

English

4: Comprehension

Main ideas

- comprehension: predicting, reading the lines, reading between the lines, reading beyond the lines; summarizing; cloze
- retelling stories and making class books
- reciprocal reading (group work where children help each other)
- critical and creative thinking skills; using De Bono's thinking hats for understanding a text
- literature

Outcomes

At the completion of this session student's will:

- be able to implement creative strategies to develop reading comprehension.
- make reading books with a class

Content

Activities to develop comprehension – all levels

a) Retelling the story

This helps students to order the events of the passage. During the story, encourage the children to make images in their mind. After reading the story, ask the children to summarize the story, retelling the main ideas. This means not including all the details, but only the key ideas in the book.

The following activities are in order of difficulty from lower to upper primary:

- sequencing the events shown in picture form
- sequencing the events written in simple sentences on cards or strips of paper
- oral retelling of the story
- making a class book where the story is retold in summarized form, and children provide illustrations
- drawing a story map
- oral retelling of the story
- making a class book where the story is retold in summarized form, and children provide illustrations
- drawing a story map
- class report on a book they have read
- book reviews

b) Questioning by the teacher

Predicting

Look at the cover. What do you think this book might be about?

Reading the lines:

What happened in the passage / story? What were the facts?

Use the five 'W's' – who? what? when? where? why?

Reading between the lines:

What do you think might have happened here? Why do you think a person acted in this way? What might have happened if...?

Reading beyond the lines:

Is there a hidden meaning to this story? Could we learn something from this story? Could something in this story apply to us?

c) Story maps

Draw a circle in the middle of the page.

Write the book title / article title / story title in the middle. Include author, place in which the story took place, time in history.

Now draw lines from the centre and draw other circles. Place a different piece of information about the text in each circle. Including diagrams and drawings if possible.

c) De Bono's Six Thinking Hats for comprehension

After a story is read, the teacher chooses one or more of the following 'hats' for construction questions. Questions are asked by the teacher to help the student think about the story.

White hat: information

e.g. "How many ... were there in the story?"

Yellow hat: positive, cheerful aspects of the story

e.g. "What good things happened in the story?" or "What was something good that happened in the story?"

Red hat: Feelings and emotions

e.g. "How did you feel when?" "How did that event make you feel?"

Black hat: negative aspects

e.g. "Did anything bad happen?"

Blue hat: Thinking about the story and its application

e.g. "What can we learn from the story?"

Green hat: Creativity

e.g. "What else could happen?" "How could the story have ended differently?"

d) Reciprocal reading

This is a comprehension strategy for independent readers. The students work in groups of about 6. A group leader is chosen.

The four stages are:

1. Predicting

Group leader says:

Look at the pictures or the book cover. Look at the headings.

What do you think this book will be about? Who do you think will be in the story?

2. Reading

The text is divided up into sections, e.g. a paragraph, a page or a chapter.

The teacher can help decide how the text is to be broken up.

Group leader says:

“Let’s read the first section.” The section can be read:

- individually, (silently)
- aloud with a partner
- together as a whole group

3. Clarifying

Group leader says:

“Were there any words you didn’t understand?”

4. Summarizing

Group leader says:

“Would you please say / write a sentence to summarize this passage?”

or

“Would you please state the main points of this paragraph?”

or

“What are the most important facts / pieces of information in this paragraph?”

5. Questioning

In order to make sure everyone has understood the passage, the group leader asks questions starting with ‘who, what, when, where, why’.

e.g.

What happened in this passage?

Why did this event happen?

What were the most important ideas?

Assessment task

Make a class book

On Practicum, read a story to the class, or to a small group. Now ask the class/group to retell the events. Use the blackboard/whiteboard/large sheet of paper to record what they say. Check that the events are in sequence.

Now write each sentence, (large print), individually at the bottom of sheets of paper. (Alternatively you can type, print, cut and paste.) Give each child, (or pair of children) a paper containing a sentence for illustration. Explain that these drawings will be used to make a book, so the drawings need to be big and colourful.

Make sure that each paper is named. Children enjoy seeing their own names in the book. Ask one or two children to make an illustrated front cover for the book. Now staple or bind the pages together in book form.

For Lower/Middle primary A3 is a good size for a 'Big Book' which can be read again and again by the class. For Upper Primary you may choose to make a smaller book that can become part of the reading library.

Submit a photograph of the front cover of your class book and a photograph of one illustrated page. Also submit the complete text.