

## Using Heinemann Classroom Books to Support Comprehension



### Comprehension Strategies

#### ***What are comprehension strategies?***

Good readers are active and engage in many different thought processes, or strategies, as they interact with a text. Comprehension strategies can be categorized and labeled in different ways, but some of the most common are:

***Visualizing:*** When students are able to create sensory images in their minds, they will be more engaged with the content of the text and will better understand what they read.

***Questioning:*** The ability to generate questions demonstrates that students are synthesizing, evaluating, and attempting to clarify what they read. This leads to greater understanding of the content and fosters further research and exploration.

***Using background knowledge:*** All students have a unique pool of personal experiences and background knowledge that they bring to the reading experience. When they are able to relate what they know to what they read, they make connections with the text, foster their comprehension, and develop their knowledge as readers.

***Inferring:*** When readers draw upon their background knowledge and connect this with new information, they are able to make informed judgments, or inferences. Inferring carries students comprehension of the text to a new level, encouraging them to create a deeper understanding between what is stated and what they know.

***Determining important ideas:*** It is crucial that readers of nonfiction learn to differentiate between the main or key ideas in a text and information that is less essential, or that serves as supporting details.

***Synthesizing:*** This involves evaluating, sorting, and sifting through information that is known and new and reorganizing it into a larger idea or concept.

***Monitoring and repairing understanding:*** Good readers are aware of whether or not they understand what they read. Being able to stop and use strategies to clarify what is confusing, whether it is due to unfamiliar vocabulary or lack of background knowledge is important to achieving comprehension.

### ***Why are comprehension strategies important?***

Developing comprehension is a primary goal of all reading instruction. When readers are able to use a variety of strategies to make sense of and construct meaning from what they read, they engage in a rich dialogue with the text and ultimately build upon their knowledge of the world around them. Readers who are able to visualize and connect with what they read will also derive greater enjoyment from the act of reading.

### ***How can you support students' comprehension of text?***

Explicitly teaching these strategies will help students approach all texts with a greater propensity for understanding the content. Engage in the text with your students. Think aloud, model, and demonstrate how good readers interact with text. Have discussions with your students about what they read, and provide background information about content that may be unfamiliar to them. Vocabulary and word study are also an important component of comprehension instruction. Many Heinemann Classroom titles provide teacher support mini-lessons that support both comprehension strategy and word study instruction.

#### **For further reference, consult:**

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- Harvey, S. 1998. *Nonfiction Matters: Reading, Writing, and Research in Grades 3-8*. York, ME: Stenhouse.
- Harvey, S & Goudvis, A. 2000. *Strategies that work: Teaching comprehension to enhance understanding*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Hoyt, L., Mooney, M, & Parkes, B., eds. 2003. *Exploring informational texts: From theory to practice*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Keene, E., & Zimmerman, S. 1997. *Mosaic of thought: Teaching comprehension in a reader's workshop*. York, ME: Stenhouse.
- National Reading Panel. 2000. *Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching children to read. Reports of the subgroups*. Washington, D.C: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health.
- Pardo, L.S. (2005). What every teacher needs to know about comprehension. *The Reading Teacher*, 58 (3): 272-280.
- Zimmerman, S., & Hutchins, C. 2003. *7 Keys to comprehension: How to help your kids read it and get it!* New York: Three Rivers Press.