

visualized  
meaning by  
using visual  
cues

make a note so I would remember. When I was done I felt relieved. Like I felt, good, that's done, now I can write the book. It was like this was something I had to do to do something else. The other book the point was reading. Here the point was researching and learning and then writing. I like writing, but here it was the topic that bugged me. I liked making the book though, that was cool. Especially the pictures and the pictures in the books I read really helped with that, to get the pictures right.

remembers  
purpose

In fact, my students, like all adolescents, enjoy perusing these artifacts of their thinking, or more to the point, *love* this kind of self-analysis! (One student informed me “To know me is to love me!” I asked him why he was so sure. His reply: “I know myself really well and I really love myself.”)

## PROMPTS THAT GUIDE STUDENTS TO USE THE GENERAL READING STRATEGIES

As you create your own lessons, use the following list of strategies/prompts as a checklist of general process strategies to teach and how to teach them. Use the six steps of recursive instruction (page 13) to guide students toward independence with them. For more on how to help students monitor their use of the strategies, turn to Chapter 7.

First, some management tips:

- You could go through the strategies in the order presented, but you don't have to. And you don't have to go through *all* the strategies; you should focus on what you think your students most need.
- When I introduce these general processes to my students, I do it by *introducing a couple at a time with short texts*. We put the strategies and prompts on chart paper and post them with illustrations at the front of the classroom.

### 1. Set Purposes for Reading

There is a host of research that shows how vitally important it is to model purpose-setting for kids. When students don't have a personal purpose for reading, they have problems iden-

tifying key details—not to mention difficulty staying engaged. In fact, students generally don't see a purpose for school reading. It's up to us to have a compelling rationale—and name it for students—with every book we read. (I'm indebted here to the work of Bauman, 1993; and Davey, 1983 who provide the basis for some of the prompts that follow.)

Start by talking through how you naturally preview a text. Use the following prompts.

## BOOK SELECTION/PREVIEWING PROMPTS

### **Sample Prompts that Relate to Considering a Book's Content, Genre, Readability**

“The title/author/call-outs/pictures/front matter/author information/book design/text this is in/makes me think...”

“The title makes me think that this is going to be about a car race.”

“The book this is in makes me think that this is going to be about science in everyday life, probably about electricity.”

“The photographs make me think that this will be about really bad storms.”

“The comments on the back make me think that professional football players think this book really captures the life of an NFL player.”

### **Sample Prompts that Relate to Personal Purposes for Reading**

“Oh, yeah, I read this author's last novel. I bet this is good too because \_\_\_\_.”

“I need something light and funny to read, and this title and cover look fun because \_\_\_\_.”

“I'm just learning to cook, and I can tell by the ingredients and directions that this is too advanced for me right now because \_\_\_\_.”

“This may connect to my interest in/study of \_\_\_\_.”

“Reading this may help me to find out whether there are any rattlesnakes in this area of the country and other things like \_\_\_\_.”

“Reading this may help me to understand what breaks up some relationships \_\_\_\_.”

“Reading this may help me to understand what it was like to be a foot soldier in the Civil War \_\_\_\_.”

## 2. Make Predictions

As you begin reading, begin predicting what will come next. Correct and revise predictions as you gain information from the text.

### PROMPTS FOR LOCAL-LEVEL PREDICTIONS

“I’m guessing that \_\_\_\_ will happen next.” “I bet that \_\_\_\_.” “I wonder if \_\_\_\_.”

#### Examples

“I’m guessing that he will be captured by the guards looking for deserters.”

“I’ll bet that there are no rattlesnakes in Maine because it is too cold there.”

### PROMPTS FOR GLOBAL PREDICTIONS

“I think this book will be about [the general topic of ...] I wonder if \_\_\_\_ . I imagine the author believes \_\_\_\_ . I think the tone of the book will be... [sad, happy in the end, pessimistic] about human beings \_\_\_\_.”

#### Examples

“I bet the author fought in the war and that he will be against wars because of his experiences.”

“I’m guessing that this book will be about why the Vikings disappeared.”

“*Pobby and Dingan* will be sad because it starts with her friends being maybe-dead.”

## 3. Connect Personally

Show how you use your own experience to help make meaning, and the ways you bring your experiences of other texts to help you understand this one. I call this “relating life to literature” or “bringing life to text.” Beth Davey calls this process the “like a \_\_\_\_” step, when readers say to themselves, *This is like when Joey and I went fishing* or *This is just like that movie I saw*.

I also ask students to practice the reverse operation, considering how they might *apply* what they are reading to their life. I call this “relating literature to life” or “text-to-life connections.”

### PROMPTS

“This is like \_\_\_\_” “This reminds me of \_\_\_\_.” “This could help me with \_\_\_\_.”

“This is helping me with/to think about/to make plans for \_\_\_\_.”

### **Examples**

“This story is like a software game I know called Diablo 2.”

“This is like the time that we went on a ferry to Nova Scotia.”

“This book is organized in the same way as that one I read about reptiles, so I can expect that each picture will be followed by a description.”

“This is helping me make plans for building a robot with Legos.”

## 4. Visualize

Show how you take the sensory and physical details the author gives you and expand them in your mind’s eye to create an image or a scene. As I’ve said, this ability to “see” what one is reading, to create accurate mental models and/or sensory-rich story worlds as one reads is crucial to engaged reading. Demonstrate how you develop and adapt images as you read, whether it’s an expression on a character’s face, the interaction of resistors and charges in an electrical circuit, the workings of an engine, the room the characters are in, and so on.

### **PROMPTS**

“In my mind’s eye,” “I imagine,” “I see \_\_\_\_.” or “I have a picture of \_\_\_\_.”

### **Examples**

“In my mind’s eye I see a girl entering a dark room.”

“I see a scientist working at his desk.”

“I imagine a floor plan of the house, and I can see how it is organized with the kitchen in the back with a bay window.”

“In my head I can see an electrical circuit plan and I see where these lightbulbs would go in that circuit and how the battery pushes the charges.”

## 5. Monitor Comprehension

Demonstrate how expert readers constantly (though subconsciously) monitor comprehension by asking, “Does this make sense?” Show that you expect what you read to make sense to you and that if it doesn’t you will stop to identify this as a problem.

### **PROMPTS**

“This is (not) making sense because \_\_\_\_.” “This is (not) what I expected because \_\_\_\_.”

“This connects (or doesn’t) to what I already read/already know because \_\_\_\_.”

## Examples

“This doesn’t make sense to me because before it said there were three soldiers and now there are only two.”

“This isn’t what I expected because it was about electrical circuitry and now it is about something called resistors.”

“This isn’t making sense because my mind was drifting for the last several paragraphs so I’ll have to go back and reread \_\_\_\_.”

“This doesn’t make sense because I don’t know what the word *conjoin* means, and it seems they’re talking about that.”

“This connects to what I read before about how the Vikings navigated because it shows how they kept exploring.”

## 6. Use Fix-Up Strategies to Address Confusion and Repair Comprehension

Repairing one’s confusion comes just a heartbeat after Step 5, of course. Demonstrate how you use various strategies when you can’t grasp something or wish to check your understanding. Emphasize that even expert readers sometimes run into texts they have difficulty reading, or can’t read. But when they do, they address these problems by:

- rereading
- reading ahead to see if that will clear things up
- reviewing and synthesizing previous ideas from the text and relating these “chunks” of concepts to the confusing ideas
- replacing a word or words they don’t know with one(s) that they know and think would make sense in this context; looking up a word in the dictionary
- changing their ideas or visualization of the story to match new information, i.e. you may find that how you have visualized the story or what you think the text is really about is in error, and you need to make a self-correction, radically reconceiving your ideas
- asking someone for help

### PROMPTS

“Maybe I’d better \_\_\_\_.” “Something I could do is \_\_\_\_.” “Since I don’t understand this word, a good strategy would be to \_\_\_\_.” “First I saw, but now I see \_\_\_\_.”

“What I thought this was about no longer makes sense because \_\_\_\_.” “I need to revise my thinking by \_\_\_\_.” “Maybe I need to consider \_\_\_\_.”

## Examples

“Maybe I’d better read on for a few paragraphs to see if I can make this clearer to myself.”

“I don’t understand how this fits with what came before, so something I could do is reread the previous passage to see if I can make the connection.”

“Since I don’t understand this word, a good strategy would be to use the context and make a guess and see if that works.”

“I thought this was about paying taxes but the detail about using enough detergent doesn’t make sense so maybe I need to consider that this is about doing the laundry.”

## THE MOVES MAKE THE READER

These general process reading moves are powerful, giving kids a way to use general processes that are basic to all reading tasks and applicable to all kinds of texts. They are particularly valuable, eye opening, and, dare I say, life changing, for our students who struggle most. One of my favorite stories is about Jon, who after hearing a classmate’s think-aloud emoted, “I can’t believe you do all that stuff when you read! Holy crap, I’m not doing... like nothing... compared to you.” His classmate Ron, a teammate on the wrestling team, concluded a long commentary by saying, “If you don’t do all that when you read, then you’re not reading! It’s like wrestling, man, you have to be there! You have to know the moves and make the moves! If you just sit there you’ll get pinned to the mat!”

Jon decided to “borrow” Ron’s strategies and reading moves, and by doing so he became a more competent reader.

After engaging in his first few think-alouds, another reluctant reader implored, “Why didn’t someone tell me that this is what readers do?” his voice loud with anger. When I asked him why he was so upset, he said, “If I had known what to do, I would have done it!” Then he added, “Why didn’t you tell us this before? Is it supposed to be a big secret or something?” “What bugs me,” he continued, “is that it’s really not so hard.... I guess I really didn’t need to go through all that suffering and feeling stupid.”

Think-alouds ensure that the hallmarks of engaged reading don’t remain a big secret to a single child in our classrooms.