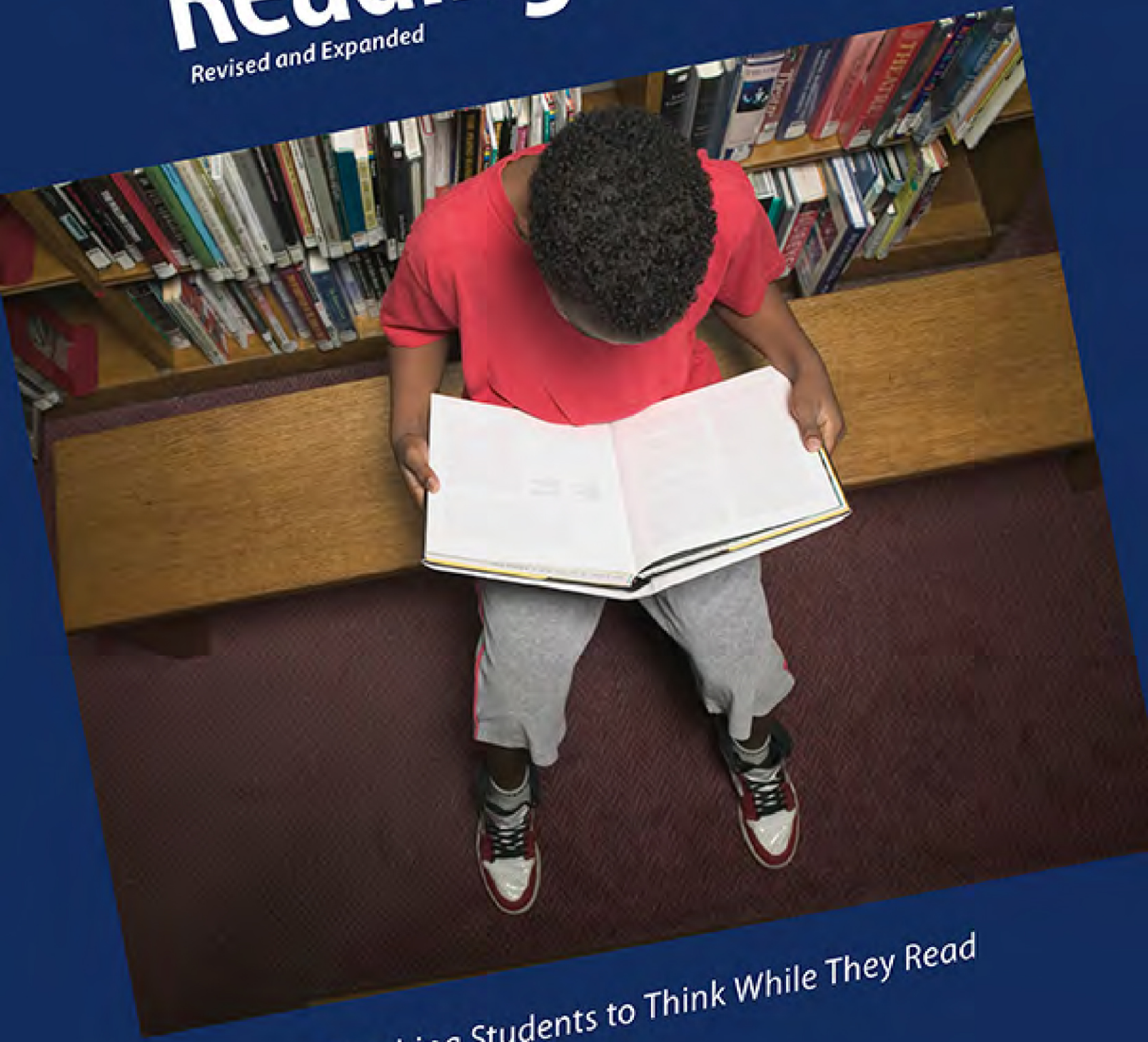
ADRIENNE GEAR

Reading Power

Revised and Expanded



Teaching Students to Think While They Read

Reading Power

Revised and Expanded

Adrienne Gear

Stenhouse Publishers
PORTLAND, MAINE

Pembroke Publishers Limited
MARKHAM, ONTARIO

DEDICATION

With a full heart and the deepest of gratitude I dedicate this book to the memory of my mum and dad, Irv and Sheila Gear.

538 Hood Road
Markham, Ontario, Canada L3R 3K9
www.pembrokepublishers.com

Published in the U.S. by Stenhouse Publishers
480 Congress Street
Portland, ME 04101
www.stenhouse.com

Funded by the Government of Canada
Financé par le gouvernement du Canada | Canada

Ontario
Ontario Media Development Corporation
Société de développement de l'industrie des médias de l'Ontario

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Gear, Adrienne, author
Reading power : teaching students to think while they read / Adrienne Gear. -- Revised and expanded.

Includes bibliographical references and index.
Issued also in electronic format.
ISBN 978-1-55138-310-1 (paperback).--ISBN 978-1-55138-913-4 (pdf)

1. Reading comprehension. 2. Reading (Elementary). I. Title.

LB1525.7.G42 2015 372.47 C2015-903653-4
C2015-903654-2

Editor: Kat Mototsune
Cover Design: John Zehethofer
Typesetting: Jay Tee Graphics Ltd.

Printed and bound in Canada
9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Contents

1 What Is Reading Power?

The five reading strategies in the Reading Power approach are called reading "powers," because the word "strategy" has been used to describe just about anything done in the classroom, and is often used interchangeably with the word "activity." The five reading powers are, in fact, reading strategies. Reading Power became my catchphrase for comprehension instruction. I called it Reading Power because it is more appealing to children, when they see it on their Shape of the Day, than Comprehension Instruction.

Reading Power

- is based on research that looks at strategies used by proficient readers.
- teaches students that reading is thinking.
- teaches students to be metacognitive, or aware of their thinking.
- creates a "common language of thinking" in your classroom and school.
- teaches students five strategies to enhance their understanding of the fiction texts they are reading: the powers to Connect, Visualize, Question, Infer, and Transform.
- encourages students to have "busy brains" while they read.
- provides a concrete visual tool to help teach the five reading powers.
- exposes students to a wide range of rich, engaging literature—including both old classics and wonderful new titles.
- can be used to enhance your writing program.
- is respectful of children's thinking and encourages them to think beyond the pages of the books they are reading.
- celebrates the students' voices in the classroom and allows for their thinking, their connections, their images, and their ideas to make a difference.
- results in rich, engaging, and interactive lessons in which students are encouraged to share their thinking.
- will change the way you and your students read and think.

Reading, Thinking, and Teaching

A mother and son, who is not yet school age, sit facing each other on the floor in the living room, each reading a book. Their "noisy reading" time, when Mom reads aloud to her child, is over, and now they are sharing in their "quiet reading" ritual. Mom senses her son is not engaged on this particular day, and notices that he keeps looking up from his book to stare at her. After a while, she asks him what he is doing.

"I'm watching to see what happens."

"What happens in my book?" she asks.

"No… what happens when you read."

"Oh," she answers, and goes back to reading.

The boy continues to watch his mother intently while she reads. "Mom," the boy asks finally, "what really happens to you when you read?"

"A child who reads will be an adult who thinks."
—Sue Fitzmaurice

This young boy has, in his simplicity, asked a most profound question. The notion of "something happening" while we read is the essence of comprehension. The "something happening" is the interactive construction of meaning inside our heads, which creates understanding. Because thinking is an abstract concept, the "something happening" can be difficult to see, difficult to understand, difficult to assess, and difficult to teach. And sadly, the "something happening" does not naturally occur inside all readers.

Because reading comprehension is not tangible and can be subjective, it is a subject that many teachers do not necessarily delve into the first week in their school year. Certainly it was not, up until a few years ago, a subject that found a spot on my weekly timetable or a place in my "shape of the day." In fact, there was no time in my school year that I could honestly say was devoted to direct comprehension instruction. Why? If I look back on my own education, I do not recall any reading instruction other than the decoding and phonemic awareness I received in the early primary grades. In university, I do not recall any methodology courses on comprehension instruction.

"There is little or no teaching of comprehension/metacognition strategies in the 6th–12th grade because curriculum is written around books to be assigned and the *assumption* that all a teacher needs to do is assign and assess, not teach reading. I once had a high school teacher say to me bluntly—after he complained about poor literacy levels—'It's not my problem: I teach English, not reading.'"
—Grant Wiggins, blog at https://grantwiggins.wordpress.com/

I began my teaching career as an intermediate teacher. As a new intermediate teacher, I considered my job to be somehow more interesting than that of my primary teacher colleagues. Thanks to the hard work of those primary teachers, my students could, for the most part, already read when they came into my class in September. I'm embarrassed to admit that I clearly remember saying to a friend that the reason I enjoyed teaching intermediate grades so much was that I didn't have to teach reading and could do "fun stuff" with the students. I truly believed the expression, "Learn to read in the primary grades and read to learn in the intermediate grades." I never considered myself a teacher of reading. We did reading in my class, but it was not something that I taught. I did not need to teach reading—my students already knew how.

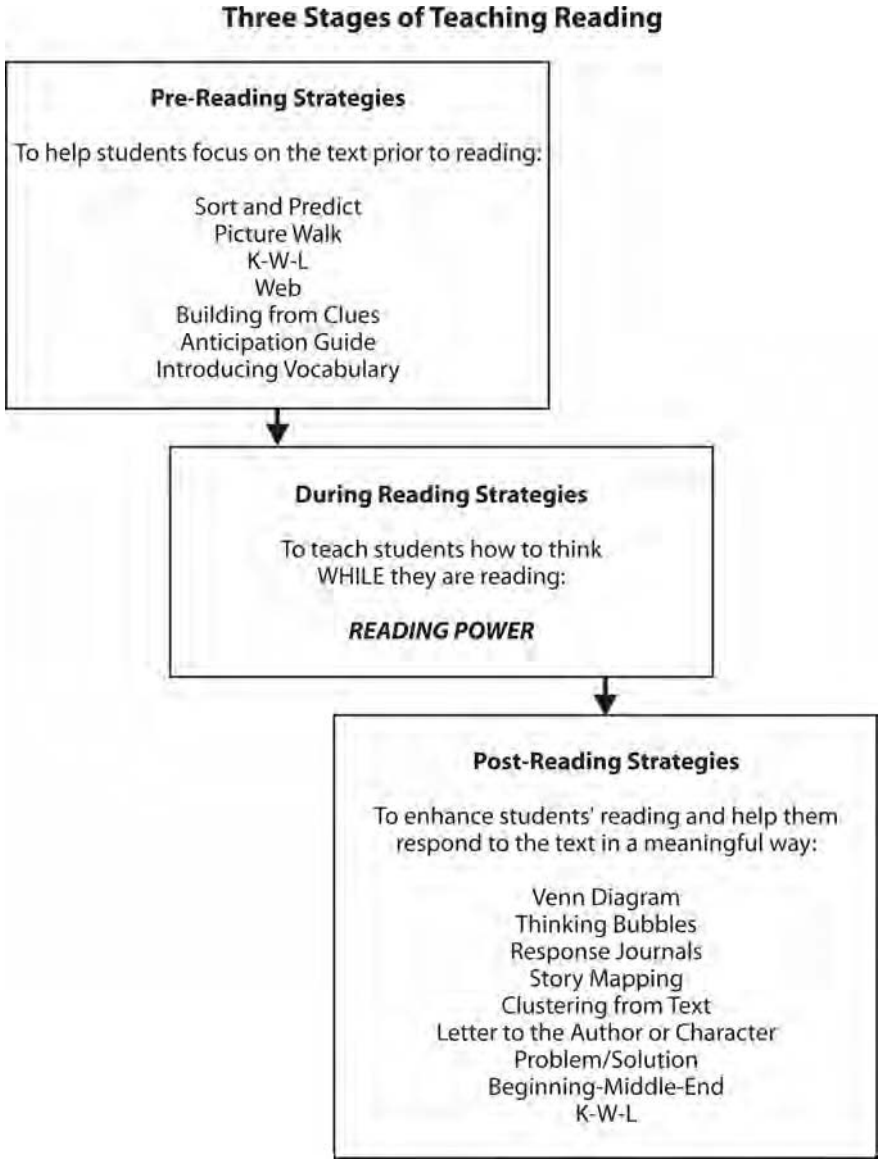
"One of reading's biggest myths is that we *learn to read* in the primary grades, then suddenly *read to learn* in the intermediate grades. Reading is not so simple a process. We develop strategies to improve reading proficiency well into adulthood."
—Stephanie Harvey, *Strategies That Work*

I now realize that my rendition of "doing reading" was "Read this chapter and then answer these questions"—what is now termed *assign-and-assess* teaching. And when a student was able to answer only two out of the ten questions correctly, what was I doing to help? Usually I handed back the notebook with the message, "*Please do your corrections,*" along with a sparkly sticker stating, "Good effort!" or "Nice printing!" The thought of it now makes me cringe—how little I was doing to help my students become better readers. Sure, my students were read to every day; my classroom was overflowing with literature; we did novel studies, book reports, story maps, letters to the authors, book talks; we wrote reading response logs, made dioramas, created posters, did readers theatre, and did all the "fun stuff" I believed fell under the category of teaching reading.

Looking back, I wonder how many of those activities represented a deep understanding of text. Certainly my students enjoyed the process and were proud of their products. But I realize now that I was not, under any circumstances, teaching them how to use their experiences and their knowledge to make sense of what they were reading. I was at the helm of a sinking ship, handing out brushes and paint to my students and teaching them how to paint the decks. Showing children that reading is not just words on a page, helping them see what of ourselves we bring to those words, is perhaps the single most important thing we can do, not only to keep our ships afloat, but also to send them full-speed ahead.

Current Reading Practice

When reflecting on my earlier years of teaching, I recall dedicated teachers who were all working towards enhancing their classroom practice in the area of literacy. Many, including myself, had attended after-school workshops and professional development on current literacy practices, and had already begun implementing many of these strategies. When trying to implement change, I believe it is important to begin to look at the things one is already doing well, so I remember a meeting where my colleagues and I discussed and brainstormed all the literacy initiatives, strategies, and activities we were currently practicing in our classrooms. The list was long and represented a wealth of rich and engaging classroom practices. After analyzing this list carefully, I found it interesting to see exactly where our reading instruction occurred in the reading process.



If we look at the reading process as three equally important stages—pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading—everything we were doing in our reading program fell in either the pre-reading and post-reading stages (see The Three Stages of Teaching Reading chart on page 15). Prior to reading, we spent time building up interest in the text with predictions, picture walks, and K–W–L. Then either the students would read independently or we would read to them. After reading, the students would be engaged in various post-reading activities.

There was a big gap in the during-reading stage of my teaching. What were we teaching our students to do when the book was in their hands and their eyes were on the words? And since, according to Pearson's research, comprehension occurs while we are *in the act of reading*, those during-reading strategies hold the key to understanding. I realized that teaching children specific strategies for the during-reading process was the piece that had been missing from my reading program, and the hole left by that missing piece kept getting bigger each year. As a teacher, I consider myself first and foremost a learner. Having not only learned what was missing in my practice, but also trying to find a way to fill in the missing piece, I was learning the most valuable lesson of my teaching journey.

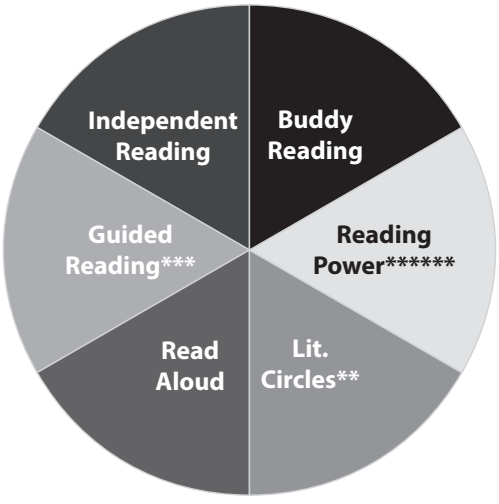
Balanced Literacy Instruction

My goal is that my students leave my classroom in June better readers than they were when they arrived in September. How this happens is through direct, ongoing, explicit instruction and providing students with time to read independently and practice what they learn. As their teacher, it is my responsibility to ensure that this happens.

As a "seasoned" teacher, one of the things I have learned is the value of reflecting and refining. Reflecting on practice has made me a better teacher because I am always searching for ways to make my teaching better for my students. And while it is both a blessing and a curse to be in a constant state of reflection, Reading Power would never have been developed had I not reflected on what wasn't working in my reading program.

When beginning a workshop, I often ask teachers to reflect on their reading program, asking them to divide a circle into pieces. On each piece they are to record one element of their reading program, including all experiences in which their students are engaged in reading; for example, silent reading, buddy reading, read-aloud, literature circles, morning message, phonics, readers theatre, etc. I then ask them to put a star in the pieces where they are providing direct, explicit instruction in some aspect of reading.

SLICES OF THE READING PROGRAM



Ten years ago, my Reading Program graph would have included a lot of "doing" reading activities, with very little explicit instruction in reading skills and strategies. Now, the addition of Reading Power, or comprehension instruction, makes comprehension instruction an essential piece of my reading program. The only way our students are going to develop as readers and thinkers is if we teach them. I can't imagine, in fact, having a reading program that does not include some kind of ongoing, explicit instruction in thinking.

The Balanced Literacy Diet is a web site with video clips of effective literacy-enriched classrooms. Look for the clip of a teacher explaining how she incorporates Reading Power with the Daily 5 and CAFE.

I would recommend blocking off two periods of approximately 40 minutes each per week to focus on Reading Power lessons. This allows time for you to incorporate other components of your literacy program, such as guided reading, Daily 5, literature circles, and buddy reading. The strategies and the language of thinking that students learn in those two blocks of Reading Power can be applied to the other components. Reading Power, in fact, ties in effectively with the Daily 5 and CAFE components of a literacy program. For example, students can work on specific strategies they learn through Reading Power lessons during "read to self" or "read to someone" choices from the Daily 5. I view Reading Power as the essential foundation on which all other aspects of my literacy program lie.

Over several years of teaching Reading Power, I have noticed that the language of thinking that students learn during those lessons become integrated into other aspects of my reading program. Moreover, it also has spilled over into content areas, such as Math, Science, and Social Studies. We will often *make connections* in Socials, *visualize* while trying to solve a Math problem, and *infer* during a Science experiment.

The purpose of the Slices of the Reading Program exercise is to encourage teachers to reflect on their practice and to notice how much or how little time they are spending on direct, explicit reading instruction. While we might think we have a full and enriched reading program, with many hours a week in which are students are engaged in reading activities, it is important to ask ourselves how many of those experiences would be considered "doing reading" compared to "teaching reading." While some consider reading instruction to be the primary responsibility of early primary teachers, I believe explicit instruction in reading is the responsibility of every teacher, no matter what grade they teach. If students already know how to decode, then we need to provide them with instruction in the other part of reading—the thinking part.

Key Concepts of Reading Power

Metacognition

Years before I had developed Reading Power, I had an experience in my classroom that was instrumental to my teaching and learning. I was teaching a Grade 5 class and, during silent reading, would call students up to my desk individually to conference with me. I made notes about their miscues, reading strategies, and fluency, and then usually asked them a few questions about the text. One day, it was Simon's turn to come to my desk. Simon was an ESL learner, having immigrated to Canada with his family from Guatemala when he was three. He was a lively, personable child who communicated well. He happily came to my desk, sat beside me, and began reading aloud from his chapter book. He read with fluency and expression, and demonstrated many of the decoding strategies he had learned in his previous grades. I was impressed with his reading and told him so. Had I stopped there, I would have made some huge assumptions of what kind of reader he was. But then I began asking him a few questions from the story. Simon was not able to answer a single question. I remember feeling completely shocked at his lack of understanding, and wondered how it could be possible for a student to be reading the words from a text so well, yet not have a single idea about what he was reading. I remember turning to Simon and asking him,

"Reading furnishes the mind only with materials of knowledge; it is thinking that makes what we read ours."
—John Locke

"Aren't you thinking about the story when you read it?" After a moment's pause, Simon turned to me and asked, "What does thinking look like?" It was probably the most important question anyone has ever asked me. At the time, I could not really answer him: "Thinking is… well… it's just thinking!" was certainly not the answer he was looking for. Now I wish that I could find Simon and tell him that I can finally answer his question.

Simon's profound question has stayed with me over the years. I think many teachers have had similar experiences with their own Simons—children who become so focused on the code that they forget to really think about the story. Simon showed me a missing piece to the reading puzzle. I was doing so much with my students in terms of reading, yet the part I was *not* doing seemed to be the most important—"Whoops! Sorry, kids, I almost forgot to tell you this tidbit of information: when you read, you also need to think"! What I did not realize then, but do now, was that this experience informed my understanding of what I now believe is the most important component of helping children become more proficient readers: metacognition.

"Metacognition" was a new buzz word when I was doing courses for my Masters degree at the University of British Columbia nearly 15 years ago. Although I did not fully understand it then, I certainly made the effort to insert it into my papers as often as I could, so I could present myself to my learned professors as being in touch with the current lingo. Now, many years and experiences later, the concept of *metacognition* or "thinking about your thinking" has become an important component of the Language Arts curriculum and an equally important component in my teaching practice. Over the years, I realize that it is more than just "thinking about your thinking" that is important. Being able to talk about your thinking is also an essential part of being metacognitive. I now see metacognition now as having three essential components: awareness of your thinking; thinking about your thinking; and articulating your thinking.

And so it became important to me, when developing Reading Power, to let students in on the secret: The secret to becoming a successful reader is to learn to think while you read. And I wanted to show children the answer to Simon's question: *What does thinking look like?* I wanted to provide children with something concrete and visual so that they could really see what a thinking brain looks like when it's reading. It was essential that this metacognition be somehow incorporated into Reading Power as a concrete image that could be a point of reference. Simply put, if Simon's head was empty, I needed to fill it up with five reading powers. And that was how the Reading Powers Model (see page 28) was born. I roughly drew it on a napkin and presented it to my staff, then drew and colored a poster of the model for every primary classroom in my school. The common language of reading comprehension naturally emerged from the use of the Reading Powers Model, and the Reading Power slogan became "Fill Your Head with Reading Power."

It is important to mention that, after teaching Reading Power to hundreds of children, it has become clear to me that children's brains are not empty at all. In fact, their brains are already filled with these strategies. The only problem is that students aren't necessarily aware of them. Our job, as teachers, is not to fill their brains, but to focus their brains on the cognitive strategies that are already in their heads, and to provide them with the language to describe them.

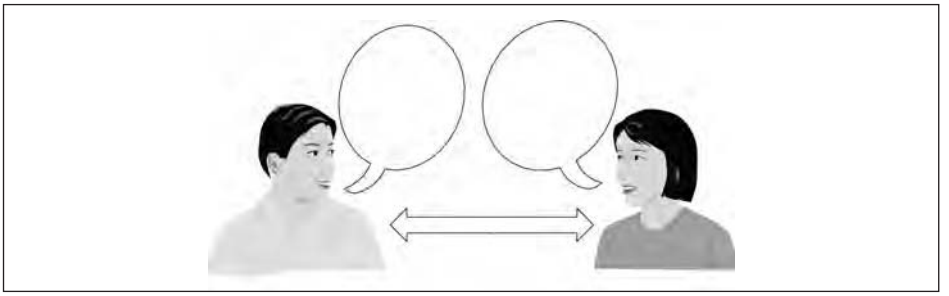
ENHANCING METACOGNITION

Active Readers…	We Can Help By…
• use specific strategies while they read to help make sense of the text.	• providing students with a common language of strategies used by proficient readers.
• are metacognitive, or aware that their thinking plays an important role in their understanding of the text.	• introduce students to metacognition—an awareness of thinking.
• pay attention to their "thinking voice" while they read to help them make sense of the text.	• model think-alouds so that the students can begin to see what thinking looks and sounds like.

Interacting with Text

Another key concept of Reading Power is the idea of interacting with text. Interacting—that is, the equal sharing between text and reader—is important to explain to students.

I usually begin the lesson by drawing two people on the board who are engaged in a conversation. Speaking bubbles are added to the picture, as well as a double-sided arrow between the figures.



> Today we are going to learn an important word that is going to help us understand what good readers need to do.
>
> (Draw figure on the board)

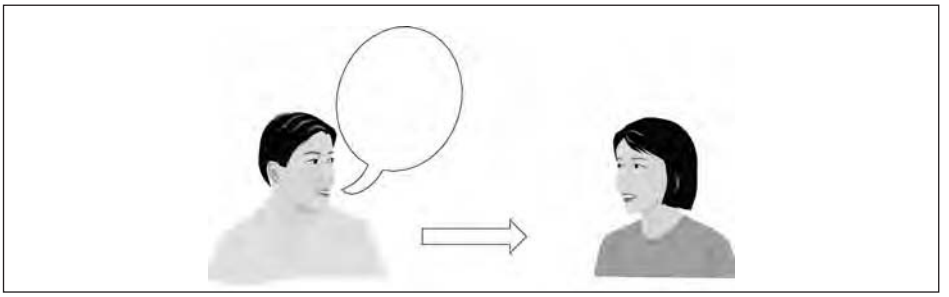
Invite the students to discuss the picture and ask them to think of some other words that could describe what is going on in the picture.

> (talking, conversing, sharing, back-and-forth)

Explain that the important thing to remember about interacting is that it is equal.

> These two people are both talking and being given equal opportunities to contribute to the conversation. This makes for an interesting and engaging conversation.

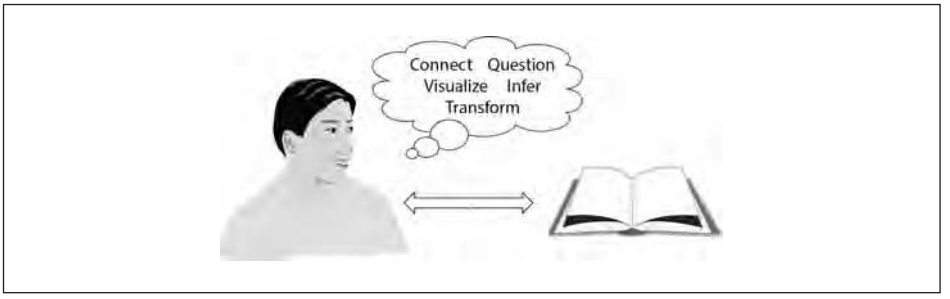
Draw the next example on the board and ask the students to discuss what is happening.



One-Sided Conversation

Explain that, in this picture, only one person is being given a chance to contribute to the conversation. Explain that sometimes only one person is speaking, such as in a classroom or a workshop, but that if you are talking to a friend and they don't give you a chance to speak, often you lose interest and become bored.

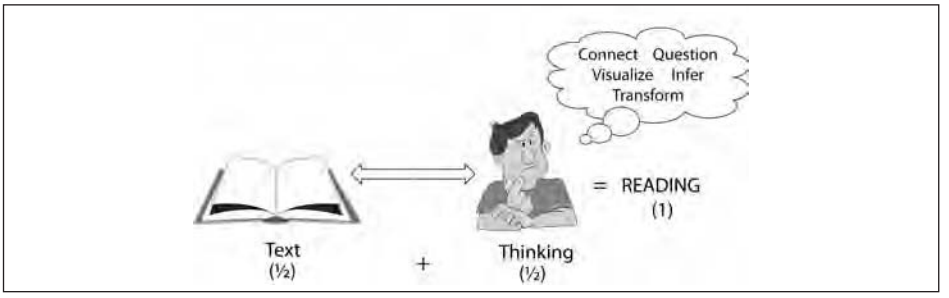
Now draw a picture of a person but tell the students that you are going to replace the other person with a book to show a reader who is interacting with a text. Invite students to talk about what they think that means.



Interacting with Text

Interaction means a give and take. When people interact with a text, they take in the story or information from the book, but also give back their thinking. Interacting with a book means that a reader adds their thinking into the story by connecting, questioning, visualizing, inferring, and transforming while they read. If we don't add our own thinking into a story, we will more likely start to lose interest and become bored. Having a one-sided conversation with a book is not going to help us understand the book at all.

Finally, present a graphic that shows what reading and thinking look like.



Interacting with Text Equation

Developing a Common Language of Thinking

"Through language, your students learn how to become strategic thinkers, not merely strategy users."
—Peter Johnson, *Choice Words*

When I heard David Pearson speak at a conference a number of years ago, he reflected that many of the children he observed reading for his research study were using comprehension strategies but were not able to articulate their thinking because they did not have the language to talk about it. He spoke of the importance of developing a common language of thinking within a school so that children hear the same words being used from class to class, from grade to grade. While many teachers could be teaching these strategies, they might not all be using the same language to describe them. Developing a common language of thinking in your school is the most significant factor in the successful implementation of comprehension instruction and the development of metacognition. Just as we have a common language in Math, with students hearing the same words for strategies, such as *add*, *subtract*, *multiply*, and *divide*, in any classroom from any teacher, so, too, must we develop a language to use when we talk about reading and thinking. Children quickly pick up on the language we model. I recall the excitement I felt when beginning to teach Reading Power at hearing students share their connections and questions. I recall in particular a little boy in Grade 1 who was waving his hand furiously during story time and, when asked, shouted excitedly, "I'm having a connection!"

Levels of Understanding Text

One of the ways I have grown to understand my students as readers is to observe the way they engage in text and to ask myself questions about how they make sense of what they are reading. While many formal reading assessments exist to help determine this, I am not giving my students formal reading assessments every week. I do, however, want to be able to get some sense of their level of comprehension when I have a reading conference with them.

I believe that knowing the levels of understanding can help teachers target their instruction and support students in their ability to move beyond a literal understanding to a deeper and more meaningful reading engagement. I have come to understand that there are three levels of understanding text. At each level, a reader is engaged in a number of different strategies. The chart on page 22 shows the three different levels or layers of understanding. Early in my teaching career, if I had students who were able to read a passage and then retell the beginning, middle, and end of the story with some degree of accuracy, I believed that they had read and understood the text and were ready to move to the next level. Now, having a child simply retell a story is no longer enough. I believe that, in order to fully understand the meaning of a story, readers must interact and interpret the story based on their own experiences and knowledge. Reading Power strategies of connecting, visualizing, questioning, and inferring play a key role in this interactive level of understanding. Ultimately, a reader can take ideas from the text and integrate it with their thinking. This synthesis, or rethinking of a text, is the highest level of understanding. The chart on page 22 is an important reminder that explicit instruction in reading strategies is essential; without it, many of our students will remain in the literal level.

2 The Components of Reading Power

The Reading Powers Model

Helping Students Become Metacognitive

Good readers have busy brains when they read.

Thinking is an essential part of reading; however, it is an abstract concept and, therefore, difficult to teach. Because we can't "see" thinking, it is difficult for us to describe and explain it. Saying, "Boys and girls, when you read, you need to think" does not really cut it! Young children know that, when they read, they need to be actively using their eyes and often their mouths. But how many of them are aware that their brains also need to be active? It was important that this metacognitive awareness be somehow incorporated into the teaching of Reading Power, so that the students could have a concrete visual image of what needs to be going on inside their heads as they read.

Students will see that the brain becomes filled as their metacognitive knowledge of their thinking develops, demonstrating that active readers have many different things going on their heads while they read.

The Reading Powers Model is an interactive, visual prompt for the during-reading process; see page 28. Each poster depicts a child's head and shoulders, and the phrase "Fill Your Brain with Reading Power!" at the top. There are five separate, removable puzzle pieces that fit together and can be superimposed on the child's head. Each piece is labeled with a different reading power. As each reading power is introduced and taught, the appropriate puzzle piece is placed inside the image of the child's head. The idea behind the puzzle is that the pieces fit together to create the ideal proficient reader—"A POWER-ful brain reads well."

Because proficient readers often move from one strategy to another within a single reading experience, it is important to teach these reading powers cumulatively rather than separately. New pieces are added as new reading powers are introduced, but the pieces are never removed once placed in the head.

What Does Thinking Look Like?

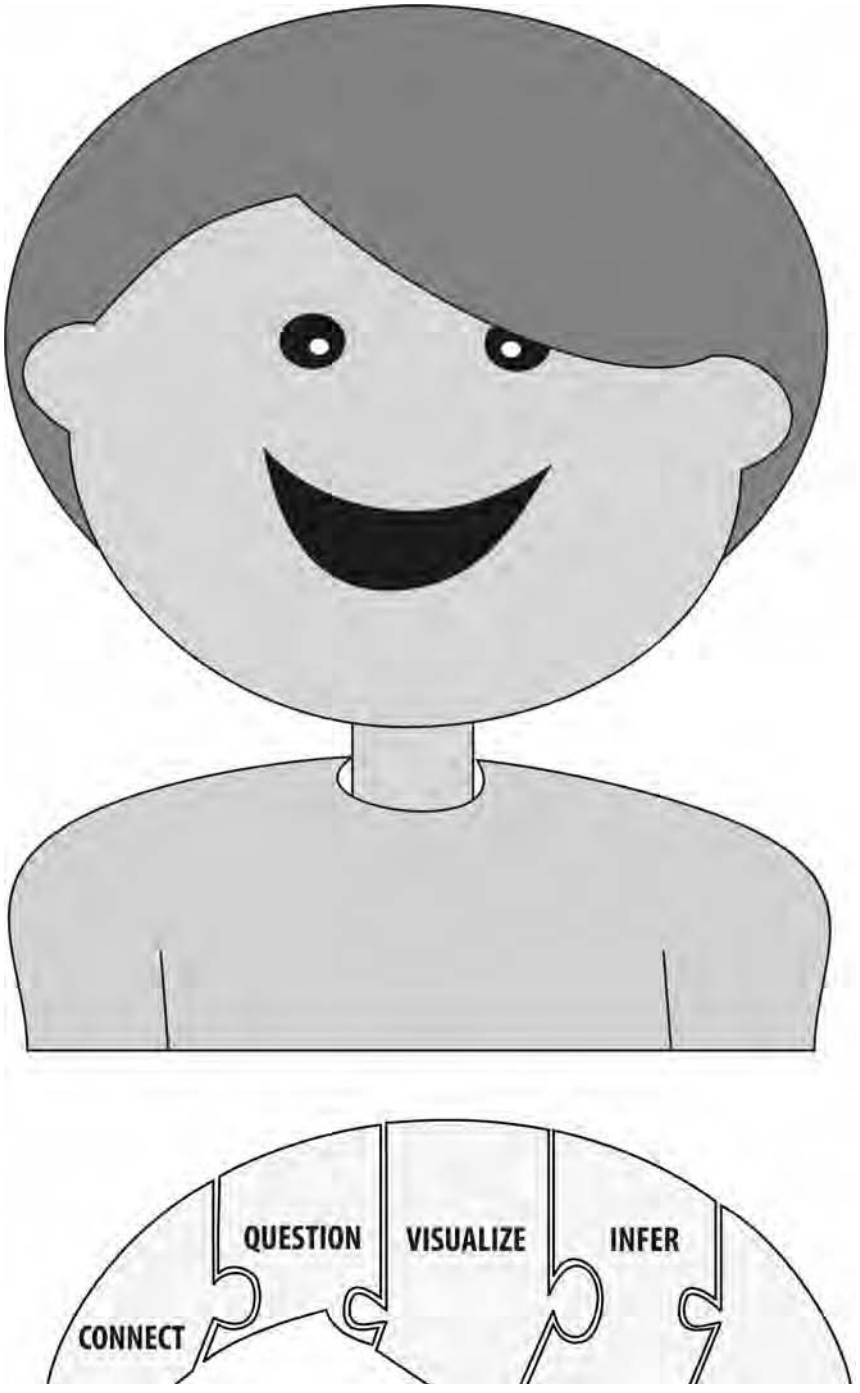
With younger children, I sometimes introduce the Reading Power Model by asking, "What parts of your body do you use when you read?" They often answer "hands" first, for holding the book. Other answers quickly follow: mouth, eyes, ears. But "the brain" is not an answer very often given, because we don't often refer to the brain when we are teaching students how to read.

Early in the school year, I like to explain to my students that one of my goals for them is that they will all be better readers in June than they are in September. The way I hope to reach this goal is by giving them many opportunities to read, but also by teaching them ways they can become more proficient readers. I explain that reading happens in two places: in the book and in your head. It happens in the book when we focus on the words with our eyes; it happens in our brains when we focus on what the words mean with our brains. Depending on the grade, I will say that most have them have already learned the in-the-book reading because they know how to read the words. I explain that, for the upcoming year, the focus of some of the reading lessons will be on the in-your-head reading.

The Reading Powers Model

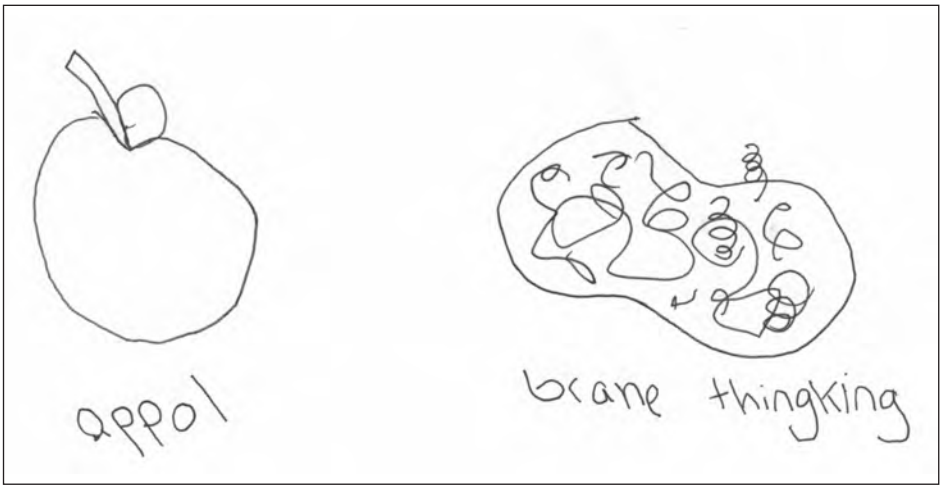
Name: _____ Date: _____

Fill Your Brain with Reading Power!



Pembroke Publishers © 2015 *Reading Power, Revised and Expanded* by Adrienne Gear ISBN 978-1-55138-310-1

- Begin the lesson by telling students that you will be spending a few minutes talking about the *thinking* part of reading. Ask them to have a pencil and a paper ready to do a short exercise. When students are ready, tell them they have 15 seconds to draw a picture of an apple. After 15 seconds, tell them to put their pencils down and to share and compare their apple drawing with a partner.
- Ask class questions about their drawings: *Who had a round apple? Curved apple? Stem? Leaf? Shiny spot?* etc.
- Ask students if it was easy or hard to draw a picture of an apple (*Easy!*) Why? (*Because we know what one looks like, have seen one, eaten one, touched one, etc.*)
- Tell students they have 15 seconds to draw a picture of *thinking*. After 15 seconds, invite students to share and compare.
- Many children will draw thought bubbles like the ones shown in comics or cartoons. Explain that a thought bubble shows thinking happening in the air, but that thinking actually happens in their heads.
- Invite students to revise their thinking pictures to show thinking happening on the inside of their heads. Have them share and compare their thinking pictures with a partner.
- Discuss the difference between drawing a picture of an apple and drawing a picture of thinking. Which was more challenging? (*Thinking*) Why? (*Because we can't see it.*)
- Explain to students that thinking is a very important part of reading, but that it is difficult to teach thinking since we can't actually see it! Ask, "What does thinking look like?"
- Tell the students that you have something that can help answer the question.



Grade 2 Sample

Introducing the Thinking Brain

I encourage teachers to name their model or have students help come up with a name for it. I call my Reading Powers Model Howard.

- Bring out the Reading Powers Model (see page 28) and explain to the students that Howard is a good reader who uses his eyes to read the words and his brain to think about those words. He is going to help us answer the question *What does thinking look like?* With the puzzle pieces in hand, I introduce, in brief, each of the reading powers, to help the students to "see thinking" more clearly:

I have very young children use magical "X-ray glasses" so they can look inside Howard's brain and watch while the pieces are placed inside.

The reason I know Howard is a good reader is that when he reads, his brain is busy. And if we could look inside Howard's head while he was reading, we would see five things going on in there. We call these five things "reading powers" because they've helped Howard become a powerful reader. Let's look inside Howard's brain to see what exactly is going on in there when he reads.

One way Howard uses his brain to think about a story is called *Connecting*. That means that something Howard might be reading about reminds him of something that happened to him once. Or he might be reading about a character that reminds him of himself or someone he knows. Or he might be reading a book that reminds him of another book he's read. And when that happens, it's called a *connection*.

(Place *Connect* piece in head.)

Howard is reading chapter books and novels, and most of these books do not have pictures in them. But Howard can read a story and, while he's reading, he can make the pictures right in his head. It's not a picture he sees with his eyes, but a picture he sees in his brain—a thinking picture. That is called *Visualizing*, and active readers visualize when they read to help them think about the story.

(Place *Visualize* piece in head.)

Another way Howard thinks about what he reads is to ask *Questions*. Sometimes teachers ask him questions after he's finished reading, but active readers ask questions *while* they read. Howard wonders while he reads.

(Place *Question* piece in head.)

Another thing that this reader can do while he reading and thinking is called *Inferring*. That might be a word that you have never heard before, but good readers infer while they read. This reader knows that not all authors write everything down in words. Some authors leave clues in their pictures and stories, and it's up to Howard to try to figure out what the author is trying to say. It's like he's filling in, in his head, what is not written on the page. After he asks a question he might try to answer it by adding a "maybe" into the story.

(Place *Infer* piece in head.)

The last thing that happens to Howard when he reads certain books is that his thinking is *Transformed*. That doesn't mean he turns into a robot or a building, but it does mean that some changes happen inside his head. You might read a story and say to yourself *"Hmm… I have never thought about it that way before."* To transform is to change, and sometimes Howard's thinking changes while he's reading.

(Place *Transform* piece in head.)

(Hold an open book up to the Reading Powers Model.)

Let's watch Howard read for a while. Oh… Howard just made a connection. Now he's wondering something…. Now he's visualizing…. Now he's making another

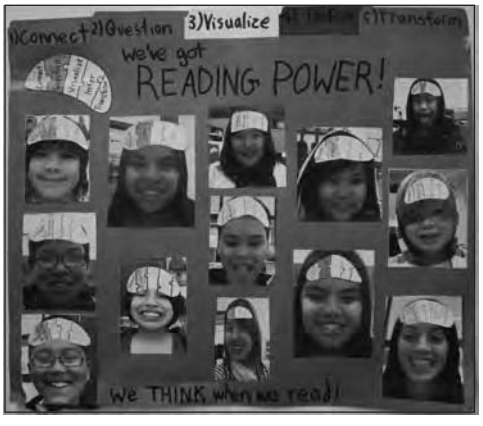
> connection…. Now he's inferring…. Wow! Howard's brain is certainly busy, isn't it? He's using the all the reading powers, and you can too. Each reading power is a piece of your thinking that can help you understand what you read.
>
> Howard has been reading this way for a long time, he's able to use the reading powers at the same time. He goes back and forth between them while he's reading—on one page he might ask a question, on the next page he might make a connection, then on another page he might make a picture in his head. But it's a little hard to do them all at once, so this year we are going to learn them one at a time. And I'll tell you something that might surprise you—you have all of these reading powers in your brains already, you just might not know it!

Children have often laughed at Howard, calling him Rainbow Brain and Helmet Head, but the Reading Powers Model has provided them with a visual that they might not otherwise have. At my school, this visual has been the focal point for many children's conversations. One class may join another class for buddy reading and recognize the Model, but see a different piece inside the head. The Reading Powers Model can help reinforce the common language of thinking and help turn an abstract concept into something concrete.

Each time I begin a new reading power, I always go back to Howard and review the idea of what thinking looks like with my students:

> Why are we learning this again? We are learning this because good readers think while they read, and this thinking helps them understand the story better. Thinking looks different to every person because each of us has different ideas and experiences stored in our heads. But if we all learn to use our thinking brains by making connections or asking questions or making pictures in our heads, we will learn to how to understand the story better.

Over the years, there have been many adaptations to the Reading Powers Model. Some teachers use store-bought posters of celebrities and place the brain pieces directly on the posters. Some primary teachers, who might not be teaching all the reading powers, have adapted the brain pieces by enlarging three of them to fit inside the head rather than using all five. Some intermediate teachers have had their classes design their own Models, in which they include unique hairstyles, clothes, and even face piercings! I know of a principal who told me he doesn't use the poster anymore: "I'm large, I'm bald—so I just stick the pieces on my head!" How you develop or create the Model is up to you, but I do believe it is essential to create a concrete visual for you and your students to refer to: *This is what thinking looks like.*



Students at Gitwinksihlkw Elementary School (School District 92 Nisga'a in the Nass Valley north of Terrace, BC) display their "personalized" Reading Power brains!

The Reading Power Theme Song

Connect Song: page 43
Visualize Song and Chant: page 67
Question Song: page 89
Infer Song: page 108
Transform Song and Chant: page 128

After the introduction lesson, the students of Tina Gill's Kindergarten class created the Reading Power Theme Song (below) and sang it for me, shouting the word "Brain" each time they sang it. Having five-year-olds sing a song about metacognition was most inspiring! I asked them why they were shouting the word "Brain" in the song, and one boy told me that it was "because the brain is so important when you read!" When I began teaching Reading Power to the intermediate students, I borrowed Mrs. Gill's Kindergarten class to sing the song to the bigger kids.

Mrs. Gill's class inspired me to create a song or chant to accompany each of the reading powers. They can be taught as you introduce a new reading power and will help to reinforce the key ideas for each strategy. As my own class helped me write many of the verses, feel free to replace or add your own. I know of schools in Vancouver where they are reinforcing the common language throughout the school through these songs, singing the songs at weekly school assemblies as the school focuses on each of the strategies.

* * *

Reading Power Theme Song
(to the tune of "Head & Shoulders")

A more hygienic trend is to give a fist-bump instead of a high-five. You can change the lyrics to reflect this.

Hands and mouth and
Eyes and BRAIN!
Eyes and BRAIN!
Eyes and BRAIN!
Hands and mouth and
Eyes and BRAIN!
High-five Reading Power!

Reading Power Book Collections

"For the price of a bowl of soup, I bought today at an old bookshop a volume infinitely valuable. All the way home on the train I read it; I was enlarged, I acquired merit, I added to my life."
—David Grayson

On the first day of my Language Arts methodology course at the University of British Columbia many years ago, the professor, a woman by the name of Clare Staubs, entered the small room in the Ponderosa Building and began her lecture by reading aloud the first chapter of *The Great Gilly Hopkins* by Katherine Patterson. She told us, on that first day, that the single most important thing that we could do as teachers was to read aloud to our students every day. She began every lecture after that by reading another chapter from the book and, while some in her class may have been put off by her read-alouds during a university class, I was forever changed. That experience had perhaps a more profound impact on me as a teacher than anything else I learned. I made a commitment to myself that, when I became a teacher, I was going to do just what Clare Staubs suggested. In my more than twenty years of teaching, I have made many mistakes, but reading aloud to my class every day was something I have been committed to and never regretted. No matter what the grade, no matter what was going on in the day, I read aloud to my students every day they walk into my classroom. Reading

aloud to students every day is my responsibility as a teacher, but for me it has also been a privilege. The literature that is available to children, teens, and young adults now is so extraordinarily rich, stunningly beautiful, and profound that we would be doing our students an enormous disservice if we did not share it with them. Books have "added to my life," as David Grayson puts it, and have certainly added to the lives of my students.

"Great books are central to teaching comprehension."
—Harvey & Goudvis, *Strategies That Work*

I encourage intermediate teachers to use picture books in their classrooms when introducing each of the strategies. David Pearson speaks about how he believes that, if teachers continue to try to teach students new reading strategies using texts that are "at the edge of their competence," students will have a much more difficult time grasping the new strategy and applying it to their reading; whereas if we bring the reading level down slightly to teach and practice the strategy, the students will have a far easier time learning and applying it. This supports my belief that using picture books that are at a slightly less challenging reading level to teach a strategy gives our students a better chance of seeing, learning, and understanding the strategy. Intermediate children are thrilled to be given permission to read picture books, and enjoy the experience tremendously. I have had Grade 7 students fight over who gets *No, David!* books by David Shannon to practice Connecting, or leaping up to grab *The Cinder-Eyed Cats* for Visualizing.

Connect Books: page 55
Visualize Books: page 77
Question Books: page 99
Infer Books: page 118
Transform Books: page 140
Novel Study Books: page 168

Reading Power opens the door to literature for both teachers and students, and introduces them to an extraordinary range of titles, authors, and illustrators. Once I became familiar with the type of books that support each strategy, it became difficult to read a new book without thinking about which strategy I might use it for. During workshops, teachers often tell me of books they know that are not on the list that would be "perfect for Connecting" or "perfect for Visualizing." I encourage you to add your own favorites to the lists in this book. Certain books just lend themselves well to a certain strategy, and it is obvious how to categorize them. Other books tend to fit more than one strategy. I know a book is good when I don't know what bin to put it in!

In as much as I am committed to read aloud every day, I must admit that at times there used to be no rhyme or reason for my daily read-alouds. I often just read a book to my students because I liked it, it suited the special occasion of the calendar year, or I had had a recent visit to a bookstore. But now, Reading Power has given me the structure under which all my read-alouds now fall. I specifically choose books that support the strategy I am teaching and intentionally integrate the language while I read. It is for this reason that I created Reading Power book bins. The book bins are not a necessity and, let's face it, can be an expensive endeavor, but they have made life a little easier for the teachers who use them. There is not enough time in a teacher's day, and having all the books in one place, ready to go, has certainly proved to be a huge time saver.

Picture books are not just for use in primary grades. In fact, many of the picture books available now I would consider too challenging both in language and theme for younger students.

I love picture books, but have discovered over the years that some books just work better for teaching and practicing a strategy than others. I decided to create Reading Power book bins that each contains a collection of books specifically selected because they lend themselves best to a particular strategy. Books are stored in a plastic tub to be signed out by teachers. Some schools keep the book tubs in the library, while others store their books in their classrooms.

Some teachers select three or four books for each strategy that they keep separately. These Gem Books are used by the teachers specifically for their modeling lessons.

We all experience frustration when a student announces, "We read that book last year!" just as you begin to read. While we cannot prevent this from happening, we can find ways to reduce this problem by designating certain books for certain grades. This requires some negotiating and collaboration among teachers, and possibly the storing of specific books for modeling lessons separately. Another way to avoid repeat reads is to rotate the Reading Power books each year. As new books are purchased and placed into tubs, some of the older titles can be added to the school library collection. Some teacher librarians label these books on the spine with a *C*, *V, Q*, *I*, or *T* so that they can be easily found on the shelves.

"Close reading does not happen when you read x number of times. It happens when what you are reading matters to you."
—Kyleen Beers, *Notice and Note*

The turnover of children's books is enormous and, as one title goes out of print, there are three more great new titles released. After conferring with several teacher-librarians in the district, I have decided to keep some books that have gone out of print on this list. Some of these out-of-print books are classics and there always seems to be copies of them hiding on library shelves, waiting to be read.

Here are lists of my top picks, favorite new books for both Primary and Intermediate grades for each of the five reading powers. If a school is creating a Reading Power collection, these would be the books I would purchase as a starter collection. More extensive lists are included at the end of each strategy chapter. I am thrilled with the quality of extraordinary picture books I have been able to share in these lists and that you, in turn, can share with your students.

Reading Power Books

CONNECT (PRIMARY)

Anholt, Catherine & Laurence. *Good Days, Bad Days*
Carlson, Nancy. *Sometimes You Barf*
Curtis, Jamie. *My Brave Book of Firsts*
Juster, Norton. *The Hello, Goodbye Window*
McBratney, Sam. *I'm Sorry*
Parr, Todd. *It's Okay to Make Mistakes*
Rosenthal, Amy Krouse. *The OK Book*
Schwartz, Amy. *100 Things That Make Me Happy*
Shannon, David. *No, David!* (or any of the David books)
Shannon, David. *Too Many Toys!*
Stinson, Kathy. *Red is Best*
Young, Jessica. *My Blue Is Happy*

CONNECT (INTERMEDIATE)

Boelts, Maribeth. *Those Shoes*
Browne, Anthony. *What If?*
Fleischman, Paul. *Matchbox Diary*
Heide, Florence Parry. *Some Things Are Scary*
Kelly, Marty. *12 Terrible Things*
Khan, Rukhsana. *Big Red Lollipop*
Larsen, Andrew. *See You Next Year*
O'Neill, Alexis. *The Worst Best Friend*
Polacco, Patricia. *Bully*
Rapp, Jennifer. *I Can Wait for the Bell to Ring*
Rosenthal, Amy Krouse. *One of Those Days*
Waber, Bernard. *Courage*

VISUALIZE (PRIMARY)

Ets, Marie Hall. *Gilberto and the Wind*
Keats, Ezra Jack. *The Snowy Day*
Lemniscates. *Silence*
London, Jonathan. *Puddles*
Morris, Jackie. *Tell Me A Dragon*
Pendziwol, Jean E. *Once Upon a Northern Night*
Weiss, George David & Bob Thiele. *What a Wonderful World*
Willis, Jeanne. *Mole's Sunrise*
Yankey, Lindsay. *Bluebird*

VISUALIZE (INTERMEDIATE)

Carroll, Lewis; James A. Stewart (illus.). *Jabberwocky*
Cooper, Elisha. *A Good Night Walk*
Cottin, Menena. *The Black Book of Color*
Larsen, Andrew. *See You Next Year*
Noyes, Alfred; Murray Kimber (illus.). *The Highwayman*
Pilkey, Dav. *The Paperboy*
Reid, Barbara. *Snow Day*
Ryan, Pam Munoz. *Hello, Ocean*
Van Dusan, Chris. *If I Built a House*

QUESTION (PRIMARY)

Barnett, Mac. *Sam and Dave Dig a Hole*
Bunting, Eve. *Fly Away Home*
Campbell, K.G. *The Mermaid and the Shoe*
Nelson, Kadir. *Baby Bear*
Rohmann, Eric. *The Cinder-Eyed Cats*
Santat, Dan. *The Adventures of Beekle*
Soman, David. *Three Bears in a Boat*
Stinson, Kathy. *The Man and the Violin*

QUESTION (INTERMEDIATE)

Abercrombie, Barbara. *Charlie Anderson*
Adderson, Caroline. *Norman, Speak!*
Bunting, Eve. *Smoky Nights*
Davies, Nicola. *The Promise*
Gallaz, Christophe. *Rose Blanche*
Lauthier, Jennifer. *The Stamp Collector*
De Lestrade, Agnes. *Phileas's Fortune*
Miki, Roy & Slavia. *Dolphin SOS*
Pennypacker, Sara. *Sparrow Girl*
Perry, Sarah. *If*
Say, Allen. *The Stranger in the Mirror*
Skarmeta, Antonio. *The Composition*
Wild, Margaret. *Fox*

INFER (PRIMARY)

Alborough, Jez. *Hug*
Boyd, Lizi. *Inside Outside*
Boyd, Lizi. *The Farmer and the Clown*
Lee, JiHyeon. *Pool*
Lehman, Barbara. *The Red Book* (or *The Museum Trip*)
Mack, Jeff. *Look!*
Meyer, Mercer. *A Boy, a Dog, and a Frog*
Miyares, Daniel. *Float*
Pett, Mark. *The Girl and the Bicycle* (or *The Boy and the Airplane*)
Thomson, Bill. *Chalk* (or *Fossil*)
Van Hout, Mies. *Happy*
Young, Cybele. *Ten Birds*

INFER (INTERMEDIATE)

Aslan, Christopher. *Dude*
Baker, Jeannie. *Window*
Baker, Jeannie. *Mirror*
Browne, Anthony. *Voices in the Park* (or *Zoo*, or any of his books)
Lawson, JonArno .*Sidewalk Flowers*
Lee, JiHyeon. *Pool*
Popov, *Why?*
Raschka, Chris. *Yo! Yes!*
Tan, Sean. *Rules of Summer*
Van Allsburg, Chris. Any of his books; *The Stranger*, *The Sweetest Fig*, and *Mysteries of Harris Burdick* are my favorites
Wiesner, David. *Flotsam*
Willis, Jeanne. *Chicken Clicking*
Young, Cybele. *The Queen's Shadow*

TRANSFORM (PRIMARY)

Barnett, Mac. *Extra Yarn*
Brown, Peter. *Mr. Tiger Goes Wild*
Cousins, Lucy. *I'm the Best!*
DiOrio, Rana. *What Does It Need to Be Present?*
Hall, Michael. *Red: A Crayon's Story*
Johnson, Mariana Ruiz. *I Know a Bear*
Nelson, Kadir. *If You Plant a Seed*
Pearson, Emily. *Ordinary Mary's Extraordinary Deed*
Snicket, Lemony. *The Dark*
Spires, Ashley. *The Most Magnificent Thing*
Upjohn, Rebecca. *Lily and the Paper Man*

TRANSFORM (INTERMEDIATE)

Brisson, Pat. *Melissa Parkington's Beautiful, Beautiful Hair*
Bunting, Eve. *Yard Sale*
Danneberg, Julie. *First Day Jitters*
De Kinder, Jan. *Red*
Ludwig, Trudy. *The Invisible Boy*
Madonna. *Mr. Peabody's Apple*
Rath, Tom. *How Full is Your Bucket? For Kids*
Reynolds, Peter H. *Ish*
Tsuchiya, Yukio. *Faithful Elephants*
Zuckerberg, Randi. *Dot*

Creating a Reading Power Book Collection

The success of this program is not tied to the specific book titles provided; it is grounded in the principles of thinking. I always stress in workshops that creating Reading Power book collections for your school is not a necessity; however, it does make things easier.

3 The Power to Connect

Connect Song
(to the tune of "Brush Your Teeth")

When I read a story and my brain says, "Hey!
This part reminds me of the other day!"
It's called "connect"—da da da da da da da da da da
It's called "connect"—da da da da da da da da da da

When I read a story and my brain says, "Whoa!
This part reminds me of my friend, Jo!"
It's called "connect"—da da da da da da da da da da
It's called "connect"—da da da da da da da da da da

When I read a story and my brain says, "Cool!
This part reminds me of my school!"
It's called "connect"—da da da da da da da da da da
It's called "connect"—da da da da da da da da da da

When I read a story and my brain says "Look!
This part reminds me of another book!"
It's called "connect"—da da da da da da da da da da
It's called "connect"—da da da da da da da da da da

When I read a story and my brain says, "Wow!
This part reminds me of my grandpa's cow!"
It's called "connect"—da da da da da da da da da da
It's called "connect"—da da da da da da da da da da

* * *

"No story sits by itself. Sometimes stories meet at corners and sometimes they cover one another like stones beneath a river."
—Mitch Albom, *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*

I am in a book club. At the end of our monthly meetings, after rich and thoughtful discussions about the books, after sharing passages that affected us or images that stayed with us, after analyzing the writers' craft, there are some books I may "accidentally" leave behind at the host's house. Other books I bring home, but then happily pass on to my sister or a friend to read without worrying about getting them back. But there are a certain few books I bring home from book club and place on a special shelf on the bookcase in my living room. There they are, not to be read by anyone else, but to sit and be coveted. I touch their spines every once in a while—I may even flip through the pages—but those books have become my treasures. Why, I often wondered, did some books end up on this shelf and not others? Children often say they like a particular book because "it

was good." Perhaps that actually means, "I connected to this book." I now understand that the books that end up on my shelf are there because my life story has somehow been woven into their pages. Those books are no longer someone else's story—they have become my story.

The ability to connect to text is perhaps the easiest one for children to understand and master, yet it is singularly the most powerful. Connecting creates the path for all other reading strategies to walk upon. When a reader begins to relate to a story in terms of his or her own life, the story simply makes more sense. We know ourselves better than we know anything else, so to read a book through the eyes of our own lives is the essence of "creating meaning." The notion that we bring ourselves into the books we read, that we weave our life stories into the stories that we read, is a deep truth. To teach children to learn to make sense of a text for themselves is teaching them not *what* to think, but *how* to think. When we teach children to connect, we are teaching them to pay attention to moments, feelings, characters, and places in a story that trigger links to their own feelings, characters, and places in their life story. Reading unlocks the memories that are the backdrop of our lives.

Your life is a story, it's just not written down on paper.

After a Reading Power workshop, a teacher came up to me to thank me for helping her solve one of the greatest mysteries of her life: why she has never liked borrowing books from the library. She explained that she had always been an avid reader, that reading books had been a hobby of hers all her life. She had, she was sometimes ashamed to admit, spent a small fortune on books. Friends and colleagues always wondered why she didn't just go to the library to borrow books to read instead of buying so many. But she had never, she told me, enjoyed borrowing books from the library. She had tried, but preferred instead to buy them. She never knew the reason for this, she said, until she heard me talk about connecting. She realized that, when she reads a book, the book becomes "her story" and that after experiencing the power of connecting through reading it, returning it to the library meant sharing her life with the next person who might come along and borrow that book. An extreme example perhaps, but one that clearly illustrates the power of connecting.

When readers connect…

- the story reminds them of people, places, and feelings they have experienced.
- their minds become filled with memories.
- they are making sense of the text in terms of their own experiences and background knowledge.
- they can make connections to pictures, events, characters, and feelings from the story.
- they are most likely reading books about realistic situations, such as family, feelings, friendship, school, siblings, pets, vacations, etc.

"A writer only begins a book. A reader finishes it."
—Samuel Johnson

Our life experiences deepen and enrich our life story to create the well of experiences from which we draw when we read. Unfortunately, not all children come to us with a wealth of life stories upon which to draw. We need to be aware of this and to try to provide stories they will be able to connect with successfully: stories about school, family, friendship, siblings, losing a tooth, birthday parties, and pets. We need to be constantly modeling our own connections and allowing children to share theirs. Just as we do not connect to every book we read, we

cannot expect our students to connect to every book. If a child does not connect to a story one day, it's okay. Encourage the child to connect to the next story. We can gently nudge children in the direction we want them to go by continually modeling our thinking and encouraging them to become more confident in their connections. Viviane, a Grade 2 student at Laura Secord, was a keen Connecter. During the Group Connect lessons (see page 49), she was one of the first to put her sticky note in the book. But after reading the story *Franklin's New Friend* to the class, Viviane was the only student who still had her sticky in her hand. When I questioned why she hadn't added her sticky to the book, she responded, "How can I make a connection to that book? I am NOT a turtle!"

New Thinking about Connecting

Going Deeper with Connections

"If books could have more, give more, be more, show more, they would still need readers, who bring to them sound and smell and light and all the rest that can't be in books. The book needs you."
—Gary Paulson, *The Winter Room*

Connecting is one of the easiest strategies for children to grasp. We need to be careful, however, that we are guiding students to make connections that are meaningful. While it might be easy to look at a picture of a dog and say, "My uncle has a dog," that is not elevating a students' thinking or understanding. It is up to us to guide our students towards making connections that are going to move them forward in their thinking. In my years of teaching students how to make connections to text, I have witnessed students making connections to just about everything. And while we can celebrate that our students are engaged and participating, those of us who have experienced these random connections will know that not all of them enhance understanding, and they can quickly derail a lesson! It is essential, therefore, when teaching students how to make connections, to explain and model this important point. You will find lessons on *going deeper* on page 50.

Anyone who has taught students how to make connections has experienced a student going off topic, sharing a connection that has nothing to do with the story and stimulating a chain reaction in which the rest of the students make "connections" that have less and less to do with what is being read. While I struggled when this happened more frequently than I liked, I realized that I was partly to blame for it happening: I was so focused on the strategy that I, too, had lost sight of the content of the story. I developed the BIBB (Bring It Back to the Book) (see lesson on page 51) to address this problem and to help both students and teacher refocus on the content.

Brain Pockets

Another concept that evolved to address connections that stray from the reading content is the use of Brain Pockets. See lesson on page 46 for using my visual for teaching students about their schema. The idea for the Brain Pockets started from working with a student I had several years ago. He was a bright boy, but when he raised his hand, I tended to avoid eye contact! No matter what we were reading or talking about in class, his thinking often took him far away from the text. It was frustrating—I didn't want to discourage him from using his imagination, but making connections to aliens kidnapping grandmothers from Halifax was not exactly the kind of connection I was looking for when we were reading a book about Canada. With brain pockets, I was able to tell him that he was "in the wrong pocket" rather than telling him his connection was wrong.

Sequential Lessons for Connecting

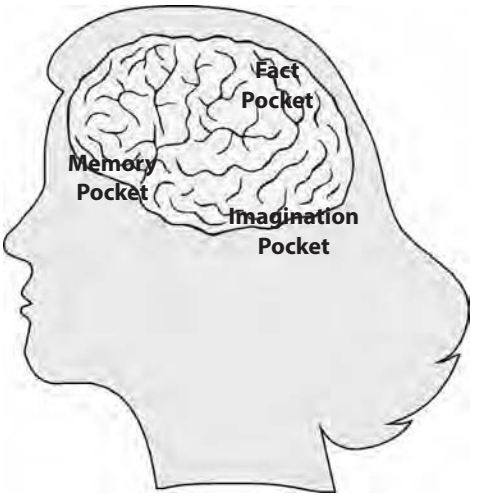
Lesson 1 (Teacher Directed): Introducing the Power to Connect, Part 1

- Remind students that good readers are also good thinkers. Using the Reading Power Model, place the Connect piece inside the head. Explain that connecting is one way a reader can think about a story, and that today you will be talking about what connecting is.
- Ask students to make a circle with their finger and thumb on each hand.
- At the count of 3, students are to connect their circles. Tell them that there are different ways and to consider different possibilities. Do not explain any further than that.
- Once students have connected their circles, invite them to share and compare their connection with others.
- Notice and reflect on the different ways student connected their circles (Linking circles, touching side by side, circles on top of each other, making funny upside-down glasses over their eyes).
- Explain that everyone was connecting circles but did it in different ways.
- Ask students for other words that might mean the same as connecting (linking, merging, joining, putting together).
- Explain that, when readers connect, they are merging or joining together the book with their thinking. Show that the book is one circle and the reading brain is the other circle.
- Ask students what is inside their brain that they might be connecting to (memories, experiences, people, feelings, places).
- Draw a brain on the board or interactive whiteboard. Explain that the brain is a powerful part of our body because it is the control centre for everything, including our thinking.
- Explain that the brain is also an amazing place because it is the storage place for our thinking. Everything we think about and learn about gets stored inside the small space that is our brain.
- Explain the word *schema*, which I refer to as our "thinking storage." Another way of describing schema is like a computer storage filled with files of different information.

When discussing where connections come from, remind students that connections can be stored in our hearts, as well as in our brains. Connections tied to feelings and emotions, in fact, are often the most power and meaningful.

> I like to think of my brain as a storage place for my thinking. Inside this huge storage place of thinking, we have different places to store our thinking. I call these Brain Pockets. We have three main pockets in our brains: experiences and memories of those experiences are stored in the Memory Pocket; information and facts we learn are stored in the Fact Pocket; and creative thinking is stored in the Imagination Pocket.
>
> (As you talk, divide the drawn brain into three sections and label them.)

When talking to students about what is stored our Memory Pocket, I like to refer to the collection of experiences and memories as chapters in my life story. A person's life is a story and every experience we have in our life adds another chapter to it. It's amazing to think that the memories of our life are stored in a tiny pocket of our brain!



- Explain that these brain pockets are very important when we read because they help us with our understanding. Depending on the type of book being read, the reader will find connections in different pockets. Refer to visual above.
- Give examples: connections to a story about friends come from the Memory Pocket; connections to reading about volcanoes come from a Fact Pocket; connections when reading Harry Potter come from the Imagination Pocket.
- Optional: Provide students with a brain graphic with blank pockets and invite them to draw or write in each section to illustrate important memories, facts they know a lot about, and things they imagine they might be connecting to.
- End the lesson:

> For the next few weeks, we will be learning and practicing how to make connections when we read.

I also use Brain Pockets when I teach writing, as an illustration of ideas for writing and where writers get them.

Beatrice Doesn't Want To by Laura Numeroff and *Matchbox Diary* by Sid Fleischman are books I like to share at the end of this lesson. Both are excellent illustrations of making connections and the use of Memory Pockets.

Students can write or draw a reflection about what they learned about Making Connections in their Reading Power notebook.

Lesson 2 (Teacher Directed): Introducing the Power to Connect, Part 2

It is important to make children aware of the individuality that comes from making sense of text through our connections. There is no one right connection, because we use our own schema or Brain Pockets to construct meaning.

- Remind students that they are learning about how readers can understand what they read by making connections. Review the idea of Brain Pockets with them.
- Read *Rondo in C* by Paul Fleischman or *Once Upon an Ordinary School Day* by Colin McNaughton if you are able to get copies.
- After reading one of those books, ask students: "Why is it that everyone in the room is listening to the same piece of music (or reading the same story) but they are all thinking of different things? Why isn't everyone making connections to the same thing?" (Because we are all different and our Brain Pockets are filled with different memories, experiences, and knowledge)

The book *Rondo in C* by Paul Fleischman is a brilliant example of making connections to music. It is out of print, but if you are able to find a copy in your local library or through a used book site, I highly recommend it.

- Explain that there is no one right way to connect, and that two people can read the same book but make different connections. Tell students that what triggers a memory for one person might not trigger a memory for anybody else. Or two people might make a connection to the same part of the story for completely different reasons.
- Give everyone a blank piece of paper. Explain that you are going to be playing a piece of music and they will practice making connections.
- Play a piece of music and invite students to close their eyes and listen; I like to use Vivaldi's "Spring" from *The Four Seasons* or *The Flight of the Bumblebee* by Rimsky-Korsakov. While they listen, students are to think about what the music reminds them of or makes them think about.
- Invite students to draw a picture of the connection they made with the music. When everyone is finished, invite students to share their connection with a partner.
- Display the papers around the room and discuss how everyone listened to the same piece of music but made different connections.
- End the lesson by generating a Making Connections anchor chart to post in the classroom.

Another option for this lesson is to have the students fold their paper in half, with each side of the paper representing one of their brain pockets. The first time they listen to the music, they draw their Memory connections on one half of the sheet; the second time, they draw their Imagination connections on the other half.

"Books are mirrors: you only see in them what you already have inside you."
—Carlos Ruiz Zafón, *The Shadow of the Wind*

SAMPLE CONNECT ANCHOR CHART

Good Readers Make Connections!

We make connections to…
- Our memories, experiences, and feelings
- Facts and information we already know
- Our imagination
- Other books, movies, or TV shows

This reminds me of…
This makes make me think about…
I'm making a connection to the part when…

Lessons 3–4 (Teacher Directed): Modeling Your Thinking

- Find your special Connect Book; i.e., a picture book that elicits strong connections and memories for you.
- Model a read-aloud/think-aloud with this special Connect book, using sticky notes to mark your connections with a *C* or a Thinking Bubble to hold up when you share your connection. Pause on a page, insert your sticky note or hold up your Thinking Bubble, and model, using this language: "This part of the story reminds me of…"
- Students wishing to participate while you are modeling can do so with a "quiet connections thumbs-up" (see page 39).
- Follow with at least two more similar lessons, using different books, within a few days. As you model, try to make sure that you are connecting to each of these: an event from the story, a character, and a feeling.

I discovered that it is possible to buy sticky notes in the shape of a thinking bubble! This is a wonderful too to use when modeling your thinking.

Finding Your Special Connect Book

My special Connect book, the one I always use to model that first Connect lesson, is Robert McKlosky's *One Morning in Maine* because it reminds me of summer holidays spent with my family on Mayne Island. The story is filled with so many fond memories of my childhood, it feels as if it was written about me. One teacher who was born in Saskatchewan uses *If You're Not From the Prairie* by Henry Ripplinger. It takes her two days to read because each page is a story from her childhood on the farm. Jodi Carson, a Literacy Mentor, searched for weeks until she finally found her Connect book: *Tales of a Gambling Grandma* by David Kaur Khalsa, because it reminds her of when her grandmother used to teach her and her sister how to play blackjack every Friday night. It may take you a few visits to the library to find your own special Connect book. The students might not remember the story you read, but they certainly will remember your connections to it!

Lesson 5 (Guided Group Practice): Group Connect

- Explain to students that they will be participating in a read-aloud by paying attention to their thinking and by noticing when they make connections in the story.
- Pass out one sticky note to each student. Ask students to put their name and a big letter *C* on it.
- Read aloud a book from the Connect bin and have students listen for all their connections.
- Read the book again, and have each student come up and put his/her sticky note on the page where his/her best connection was made, or where the student's thinking voice "was the loudest." Students are not sharing at this point, simply placing their sticky notes in the book when you get to the right page.
- Continue to model by placing your own sticky note on one of the pages.
- Model how you want students to share: "I put my sticky on the page where…. This reminded me of…"
- Invite students to share their connections out loud with a partner. When partners are sharing, circulate around the room, listening for all connections. Choose one pair of students to come up to the front to model their connections. Choose the pair who really went beyond a simple statement like "This reminds me of my brother" to sharing a "chapter" of their life stories.
- Depending on time, students can chose one of the Connect templates (see pages 58–62) to write and/or draw their connections.
- Suggested books for this lesson: *Some Things Are Scary* by Florence Parry Heide; *Courage* by Bernard Waber; *The Party* by Barbara Reid; *One of Those Days, The OKAY Book,* or *It's Not Fair!* by Amy Krouse Rosenthal; *No, David!* by David Shannon; *My Brave Book of Firsts* by Jamie Lee Curtis; *Twelve Terrible Things* by Marty Kelley.
- You can follow this lesson with similar Group Connects and invite students to turn and share their connections with a partner. Choose one or two students to share their connections with the class. This informal sharing is an opportunity to monitor students' connections and to give praise for the strong connections, guidance for the weaker ones, and encouragement for the non-connectors.
- You might choose to have students draw and/or write about their connections: choose template Making Connections #1 or #2 on pages 61 and 62.

Some primary teachers find sticky notes too distracting for their students and choose, instead, to give each student a Thinking Bubble. Thinking Bubbles can be made by cutting out a bubble shape and gluing it on a craft stick. Students hold up their Thinking Bubbles during the read aloud; once they have shared, the bubble is collected. The goal is that every student will have a chance to share a connection before the end of the story.

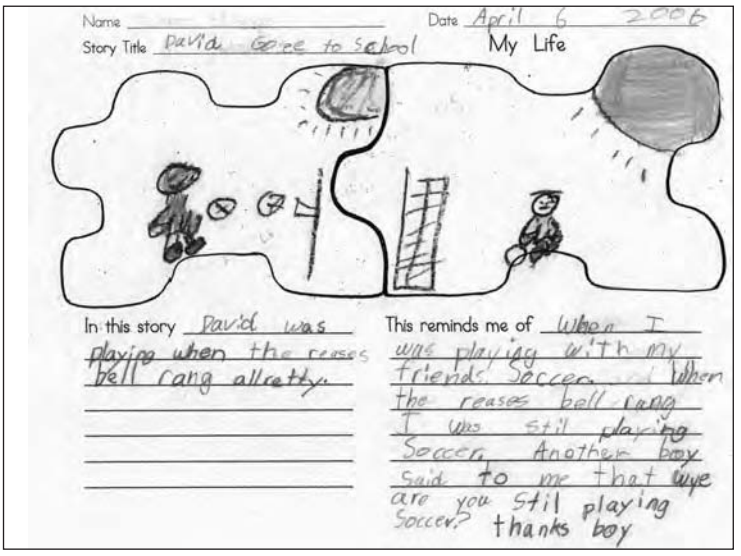
Lessons 6–7 (Guided Group Practice): Expanding Connections

- Create a large chart (Expanding Your Connections #1 on page 58) to display in the classroom.
- Explain to students that when we read, we can connect to different parts of the book: part of the story, a picture, a character, or a feeling.
- Repeat Group Connect lesson (page 49). After students have placed their stickies in the book, explain that you will be returning their stickies shortly. Refer to the chart and tell them you would like the stickies placed on the column where they think they made their connection today. Model with your sticky note and explain your thinking.
- Page by page, pass the stickies back and have students put them on the chart.
- The next day, remind students where they put their stickies on the chart. Encourage them to try to put their stickies in a different spot today during the Group Connect.
- This same lesson can used when introducing students to different ways we make connections. Depending on the grade level, you can introduce students to T–S (Text-to-Self: *This book reminds me of the time when I…*), T–T (Text-to-Text: *This book reminds me of another book I've read*), and T–W (Text to World: *This book reminds me of something I already know about the world*) connections. (See template on page 59.)
- In conjunction with the Brain Pockets lesson (page 46), you can also invite students to make T–M (Text-to-Memory), T–F (Text-to-Fact), and T–I (Text-to-Imagination) connections. (See Brain Pockets template on page 63.)

Lesson 8–9 (Teacher Directed): Going Deeper with Connections: Quick and Deep-Thinking

Most students learn to connect relatively easily, but there is a tendency for some to connect to everything. While it can be initially exciting to hear them making connections, not all connections enhance understanding. Helping students to make effective, meaningful connections is an important next step.

- Explain that not all connections help readers understand the story better.
- Introduce the idea of Quick connections (e.g., "I have a blue hat like the one in that picture.") and Deep-Thinking connections (e.g., "That reminds me of the time when I got teased at school for wearing dresses every day and I felt really embarrassed.").
- Spend time modeling the difference between the two levels of connections, so that students can begin to see and understand the difference.
- Sometimes I invite students to listen to my connections and, if they think my connection is a Quick one, they can snap their fingers. If they think the connection is a Deep-Thinking one, they can point to their heads.



Grade 2 Sample

Lesson 10–11 (Guided Group Practice): Going Deeper with Connections: Put On Your BIBB!

I refer to these connections as "burnt hamburger connections," because I once had a student make a connection to their dad's burnt barbecue hamburgers after seeing a picture of a hamburger in the book. The book was about a boy who dumps his best friend to hang out with the new cool kid—not about cooking hamburgers!

Students sometimes get side-tracked by a story they want to share that has nothing to do with the story you are reading. This can cause a chain reaction—soon many students are making connections to the first student's story and not the book. Within a short time, the book is off the radar entirely! The more often we can guide students to make relevant, meaningful connections—as opposed to quick, random, or off-track connections—the more likely they will learn to find meaningful connections.

- Explain to students that not all connections are going to help them find meaning.
- When a student does go off track with his/her thinking, guide them to bring their thinking back to the book.
- Explain the acronym BIBB stands for Bring It Back to the Book, with "It" referring to their thinking.
- When a student makes a connection that is not connected to the story, remind that student of BIBB.
- Ask: *What is this story about?* and *Has your connection helped you to understand the story better?*

A small plastic baby bib with *BIBB* on it hangs in my classroom. Whenever a student makes a connection that is not connected to the story, I will stop that student and say, "I think you need to put on your BIBB." (I no longer actually tie it on them!)

Lessons 12–13 (Independent Practice): Trading Connections

These sticky notes act as small windows into your students' thinking and can be used for assessment.

- Have each student choose his or own book from the Connect collection (see book list on pages 55–57). Provide each with their own sticky notes.
- Ask them to read silently and mark their connections with their sticky notes. Older students can jot down notes about their connections on each sticky; younger students will simply code the sticky with a *C* and their names.
- As students finish, they can find a partner and share their connections. Encourage students to find a page where they both had stickies on the same page. These double-connection pages can be shared with the class.
- This lesson works very well if, after students mark their connections, they trade books with a partner and mark their connections using different-colored

sticky notes. Partners then get together to share and compare their connections from both books.

Lessons 14–16 (Independent Practice): Expanding Connections Through Writing

Grade 1 Sample

- Explain how each sticky note placed in a book represents a little chapter of a student's life.
- Model how to expand this into writing by choosing one of your previous connections and writing it out—with details, names, and feelings—on chart paper.
- Invite students to choose their own book to read (from the collection of Connect books, if possible) and to use sticky notes to mark connections they make while they read. (I usually limit sticky notes to 3–5 each.)
- After students read and mark their connections independently, have them choose the connection where their "thinking voice was the loudest" and expand this connection into writing. This could be done by writing about it in a journal, or using one of the templates (pages 58–62).
- Many teachers give students Reading Power Notebooks or duotangs for these writing extensions. Students can peel the stickies from the book they read, stick them on one page of the notebook with title and author at the top, then choose one of the connections to write about. I like to have a variety of different templates for the students to chose from. You will find examples of these on pages 58–62.
- Rule: Never put a book back into the book bin and "leave your thinking behind." Sticky notes must be peeled off before a book is returned. Students can use the Independent Connections organizer on page 66 to keep their sticky notes.

Lesson 17 (Independent Practice): Finding Your Own Connect Book

- Review the concept of the Connect power.
- Older students can be given the assignment of finding their own special Connect book in the school or public library.
  - Go to the library and search for your special Connect book.
  - Write about the picture book that you made strong connections with:
    1. Give a brief summary of the story
    2. Use examples that show how you connected to the book through the events, pictures, characters, or feelings.
    3. Explain whether you made T–S, T–T, T–W connections. Give examples.
    4. Explain what makes this book special to you.
  - Prepare an oral presentation for the class on your Connect book.
- Books can be displayed, along with the written connections and photo of the student.
- As teacher, you can participate in the display with your own Connect book.

Some teachers who are implementing Reading Power begin their first staff meeting in the fall by sharing their personal Connect books with each other. It's a wonderful way to get to know your colleagues!

Index

Ten years ago, ***Reading Power*** was launched in an elementary school in Vancouver. Since then, it has evolved into a recognized approach to comprehension instruction and has been implemented across Canada, the US, the UK, Sweden, and China. This ground-breaking approach showed teachers how to make thinking more visible to their students through explicit instruction of five comprehension strategies: connect, visualize, question, infer, and transform.

Adrienne Gear has continued to reflect and refine her understanding of metacognition, comprehension instruction, and the reading power strategies. In this revised and expanded second edition of her popular book, Adrienne shares this new understanding and offers teachers

- new thinking around metacognition and each of the Reading Power strategies
- debunking of some "myths" that have grown around Reading Power
- new and revised lessons and reproducible templates
- an updated assessment rubric in student-friendly language
- extended chapters on applying Reading Power to literature circles and home reading
- new student samples to show teachers what to look for in student response
- updated and expanded book lists for modeling demonstrations, encouraging practice, and nurturing independent reading

Reading Power is an ideal resource both for teachers familiar with this strategic approach to teaching reading and for those looking for new ways to connect thinking with reading.

Richard Gatrike

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Stenhouse Publishers
PORTLAND, MAINE

Pembroke Publishers Limited
MARKHAM, ONTARIO

ISBN: 9781-55138-3101
9 781551 383101

Front Cover Photo: Anderson Ross/Blend Images/Getty Images