

Cognitive Strategies for Readers:

Introduction

- Summary** This lesson introduces students to the idea of a mental toolkit that readers can use to better understand, analyze, and evaluate texts. After a brief introduction, the teacher models reading strategies while reading aloud, stopping to flag important information, to ask questions, to return to information that seems relevant.
- Objectives** Students should come away with a sense of the often unspoken strategies they use, or that others use. They should begin to think about their own reading practices on a meta-cognitive level.
- Materials** Copies of “The Stone Eater” by Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm
Pens, pencils, coloured pencils for annotation
- Preparation**
- Photocopy “The Stone Eater” (include question page)
 - Flag instances of each cognitive strategy in story to mention in second read-through
 - Prepare mini-lecture presentation for introduction
 - Select and write out a passage for modelled annotation
- Warm-Up**
1. *Think Pair Share*: Have students respond to the following prompt – *What does it mean to be a good reader?* – individually, then pair, and share as a class. Brainstorm traits, qualities, habits.
 2. Mini-lecture (5 minutes): Explain to students that we’re beginning a new unit on cognitive strategies for readers. Briefly unpack the term “cognitive strategies.” How does that “good reader” we talked about go from reading something for the first time to figuring out what it means? How can we know which details to focus on? How can we move from being confused about a text to “getting it”?
- Run through the cognitive strategies that we’ll learn and practice in the unit. Toolkit metaphor: explain that, throughout, students will be developing and honing their own toolkit, learning when to use what tool, and how to use them to construct meaning.
- When writers write something, they leave it there for the reader to deal with. Part of being a reader means taking what the writer has written and creating meaning or understanding out of those pieces. We assemble understanding a bit like we put together a piece of furniture. All of the pieces are there, but we get to decide how to put it together and, sometimes, what it will look like in the end.

Main Act	<p>1. Read “The Stone Eater” by Kateri Akiwenzi-Damm. Ask students to do the following as you read:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Underline important parts with green Underline confusing parts with red Put a star by a part that makes you think of something else Put a question mark by a part that makes you think of questions (“I wonder...”)</p> <p>2. Explain that we will be re-reading the story, and you will be modelling the cognitive strategies we discussed earlier in a “think-aloud” way. Let students know they can contribute as they get the hang of what we’re doing. Students should have access to a “Pause” button: when they have a question, comment, or want to add something they were thinking of during the first read through, they can say “Pause,” and temporarily stop the reading. At the end, lead a brief discussion that evaluates the text’s merits. Some students will have enjoyed it; others will be frustrated because the character’s motivations aren’t clear. It is a piece that brings out a lot of contrasting opinions! Be sure to celebrate those.</p> <p>3. Briefly demonstrate effective annotation (this can be left until the beginning of the next week if necessary) with a selected passage that is on the board. A good text is “Fair Heart” by Sarah Rees Brennan.</p>
Conclusion	1. Give an overview of how this unit will function: final projects, weekly schedule. Address any last minute questions.
Extension	Ask students, in pairs, to review the parts of “The Stone Eater” that they marked in their original read-through and to compare with a peer. Did they pick up on similar details? How did their information differ? Students can also address any of the questions included in the text at the story’s conclusion (be sure to include on photocopy). Ask them to respond to one of the “After” questions <i>or</i> the “Beyond.”
Assessment	<i>Informal:</i> monitor student comprehension and engagement with process. Pre-assessment on student use of cognitive strategies has already been completed.
Adaptations	Normally, students with difficulty reading would benefit from having access to a text before we read it in class. However, because we’re doing a think-aloud session and students will be walked through the text twice, it is unnecessary in this instance.
Resources	<p>Akiwenzie-Damm, Kateri. “The Stone Eater.” <i>Modern Morsels: Selections of Canadian Poetry and Short Fiction</i>. Eds. Dr. Janet E. McIntosh, Sue Schleppe, and Alex White. Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 2012. 56-61. Print.</p> <p>Rees Brennan, Sarah. “Fair Heart.” <i>After: Nineteen Stories of Apocalypse and Dystopia</i>. Eds. Ellen Datlow & Terri Windling. New York: Hyperion, 2012.</p>