

# Metacognitive Overview/Introductory Unit of Study

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## A. INTRODUCING THE “INNER VOICE”

Kids need to be explicitly taught that they have two inner voices. The reciting voice which reads the words and the conversation voice that talks back to the text.

### 1. Modeled-step 1

- Teacher does the work/kids watch and listen.
- You need to decide what visual action/sign you will take when you are no longer reading but are sharing your thinking. This is especially crucial with younger students as they may not realize you have stopped reading the words when you are sharing your thinking. Some people close the book. Others set the book on their lap and look out to the kids when sharing their thinking. Looking up to the ceiling can be a visual sign that you are sharing your thinking. **\*\*Be sure to tell the kids you will be reading the words and then stopping to share your thinking. Tell/show them how they can recognize the difference. “Today when I am reading to you, I will be holding the book like this. But I am going to stop along the way and share my thinking. I will tell you what my inner voice inside is saying. All readers have a reading voice that reads the words. This voice is called our **reciting voice**. We have a second voice that talks in our heads about what we are reading. That voice is called our **conversation voice (inner voice)**. When I am sharing my thinking it will look like this. I will close the book and look out at you. That’s how you’ll know I am sharing my thinking. Then I’ll open the book back up, like this, and continue reading the words.”**
- When reading aloud, read some text and then stop and set the book down and talk out loud saying whatever thinking comes to your mind. Then pick the book up and return to the text. Read until you have more thinking and then stop, set the book down and share that thinking.
- It is helpful to start your sentences like this:  
*“I’m thinking that .....”*  
*“Wow! After I read that ..... it made me think .....”*  
*“Now I’m thinking .....”*
- Do this for many days in different genres and in all subject areas. (You can share your thinking about math for example.)
- Always remind them that careful readers **think** along the way when they are reading the words. They don’t just read the words. Reading is thinking.

### 2. Modeled-step 2

- Once your students get used to hearing you explicitly say *“I’m thinking.....”*, then you can mix in any wording you want.

*"I'm wondering....."*

*"I can just smell those....."*

*"How come he just did that? I sure would have been more careful...."*

*"No way! They broke it? Oh my! What's going to happen next?"*

- Whatever YOU are thinking as you are reading the words is what you would share with the kids.
- Teach the kids the word "metacognition". Tell them that metacognition means THINKING ABOUT YOUR THINKING. It is important that we KNOW we have an inner thinking voice and that we LISTEN to that voice.
- Say- *"See how I talk to myself as I read? I don't just read word after word after word. Careful readers do more than that. They stop and take time to "catch" the thinking in their heads and they MAKE SURE they think ALONG THE WAY. I let my thinking bubble up and I have a discussion with myself. I talk in my head about what I am reading. I am doing it out loud so you can hear what my discussions sound like inside my brain. When I do this I am being metacognitive."*
- At this point you can simply suggest *"Maybe you guys could try this when you are reading at home and at school. See if you can "catch" your thinking AS you are reading. But you'll have to stop every once in a while so your thinking can come out."*

### 3. Shared-step 1

- The next step is to tell the kids that their job is to watch what you are doing and listen to what you are saying. Say *"Today when I am reading I want you to watch what you see me doing and listen to what you hear my saying. Be ready to turn and talk about this and then share back."*
- Read through an interesting text and stop and think along the way. Be sure to be obvious about when your reading the words and when you are thinking.
- Say *"O.K. Turn and talk with a partner about what you saw me doing and heard me saying when I was reading this book."*
- Call on several groups and have them start their sharing by saying:  
*"Mary and I saw....."*  
*"We heard ....."*

These are some sample responses you want:

*"Mary and I saw you read a little bit and then you closed the book and said what was in your head and then you went back to the book."*

*"We heard you stop reading after \_\_\_\_\_ and tell us what you were thinking."*

*"Marty and I heard you ask a question after reading ....."*

*"Renni and I noticed you were not just reading the words and that's it."*

*"Manuel and I heard you thinking about what you were reading."*

*"We heard you tell about how you thought \_\_\_\_\_ must be feeling."*

*“We heard you tell us that you how you thought the \_\_\_\_\_ sounded.”*

*“We heard you say that you thought the author was really meaning .....*”

If they don't come up with those types of responses, restate what it was you were modeling for them.

#### **4. Shared-step 2**

- Tell the students that today you will invite them to share their thinking as you read to them.
- Read an interesting picture book. Stop and share your own thinking.
- Read on to the next best place for some thinking to bubble up. Have your students turn and talk with a partner to share their thinking.
- Then call on a few groups. (always having them start out by saying, *“Steven and I think.....”*)
- Work through the book this way. Reading to a good thinking place. Stopping and having them turn and talk and then share back whole group.
- If you don't want to do turn and talk be sure to remind them to start out their sharing back with *“I'm thinking .....*”
- Do this with many picture books and vary the genre.

#### **5. Small Group Instruction**

- Pull small groups and read a new text piece.
- Have them share what they hear their inner voice in their head saying.

#### **6. Independent Practice**

- During independent reading have your student listen for their inner voice.
- Say- *“Today when you are reading I want you to try and catch your inner voice talking to you as you are reading. Take 3-5 post its and when you hear your inner voice I want you to write down what it is saying. Stick the post it right where that thinking bubbled up in your head. Be ready to meet with others to share how it was for you to catch that inner voice and how it felt to you as you were reading.”*
- 10 minutes before the end of independent reading, put your students in groups of three to share where in their books they had thinking. Next ask them to talk about how it felt to read and then stop to think and then go back to reading.
- Ask the students to keep track of their stopping and thinking when reading at home.

## B. RECOGNIZING CONFUSION

### 1. Modeled

- Teacher does the work/kids watch and listen.
- Students are not always AWARE if they are understanding what they are reading or not so we must explicitly teach this and also what they can do to repair that confusion.
- This builds on the “inner voice” work you have just completed.
- When reading aloud you need to find places in the text where you are confused. (fake this if you have to!)
- Do the “finger one and finger two” idea talked about in the professional book Mosaic of Thought, page 39.
- Before you actually teach it to your students start doing it yourself as you are reading aloud to them. Hold up one finger just next to the book. When you get to a part that was confusing or where you found your mind wandering or that didn't make sense switch your finger to two fingers out.
- Talk out loud like this- *"Oh, that doesn't make any sense. I need to go back and reread that part."*
- **Reread** where you became confused and if **rereading** helped you understand that part put back up just one finger.
- If not, say, *"Well, that didn't help. Now I am going to read on a bit and see if that helps me out."*
- **Read on** a bit and if that helped you understand, put back up one finger.
- If that didn't help you, (so you would be still holding up 2 fingers) say, *"Well, rereading didn't help me, reading on didn't help me, so now I am going to have to find someone to ask because I can't go on if I don't understand this part."*
- Then **ask** one of the students to explain that part to you (or another adult if one is available).
- \*\*\*This is NOT used when coming across tricky words- words you could not READ. This is just for passages you did not understand.
- Do this naturally for a few days as you are thinking aloud. Catch your inner voice letting you know that you are confused and not understanding what you are reading.

### 2. Shared

- Ask if anyone had noticed you doing anything unusual with your fingers as you were reading these past few days. (Of course they had.)
- Have them tell you what they SAW you doing and what they HEARD you saying.

- Talk about WHY you were doing it: because readers need to understand what they are reading to fully enjoy or learn from the words. A book will be more rewarding if it makes sense to the reader. This is what CAREFUL READERS DO!!! They don't just keep reading or put the book down when they don't understand it. (Of course talk about exceptions!!!) Their inner voices tell them they are confused and they stop and do something to repair that confusion.
- From that point on invite them to hold out one finger when you are reading aloud and switch it to two fingers when they become confused (when they recognize confusion).
- Stop during those times and **reread, read on**, and then explain it to them if need be.

### 3. Small Group Instruction

- Pull small groups and either read a challenging text piece or have them bring their own self selected texts to the group.
- Have them show you when they recognize they are confused and what they can do to repair that confusion.

### 4. Independent Reading

- Have them practice this on a whole group text and then independently using post its to mark when they used the “HELP strategy” (**reread, read on, ask**).
- Have them write HELP at the top of the post it. Under it they write in a list: **reread, read on, ask**. If they find themselves being confused or distracted they should place the post it note at that point in the text and cross off what they tried in that order and circle where they got back their clarity/understanding.

## C. STRATEGIES TO “FIX-UP” CONFUSION

### 1. Step 1

1. There are many other ways that readers can learn to help themselves get unstuck.
2. Many of these strategies will be the main focus of upcoming strategy studies, so at this time we are just introducing these fix-it strategies in a very general way.
3. Either provide the following list or brainstorm with your students: (list from Cris Tovani)
  - **Reread, read on, ask**. (previously taught)
  - Make a connection between the text and your life, another text, or the world.
  - Make a prediction.
  - Stop and think about what you have already read.

- Ask yourself a question and try to answer it.
- Reflect in writing on what you have read.
- Use print conventions.
- Notice patterns about text structure.
- Create mental images.
- Retell what you've read.
- Adjust your reading rate: slow down or speed up.

## 2. Step 2

1. When a reader is confused, the above are all things he/she could try to repair the confusion.
2. Below you will find an excerpt from the professional book, I Read It But I Don't Get It by Cris Tovani (Stenhouse, 2000) explaining each "Fix It" strategy.

### Make a Connection Between the Text and Your Life, Your Knowledge of the World, or Another Text

Sometimes a reader has information about a topic in his head that isn't being used. When brought to bear, this background knowledge can be a powerful tool, helping the reader repair meaning. Good readers know that using knowledge to make a connection will help them understand their reading better. They use memories, personal experiences, information about the subject, the author's style, and textual organizations to help them visualize, predict, ask questions infer, stay focused, and remember what they have read.

Text connections can give a reader insights into a character's motive. Sometimes recalling factual information helps the reader understand why an event is taking place. Remembering another story with a similar plot enables the reader to anticipate action. Identifying an author's writing style or the organizational pattern of a text helps the reader understand what the author is saying.

### Make a Prediction

Good readers anticipate what's coming next. Based on what they've already read, readers expect certain new events to occur. When an event doesn't match a prediction, readers rethink and revise their thinking. More important, they are alerted to possible confusions. Sometimes misreading words throw the prediction off. When readers predict, they are aware meaning is breaking down. Instead of ignoring an incorrect prediction, they get back into the action by making a new guess. Predicting jolts readers back on track. It keeps them involved so they aren't surprised by incorrect conclusions.

### Stop and Think About What You Have Already Read

This one is so easy most students ignore it. Yet it is one of the most useful fix-up strategies of all. Good readers ponder what they have read. They connect newly acquired knowledge with information they already have. Stopping and thinking gives readers time to synthesize new information. It allows opportunities to ask questions, visualize, and determine what is important in the text.

### Ask a Question

Good readers ask themselves questions when they read. Curious about the answers, they continue reading. Sometimes these questions are answered directly in the text, and meaning is clarified. Typically, clarifying questions are about a character, setting, event, or process: *who*, *what*, *when*, and *where* questions.

Other times, answers to readers' questions aren't found in the text. These are pondering questions that don't always have simple answers. They ask *how* and *why*. In these cases, the reader is forced to go beyond the words to find the answer, either by drawing an inference or by going to another source.

Struggling readers sometimes expect to find all the answer to their questions in the text. These readers often miss test questions like, "What's the best title for this piece?" or "What's the main idea?" They don't realize that the answers can be found by using clues from the text and their background knowledge to draw an inference. Many secondary students think this is cheating or wasting time.

Readers who ask questions and know where the answers to their questions are to be found are more likely to have a richer read, to infer, to draw conclusions, and regain control of their reading.

### Write About What You've Read

Writing down what they think about what they've read allows readers to clarify their thinking. It is an opportunity to reflect. Readers better understand their reading when they have written about it. The writing may be a summary or a response. Sometimes just jotting a few notes will clarify meaning.

### Visualize

When meaning breaks down, good readers consciously create images in their head to help them make sense of what they words are saying. They use movies, television, and life to help them picture what is happening. When a reader can visualize what is happening, comprehension improves. Secondary students are bombarded with visual images. These images can help readers make a video in their head. If they can "see it," they often understand it.

### Use Print Conventions

Key words, bold print, italicized words, capital letters, and punctuation are all used to enhance understanding. Conventions of print help the author convey intent. They help the reader determine what is important and what the author values. Conventions of print give the reader insight into voice inflections and how the author wants the piece to sound. Poor readers often ignore conventions because they are unaware of their function. Pointing out conventions will not only improve reading comprehension but all will help students use these same conventions to convey meaning when they write.

### Retell What You've Read

Taking a moment to retell what has been read helps the reader reflect. It activates background knowledge and also provides a check on whether the reader is understanding. When readers can't retell what they read, it is an indication that their minds have been wandering or confusion has set in. Asking *What have I just read?* Refreshes the reader's memory and prepares her to read the next part. This is a useful strategy when returning to reading after some time has passed. Students frequently read something and then don't pick up the material again for several days. Teaching students to quickly recall what they have already read before starting new material can save time. Readers who don't recall what they have read before beginning new text end up doing it while they are reading the new material and therefore don't pay attention to it.

### Reread

When meaning breaks down, readers can stop and decide whether there is something in the text they can reread that will help them understand the piece better. Since this is the one strategy most readers know automatically, it needs little explaining. An important aspect to remember is that a student doesn't have to reread everything for the strategy to be helpful. Sometimes rereading portions of the text- a sentence, or even just a word- can enhance comprehension. Struggling readers tend to think rereading means they have to reread everything.

### Notice Patterns in Text Structure

Genres have specific organizational patterns. Recognizing how a piece is organized helps readers locate information more quickly.

Some struggling readers believe that they have to read everything from cover to cover, even nonfiction. Taking time to explain how a piece is organized helps students figure out where information is found. It helps them determine what is important. When meaning breaks down, readers can stop and think how the text is organized and see whether there is something in the organizational pattern that will help them understand the piece.

### Adjust Reading Rate: Slow Down or Speed Up

Contrary to what struggling readers think, good readers don't read everything fast. They adjust their rate to meet the demands of the task. Many secondary students read course textbooks at the same rate they read their favorite magazine. Good readers slow down when something is difficult or unfamiliar. They realize that in order to construct meaning, their rate must decrease. They also know that it's okay to read faster when something is familiar or boring. Reading faster sometimes forces the brain to stay engaged. Good readers select a rate based on the difficulty of the material, their purpose in reading it, and their familiarity with the topic.

(Tovani, pp. 51-57)

3. Over several days find different text pieces to model each of these fix-it strategies for your students.
4. Make an anchor chart listing these and put it up in your classroom so the students can refer back to it to remind them what they can do when confused.

### 3. Step 3

1. Comprehension Constructor (from Tovani, page 59)
2. Model your own confusion using the Comprehension Constructor to give evidence of how you repaired the confusion.

I am confused by (copy directly from the text whatever your confusion is):

\_\_\_\_\_ page \_\_\_\_\_

I am confused because (try to figure out why you are confused):

\_\_\_\_\_

I will try (record different fix-up strategies you try):

\_\_\_\_\_

I understand (explain how your understanding is deeper as a result of the fix-up strategies you've used):

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Give the Comprehension Constructor to your students to complete when reading during independent reading.
4. Be sure to stress that careful readers try other fix-up strategies if one does not help them repair the confusion. This is called being flexible. Trying more than one way rather than doing nothing.

Once kids can hear the voice in their head, and are thinking as they are reading, they will be better able to do the strategy work because they will be metacognitive from this point forward. It becomes natural to hear that inner voice and that is how they integrate the use of all the comprehension strategies- letting questions come up as they have them, experiencing the sensory images in their texts, inferring deeper meanings, connecting to their own schema, synthesizing understanding as they read with stamina, and determining the authors message/getting what is important. All of this is metacognition. Metacognition is the umbrella over all the comprehension strategies.