

Create Sensory Images

- Create images from text during and after reading.
- Use developing images to support their ongoing comprehension of their reading.

Reading With Meaning

Children explore how

- Images are created from reader's schema and words in the text
- Readers create images to form unique interpretations, clarify thinking, draw conclusions, and enhance understanding.
- Reader's images are influenced by the shared images of others.
- Images are fluid; readers adapt them to incorporate new information as they read.
- Evoking vivid mental images helps readers create vivid images in their writing.

Debbie Miller writes in her Creating Mental Images chapter, "We've been learning how readers and writers create mental images when they read and write. When we read our poems, we want you to create some mental images, too. Listen and wait for the pictures to come alive in your minds."

What's Key for Kids?

- Proficient readers create mental images during and after reading. These images come from all five senses and the emotions and are anchored in the reader's prior knowledge.
- Proficient readers understand how creating images enhances comprehension.
- Proficient readers use images to draw conclusions, create unique interpretations of the text, recall details significant to the text, and recall a text after it has been read.
- Images from reading frequently become part of the reader's writing.
- Readers use images to immerse themselves in rich detail as they read. The detail gives depth and dimension to the reading, engaging the reader more deeply and making the text more memorable.
- Readers adapt their images as they continue to read. Images are revised to incorporate new information in the text and new interpretations as developed by the reader.
- Evoking mental images helps readers create images in writing.

- Debbie Miller's book, *Reading With Meaning*, includes an anchor lesson called "Images are created from readers' schema and words in the text (artistic response)"

Choose three or four poems I know children will love. I think about the content of the poems I choose. Do children have enough schema for the topic? Is the text clear? Do the poems lend themselves to unique interpretations?

Read the poems several times asking the children to listen carefully and think about which poem creates the most vivid mental images for you.

Take a copy of the poem you've chosen and a piece of drawing paper. Read the poem to yourself a couple of times. Then capture the image that's in your head as best as you can onto paper. Take about ten minutes. Then we'll share our work.

The children who choose the same poem, sit together and share with each other.

Our pictures / images are different because our schema is different.

- Debbie Miller's book, *Reading With Meaning*, includes an anchor lesson called "Readers create images to form unique interpretations, clarify thinking, draw conclusions, and enhance understanding (dramatic response).

Dramatizing short pieces of text is another way to engage and teach young readers about mental images. Place the students in small groups of 3 and 4 and find a place where there is enough space for them to work together comfortably. Tell them to close their eyes and listen carefully to the poem I am about to read. Pay attention to the words in the poem and your schema to create vivid, detailed images. Teacher reads poem 3-4 times and ask children to think aloud to their small groups about the images they have created. Now put your thinking together to create a dramatic interpretation of the poem.

Think about things like:

- What about the poem does your group think is the most important?
- How will you show that?
- How can everyone be included?

Children love to choose their own poems or short pieces of text to dramatize and present to the group. Sometimes the audience tries to guess what the poem is about; other times one or two children will read the poem while the others act out their images.

See *Reading With Meaning* for many more anchor lessons.

My "anchor" lesson uses "Elbert's Bad Word" by Audrey Wood. First I talked to the kids about how good readers have a movie going through their heads as they read. They see the people and places in the book and usually their pictures are based on their own knowledge. For instance, if the story takes place in a kitchen, the reader will visualize a kitchen they've actually been in before (I remember, as a 5th/6th grader, suddenly realizing that the pictures in my head hadn't been CREATED by me at all, they were just composites of real places I'd been - it was a light bulb moment!).

Then I make 5 columns on the board and label them with the 5 senses. I read aloud "Elbert" without showing the pictures and stop to ask kids to share their mental pictures (but since I read Ginger's post, from now on I'm going to give them paper and have them draw their pictures too - good idea!). In particular, I have the kids visualize the elegant garden party, which is the setting for the book. We list what we'd probably see, hear, smell, taste and feel. The kids get pretty creative with the sounds of quiet music, feel of smooth cut grass, smell of fancy flowers, etc.

When we get to the part about Chives the Butler balancing and then spilling 2 trays of deviled eggs on one of the party-goers, we stop to describe this and even act it out (this idea was given to me by a student who improved the butler's actions spontaneously). Talking about what we're seeing in our heads with this specific character's actions really seems to help those kids who have problems visualizing.

We continue reading the whole book, visualizing as we go, and then at the end I have them draw the "bad word" which was described as dark as a small storm cloud with bristly hairs all over it. Again, it's a specific image that forces them to listen carefully and create a mental image.

On another day I do an activity from "Visualizing and Verbalizing" by Nanci Bell. She has simple drawings in the back of the book, which I copied and colored and laminated. We then take turns orally describing the pictures without showing them to the group, allowing the group to form mental images. The group is encouraged to ask clarifying questions (is the duck BY the water or IN the water? Is it a VERY young girl or a teenage girl?) The picture is revealed and we discuss whether our picture matched the actual one. Nanci recommends VERY simple pictures with just one main object and perhaps a few details.

OK, I know this is long, but I'd like to add one further thing. Earlier this summer I had a pretty serious bike accident - got a concussion, had amnesia, spent a lot of time staring off into space - but the most interesting thing (in retrospect) is that I forgot how to comprehend. I could read words, but couldn't understand what I read beyond very simple sentences. It took me weeks and weeks to recover, and I made notes about my progress as I went, so that now that I'm almost fully

recovered I understand that one of the HUGE pieces of the puzzle that was missing for me was visualization. I wasn't able to form pictures in my head to go along with what I read. I didn't have the mental strength to keep up with what I was reading. I've since realized that many of my students read just like this, and so I've been convinced of the importance of teaching visualizing to my struggling readers. I remember being so frustrated about not being able to read, and feeling horrified that it might stay that way. But for some kids it is that way all the time.

Heather Wall

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Pairs Discussing the Pictures They See When the Pictures are not shown to the students

Teacher reads the Eve Bunting story *Someday a Tree*. Then the two of us talked about the pictures we got as the story was read. We didn't show the pictures to the students. The kids were amazed that two adults would sit and talk about this. We then asked the kids to work in pairs to talk about pictures they "saw" when they heard the story. We returned to the large group and several volunteers shared different pictures. I had wondered if the kids would copy some of our pictures, but this only happened in a few cases.

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I reread a particularly descriptive part of the section they are illustrating, several times as they draw. This helps develop their ideas and take on more of what the author is saying. As a follow up activity the kids write a sentence/paragraph about their drawings. They can alter the story line if they wish. Great for reluctant writers as it provides scaffolding for them but allows room for innovation.

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Perhaps your strategy study of visualizing will help you in this area as well. I don't think everyone sees pictures in their minds and that doesn't need to be the way you present it. Basically I choose text that has very descriptive language and do a read aloud. After reading I have the children sketch what they think it would look like. This way, even if they didn't get a mental picture, they now have a tangible one. Poetry works well for this. We read a Jack Prelutsky piece and the kids sketched what they visualized. We then shared them and noticed that they were all very similar. The author they were told did a good job describing what he wanted us to visualize since we were able to sketch it. Don't show them any pictures when you read, rather wait until after you share their sketches.

Another book, *A Chair for My Mother*, has a wonderful description of the chair they would like to purchase. Same idea, read it aloud and have them sketch the chair. I don't focus on "picture" in my mind when I teach this. I focus more on the words that help me know what the author is describing. Here We All Are, Tomie DePaola has good descriptions as well. A final book that we've used for this is *A Bad Case of Stripes*.

Visualizing doesn't have to be about seeing a real movie in the mind, or a picture. It can be about the language in a book that helps you see what the author is describing. If the author has done a good job of describing you should be able to sketch what he/she wanted you to see. Most of the sketches will be similar if the description is good.