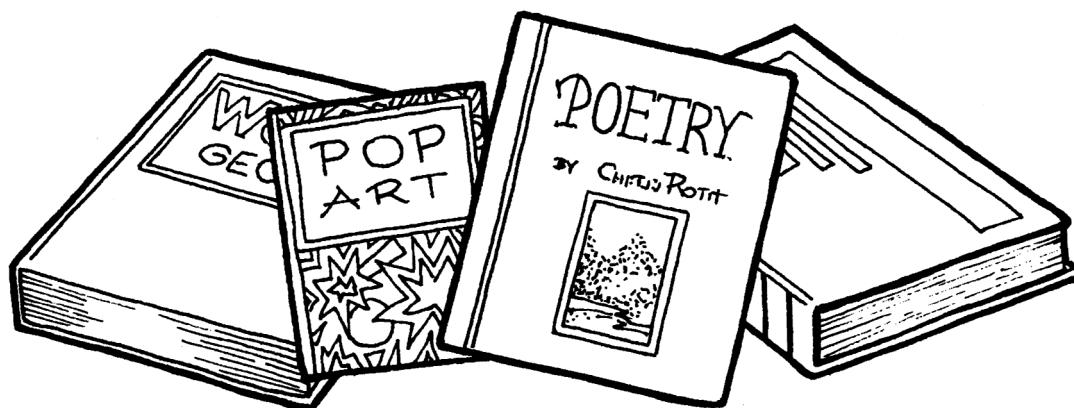




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To the Teacher

Teaching reading comprehension is an enormous task for teachers to address, especially if they hope to lessen or eliminate each student's individual difficulties. In the middle years, the task becomes even more complex, because students arrive with a range of skills and abilities. Reading comprehension is the sophisticated result of a multi-faceted performance. In order for students to understand what is being read, they must do many things. Breaking the task into isolated parts is one common approach in teaching students to sharpen their reading comprehension; however, it does not teach them to deal with the multiple skills and strategies that combine to create meaning.

So, which strategy or skill will make a difference and how can the integrated process of reading be addressed? The most important strategy or skill is monitoring. Reading comprehension cannot be achieved unless the reader is active and aware of the reading process. A good reader automatically monitors a variety of things in order to employ strategies to aid understanding. Therefore, it makes sense that the single most important strategy for reinforcing or accelerating reading skills is to improve the monitoring skills of students. What should students monitor? Five monitoring strategies are used: predicting, questioning, clarifying, summarising and using prior knowledge. These are complex tasks for a student to think about and integrate when struggling to read. However, if reading is approached as a process to manage, readers begin to read like adults who have learned how to integrate the skills of a reader, monitor comprehension, and apply the information to their own lives or situations.

This book is designed to give students a variety of multi-tasked reading experiences which focus on comprehension. The activities encourage readers to integrate three basics: 1) Identifying the literal details, actions, or facts; 2) Interpreting and connecting the details, actions or facts; and 3) Applying the meaning to previously learned knowledge or personal experience to make sense of the reading. The questions are consistently divided into three categories: 1) Identifying the Basics; 2) Understanding the Connections; and 3) Making Sense of the Meaning. Occasionally, students will be invited to respond to the reading activity in writing, or they will be invited to reflect on their reading skills and usefulness of the reading strategy. Comprehension Log is a fourth category which requests thoughtful reflection on current and future reading performances.

Raise students' awareness of the multi-faceted nature of the reading process and their reading comprehension will improve as well.



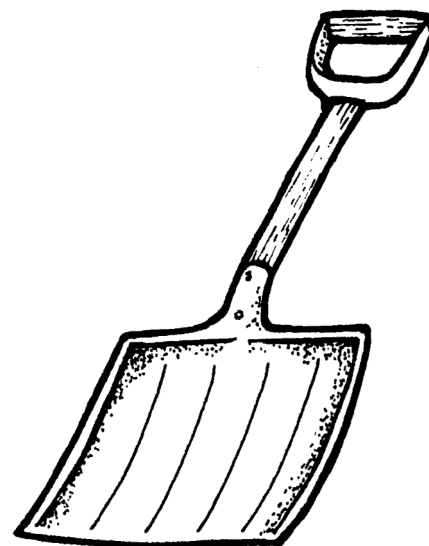
Perfect Weather

Directions: Read the story and answer the questions on the accompanying page. Making predictions is a valuable reading strategy. By paying attention to the details early in a story, a good reader can guess at the outcome. Pay close attention to the details and make predictions as you read this story.

'Go back to sleep, Kevin. No school,' Mum said as she turned off my alarm. 'No school!' I leaped out of bed. 'How much snow did we get?' 'Twenty centimetres.' 'Perfect skiing weather. Will you take me to Pine Knob?' 'If you shovel the drive, we'll see. The ploughs haven't been through yet.' 'Shovel the drive? What about the snow blower?' I followed Mum into the kitchen. 'It broke this morning. Your dad cleared part of the drive.' I looked out the kitchen window. The driveway had disappeared. Wind whipped whirls of white across the front lawn. Perfect weather for skiing, I thought.

Stop! Make a prediction. Will Kevin go skiing? Circle one: Yes or No

'Your dad got out, but he took the four-wheel drive.' Mum dropped bread into the toaster. I'll be skiing in no time, I thought. Plus, if Bobby came out, we'd get this done twice as fast. But before I could finish dialling, Mum said, 'It's too early to call anyone. Just wait a while.' I couldn't wait. Twenty centimetres of fresh snow was calling to me. Suddenly, Bobby's garage door opened, and he emerged carrying a shovel. However, he started shovelling his own driveway. I tripped over myself getting dressed and raced out the door. 'What happened to your snow blower?' I shouted. 'What?' 'What happened to your snow blower?' I stumbled down the driveway toward his house. 'It's broken.' He shoved his shovel into a thigh-high snow drift and walked up to me. 'My mum will take us skiing. All I have to do is shovel the drive,' I said. 'Take you skiing? What are you thinking? We're not going skiing today.' 'Sure, we are. The weather's perfect – twenty centimetres of fresh powder.' 'Yeah, perfect for shovelling. You'd have to shovel your way to Pine Knob today.'



Stop! Make a prediction. Will Kevin go skiing? Circle one: Yes or No

I looked up the street. Fenkel's car was stuck in a snow drift three houses up the street. Mikuiski's car was stuck half a block in the other direction. You could hear the tyres buzzing as Mr Mikuiski put his car first in forward then reverse. 'Okay, Okay! The plough will be through shortly,' I said. 'You got rocks in your head?' Bobby said. 'The ploughs are busy on main roads. This is a blizzard. Now, let's go help Mr Mikuiski.' 'Sure, maybe he'll be so grateful he'll take us to Pine Knob,' I laughed, but Bobby just shook his head.



Perfect Weather

Directions: After reading the story, answer the questions below. You may look back to the story to answer the questions.

Identifying the Basics

1. List four details stated in the first seven lines that indicate the weather conditions.

2. Why does Kevin ignore the weather conditions? _____

3. The word *emerged* may be difficult, but by rereading the sentence, there are words that give clues to its meaning. Circle the words in the sentence which help a reader.

Suddenly, Bobby’s garage door opened, and he emerged carrying a shovel.

Understanding the Connections

4. Does Bobby believe it is perfect weather for skiing, too? Circle one: Yes or No.

List four details which are not included in #1 that support your answer.

Making Sense of the Meaning

5. Why doesn’t Kevin understand how bad the weather is? _____

6. Did Kevin ever understand he wasn’t going skiing? Circle one: Yes or No.

List the detail that supports your answer. _____

Reflecting on my Reading

Review the story. What did you predict? Were your predictions accurate? At what point did you know that Kevin was never going skiing? On the back, state why predicting can be helpful.



Pen Pals Are Fun

Directions: Pen pals help you learn about different people and places. Letters are a way to introduce yourself to a person as well as maintain a friendship. Therefore, it is important to read a letter carefully. As you read, questions may arise. As you read the letter below, pay close attention to the details to get to know Marcia. Formulate questions you might have if you were her Pen Pal. Then answer the questions on the accompanying page.

Dear Pen Pal,

I am twelve years old and a student at Central Secondary School. I am in year seven, and my favourite classes are science and computers. I love to study space. I would like to be an astronaut when I grow up. My family recently went to Kennedy Space Centre in the United States.

I have a brother and a sister. My brother is a lot older than I am. Robert is 20 years old, and he is in the Air Force. He is studying to be a pilot. He lives in Geelong, but he comes home during holidays. He takes me to the movies and bowling. My sister Susie is 10 and causes a lot of trouble. We share a bedroom, and she always wants to borrow my things. She goes to the primary school two blocks from our house. My mother works at the library in town. My father is a car salesman. My grandparents live far away. We drive to their house in the summer. I stay the night with my Grandma Burkiow. She makes chocolate chip cookies when I come. How many people are in your family?

I take a school bus to school every day. It picks me up at 7 o'clock in the morning. I hate getting up so early. Plus, the bus is noisy and crowded. Do you catch a bus to school? What is your school like?

My hobbies are rollerskating, stargazing and reading. What do you like to do for fun?

Your Pen Pal,
Marcia

List two things Marcia mentions in her letter about which you want to know more. Write a question for each thing.

#1. _____

#2. _____



Pen Pals Are Fun

Directions: After reading the letter from Marcia, answer the questions below. You may look back to the letter to answer the questions.

Identifying the Basics

1. Name four activities Marcia likes. _____
2. Name two things Marcia does not like. _____
3. List four things on which Marcia wants information.

Understanding the Connections

4. Has Pen Pal written to Marcia before this letter? _____
 How do you know? _____
5. Does Marcia like her brother or sister better? _____
 How do you know? _____

Making Sense of the Meaning

6. Would you want Marcia as a pen pal? _____ Explain your answer.

7. List one way Marcia and Pen Pal are probably alike. _____

Reflecting on my Reading

Directions: Write a letter to Marcia as if you were her pen pal. Tell her about yourself. Be certain to answer her questions. To keep the friendship going, include your two questions written on the bottom of the letter. Include at least two new questions as well.

