

Monitoring Comprehension: Following the Inner Conversation

Listen to your inner voice and leave tracks of your thinking.

Many striving readers think reading is simply about sounding out the words and calling them. So it is imperative that they learn that reading is truly about thinking. This monitoring lesson is a first step in that direction.

Preparation. Choose a compelling piece of short text, a picture book, or a nonfiction article—a text that students can really sink their teeth into. Read it before the lesson and notice what you think about, your connections, questions, inferences, and so forth, and mark them so you remember them in the lesson. Each student needs a pencil and clipboard with a piece of paper and six 3" x 3" sticky notes attached to each side of the paper.

1 Connect and Engage. Gather the kids on the floor in front of you. Make sure each one has a partner for turn and talks throughout the lesson. *Today I brought this book called _____.* *This story is about _____.* *Has anything like this ever happened to you? Turn and talk about that.* Invite a few volunteers to share. *When readers read or listen to and think about the words, they carry on an inner conversation with the text. They have an inner voice that speaks to them as they read. They might have a connection, a question, or a reaction. They might be confused. Readers talk back to the writer when they read. Have you ever noticed a voice in your head speaking to you as you read? Turn and talk about that.* Some students may relate immediately, others may not. *Well, today I am going to read this book aloud and stop and share my thinking as I read. I'm going to share my inner voice so you can see how I think when I read and notice how I follow an inner conversation with the text when I read. Then you will have a chance to try it. You need to remember that nothing is more important than your thinking when you read. You see, reading is thinking!*

2 Model. Take no more than seven minutes to read a page or two of the text, share your thinking, and jot down thoughts on sticky notes. *Let me read a little, and as I read, I will share my thinking out loud. I am going to leave tracks of my thinking on sticky notes. Just like*

animals leave tracks in the snow after a snowfall, you can tell which animals were there the night before from the fresh tracks. The sticky note tracks are a place to hold my thinking so I don't forget it. And I can see them even after I've finished reading.

*Right here, I have a question. I wonder . . . I'll code it with a **?** on the sticky note. Here I have a connection, which I can code with an **R** for reminds me of . . . Here my inner voice said, "Huh, I don't get this part . . ." Sometimes I get confused and need to reread or read on. But I don't write all of my thinking down or I'd never get through the text. So I need to think about what is really worth writing down.*

Stop reading for a minute and ask students to turn and talk about what they notice you doing as you read. To assess whether they understand the strategy, listen in on their discussions. This is an opportune time to invite a striving reader to share out the wise things he or she notices such as you jotting, you asking questions, things you were reminded of, and points that confused you. If that student is reluctant to speak, share for him or her, with permission. Write what they share on an anchor chart titled The Inner Conversation for all to see.

3 Guide. Hand out the clipboards and sticky notes and have kids try what you just modeled. Continue to read slowly and ask them to jot down their thoughts—their connections, questions, reactions, and confusions—and then discuss their ideas. Invite a few kids to share their sticky notes and turn and talk throughout.

4 Practice. Have kids practice the strategy in small groups or pairs, continuing to jot down on sticky notes what their inner voices say and talk to each other, just as they did during the Guide portion of the lesson. They can continue with the text you were reading or they can choose a text of their own. Explain that as they work, you will be moving around the room, conferring with small groups, pairs, and individuals as they jot down their inner voices and talk with each other.

5 Share. Call kids back to share their sticky notes and to share what they learned in their discussions. Ask, *What did you notice yourself doing as you were reading?* Add to The Inner Conversation anchor chart, recording their answers on it. They will likely say they asked questions, made connections, noticed surprising information, and so forth. Keep the chart posted. As kids continue to embrace the idea that reading is about many different kinds of thinking, they can add to it. *Wow, great work today! This chart is an important record of the kinds of thinking you do when you read. All of these ideas came from you. You learned so much about yourself as a reader and you also learned so much from the reading itself. When we take our inner conversation public with each other, we all learn and understand more.*