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# INTRODUCTION TO IMAGERY

## WHAT IS IMAGERY?

Imagery is a process whereby a person can create a visual picture of an object, event, or situation in his/her mind. These visual pictures can represent photographic records of objects, interactions and impressions of the external environment (Bagley & Hess, 1984). They are often highly vivid representations of real-life experiences. The mind is capable of combining previous experiences in a way that produces "new thoughts," which form the content of the images. Images come to us in the form of a simple, spontaneous daydream or a more detailed, lengthy dream produced by the subconscious while sleeping. The average person produces four to five dreams per night. Although many individuals do not recall dreaming, nevertheless, it has been clearly established that each of us spends time each night projecting images (pictures) in our mind's eye'....and that this process is automatic. Producing mental images in our mind is a natural human process which most people experience daily. Some individuals are highly visual and are constantly creating pictures as they think. Some researchers feel that more than 40% of every class is comprised of these predominantly "visual learners."

Different from the natural spontaneous flow of unexpected images is the process of evoking, controlling, and directing mental images. It is this conscious attempt of activating and creating mental pictures that has become the foundation of an extraordinary new instructional methodology called "Mental Imagery." This new approach to teaching and learning uses spontaneous and multi-potential images (visual pictures) instead of words for exposure to curriculum and life-related emotions and ideas. Imagery is an ideation process which is fundamentally different from forced thinking. It is a highly creative act which allows an individual to produce real-life pictures of important things in a person's environment. Through "image creating" one can make an experience (social studies fact, reading skill, scientific principle, or problem) come alive with amazing clarity and perceptual detail. The image process has no boundaries; it can be used to increase one's basic knowledge, level of understanding, and sensitivity to all human events. In this text the image will be used to reinforce the skills and concepts of reading in a very creative manner.

Mental images are most vivid when the mind is least distracted by interfering thoughts. As one focuses on the content of the image, the mind automatically begins to slow down (there is actual lowering of brain energy during image projection, allowing concentration to hit its target and be maintained) and limits the number of distractions or unrelated thought messages. As long as the mind remains in this restful, visual state, the images will continue to flow and remain the focus of pure attention. The more one experiences and practices generating images, the more control s/he acquires and the more potent and meaningful the images become. When you image, you become a projectionist capable of speeding up, slowing down, or stilling a particular event. The slowing down of the image content provides you with a detailed means of examining the elements and thereby, of gaining the new thoughts and new perspectives. We have often heard the phrase "a picture is worth a thousand words," imagery clearly demonstrates the validity and accuracy of this statement. It is for this reason that Mental Imagery has become a valuable teaching tool in American education. In the next section, you will find out why the image is such a potent vehicle for enhancing learning.

## MAJOR COMPONENTS OF THE IMAGE PROCESS (ISM)

The image process consists of three major components. They are:

- (I) image (pictures, visuals),

## THE MENTAL LIBRARY BIO-COMPUTER

Many scientists divide the brain in two: the conscious and subconscious. Scientists say that it is the subconscious mind where our life experiences are stored and retrieved. Dr. Willer Penfield, a neurosurgeon from Montreal, theorizes that every experience – sight, sound, smell, taste – registers as a particular pattern in the brain and that this pattern remains long after the experience is consciously forgotten. Through thousands of experiments with patients, Penfield found that human experience is recorded with our brain cells in the form of image processes which have amazing original retention. Through various image exercises these past experiences can be accessed from one's Mental Library (subconscious) using the "Bio-Computer" concept.

Let's try a few images now, to demonstrate how our Bio-Computer and Mental Library function. Read each of the following commands one at a time...pausing 3 seconds and then imaging for 10-15 seconds. Once you have read the command gently close your eyes, pause, and then let the image come into your mind.

<b>Commands:</b>	<b>Pause:</b>	<b>Image:</b>
○ <i>See a childhood vacation spot</i>	3 sec.	15 sec.
○ <i>See your first car</i>	3 sec.	15 sec.
○ <i>Allow an image of your favorite primary grade teacher of the past to come into your mind</i>	3 sec.	15 sec.

Now let's use your Bio-Computer in a creative way. Following the same three-step procedure you are going to see creative images relating to the content of the command (after your command is read your Bio-Computer will search its mental library files, sorting-out, associating, analyzing, etc., all previous data filed under all related experiences to the command. In a fraction of a second your Bio-Computer will project images; let the images come into your mind; don't look for anything.

<b>Commands:</b>	<b>Pause:</b>	<b>Image:</b>
○ <i>See a ridiculous looking tree</i>	3 sec.	15 sec.
○ <i>See a flying cow</i>	3 sec.	15 sec.
○ <i>See an intelligent mosquito</i>	3 sec.	15 sec.
○ <i>See a table that eats</i>	3 sec.	15 sec.
○ <i>Watch a flower turn into a human being</i>	3 sec.	15 sec.

How did you do? ... Letting images form freely and effortlessly is what it is all about. The creativity that is in each of us is amazing! Your experiences are so rich!

## YOUR MENTAL LIBRARY IS REALLY A TREASURE

Imagination is by far the most neglected and underdeveloped of the normal abilities of the human mind. It is the forgotten and rusting key to many treasures of the mind.

Dr. Barbara Brown  
*Supermind*, 1983

This same creative process will be used throughout the reading portions of the text. Students will be asked to construct in a creative manner, a new word, using a prefix and a root. They will actually see (image) the prefix (in any color, size, shape, etc.) and the root (in any texture, color, size, shape, etc.) coming together in some creative way...Instead of *only* looking at the prefix "un-" in black or colored

type, readers using imagery will see that prefix in the most marvelous, personal, and different manner ... it is their prefix ... literally! Isn't that what John Dewey wanted in teaching ... some decision-making by the students, some structured freedom in learning, and some things that stimulated curiosity and inquiry?

If you convince your students that their Mental Libraries are filled with data on many issues, topics, things, you will witness considerable improvement in written expression. Just think for a moment, about a "flower." How many data entries do you think an eight year old child has had since birth? A data entry would include every flower that child has ever seen in real-life, in books, in his/her home, in cartoons, in gardens, in pictures; s/he has smelled flowers, taken them apart piece by piece, listened to adults describe their beauty hundreds of times. The answer to our question is thousands and thousands. For that same eight year old to say, when asked to write something about a flower, that s/he can't think of anything, is really sad. The response could be altered if that youngster had been trained in imagery and s/he had been taught the concepts of Mental Library and Bio-Computer. To teach children about their natural creative potential is a wonderful gift, from you (teacher) to them (student).

Chapter Two, "The Imaginary Reading Center," will deal more specifically with creative imagery.

## HOW TO INTRODUCE IMAGERY TO YOUR CLASS

In this section you will find suggestions on how to introduce imagery to your class plus a few introductory guided imagery exercises. The important thing to keep in mind is that teaching through imagery is an "Art." It is an art in reading a guided image to the class. It is an art in knowing and sensing how long to pause in between imagery statements. It is an art to be non-critical and non-judgmental of a student's imagery. It is an art to know when and where to use imagery. It is an art to be able to explain to colleagues, administrators, and parents what creative imagery is and why it is beneficial to the teaching/learning process. The authors feel strongly that basic teaching is an art.

A good way to get into a discussion on imagery is to ask the students some questions, e.g., Do any of you ever see pictures in your mind? Does anyone know what a daydream is? (You're probably laughing at this point as you think about all those daydreamers who give you such a hard time.) Does anyone see pictures in the mind while sleeping? How do these pictures get into your brain? Where do they come from? Can you make pictures come into your mind? These are sample questions to ask the class which will generate discussion. Give them plenty of wait time; it will be worth it. Following a discussion(s) on pictures of the mind, you can do a few short non-guided images to get the process going. Here are a few examples:

<b>Introductory Non-Guided Images:</b>	<b>Time</b>
I want you to see your favorite kind of fruit	10 sec.
Watch a bird fly	10 sec.
See a toy that you enjoy playing with	10 sec.
See your house	10 sec.
See a tree blowing in the wind	10 sec.
See a funny cartoon character	10 sec.

Now some multi-sensory images

See and taste your favorite ice cream	10 sec.
See yourself playing on the beach, feeling the sand and listening to the waves	15 sec.
Look up into the sky and see and listen to a large jet plane flying by	15 sec.

It is best to try one image and then allow the students to describe their experiences. After that you can give another image or do two or three in a row—then process out. You might also want to ask, at this

# PHONICS/STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS THROUGH IMAGERY

## GUIDELINES FOR USING THE READING IMAGERY EXERCISES

In this chapter there are 20 reading-imagery exercises specifically dealing with the skills of phonics/structural analysis. The exercises were developed after careful study and review of several reading scope and sequences. Space does not permit for the development of imagery exercises for all the skills in the area of phonics/structural analysis. The chapter does include imagery exercises for most of the main phonics/structural analysis skills. Since imagery is a process, teachers are encouraged to develop additional reading exercises using this approach. The exercises are presented in a structured format making them easy to administer to the students. This format is also used for the 20 exercises in the next chapter under Word Recognition.

Take a moment now and familiarize yourself with each of the exercise components.

