

## Think-Alouds

**DESCRIPTION:** We know that proficient readers monitor their own comprehension, noticing their own **questions, connections, inferences, visualizations and more** as they read. The *think-aloud strategy* simply turns this kind of inward, often automatic thinking into an explicit, outward demonstration. The reader reads a passage aloud and stops repeatedly along the way to explain his or her mental processing of the ideas or events in the text. This means the reader is essentially “opening up her head,” showing others the thinking going on inside.

**WHY USE IT?** Many students, particularly those who struggle, are quite unaware of the mental activity that takes place during effective reading. Some simply search for answers to the questions at the end of the chapter or on the pop quiz, when it is too late. The *think-aloud strategy* helps students to really see how reading is thinking. Once is not enough; kids need to see skilled readers repeatedly demonstrating their thinking. *Think-alouds* also offer a great opportunity for kids to learn about subject-specific genres of text when content-area teachers show how historians read, how scientists read, or how mathematicians read.

### **HOW DOES IT WORK?**

1. Before you begin, let students know you’ll be stopping to think as you read, and indicate what they should notice in your thinking B e.g., *Watch how I take the information in the passage and use it to figure out what’s really going on. I’ll probably be using several strategies to get meaning, including visualizing, questioning, inferring, making connections, trying to figure out what is important, and synthesizing everything into an overall understanding Let’s see what happens.”*
2. Use a short passage, and provide students with copies so they can follow along. Stop from time to time to tell what you think is coming next, make a connection to your own experience, question what a statement might mean, or express confusion about some part of it, etc.
3. When you stop to think, look up from the text and shift your voice to indicate that you’ve moved from reading the words to your own thinking.
4. After modeling, have students try it, either in pairs or as a whole class.
5. *Choice:* You can either do think-alouds “naturally” (stopping whenever you have a thought or question) or by stopping and thinking aloud at pre-marked spots in the text, or at the end of each paragraph.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:** See Beth Davey, *Think Aloud: Modeling the Cognitive Processes of Reading Comprehension*, @ *Journal of Reading*, 1983, vol. 27, pp. 44-47.  
Daniels, Harvey and Steve Zemelman. 2004. *Subjects Matter: Every Teacher’s Guide to Content-Area Reading*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. p.102.