

Mosaic of Thought Book Study Group

Reflection/Focus Questions for Prologue, Ch. 1 & 2

1. Many of us learned to read with Dick and Jane and SRA cards. What was your personal response to "First Reader"?
2. Ellin Oliver talks about the transformation that has taken place in her own reading. "I have moved from a passive to an active stance. I am acutely aware of my own reading process, the questions and challenges I have for the authors I read, the awareness I have of moments of confusion and disorientation in the text, and the tools I use to confront that confusion." (Pg. 5) How aware are you of the processes you use in your own reading? Where would you place yourself, as a reader, on a continuum between being a passive reader and an active reader? How important do you think it is for a teacher of reading to be an active reader?
3. Susan Zimmerman asked the group of educators what it would take to create a group of public schools that would be places "where the children and adults were deeply engaged and passionate about their own learning?" How would you answer this question? Have we created this type of environment at our school? In our own classrooms? What things are we doing really well? What things could we maybe do better?
4. What touched you as you read this section? Surprised you? Intrigued you?
5. What questions do you have? What do you wonder about?

Reflection/Focus Questions for Ch. 3/Gradual Release of Responsibility Handout

1. What were you thinking **as you read** "Salvador, Late or Early?" What were your thoughts **after you finished** reading?

2. "My concern, "I told them, "is that many children are not so engaged as they read. They don't know when they're comprehending. They don't know when they're not. They don't know whether it's critical for them to comprehend a given piece. And if they don't comprehend, they don't know what to do about it." What were your thought/feelings as you read this quote? How prevalent is this as a problem with the students you work with each day?
3. The two classroom vignettes in this chapter demonstrate how two teachers went about teaching their students to be metacognitive. What are some ways you've helped your own students to be more aware of their thinking/comprehension as they read? What are some ways we as teachers can "see" into our students thought processes as they read?
4. Why is it important for us as teachers to understand and be aware of how we comprehend reading before we are able to teach our students to do so?
5. What is your understanding of the *Gradual Release of Responsibility Model*? How does this model fit into your daily plans with your students?

Reflection/Focus Questions for Chapter 4

1. What was the single one, or two, most interesting or valuable insights for you as you read this chapter?
2. This is the first chapter that really demonstrates how teachers who follow this model of instruction explicitly teach one strategy, in depth, at a time. What are your reactions to/thoughts about this method of comprehension instruction? What do you think are the benefits or drawbacks to this type of instruction?
3. How can we mesh this type of instruction with the use of our basal readers?

4. Debbie Miller, the teacher whose classroom is highlighted in this chapter, documents her student's progress through the strategy study with classroom charts. What kind of chart/visual aid could you envision using in your classroom, with your students?
5. If you have the time, try to bring or write down the names of a book or two that you think would be good for "think alouds" in making text-to-self, text-to-text, or text-to-world connections.

Reflection/Focus for Chapter 5

To me, determining importance, especially in expository text, is one of the most difficult strategies to model/teach. I thought maybe we could each bring a sample of grade appropriate expository text with us to our next meeting and we could discuss as a group the ideas we identify as important in different pieces and what our thinking behind those decisions was.

Reflection/Focus Questions for Chapter 6

1. "The research shows that children who struggle as readers tend not to ask questions at any time as they read—before, during, or after."

"They're not really reading, not really getting it, not really connecting with the text enough to interact with it."

Both of these quotes reinforce the necessity of teacher modeling and the active teaching of metacognition. What are some ways we can help our students slow down and become involved enough in a text that they are aware of the questions or "I wonders" that they have?

2. Typically, I think, teachers (as well as basal publishers) have tried to force student interaction with a text by providing the questions for them. These questions are based on what the teacher/publisher have deemed as important in the text. As we've discussed, a student can often answer these questions and still not have understood the text at much more than a surface level.

How comfortable are you in handing over the responsibility to your students to generate the questions that are important to them and their understanding of a text? It is sometimes hard for me to step back and realize that my students don't have to have the same or as complete an understanding of a story as myself. Do any of you struggle with this?

3. Are some questions better than others? Other resources I've read talk about thick (those that help the reader understand the story better) and thin (usually short, factual answers that don't necessarily increase comprehension) questions. How can we help our students evaluate the helpfulness of the questions they're asking?
4. How can we help our students take the step from generating questions to using those questions to increase their understanding of the text? Once we've got our students generating questions, what is the next step? How can we evaluate individual student's progress with this strategy?
5. The example chart on page 113 in the text seems fairly complicated to me, especially for primary students. What kind of chart or visual aide could you envision using in your classroom to document progress during this strategy study?

Reflection/Focus Questions for Chapter 7

1. I found it interesting that Ellin, after discussing the poem, turns to a discussion of her sensory imaging with artwork. Do you think it might be easier for students to initially try out this strategy with modes other than text? Besides artwork what other mediums might be helpful in developing our students sensory imaging skills?
2. As I read and reread this chapter I was struck again and again with how inter-related this strategy is with schema and text connections. The sensory images each of us makes in response to a text will be very individual based on our own personal schema. The students in Todd McLain's class noted this. I also took note of how this strategy,

especially when the reader responds emotionally, leads to questioning. The kindergarten students demonstrated this when they asked questions about the little boy in the story they were reading. What do you think of the idea that as we teach one strategy, in depth, children will independently start to implement some of the other strategies of good readers? Agree/disagree? For me, this leads to reflection on the importance of teaching one strategy at a time. How necessary do you think this is? How do you envision implementing strategy instruction in your own classroom? What are your thoughts about what order the strategies should be presented in?

3. I loved how Ellin referred to what was on the walls of Paige Inman's classroom as "testaments to what is valued in" her room. What would a visitor to one of our rooms interpret as important to us and our students based on what is on our walls?
4. The discussion of how Todd McLain modeled spontaneously forming images at times and at other times have to purposely form images to increase comprehension was thought provoking for me. Is the inability to form a sensory image a sign of a breakdown in comprehension? Is it always necessary to form a sensory image to comprehend a text? Could the inability to form a sensory image be related to a lack of schema for the topic? How do we help our students when this occurs?

Reflection/Focus Questions for Chapter 8

1. Ellin discusses a conversation she had with a study group of teachers about a perceived need for a hierarchical approach to teaching children to infer. Several teachers argued for this approach, one that taught literal comprehension first and independent of inferring. Where are your thoughts on this issue? Did the following vignette with Christina change your thoughts at all? In what way?
2. On page 154, Ellin, in speaking of inferring, says, "There must be a fusion of words on the page . . . and the experience and knowledge of the reader." Throughout this chapter I was struck again and again with how individual a reader's inferences will be based on their individual life

experiences and knowledge (schema?). How does this observation fit in with standardized test questions with only one correct answer?

3. On page 158, Christina infers that the mother in "Tar Beach" is worried the dad may never come home, "Well sometimes when parents don't have jobs, they just go away and they never come back." I was dying to ask her about her personal experience with this issue. Could she have dealt with something like this in her personal life? I haven't read this story (but plan to, smile) and am not sure what the central concepts are. But, if Christina has some personal experience with dad's who are out of work or who have left a family behind, don't you think this could be a very valid inference, albeit one that wouldn't show up on a standardized test form?
4. How can we gain insight into the thinking behind the inferences our students make? How can we help them to recognize the validity/feasibility of an inference?

Focus/Reflection Questions for Chapter 9

1. What do you see as the major differences between summarizing and synthesizing? How would you define synthesizing?
2. What key skills do we need to develop in our students in order for them to successfully synthesize a text?
3. I was struck by the description of Jody Cohn's 5th grade classroom and how she describes the work going on there as a building on to the things previous teachers had done with the students. Reading this, I felt her school must have a feeling of cohesiveness and collaboration, of working toward a common goal. A lot of this it seems to me must stem from the work the reading specialist does with the teachers. What things could we do to increase communication and collaboration between grade levels at our campus?

Reflection/Focus Questions for Chapter 10 & Epilogue

1. How do you see your participation in this group and the material from this book impacting your reading instruction? Will reading instruction look different in your classroom next year based on your participation in this group?
2. What measures can we take as a group to continue our dialogue and support of each other in implementing this instruction in our classrooms?