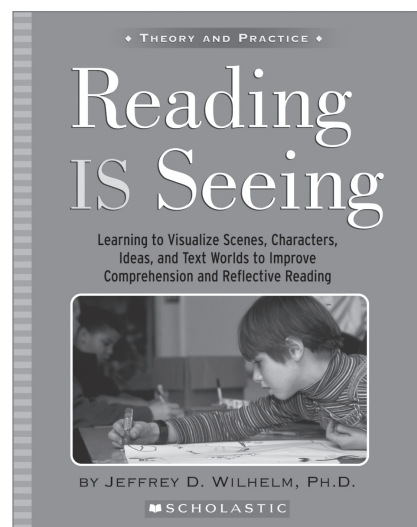


A Study Guide for
Reading Is Seeing

by **JEFFREY D. WILHELM**



This Study Guide can be used as a vehicle for discussion and an exchange of ideas as well as a resource for generating Actions you can take with your students. The Guide is organized into two sections:

1. Thinking About Your Practice, which provides questions to ponder before you start reading *Reading Is Seeing*
2. Guidelines for your Study Groups which include the following:
 - a synopsis of each chapter
 - a quote or excerpt to react to
 - Questions to discuss
 - Take Action, which provides you with activities you can try in your classroom and then discuss in your next Study Group.
 - A Teacher Research/Reflection activity to help you think about your use of the strategies and what you might do next as you plan future instruction that meets your students' current needs as readers and thinkers.

Part 1: Thinking About Your Practice

You may wish to use the following questions for discussion before you begin *Reading Is Seeing*.

- What does the title *Reading Is Seeing* suggest to you?
 - What do you think of when you read the book's subtitle: *Learning to Visualize Scenes, Characters, Ideas, and Text Worlds to Improve Comprehension and Reflective Reading*?
 - To what extent are you aware of your own visualization as you read?
 - In what ways does the type of material you are reading affect the degree of visualization in which you engage?

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- **Teacher Research/Reflection:** The author states that this book tells two stories, one of which is his “journey to become a better teacher.” What are some significant events in your journey to become a better teacher?
 - **React to:** *“To prepare children for a hopeful future, teachers must be able to do more than implement a handful of strategies they have learned in a teacher education program or on the job. They must have an experimental mindset.”* (p. 7)
 - **How do you/might you use visualization strategies in your classroom?**
 - What events in your teaching experience led you to use or to be interested in using visualization strategies with your students?
 - To what extent and for what purposes do you/could you use visualization strategies with fiction material? With nonfiction material?
 - Within the group, take turns briefly describing the strategies that you think have been most beneficial for your students. How do you know these strategies have been successful?
 - Share your observations about ways in which visualization strategies have affected students’ reading performance, their attitudes towards reading, their motivation to read, and their abilities to communicate with peers about what they have read.
 - In your teacher journal, record your goals for participating in this study group.

Part 2: Chapter Overview, Study Guide Questions, and Actions

CHAPTER 1: Reading is Seeing: Why Teaching Students to Visualize is Important

Chapter Overview

The author’s arguments for teaching students to visualize are centered on the idea that “without visualization, students cannot comprehend, and reading cannot be said to be reading.” As you read this chapter, you will have opportunities to reflect on your own experience with visualization, to review visualization strategies and how they benefit students, and to learn about the research bases for these strategies.

React To

Eliot Eisner posits that “those who cannot imagine, cannot read.” Although reading can lead to abstract thought, that thought depends at its base on concrete, highly

visualized experiences of the individual reader. All thinking proceeds from the concrete to the abstract, from the visible to the invisible. (p. 14)

Discuss

- Take turns in the group sharing your images based on either childhood recollections, an important event in your life, or a book that you powerfully experienced, or one that you are currently reading. How do your experiences compare to those the author relates in this chapter?
- What have you observed about your students' use of imagination? What factors do you think affect their ability to imagine?
- Review the author's vignette about Scott (pp. 11–14). How could you use or adapt the approach the author used with students like Scott?
- What evidence do you have that visualization improves your own or your students' engagement, comprehension, or response? Their social interactions?
- What factors do you think may limit teachers' use of visualization strategies with all students? What suggestions do you have for overcoming these limitations?

Take Action

- Talk with your students about what they “see” as they listen to songs, hear a story, read different types of material, and so on. Build the discussion so that students begin to examine the effectiveness of their visualization strategies. If you actually have them complete a visual think-aloud (see *Improving Comprehension with Think-Alouds*) then they will have an experience and data that will help them identify what and how they visualize. Make a list of visual strategies they use, when they use them in life and in reading, what seems to stimulate them to visualize, and so on. (Remember that some students, including reluctant readers, may not visualize.)
- Have your students make individual inventories of visual texts that they use inside and outside of school. Have them compare their inventories with a partner or the group. Talk with them about the ways in which visuals help them understand the materials. Relate this discussion to the previous discussion in which students talked about what they visualize when they read.
- For more information about the importance of imagination in children's learning, you may want to read “What More Needs Saying About Imagination?” by Margaret Meek Spencer, *The Reading Teacher* (2003), 57:1, 105–111.
- Teacher Research/Reflection: During the time between this study group session and the next one, inventory your own use of visualization strategies as you read. Take into account such factors as frequency, type of reading material, nature of visualization (e.g., do you see a scene, a whole story, a mental model—is it like a movie in your mind, a slide show, or just fleeting, felt kinds of images?)

CHAPTER 2: What Does It Mean to Teach? Grounding Our Instruction in Current Research and Theory

Chapter Overview

In this chapter you will read descriptions of three different theoretical to instruction—the curriculum-centered model, the student-centered model, and the learning-centered model—and the research base for each. Learning-centered teaching is the core message in this chapter as well as throughout the book. A template for scaffolding instruction will help you refine your lessons in a way that makes use of the learning-centered theory.

React To

...Whatever we teach has to resonate outside the classroom. And we have to let our students know that it will—that whatever it is they are sweating over is useful knowledge they can transfer to their lives outside of school. The issue of transfer is central to education: if we do not teach students something during a class that they can then use in their next class or in their lives, then we have taught them nothing. (p. 40)

Discuss

- Although each model “works,” depending on what you define as “working,” the author makes a strong case for the learning-centered approach. He argues that repeating information or constructing personal understandings cannot be considered as powerful as achieving cultural and disciplinary understandings that reflect what is known and used in disciplinary communities of practice such as math, science, history, and so on.
- Why do you think information-transmission models dominate American teaching, although current cognitive research does not support them?
- What factors do you think complicate achieving the tenets described for the learning-centered model? What factors in your situation facilitate achieving these tenets?

Take Action

- Reflect on your theory(ies) of learning and what you do to test them. With a colleague, discuss how your theory(ies) has/have evolved over the course of your teaching career.
- Arrange for a colleague to observe a lesson or series of lessons in which you are teaching a visualization strategy. Discuss how your lesson structure compares to the scaffolding template described in this chapter, how it exemplifies or fails to exemplify learning-centered teaching, and the apprenticeship of students into the use of more complex reading or learning strategies.
- Have your students react to the examples the author uses on pages 33, 34, and 35 to help them understand the role of schema in understanding what they read. Extend the discussion to help students understand the relationship between reader, schema, and text. Have students find other examples to share with the class that require the use of background schema.

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- Refer to “Designing a Visualization Tool Activity,” (p. 182). List the criteria in your journal and evaluate your current lessons for teaching visualization strategies. Refer to this chart periodically to review your progress as you participate in this study group. When you have completed discussion of Chapter 7 in *Reading Is Seeing*, you will return to these criteria to assess your understanding of how readers read and respond to texts.
 - Teacher Research/Reflection: What evidence do you/could you use to determine a student’s Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)? Describe strategies that are most useful for obtaining this evidence.
 - What do you think is the most challenging part of devising and using scaffolding to help your students learn a new strategy or concept?
 - Describe someone you consider to be a “consummate teacher” comparable to the individual the author describes at the end of the chapter (pp. 42–43). Which of these attributes would you most like to emulate?

CHAPTER 3: Using Our Lives to See What We Read: Introductory Visualization Techniques

Chapter Overview

This chapter provides a collection of activities that exemplify the scaffolding sequence described in Chapter 2. These activities will enable you to help your students visualize from words and to make connections across larger chunks of text. These techniques are especially helpful to students who may struggle with reading and who may not yet visualize as they read.

React To

...we need to use a wide variety of visual and nonvisual popular-culture texts in the classroom to bridge to the more traditional forms and text, and to expand our notions of literacy and text. (p. 70)

Discuss

- In what ways do required instructional materials foster or limit the development of visualization strategies? What can you do to overcome the limitations? How can you supplement or add to required materials with those that may be more engaging or assistive to students?
- How can you use the suggestions for visualizing from words to differentiate instruction for students in your class?
- Demonstrate a think-aloud featuring visualization and visual strategies based on material that you are currently using with your students.
- What challenges have you encountered in helping students develop their image-building abilities through read-alouds? Which suggestions in Chapter 3 can help you address these challenges?

Take Action

- Talk with students about the techniques for visualizing from words, providing appropriate examples to demonstrate each technique. Have students create self-monitoring charts to help them understand how and when they need to use the different techniques.
- Demonstrate the visualization prompts listed on pages 64–66 and talk through each process with your students. Work with them to make a group checklist of these prompts that they can use as a reminder when they are reading independently.
- Teacher Research/Reflection: Create two charts—one for “visualizing from words” and another for “techniques for visualizing across text.” In the appropriate chart, list the techniques described in Chapter 3, then rate your own use of these techniques as you read. Then consider how often you promote or assist students in using these techniques according to frequency and types of materials over a period of one month. What do these inventories reveal about your practices using visualization strategies?
- Arrange for a colleague to observe as you teach students selected techniques for visualizing across text. Share your reactions to preparing, conducting, and observing the lesson with colleagues in a future study group session.
- With your grade level or subject area team, evaluate the visual aids in selected content textbooks to determine where you will need to augment the material with intensive use of visualization strategies.

CHAPTER 4: From the Known to the New: Building Background Before and During Reading

Chapter Overview

The strategies described in this chapter enable teachers to “harness the power of the familiar” in order to help students develop as independent readers and thinkers. You will read several classroom vignettes that convey the impact of visualization strategies on students’ ability to link prior knowledge and experience to their reading. The vignettes and strategy descriptions provide a repertoire of techniques that will serve you well in working with students at all levels of reading performance.

React To

True inquiry (and all reading should be inquiry) is where personal relevance, textual offerings, and real-world issues and needs come together. Any activity that requires students to bring their three kinds of knowledge together supports authentic learning. (p. 88)

Discuss

- Refer to the anecdote that opens this chapter (p. 72). Share with students experiences of your own that are similar to the one described. How did you adjust your teaching as a result of these experiences?
- Which of the techniques described in this chapter do you/could you use with your students? In what ways do you/could you vary the techniques for fiction material? nonfiction material? English language learners? struggling readers? proficient readers?
- To what extent are you able to have students participate in firsthand experiences? What can you do to overcome the obstacles to the use of firsthand experiences?

Take Action

- Refer to the state content standards for reading and language arts. Align the strategies in this chapter with the appropriate standards. Note these relationships in your lesson plans.
- Identify features of nonfiction texts that support the concept of linking the known to the new. Examine these features with your students and guide them in using the text structures to enhance their comprehension.
- Create an area in the classroom where objects, artifacts, photographs, advertisements, and so on can be collected. Have students contribute to the collection. Use the items to help students practice visualization strategies.
- Teacher Research/Reflection: In your Teacher Research Journal, compose a response process analysis (RPA) of your use of a visualization strategy in your own classroom (all the better if this was a strategy to “frontload” students for a new reading or learning challenge). Describe what you did, what happened, and what possibilities you see for the next time you will use this or a similar technique.
- Discuss “frontloading” techniques that have been successful in your own learning and teaching—outside as well as inside of school (e.g., giving your child a tricycle before a bike, a bike with training wheels before one without training wheels so she or he could learn how to get off and on, pedal, brake, and so on.) Then brainstorm any introductory activities that did not work so well for you as a learner or teacher. What was true across successful cases? Cases that caused difficulty? What can we learn from these cases about our own learning and teaching?
- In your journal, reflect on what the following statement by John Dewey suggests about professional development activities: “To perceive, a beholder must create and use his own experience.”

CHAPTER 5: Time After Time: Sequencing Strategies that Help Students Meet the Next Reading Challenge

Chapter Overview

Successful readers know how to interact with text at various levels of understanding. In this chapter you will explore strategies that support students as they extend their reading experiences by making connections within and across texts. The apprenticeship model that is central to these teaching strategies extends the scaffolding techniques that you read about in Chapter 2 and provides another kind of learning-centered, apprenticeship-oriented teaching.

React To

Identifying main ideas and supporting these with evidence from the text are skills that our national assessments (the NAEPs) continually show only a minority of our graduating seniors actually possess. And the numbers for these higher level skills are decreasing, perhaps as a result of our renewed emphasis on teaching information instead of strategies. (p. 110)

Discuss

- Use a point-counterpoint or debate format to explore this statement: Content is a means to an end, not an end in itself.
- Compare the elements in the structure of the apprenticeship model (pp. 101–103) to selected lesson plans you have developed for fiction and nonfiction materials. What effect does the reading material have on the emphasis given to each element in the lesson plan?
- What strategies do you use to make information useful, immediately functional, and applicable for your students? If you sometimes do not teach in ways that promote understanding and use, then what are you teaching for and why is that?
- Making inferences is a challenging task for many students. Talk about strategies that you use/could use to help students understand inferencing and to make inferences within a text or across texts or data sets. How might the lesson based on “The Owl and the Pussy-Cat” (pp. 120–124) inform or refine your approach to teaching inference?

Take Action

- Use Shel Silverstein’s “My Rules” with your students to help them learn the heuristic (i.e., problem-solving process) for identifying central focus (i.e., main idea, theme, or point made by a text). Talk with them about how they can use this process with stories and nonfiction selections.
- Use the lesson sequence described on pages 111–114 with a topic that you are introducing to your students. During or following the lesson, talk with students about what was happening in each segment—I Do/You Watch; You Do/I Watch; You Do Together/I Help.

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- Use the Five Guesses Game (p. 113) with your students.
 - In preparation for another study group session, select a poem, story, or fable to read aloud to your colleagues. Using the selection, demonstrate the sequence described in “Rereading a poem with visuals: a sample sequence” (pp. 119–120).
 - Teacher Research/Reflection: Compose a Teacher Research Journal entry or Response Process Analysis in which you describe your use of some of these visual techniques: what you did, in what situation, why you thought the technique was appropriate, what happened, when you could next use a variation of the technique, and what you will do differently to adapt the technique the next time you use it.
 - What have you observed about your students’ ability to identify main ideas and supporting details? In what ways does the reading material—fiction or nonfiction—affect their performance of these skills?

CHAPTER 6: Making the Scene! Seeing and Summarizing Characters, Events, and Situations

Chapter Overview

This chapter presents a “cluster of visualization techniques around the skills of summarizing and inferencing.” As students advance through the grades, they encounter more demanding texts and tasks that require them to apply higher level skills in reading and writing. The most complex reading and learning strategies involve seeing the implied connections among various details and inferring the meaning of the patterns that emerge. The strategies presented here center on helping students to visualize these relationships and see these meaning-making patterns among characters, actions, events, and situations as well as personal connections with the reader.

React To

I want to do something that shows who I am. The teachers never let me do that. I am always doing their work instead of my work. So nobody [in the class] can get to know me, and I can't show who I am or who I want to be. School is just a waste of time to me and I don't think the teachers are ever going to change. (p. 128)

Discuss

- How do you define inferencing when you teach the skill to your students? Compare your definition to the description on pages 129–130.
- What strategies and materials do you use to help students understand both simple and complex types of connections that are necessary for making successful inferences? How do your strategies compare with those described in this chapter? The connections may be characterized as follows:

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- Text to self
 - Text to text
 - Across texts about the same topic
 - Text to the world
- Do your students have difficulty making inferences when they are reading nonfiction material? If so, how can you use the description of different kinds of relationships (see p. 130) to develop lessons that enable students to overcome this difficulty?
 - Building students' ability to infer takes time. How do you manage your instruction to ensure that all students have ample time to learn this important skill?
 - To what extent is the ability to see patterns and make meaning from these (i.e., inferring) included in the state content standards for reading/language arts? social studies? mathematics? science? How can you use this knowledge of the articulation across grade levels and subjects to facilitate teaching inference?

Take Action

- Working with a partner or your grade/subject team, develop a model lesson based on at least one strategy from each of the sections in the chapter (understanding character, understanding settings, events, and ideas, studying illustrated texts, and understanding inferring and other skills with comics). Demonstrate the lessons at future study group sessions.
- Videotape a lesson in which you are using one of these visualization strategies with a group of students. View on your own, with a peer coach, or with your study group. At a future study group session, discuss what you learned from “seeing” your own teaching of the lesson. What did you notice that you would not have noticed or believed without the videotape?
- Make a chart of the techniques described in this chapter. When would it be most fruitful to use these various techniques with your own students?
- Teacher Research/Reflection: Incorporate techniques that you have not previously used in your lessons. Talk with students about the new techniques and how these techniques have helped them to learn what is necessary to make inferences. Keep notes about what they say. Share the notes with your study group. What can you learn from these comments? How can these comments, student responses, and student work inform how you will adapt your use of these and other strategies in the future?
- In your journal, reflect on the climate in your classroom. Does it inspire the students to be motivated and positive about their learning experiences? How does the use of visualization strategies at particular times and in particular contexts seem to affect the motivation, engagement, comprehension, and response of different students?
- Do you have students whose attitudes are similar to those recorded on page 128? How are you addressing the situation, or how might you address it?

CHAPTER 7: Moving Past Main Ideas: Identifying, Placeholdering, and Interpreting Key Ideas to Create Knowledge

Chapter Overview

In this chapter you will learn how visuals can be used to “placeholder” information so that it can be operated on—added to, organized, analyzed, interpreted, critiqued, and used. The activities center on the use of inquiry to help students become more independent and resourceful in their learning. Picture mapping, transformative discussions, quote books, and visual correspondence are techniques that will enable you to shift your emphasis from “schoolishness” to “toolishness” and from yourself to those you are teaching.

React To

Teacher research shifts the relationships in a classroom. Instead of delivering information, we can invest ourselves in the creative and relational work of engaging, challenging, and assisting students in new ways. (p. 184)

Discuss

- Refer to the chart comparing “Information” and “Knowledge” (p. 167). How can you use this material to counter arguments favoring the What over the How of learning, reading, and composing (Chapter 5, pp. 104–105)?
- Refer to the listing of text detail relationships (pp. 168–169). Drawing from material that you are currently using with your students, give examples that parallel those the author uses from *Roll of Thunder*.
- Comment on how you used picture mapping with your students. How does this technique benefit your students? What adaptations could you make to the technique to promote other potential benefits?

Take Action

- Have your students participate in a picture mapping activity using the guidelines, basic or advanced, that are appropriate (pp. 170–171).
- Design a visual correspondence activity.
- Refer to the chart you created based on “Designing a Visualization Tool Activity” (p. 182) in your journal. Analyze your progress as recorded at various times during the course of this study group. Do you now feel confident to share your knowledge with colleagues outside your study group or school? Brainstorm ways to develop a presentation for a future school or district professional day program and other opportunities for sharing your teaching experience and expertise.
- Teacher Research/Reflection: In your journal, describe your use of a technique from this chapter. What did you do, what happened, and what could you do differently next time?

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- In your journal, reflect on how reading this book and participating in the study group have helped to enliven your teaching and strengthen your students' reading performance.
 - Apply the author's suggestion about Quote Books (p. 177) to your professional development journal or portfolio. From this book, select quotes that convey powerful messages for you. Compare your selection of quotes with colleagues at a future study group session. What do the selected quotes reveal about the author, Jeff Wilhelm? About you? Which quotes used in this study guide would you replace with your choices?
 - Teacher researchers often refer to "critical incidents" that can be used as experiences to reflect on, think with, and use as a fuel for transformative changes in one's teaching. What events in your teaching experience have caused you to rethink your practice? In what ways does your experience compare to that of the author's as described in the opening section of this chapter (pp. 162–165)?
 - Talk about discussions in your classes that you would describe as "transformative" for the students. What factors contributed to the success of these discussions? What features marked these discussions in terms of the teacher's role, the students' roles, the purpose of the discussion, the use of artifacts or visuals, and so on? What can we learn from such successes that we can use in our future teaching?