

Reading Comprehension Icon Rationale:

Introduce the different ways readers think with visual icons that represent each comprehension strategy. Students then hear the same vocabulary from year to year and see the same graphics. This begins to develop building-wide consistency in implementation and reading expectations. Here are a set of graphic icons developed by Kristina Smekens:

Making Inferences

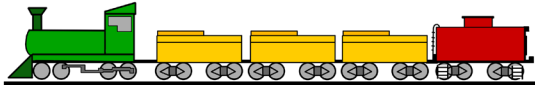
All reading experts agree that an *Inference* = *Text Clues* + *Background Knowledge*. Following that formula, consider that text clues come from the reading and the Reading Voice. Background knowledge comes from the reader's mental backpack and his Thinking Voice. If you assign a half of Velcro to each "voice," then comprehension occurs when the reader "sticks" new or unfamiliar information from the text to background knowledge they already possessed. It's the Velcro Principle.



Readers are thinkers, and they can think in a variety of ways. They can use their background knowledge and the text clues to visualize or to ask questions or to summarize, etc. Inferencing is *not* a separate comprehension strategy; it is the umbrella that all other strategies fall under.

Retell & Summarize

Retelling leads to summarization. Readers first learn to retell the many specific details of a text *in a logical order*. It's the beginning (train engine) and ending (caboose) with lots of details from the middle of the text (middle train cars). Summarization also has a beginning, middle, and ending in a logical order—but it's far shorter and more general. It's a shorter train that mentions just the highlights. It's an overview.



Determine Main Idea

Readers determine the main idea when they filter out the specific text details and identify the principal focus. Like draining a boiling pot of pasta, readers sift out the unimportant details and save only the single big idea.



The main idea is *not* multiple sentences like a summary. However, it is more than just the general topic written in 1-2 words. It's a single statement. The main idea is the specific angle or focus of a topic.

Create Visualizations

Readers "see" images when reading, but not literally, rather in their imagination (represented by the cloud above a cartoon character). The author provides the words (also known as text clues read by the Reading Voice). The reader creates the mental illustrations using the Thinking Voice.



Demonstrate this concept with paper taped over sunglasses. Readers don't see these pictures literally; all visualizations are created in the mind's eye. As ideas unfold in the text, readers adjust their mental images. It's like a continuous mind movie that corresponds with the details in the text.

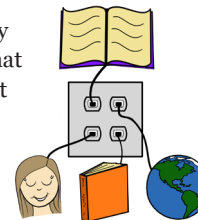
Ask Questions

Readers are curious about characters in literature and ideas in texts. Compare the shape of a question mark to a road with a large bend. The reader, driving in the car, should wonder what's around the corner. Readers ask questions; they wonder about the text. And then they *keep reading*, keep driving, keep turning the pages to find out the answer. If readers aren't questioning before, during, and after reading, they're not thinking. NOTE: Predictions are questions, just in statement form. *Will he run away?* is a question. *I think he'll run away* is a prediction.



Make Connections

Readers make connections when they compare what they are reading to what they already know. "Plug" the current text into something else. Sometimes the text is similar to a personal experience (text-to-self). Sometimes the text relates to something read previously (text-to-text). But a lot of what readers know is from general knowledge they've acquired over time (text-to-world). When connecting or comparing a text to something else, utilize a four-opening outlet to demonstrate readers can connect the *same* text to themselves, another text, *and* the world.



Synthesize Ideas

All other comprehension strategies are about the *reading*. However, synthesis is about the *reader*. It's very personal. It's the *aha!* discovery a reader makes *after* reading something. It's a *new* thought; it's what a reader has gained because of the text. Like baking a cake, the reader starts by combining lots of "ingredients"—experiences, connections, visualizations, etc.—and produces a brand new thought or *aha!*

