

Strategies to support comprehension

Comprehension outcomes vary from reader to reader and, as teachers, we know we can't teach outcomes. However, we can teach strategies to support the development of comprehension. These strategies *become* the learning objectives and, when revisited regularly, they allow children to achieve mastery in their use. All of these strategies (with the exception of evaluating) can help to support the process of inference making – which, in itself, is also an outcome: readers infer different things from the same text. Bug Club Comprehension draws on eight key strategies to build children's comprehension skills.

Clarifying

Clarifying involves ensuring that words in the text have been understood. Bug Club Comprehension dedicates a session each week to exploring text vocabulary prior to the adult-led teaching session.

Summarising

Summarising involves outlining the key events in a text briefly, and recalling events from earlier in the text. It promotes a basic level of literal comprehension.

Activating prior knowledge

When readers make sense of text, they bring the sum of their experiences to the process. Activating prior knowledge involves children drawing on what they already know and understand to make sense of the text as they read it.

Visualising

When a text has been read, the reader arrives at a mental representation of its content (see Johnson-Laird's book under 'Further Reading' below). When working with children, it is useful to ask them to visualise what they are reading. How do the 'pictures' in their heads look? Ask them to verbalise what they 'see'.

Connecting

Connecting involves finding links (including causal links) between events, actions, themes and ideas in the text.

Predicting

Predicting involves anticipating future events in a text by applying knowledge of the text read so far, knowledge of the world, knowledge of text types, and previous experiences.

Questioning

Questioning is the most powerful strategy for helping children to make sense of a text. It both allows teachers to assess children's literal understanding and is the most important strategy for developing inference-making skills. In Bug Club Comprehension, the teacher models how questioning a text appropriately can deepen understanding. The aim is for the children to use this questioning strategy in their own reading and when talking about the text.

Evaluating

Evaluating encourages children to give and justify opinions about what they have read. It will invariably involve activating prior knowledge and connecting ideas to make judgments.