



Reading Comprehension At Home

Strategy Focus: *Synthesizing*

Reading is thinking!

How do good readers synthesize as they read?

“Synthesizing is closely linked to determining importance. Basically, as we identify what’s important, we interweave our thoughts to form a comprehensive perspective to make the whole greater than just the sum of its parts. . . When readers synthesize, they identify the essential story line and ask, What does it all mean? Readers coax more meaning from the text as they generate questions, apply background knowledge and discuss it with others. Through the process of synthesizing their thinking deepens and their understanding grows.” (Zimmerman, p. 129,131)

Synthesizing is using all of the strategies we’ve learned so far.
“It’s your thinking and background knowledge added to the summary. It helps you understand more about the book” - 3rd grade student
(Zimmerman, p 133)

Home activities to practice synthesizing:

Read chapter books together:
Take turns reading a book aloud. As you finish a chapter or section, take turns retelling what you’ve read. Once you’ve practiced telling events and characters, begin talking about What does it all mean? Has your thinking changed as we’ve read? Does the author want us to learn something or understand something more than what she has what the words on the page say?

Read the newspaper together:
Read the headline first. What do you think the article is about? Continue paragraph by paragraph. Has your thinking changed? Why do you think the author wrote this piece? What was the message he or she was hoping you would receive as the reader?

Cook your favorite recipe:
As you add ingredients notice that each ingredient has its own qualities and flavors, but when all the ingredients are blended together, you have created something entirely new with its own flavor and characteristics. This is sort of like synthesizing. We use all our background knowledge, questions, inferences, images as we read to understand the big idea.

Adapted from 7 Keys to Comprehension: How to Help Your Kids Read it and Get it! By Susan Zimmerman and Chryse Hutchins 2003