading compared to assignments in which the students seek answers to questions supplied by a teacher or a textbook. As we'll explain, the teacher may need to employ several strategies to help get the questioning process going, particularly if students are not accustomed to participating in it.

Then, after completing a unit, chapter, or inquiry project, looking at **L**—what we've learned—enables students to appreciate and reflect on their learning. The whole class returns to examine the original **K** and **W** lists, and kids enjoy the ceremony of checking off items accomplished, questions answered, even misconceptions corrected. This public review process helps to solidify the knowledge in kids' minds, rather than just getting "work" done and forgetting about it. Students can consider how and whether they've achieved the goals they set, what helped them learn, or what obstacles they encountered and overcame.

How Does It Work?

1 For **K**, students' knowledge may be sketchy or even incorrect. What do I know about the French Revolution? Photosynthesis? Nuthin'! Kids may need encouragement at first, to locate in their minds whatever bits of information or associations may be tucked away there. Like brainstorming, no answer is "wrong" at this point. This step is simply a picture of where students' heads are at the start of a unit. So this is not the occasion for giving a lecturette to correct all misconceptions. If you hear a glaring one, you might just flag it briefly—"That's an interesting idea. When we're reading, let's watch to see what the text tells us about it." As students brainstorm what they already know, list the items on chart paper or screen so kids can look back as the unit progresses.

2 While the **K** step usually goes smoothly, students often need help getting started on the **W** questions—perhaps hesitating to show their lack of knowledge, or because they're so rarely asked what they want to learn. Or maybe, when we ask kids, "What do you want to know about the French Revolution?" the underlying answer is "Nothing, thank you!" One way to steer around this pro forma resistance is to simply rename the center column **E** for "What do you **Expect** we will learn about the French Revolution?" And develop questions (probably quite similar) that way.

A more artful approach is to use items in the **K** column to tease out the questions—"I notice that you said Iraq was a desert. So what do you wonder about how people live in such a place?" Middle school teacher Annie Combs, in New Miami, Ohio, often projects pictures to help get questioning started. Or she'll show the title of a book they're to read and asks students what it makes them wonder. She doesn't hesitate to ask a few questions herself, which she finds helps students to question further as well.

3 After completing the **K** and **W** columns, students can group and label the items in categories they decide on, to begin building connections among the various ideas that will come up in the reading. This step is very similar to the List-Group-Label vocabulary strategy described on page 153. Take time to reflect back repeatedly—KWL is not just an exercise to rush through at the start, but a tool to support thinking as you go.

4 When completing the **L** list at the end of the project, be sure to compare it to the **K** and **W** columns. Downers Grove High School teachers find that their students are often surprised and pleased that the textbook or article they're reading actually did provide answers to their questions. Students should not only become more aware of what they've learned and what misconceptions got clarified, but they can also see how, as is often the case in learning, some questions didn't get answered, while unexpected ideas turned up as well.

Science

VARIATION: Filling out the **K** and **W** columns of KWL doesn't need to take place only at the start of a topic. When Annie Combs introduced her sixth graders to a science unit on erosion, she found that the students had no idea what the concept meant. Fortunately, a creek runs close by the school, and the students were used to hanging out and fishing there. Tree roots are visible at the edges, where the water has washed the soil away, so to get a KWL started, Annie took pictures of this—and of course the kids realized that they were actually familiar with the phenomenon and could begin to list things they knew about it. For the **W** step, knowing that this was still a new academic concept for the students, Annie got them thinking by introducing an article about preventing erosion. Once they read it, the students quickly realized they had questions about how to do this, how long it takes to erode a specific area, how much damage a single storm can do, and so on. For students' further reading, Annie used sections of the book *Sciencesaurus* (Martin and Needham 2009) plus news articles she'd gathered to better connect the students' learning to real-life situations. Annie repeatedly focused their reading by asking, "Is there anything in this article that helps answer one of our **W** questions?" And of course the articles led to further **W**'s as well.

TO LEARN MORE

Ogle, Donna. 1986. "The K-W-L: A Teaching Model That Develops Active Reading of Expository Text." *Reading Teacher* 39: 564–570. (This was the original introduction of this strategy to the education world.)

The KWL strategy has become so popular and so widely recognized, it now has its own substantial and fairly accurate Wikipedia entry: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/KWL_table (accessed 7/25/2013).

STRATEGY: **Prereading Quiz (PRQ)**

FOCUS: **Connecting to and Building Background Knowledge**

WHEN TO USE: **Before Reading** During Reading After Reading

DESCRIPTION:

Do you love those little quizzes that often lead off articles in popular newspapers and magazines? Ones like, "Test your Marital IQ" or "Guess the Ten Most Popular Baby Names for Last Year!" In the reading world, these little curiosity provokers are called *anticipation guides*, brief sets of questions (three to five items) that help kids activate their prior knowledge (including misconceptions), make predictions, engage important issues that will surface in the reading, and enter a text thinking. You create a quick, engaging, even mock-competitive quiz or survey for students to take before reading. The items focus on big ideas, concepts, surprising or puzzling information, or controversial issues. Kids simply circle or jot down their answers, and may talk them over with classmates before reading.

Why Use It?

Inviting students to think about key concepts *before they read about them* establishes a tangible purpose for reading: namely, to raise important questions or compare what students know or believe with what actually turns up in the text. And a PRQ does this by involving the students in the ideas, rather than having the teacher simply state, "Here's why this reading is important"—which may or may not get heard in any serious way by the students. Too often, when we have asked students, "Why is your teacher having you read this?" the answer comes back, "I don't know. She just told us to do it." In fact, the teacher may well have explained the purpose, but it didn't necessarily stick in the students' minds.

This broader process is sometimes called *frontloading* (Wilhelm 2001), a great term for investing class time in activities that launch kids into the text with their brains switched on. Reading becomes a support for, or a challenge to, the positions students have taken. The questions guide students to focus on big ideas in the reading. Instead of simply an assignment, reading becomes part of an ongoing conversation students have joined—perhaps without their realizing it. Of course, some topics, like "kinetic molecular theory," will call just for simple prediction about the content. Others, like "the discovery of radioactivity," more readily invite controversy and consideration of important beliefs. But even simpler prediction questions still help students think as they read.

Anticipation guides are easy to prepare and take little class time—they are a great way to dip your toe into prereading activities. A five-item guide might take no more than five minutes—two minutes for students to respond, two to compare answers in pairs, and another minute to hear what one volunteer per question says about his or her answer.

How Does It Work?

1 Create a few (three to five) short questions or statements related to the text, using true/false, yes/no, or agree/disagree formats. Effective questions pose big, open-ended issues or draw kids' attention to curious or startling information. When studying earth's biosphere in science, you might offer a statement like:

"Human pollution of the atmosphere is always wrong." Yes or no?

If your students will be reading Orwell's *Animal Farm* you might ask:

"Is it OK to have just a few people in charge of a government or organization?"
Strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree

For an upcoming Civil War unit:

Suppose you were in Lincoln's cabinet deciding whether to issue the Emancipation Proclamation, and a poll showed he would lose the next election if he signed it. Would you vote to: (a) sign it anyway; (b) not sign it; (c) wait a few months and decide later?"

In a world history class you might survey:

What percentage of the world's children between 5 and 17 do you think are in forced labor?

- A. 1 in 1,000
- B. 1 in 100
- C. 1 in 20
- D. 1 in 12
- E. 1 in 6

What percentage of those children are girls?

- A. 3%
- B. 10%
- C. 34%
- D. 50%
- E. 68%
- F. 90%

These prereading questions are a good example of the kind you are looking for. The correct answers (E and D) often startle kids—and galvanize them to read about this topic (UNICEF, 2012).

2 Kids can go right into the selection after doing the prereading quiz. This is meant to be a brief get-ready activity—it's not about correct answers. What we are trying to do is activate prior knowledge, beliefs, and ideas, and send students into the text with an agenda, looking for answers to questions that provoked them.

3 If you can take a little more time, it really helps to deepen students' thinking and engagement by having them discuss their answers with a partner or small group. Then you can call the class back and discuss the quiz, share consensus predictions, or surface a core disagreement, just before reading. If kids are slow to talk, have them jot their justifications first. Students tell us that discussion and opportunities to express their own opinions and ideas are some of their most valued and meaningful activities in school. Some teachers design their PRQs to feature surprising information. For example: Q: How many earthlike planets have astronomers discovered revolving around other stars? A: Billions. This not only tantalizes kids for the reading, but also allows for friendly competition as kids pit their guesses against each other's as the correct answers are revealed.

TO LEARN MORE

IRA/NCTE. 2013. "Anticipation Guide." ReadWriteThink.
www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/printouts/anticipation-guide-30578.html.

Wood, K. D., D. Lapp, J. Flood, and D. B. Taylor. 2008. *Guiding Readers Through Text: Strategy Guides for New Times* (2nd ed.). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

STRATEGY: **Dramatic Role-Play**

FOCUS: **Visualizing Meaning**

WHEN TO USE: **Before Reading** During Reading **After Reading**

DESCRIPTION:

Choose a situation, process, or event that will be described in the reading students are about to do, and prepare a very brief description of it. Students work in pairs or small groups (depending on the number of characters or roles involved) and rehearse role-plays to represent the passage or element to be explored. One or more groups present their role-plays for the class.

Why Use It?

In his research comparing competent and struggling eighth-grade readers, Jeff Wilhelm found that successful students consistently visualize what they are reading about, while struggling ones do not. As he searched for ways to help students visualize, he found that just telling them to do so was generally ineffective, while short, simple role-plays were quite powerful, sometimes when nothing else would work. While many teachers use drama as a means for re-expressing ideas *after* reading, role-plays that are carried out *before* reading are especially effective because they help kids build pictures of the action in their heads, to be accessed as they get into the content.

How Does It Work?

1 When designing a role-play, keep the scene simple, focused on a single problem or challenge. Leave it open for the students to improvise. For example, before reading the illustrated book *Pink and Say* by Patricia Polacco, a true account of an African American and a white soldier in the Civil War, Steve had the students count off by twos. He instructed, "Ones, each of you is a Union soldier who has been wounded. You're lying on the ground, barely conscious. The battle is over, but you can't walk. Twos, each of you is a Union soldier who has gotten lost from his company. You're frightened, and occasional bullets whiz by. You discover the wounded man lying on the ground. What do you say to each other?" For science or math, the roles can represent inanimate objects, such as chemicals, viruses, electrons and nuclei, or numbers and variables. The teacher may specify a single situation or process for all the groups to portray, or students may be invited to choose some part of

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the passage to represent—in which case the role-plays will explore various aspects of the reading. Be sure the students keep their performances short. The activity is not an end in itself but simply an opportunity to get students thinking about the material they are going to read.

2 After the groups have planned and very briefly rehearsed their role-plays, some of them can present to the whole class, particularly if they have developed differing takes on the same situation. Include as many of the groups as time permits. However, as long as everyone has experienced the scene in their small groups, the main purpose of the activity—helping students create mental visualizations of the elements in the reading—will be achieved.

3 If you do have students present their role-plays it's especially worthwhile to debrief the role-plays with the class as they are performed, to help students think about the concepts and ideas that are being portrayed. As each group performs, one or more students in the group can also lead the discussion about it. This helps to strengthen the students' sense of ownership in the activity.

VARIATION: If you use role-plays *after* students have read a selection, your purpose will be somewhat different—more about reflecting on the reading, or considering alternatives. For the *Pink and Say* Civil War example we described, you could invite small groups to consider alternative ways the two characters might have interacted and why these could happen. It would be important, in this case, for the class to then discuss the motives and the historical background that they think are being reflected in the various choices—so the activity is for thinking more deeply about the history being studied.

TO LEARN MORE

Steineke, Nancy. 2009. *Assessment Live: 10 Real-Time Ways for Kids to Show What They Know—and Meet the Standards*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Wilhelm, Jeffrey. 1996. *You Gotta BE the Book*. New York: Teachers College Press.

STRATEGY: **Vocabulary Predictions**

FOCUS: **Building Academic Vocabulary**

WHEN TO USE: **Before Reading** During Reading After Reading

DESCRIPTION:

The teacher selects a set of eight to fifteen key words from the piece to be read. Working in small groups, students try their best to place the terms in a set of categories the teacher has established. Each group then creates a "gist statement," which they predict will summarize the reading. Finally, they list things they hope to discover as a result of words they didn't understand or questions that were inspired by the process.

Why Use It?

This activity takes some time, but addresses a number of important mental strategies for good reading. It leads students to use their prior knowledge, focuses on important academic vocabulary, and uses prediction to build active thinking about a topic before reading. Predicting helps readers become aware of their expectations and how the reading either fulfills or surprises them—an important aspect of learning. The activity gets students talking in small groups in a carefully organized way. It helps them become conscious of the structure of a story, argument, or explanation. Talking over the words in their groups helps students not only to notice these key words as they read but to go into the reading with their minds focused on the ideas expressed through them. Finally, the "to discover" step sets purposes for students' reading. Students can be observing, as they read, to see which of their own questions get answered in the text. As we discuss later, in Chapter 11, even struggling readers become more engaged when they are thinking about their own questions rather than those supplied by a teacher or a question section at the end of a textbook chapter.

How Does It Work?

- 1 Choose eight to fifteen key words from the upcoming passage, words that invoke main elements or ideas in the reading. To give kids a fair chance at speculating, the mix should include some words kids already know; some technical (Tier 3) words (please see p. 179 for a definition of these three-tier models) that will be a stretch (kids can use knowledge of word roots, affixes, or suffixes

to make informed guesses); and some important Tier 2 academic terms that will not only help kids understand this particular text, but also serve them in the future, across the curriculum.

Similarly, the categories for labeling these words depend on the subject and kind of material to be studied. Typical categories for a fictional story or a biographical piece might be Characters, Setting, Problem, Outcomes, Unknown Words. For a nonfiction news article on the spread of flu strains, for example, the word list might include: *virus, mutation, interspecies transmission, respiratory, epidemic, genetic shift, travelers, virulence, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, quarantine, death rate, co-evolution*. (See the great Tier 2 words in there?) Some categories for sorting these words might be Problem, Setting, Causes, People, Solutions, Unknown Words. At first you may want to provide the categories for sorting the words, but as students get accustomed to the activity, you can also ask the groups to determine their own categories (which makes this activity more like the List-Group-Label strategy (see pages 153–154).

- 2 Model the strategy first with a group of words on a topic in your subject, thinking aloud so the students will understand what is involved. Along with the groups of words that you arrange (on a whiteboard or projected slide), be sure to also list a few questions the words have engendered, which you hope to get answered in the reading selection.
- 3 Provide a few key directions: The “unknown words” category is only for terms the group does not have any inkling about. Tell students whether you want them to use all the words in their gist statement, or only a certain proportion. Explain that if their gist statement doesn’t completely match the reading, there’s nothing wrong—but it does show that their expectations and the reading differed, and that’s important to realize. The differences can help students realize that they’ve learned something new, or that the information or story was more complex or surprising than it first appeared to be. And remind students to list the “to discover” questions that the words led them to ask—not just about the word’s meaning but anything else that could go with it. Students might wonder not just what the Federalist Papers were, for example, but also why they were important or how they influenced the people who read them at the time they were written.
- 4 Group representatives briefly share with the class how they grouped their words and especially what their “to discover” questions are.
- 5 When the reading is completed, groups revisit the “to discover” lists to see which questions got answered and which did not. They can report these to the class, which can discuss when and how their unanswered questions might get clarified later in the unit or by some future online research.

VARIATION: If your students will be reading a narrative text like a short story, biography, or historical novel, you can do a very similar predicting activity by selecting a set of eight to fifteen *sentences* instead of single words (of course, you will pick sentences with great Tier 2 words in them as well as technical vocabulary). Each student gets one sentence on a piece of paper, and then students walk around the room, reading their different sentences to each other and predicting what the text will be about. When they go on to read the complete passage, students will implicitly be comparing the actual text to their hypotheses. Kids seem to find it fun when the sentences they worked with earlier suddenly pop up in the text. We call this activity a Quotation Mingle and Harvey and Nancy Steineke have written about it in another of our family of books (Daniels and Steineke, 2013).

TO LEARN MORE

Daniels, Harvey, and Nancy Steineke. 2013. *Texts and Lessons for Teaching Literature*. Portsmouth, NH. Heinemann.

Wood, K. 1984. "Probable Passages: A Writing Strategy." *Reading Teacher* 37: 496–499.

DURING READING

STRATEGY: **Partner Reading**

FOCUS: **Sharing Ideas, Discussing, Debate**

WHEN TO USE: Before Reading **During Reading** After Reading

DESCRIPTION:

Instead of reading silently and alone, pairs of students sit side by side and take turns reading a selection of content-area text aloud to each other. Between paragraphs, the partners stop to discuss and clarify their understanding of each section before changing readers and proceeding. While partners work, the teacher observes, confers, and coaches. After five to ten minutes of this collaborative reading "warm-up," kids can shift into individual silent reading for the rest of the text.

Why Use It?

When we think of our students at work reading, we naturally envision individual students quietly processing text, pencil in hand, in a well-lit place. And obviously, being able to fluently read in this mode, without much outside scaffolding, is our goal in every subject—and an explicit target of the Common Core Standards. But some students—and highly technical content—require more support, especially early in the year. Remember, both the standards and our curriculum call for a long, gradual ladder of experiences, maybe 180 rung-days, leading to end-of-year proficiency. We must start kids where they are today, and keep moving up, using necessary scaffolds like paired reading. What our students can do out loud with a partner today, they can do silently and singly later, as they internalize the thinking strategies of proficient readers.

How Does It Work?

1 Select an important chunk of content-area text and set aside at least five to ten minutes of classroom reading time. We know, finding that time can be hard. We have so much content to cover that we often assign most reading as homework. While this seems to save instructional time, if kids come back the next day with zero understanding, then the shortcut has failed. And further, if kids never read under our close supervision, we cannot monitor their challenges, understand what