



Education

Developing Higher-Order Comprehension Skills

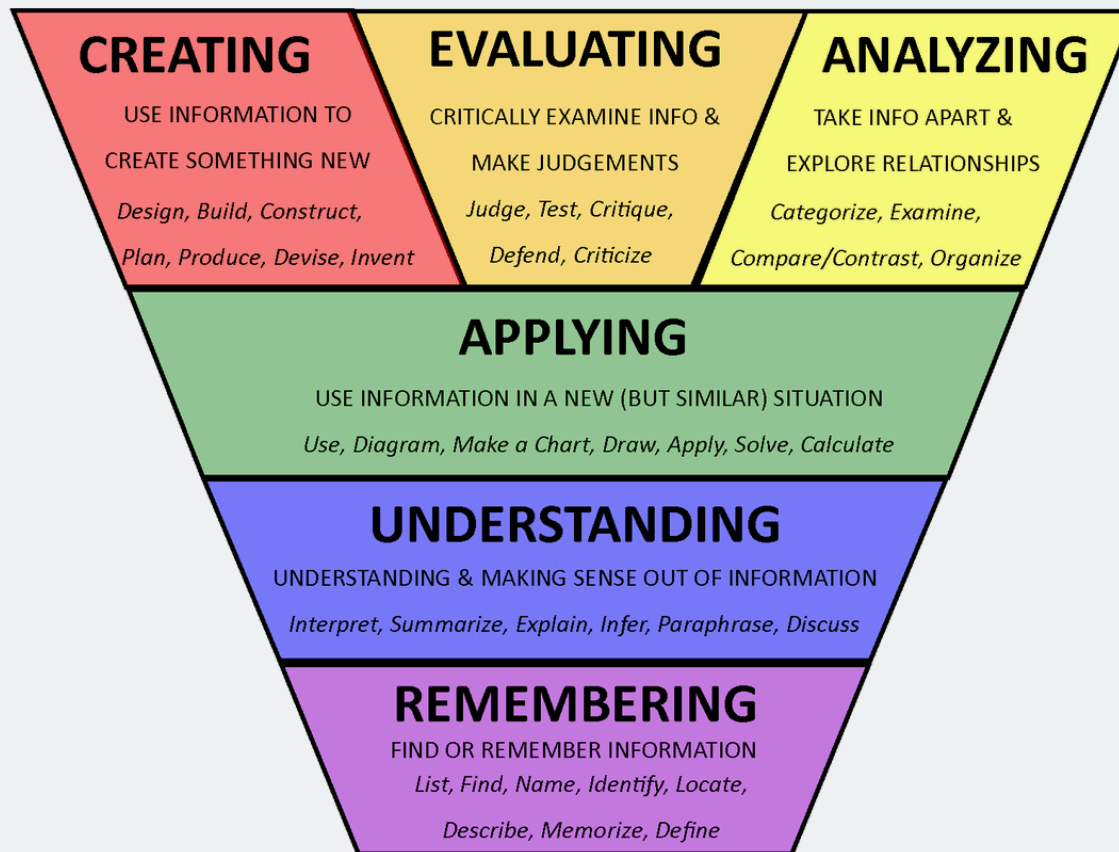


Jenny Cooper, Bronwyn Daniels and Rebecca Ingram

What is higher order thinking?

Thinking provides the software for the mind.

Higher order thinking essentially means thinking that takes place in the higher-levels of the hierarchy of cognitive processing.



Developing Higher-Order Comprehension Skills



The Griney Grollers Thinking Skills Test...

The griney
grollers
grandled in the
granchy gak.



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The griney grollers grangled in the granchy gak.

1) What kind of grollers were they?

They are griney grollers.

2) What did the grollers do?

They grandled.

3) Where did they do it?

In the gak.

4) In what kind of gak did they grangle?

Granchy gak.

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The griney grollers grangled in the granchy gak.

- 5) Place one line under the subject and two lines under the verb.
- 6) In one sentence, explain why the grollers were grangling in the granchy gak. Be prepared to justify your answer with facts.
- 7) If you had to grangle in a granchy gak, what one item would you choose to have with you and why?

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What is Comprehension?

Comprehension has much more to do about **background** as it does **vocabulary**.
–Richard LaVoie, M.A., M.Ed.

Additionally, we must not assume that because a person can understand every word in a passage that they understand what the passage means.

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What is Comprehension?

Comprehension takes the learner to a new level of active understanding and insight. It enhances language and vocabulary knowledge. Good learners use a variety of comprehension strategies simultaneously and, according to Pressley (2002), they know how to deliberately apply specific strategies to aid their comprehension, particularly with regard to challenging texts/information.

Pressley, M. (2002) 'Comprehension instruction: What makes sense now? What might make sense soon?'
Reading online, International Reading Association, viewed 2 December 2008, <www.readingonline.org/articles/handbook/pressley/index/htm>

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Super Six Strategies



Making connections

Description

Learners make personal connections from the text with:

- something in their own life (text to self)
- another text (text to text)
- something occurring in the world (text to world).

Example questions/statements

This story reminds me of a holiday to my grandfather's farm.

This character has the same problem that I read/saw/heard in another text.

I saw a program on television that presented things described in this text.

Does this remind me/you of something?

Has something like this ever happened to me/you?

Example teaching idea

Book and me: Students create two columns with headings *Book/Me*. Prior to and during reading students add details about the connections between the book and their lives.

Super Six Strategies



Predicting

Description

Learners use information from graphics, text and experiences to anticipate what will be read/viewed/heard and to actively adjust comprehension while reading/viewing/listening.

Example questions/statements

What do I/you think will happen next?

What words/images do I/you expect to see or hear in this text?

What might happen next? Why do I/you think that? What helped me/you make that prediction?

Were my/your predictions accurate? How did I/you confirm my/your predictions?

Have I/you read/seen/heard about this topic anywhere else?

Example teaching idea

Before and after chart: Students list predictions before and during reading. As they read students either confirm or reject their predictions.

Super Six Strategies



Questioning

Description

Learners pose and answer questions that clarify meaning and promote deeper understanding of the text. Questions can be generated by the learner, a peer or the teacher.

Example questions/statements

What in the text helped me/you know that?

How is this text making me/you feel? Why is that?

When you read/viewed/ listened to that text did it remind me/you of anything I/you know about? Why did it remind me/you of that?

What did the composer of the text mean by ...?

Whose point of view is this? What points of view are missing?

Example teaching idea

Wonderings: Using post-it notes, students list all the questions they have about the text. As they read students continue to write questions. When an answer is found for the wondering students remove the post-it note.

Super Six Strategies



Monitoring

Description

Learners stop and think about the text and know what to do when meaning is disrupted.

Example questions/statements

Is this making sense?
What have I/you learned?
Should I/you slow down? Speed up?
Do I need to re-read/view/listen?
What can help me/you fill in the missing information?
What does this word mean?
What can I use to help me understand what I'm/you're reading/viewing/hearing?

Example teaching idea

Coding: As they read students code the text with post-it notes

- ✓ I understand
- ? I don't understand
- ! I fixed it up myself

Super Six Strategies



Visualising

Description

Learners create a mental image from a text read/viewed/heard. Visualising brings the text to life, engages the imagination and uses all of the senses.

Example questions/statements

What are the pictures I/you have in my/your head as I/you read/view/listen to this text?

Can I/you describe the picture or image you made while you read/heard that part?

How did the pictures in my/your head help me/you to understand the text?

Example teaching idea

Sketch to stretch: As a passage/story is read students sketch their visualisation. In groups they share their sketches and discuss reasons for their interpretation.

Super Six Strategies



Summarising

Description

Learners identify and accumulate the most important ideas and restate them in their own words.

Example questions/statements

What things will help me/you summarise this text – list, mind map, note-taking, annotations, etc?

What are the main ideas and significant details from the reading/viewing/listening?

If you were to tell another person about the text read/viewed/heard in a few sentences, what would you tell them?

What is the main theme? How is it connected to the world beyond the text?

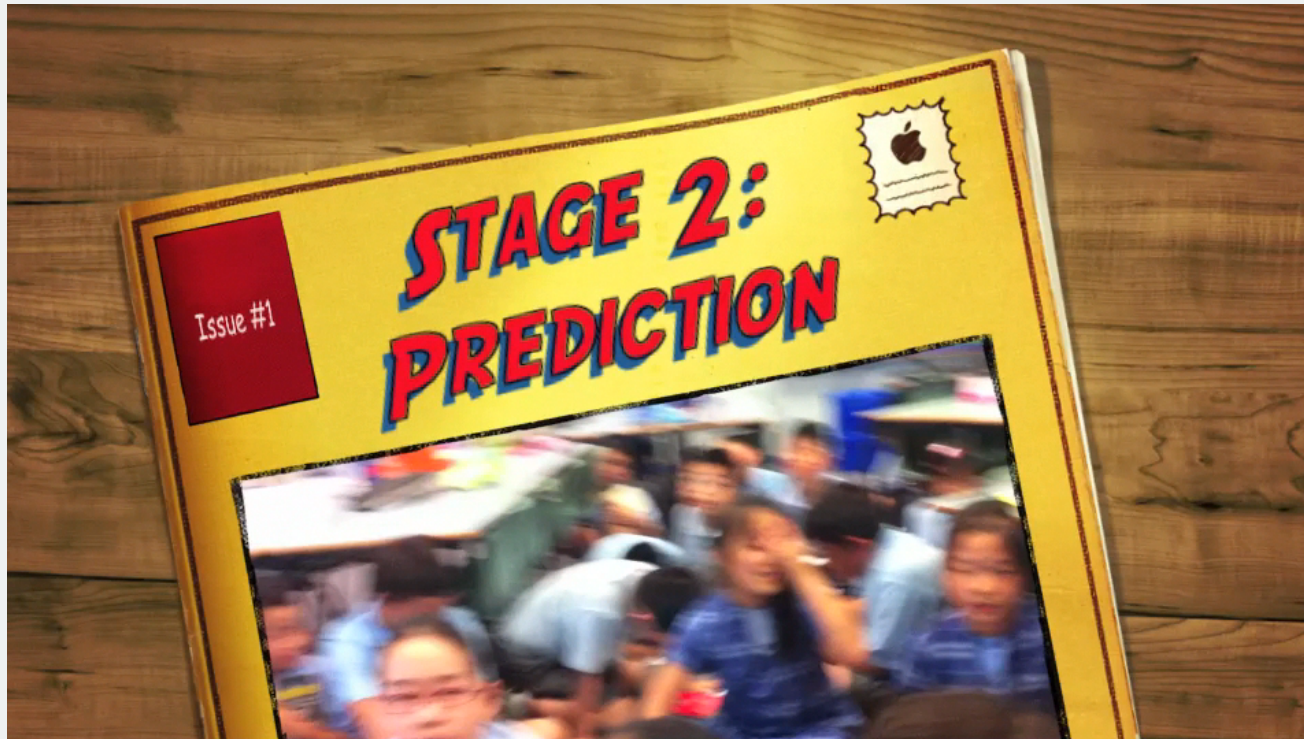
In what significant ways does this text relate to/elaborate on the topic that you have been investigating?

Can you create a metaphor for the text that you have read?

Example teaching idea

Key words: Students highlight words they believe are key to understanding the passage. These words are written on post-it notes and placed on the page. After reading the students close the book and arrange the key words in an order that supports a cohesive summary.

A “Prediction” Lesson...



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What you can do at home to help

- Encourage children to read a **variety** of texts, not just home readers, but quality literature, newspapers, catalogues, advertisements etc.
- Oral comprehension – ask children what they have watched on TV, played on video games, everyday experiences etc.
- General discussions with your child about their understanding of what they have heard or read.
- Encourage your child to talk about their reading. What are they reading? Why do they like it?
- Help your child to make connections between what they have heard or read and similar experiences they may have felt, seen or read elsewhere.

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What you can do at home to help?

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Comprehension strategies to use at home

These comprehension strategies are mental processes that effective readers use as they are reading in order to understand what they have read. As readers, we often use these strategies without even realising it. By making these strategies more obvious to your child, they will be able to use them when they come across new and challenging texts.

Good readers use these strategies as they read - before, during and after reading. They can also use different strategies at different times depending on what they are reading (e.g. novel or report) and why they are reading (e.g. an assignment or for pleasure). No two readers will use exactly the same strategies at the same time.

Making connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We make personal connections with the text, by comparing it to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> something in your own life (text to self) another text (text to text) something occurring in the world (text to world)
Predicting	We use information from the text, images and our own experience to try to predict what might happen next, how the characters might respond or what the outcome might be.
Questioning	We ask and then answer questions that help clarify the meaning of the text, and also help us consider deeper meanings.
Monitoring	If we are reading a text and something doesn't make sense, we know it's okay to stop, reread and think about it to try and understand the meaning.
Visualising	We paint a picture in our head of the things that are being described and explained in the text.
Summarising	Visualising brings the text to life, engages the imagination and uses all of the senses in the text.
	We notice the most important things in the text, and can then put them together in our own words to describe what we have read.

Discuss these strategies with your child, then work through the Ranger's Apprentice example fact sheet.

For more homework help, tips and info sheets go to www.schoolatoz.com.au

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Ranger's Apprentice – Comprehension strategies example

Here's an example of how your child might use comprehension strategies, based on an excerpt from *The Ruins of Gorlan*, Book One in the *Ranger's Apprentice* series by Australian author, John Flanagan.

Have a discussion about the strategies before your child starts reading, so they can keep them fresh in their mind to help them get the most meaning out of the following excerpt.

Chapter One

"Try to eat something, Will. Tomorrow's a big day, after all."

Jenny, bland, pretty and cheerful, gestured towards Will's barely touched plate and smiled encouragingly at him. Will made an attempt to return the smile but it was a dismal failure. He picked at the plate before him, piled high with his favourite foods. Tonight, his stomach knotted tight with tension and anticipation, he could hardly bring himself to swallow a bite.

Tomorrow would be a big day, he knew. He knew it all too well, in fact. Tomorrow would be the biggest day in his life, because tomorrow was the Choosing Day and it would determine how he spent the rest of his life.

"Nerves, I imagine," said George, setting down his loaded fork and sipping the lapels of his jacket in a judicious manner. He was a thin, gangly and studious boy, fascinated by rules and regulations and with a penchant for examining and debating both sides of any question – sometimes at great length. "Dreadful thing, nervousness. It can just freeze you up so you can't think, can't eat, can't speak."

"I'm not nervous," Will said quickly, noticing that Horace had looked up, ready to form a sarcastic comment.

George nodded several times, considering Will's statement. "On the other hand," he added, "a little nervousness can actually improve performance. It can heighten your perceptions and sharpen your reactions. So, the fact that you are worried, if, in fact, you are, is not necessarily something to be worried about, of itself – so to speak."

In spite of himself, a wry smile touched Will's mouth. George would be a natural in the legal profession, he thought. He would almost certainly be the Scribblesmaster's choice on the following morning. Perhaps, Will thought, that was at the heart of his own problem. He was the only one of the five wardmates who had any fears about the Choosing that would take place within twelve hours.

"He ought to be nervous!" Horace scoffed. "After all, which Craftmaster is going to want him as an apprentice?"

"I'm sure we're all nervous," Alys said. She directed one of her rare smiles at Will. "We'd be stupid not to be."

"Well, I'm not!" Horace said, then reddened as Alys raised one eyebrow and Jenny giggled.

It was typical of Alys, Will thought. He knew that the tall, graceful girl had already been promised a place as an apprentice by Lady Pauline, head of Castle Redmont's Diplomatic Service. Her pretence that she was nervous about the following day, and her tact in refraining from pointing out Horace's gaffe, showed that she was already a diplomat of some skill.

Jenny, of course, would gravitate immediately to the castle kitchens, domain of Master Chubb, Redmont's Head Chef. He was a man renowned throughout the Kingdom for the banquets served in the castle's massive dining hall. Jenny loved food and cooking and her evergoing nature and unfailing good humour would make her an invaluable staff member in the turmoil of the castle kitchens.

Battleschool would be Horace's choice. Will glanced at his wardmate now, hungrily tucking into the roast turkey, ham and potatoes that he had heaped onto his plate.

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