

TIPS FOR TEACHERS



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LITERAL COMPREHENSION

SKILL OVERVIEW: Literal comprehension

Reading comprehension is grasping and interpreting text meaning. While reading entails a hierarchy of skills, comprehension is the ultimate objective. Readers do not understand text if they cannot read words fluently. The cognitive capacity of humans is limited, so if students must allocate excessive thought to word analysis, little is left for comprehension. Thus, the first step toward developing comprehension skills is to teach students to decode well.

At the most elemental level, reading involves a literal interpretation of an author's words. Since readers construct meaning using their prior knowledge, even literal comprehension varies from one reader to another. Still, students must have a strong foundation in these fundamental comprehension skills before they can shift focus to critical reading. For this reason, it is valuable to incorporate materials into instructional programs that build the following skills while affording students with reading opportunities.

- **CONTEXT** Readers use context to predict word meaning or select missing words. The context may actually define words, relate words to prior knowledge, or provide information to build concepts.
- **FACTS** As people read, they must attend to factual details. Exercises that check whether students acquire the key information from a selection are worthwhile. Text discussions, however, are often too focused on facts. Questions should also target inference and analysis, which are higher-level comprehension skills.
- **MAIN IDEA** It is important for readers to be able to identify the main idea of each paragraph since this enables them to find supporting details. These abilities then lead to summary and synthesis of what has been read.
- **SEQUENCE** If students grasp the entirety of what they are reading, they can sequence the events. Manipulatives are an ideal format for developing this skill.

TEACHING STRATEGIES: Sequencing and main idea

Step 1 – Plan comprehension activities that suit program and student needs

Language arts skills are interrelated. For instance, being able to identify main ideas is equally helpful to readers and writers. Look for ways to support all aspects of your program while building key reading skills. Nonfiction reading selections can relate to other subject areas.

Step 2 – Use materials that provide opportunities to read and teach skills

Reading Manipulatives comprehension products build skills and afford meaningful reading activities to students. The nonfiction topics interest students, so they actually enjoy reading the stories and working on the skills. An advantage of manipulatives is that multilevel sets can target the wide ability ranges in a classroom. The levels have a similar appearance so below-level students are not self-conscious.

Step 3 – Encourage students to use strategies to monitor comprehension

In content area reading, comprehension strategies should be applied. Until students become competent readers, they may need to be shown how to monitor comprehension. Teach students tactics to use when their understanding seems to be breaking down. Some of these include: word analysis, vocabulary expansion, or rereading. They can also look forward in the text seeking meaning clarification.

READING MANIPULATIVES PRODUCTS: Sentence and Paragraph Sequencing

The Titanic's Failed Warning

The magnificent Titanic left London for New York on its first voyage.

On the fourth day, April 14, 1912, the Titanic was near Greenland.

The night of the 14th, an operator on the Californian warned the Titanic of icebergs.

The weary Titanic operator told him to quit bothering him.

An iceberg ripped the Titanic open at 11:40 P.M., and it rapidly began to sink.

The Californian's operator, who had gone to bed at 11:30, never heard the distress calls.

By 2:20 A.M., the Titanic had sunk, taking 1,500 people down with her.

Manipulatives are a natural, effective way for students to sequence sentences.

Students put the title card first and then arrange the 7 sentences in sequential order. Manipulatives allow students to keep rearranging until a story makes sense. The 24 sets in Sentence Sequencing A contain topics that are more suitable for younger students (everyday experiences, true animal tales, fables, humor). The nonfiction content of other Reading Manipulatives sequencing products raises concept load and readability. The 30 sets in level B are based on factual events and people. Topics are interesting and suitable for third grade through adult.

COMPREHENSION MANIPULATIVES

Manipulatives build comprehension skills by providing extensive practice using structured reading selections followed by activities that check comprehension. Some products focus on literal comprehension and others on critical reading. Manipulatives are ideal for fostering the cooperative learning that is so valuable for advancing viable text comprehension strategies.

- SENTENCE SEQUENCING A** Download \$8
- SENTENCE SEQUENCING B** Download \$10

RM PRODUCTS: 505, 510 SENTENCE SEQUENCING A & B

Queen Elizabeth II, Grease Monkey

The huge numbers of men in the armed forces during World War II created a shortage of workers on home fronts. Women, wanting to contribute to the war effort, filled many jobs traditionally held by male workers.

Britain's dignified Queen Elizabeth II, who at the time was eighteen-year-old Princess Elizabeth, signed up for a course in heavy mechanics. She didn't even know how to drive.

On her first day of training, the princess' commander picked her up at Windsor Castle. When she arrived at the training center, Elizabeth found a jacked-up car without wheels awaiting her. She learned to strip and service engines.

Elizabeth had to take a test at the end of her mechanic's training. The day of her test, King George VI found his daughter in greasy overalls under a car. He teased her about not being able to get the car going. What Elizabeth did not know was that the king had secretly removed the car's distributor.

After she learned to service military vehicles, Elizabeth was taught how to drive them. She was treated "like any other" except that each evening she returned to the castle. The princess' commander gave her a positive evaluation saying, "Her Royal Highness is a very good and considerate driver."

WOMEN FILL MEN'S JOBS DURING WAR

PRINCESS ELIZABETH VOLUNTEERS

ELIZABETH LEARNS TO REPAIR ENGINES

KING GEORGE'S EXAM TRICK

ELIZABETH'S DRIVING EVALUATION

Comprehension, sequencing, and main idea are all targeted.

First students must read and comprehend the paragraphs. Then they arrange them sequentially. Finally, main ideas are matched to paragraphs.

The 30 sets contain high-interest, nonfiction stories. The stories in Level A have 4 paragraphs and main ideas. The sequence is more obvious than in Level B. Content is suitable for third grade or above.

Level B sets have 5 paragraphs and main ideas. Many stories are based on historic events making them suitable for upper elementary through adult.

This material builds the concept of one topic per paragraph. Skills developed improve students' abilities to form paragraphs when they are writing.

- PARAGRAPH SEQUENCING A** Download \$12
- PARAGRAPH SEQUENCING B** Download \$12

RM PRODUCTS: 515, 520 PARAGRAPH SEQUENCING & MAIN IDEA A & B