

# Workshop Guide

Andie Cunningham

## Synthesizing Butterflies



Teaching  
Reading Strategies  
to Kindergartners

# Contents

## Introduction

## Questions for Discussion

## Workshops

1. Understanding Synthesis 5
2. Designing Comprehension Posters 6
3. Movement and Synthesis 7
4. Using Sticky Notes with Young Learners 8
5. Bull's-Eyes and Waves Written Response 9
6. Planning a Lesson Progression and Integrating Strategy Instruction into Themework 10
7. Analyzing Student Work Samples 11
8. The Language of Strategy Instruction 12

## Handouts for Workshops

- |  |    |
|--|----|
| Commonly Asked Questions                                 | 13 |
| Sticky Notes: Comprehension Placeholders at Any Age      | 16 |
| Comprehension Posters: What, Where, and Why              | 18 |
| What Are the Seven Reading Strategies?                   | 20 |
| Waves Template   | 21 |
| Bull's-Eye Template                                      | 22 |
| Student Sticky Note Samples                              | 23 |
| Student Wave Sample                                      | 24 |
| Student Bull's-Eye Sample                                | 25 |
| Lesson Progression Grid                                  | 26 |
| Integrating Strategies into Themework Grid               | 27 |
| Three-Column Notes                                       | 28 |
| Examples of Anchor Books Used in Weeklong Strategy Study | 29 |
| Introducing Bull's-Eyes and Waves in Synthesis Work      | 34 |
| Movement and Books: Another Way In                       | 36 |

Copyright © 2006 Andie Cunningham

ISBN-10: 1-60155-006-5

ISBN-13: 978-1-60155-006-4

All rights reserved.

This guide may be photocopied for staff development use only.

# Introduction

*Butterfly Synthesis: Teaching Reading Strategies to Kindergartners* takes viewers into Andie Cunningham's kindergarten classroom for three consecutive days of reading workshops. During these sessions, students learn how the strategy of synthesis can help them understand texts and make connections to their own lives.

Andie demonstrates on the video how an “anchor text” for strategy instruction (the children's book *The Prince of Butterflies* by Bruce Coville and Jon Clapp) is read and reread over three days, with a variety of writing, discussion, and movement extension activities building the children's understanding of the text and their thinking processes as they read.

The eight workshops described in this guide are designed for use in a variety of settings—from ongoing study groups in schools to brief presentations at staff meetings. You may want to print out the “Commonly Asked Questions” handout for workshop participants to read before viewing, or keep a copy handy since these questions about the school demographics and reading curriculum are sure to emerge in many sessions. Participants may also want to read the book *Starting with Comprehension* by Andie Cunningham and Ruth Shagoury (Stenhouse 2005) for more information on strategy instruction with young children.

This guide includes three components:

1. Questions for discussion, tied to each of the four chapters of the DVD (Introduction, Day 1, Day 2, and Day 3).
2. Eight workshop suggestions, with a range of formats and activities, from short viewing and discussion to in-depth viewing, hands-on application, and classroom extensions.
3. Short readings and handouts to enhance the viewing and workshop experience, including brief explanations of the theory behind the practices, bibliographies and lesson guides for strategy instruction, and templates for writing extension activities with students.

## References

- Coville, Bruce, and Jon Clapp. 2002. *The Prince of Butterflies*. New York: Harcourt Children's Books.
- Cunningham, Andie, and Ruth Shagoury. 2005. *Starting with Comprehension: Teaching Reading Strategies to the Youngest Learners*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

# Questions for Discussion

- Introduction**
1. What is going well in your comprehension strategies instruction?
  2. What is your goal for improving your strategies work with students?
  3. Andie defines synthesis as “the beautiful way we live through a book.” How do you define synthesis?
  4. Andie describes the challenges of teaching reading in a half-day kindergarten program as “immense” and the importance of taking things out of the curriculum to free up time for her strategies instruction. How has your schedule for literacy instruction changed over the past few years? What changes are you in the process of making now?
  5. Visual aids like the comprehension posters are important in Andie’s classroom. What visual aids do you use for reading instruction? How and when do you refer to them with students?
  6. Andie and her students call each other “friends” as their preferred greeting, and students call Andie by her first name. What is your response to this?

- Day 1**
1. Some of the students are eager to try the movement extension after the first reading of *The Prince of Butterflies*. Other sit the activity out. When are children allowed to sit out activities in your classroom? What activities aren’t optional? Why?
  2. The anchor book *The Prince of Butterflies* is selected because it presents complex themes about change, connection, and community all tied to the butterfly theme. How do you choose anchor books?
  3. Think of an anchor text you used for strategies work that was especially successful. What made it successful?
  4. Think of an anchor text you used with more discouraging results. Why didn’t it work well as an anchor text?

- Day 2**
1. Andie always rereads the anchor text at least once on the second day of study, and often two or more times through the cycle of exploring the anchor text. When do you reread text? Why do you reread text?
  2. What is going well in your comprehension strategies instruction?
  3. What is your goal for improving your strategies instruction?
  4. Andie has adapted the bull’s-eye graphic organizer from Debbie Miller’s work in *Reading with Meaning* and designed a new comprehension constructor, the waves sheet. What graphic organizers do you use in your reading comprehension work? How are these different from worksheets?

- Day 3**
1. Andie uses a lot of metacognitive language with her students, talking about *schema*, *brains*, *what’s in your head*, *your mind*, and *brilliant thinking*. Why do you think she does this? What language do you use in your classroom that encourages your students to be thoughtful learners?
  2. Andie says she “lets students off the hook” in their written responses to the anchor text, requiring only that they draw and not necessarily write any letters or words in response to the book. What are the benefits of allowing young children to focus on drawing in response to a book?

# WORKSHOP 1 Understanding Synthesis



Distribute copies of the “What Are the Seven Reading Strategies?” (p. 20) handout. Have everyone read the handout silently and then talk together about what makes synthesis instruction challenging. View the Introduction, Day 1, and Day 2 segments of the video. Discuss these questions with participants:

- ▶ Why does Andie tell students to “put their lenses on”?
- ▶ How does the book introduction change the second day before rereading?
- ▶ What different skills do students practice in the movement and bull’s-eye response activities?



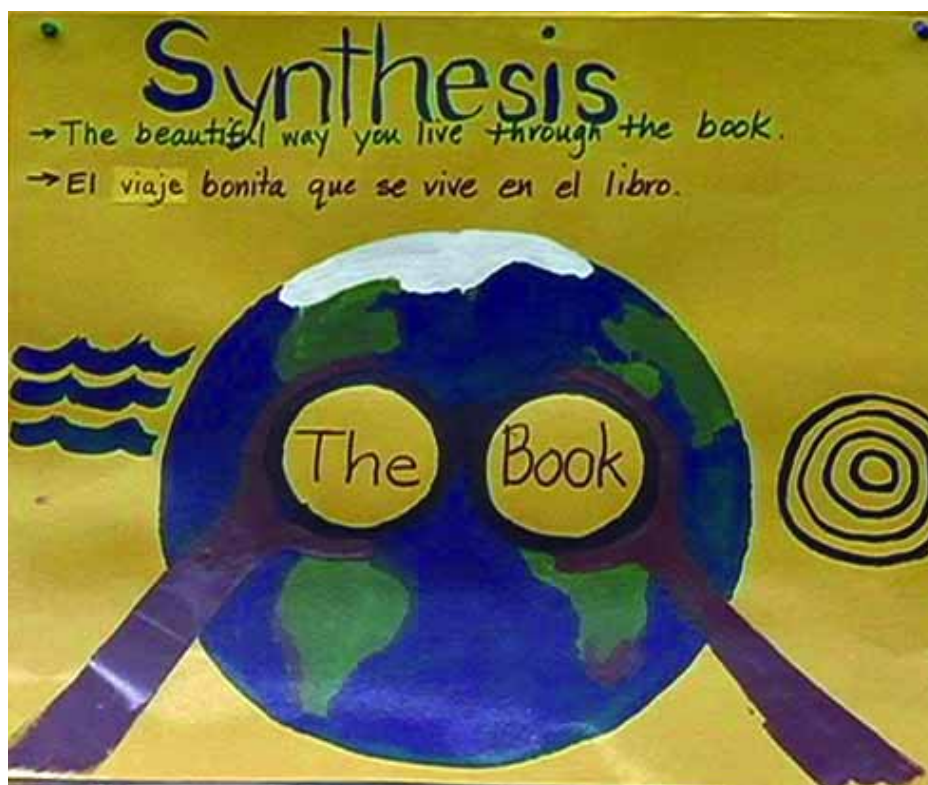


## WORKSHOP 2 Designing Comprehension Posters



Distribute copies of the “Comprehension Posters” (p. 18) handout to participants. Read silently, and then view the introduction to the video. Provide markers, art supplies and posterboard to participants, and then have everyone create posters together. Issues to think through and discuss include the following:

- ▶ When and how will you introduce the poster to students?
- ▶ Should there be one or more language translations?
- ▶ How might you integrate the use of more visual aids into your reading instruction?



## WORKSHOP 3 Movement and Synthesis



View the Day 1 segment of the DVD, and distribute the “Movement and Books” (p. 36) handout to participants. After everyone has had a chance to read the handout, talk about these issues:

- ▶ How can teachers connect movement and reading strategy instruction in their own classrooms?
- ▶ What is the place for movement work throughout the curriculum?
- ▶ What challenges does everyone anticipate with integrating movement into the curriculum?



## WORKSHOP 4

## Using Sticky Notes with Young Learners



View the Day 3 segment of the video, asking participants to focus on the “sticky notes” whole-class writing activity. Distribute copies of the “Sticky Notes” (p. 16) handout. Give each participant a large sticky note, and then read a short but provocative text or picture book linked to a current topic of study in classrooms. Give the group a question to sketch or write a response to the text on their sticky note. Compile all the sticky notes on a piece of chart paper, and then have the group look at them together to talk through themes that emerge. Distribute the “Student Sticky Notes Samples” handout (p. 23), and have everyone discuss what the common themes that emerged in the students’ writing and drawing.





## WORKSHOP 5

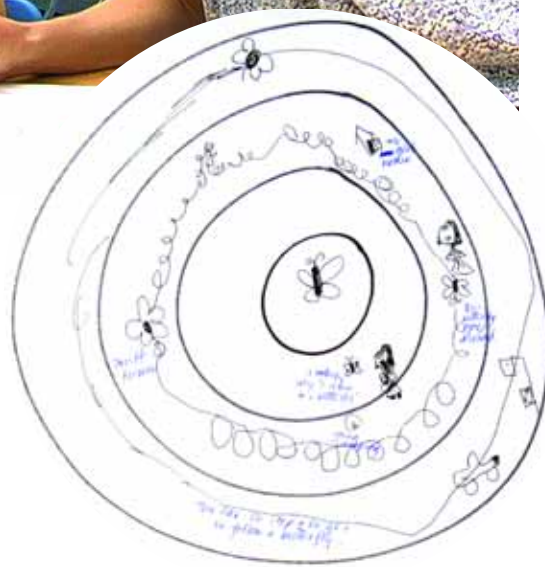
## Bull's-Eyes and Waves Written Responses



View the Day 2 and Day 3 segments of the video. Distribute the “Bull’s-Eyes and Waves” handout (p. 34), and have everyone read it silently. After everyone is finished, distribute copies of the bull’s-eye and wave templates (pp. 21–22), and explain that everyone should choose one template for response. Then read a short selection from a children’s book or provocative short text. Have everyone write or draw a response during or after your reading on the template they selected. Participants can share their responses in the whole group or with partners first.

Discuss the following:

- ▶ Who picked waves? Why?
- ▶ Who picked bull’s-eye? Why?
- ▶ How did the written response change the reading experience?
- ▶ What did you learn about synthesis by trying it?
- ▶ What have you learned about written response to reading that you will take back to your classroom?



## WORKSHOP 6

# Planning a Lesson Progression and Integrating Strategy Instruction into Themework

**Integrating Strategies into Themework Grid**

Anchor Book: One Piece of Butterflies by Bruce Goldstone and Joe Chen	Theme: Butterflies	Strategy: Reading	Notes
Anchor Book	Theme	Strategy	Notes
Anchor Book	Theme	Strategy	Notes
Anchor Book	Theme	Strategy	Notes
Anchor Book	Theme	Strategy	Notes
Anchor Book	Theme	Strategy	Notes

Have participants bring in plans for themes to be explored throughout the year, along with texts they plan to use. Distribute copies of the “Integrating Strategies into Themework Grid” (p. 27) and “Lesson Progression Grid” (p. 26) and the “Examples of Anchor Books Used in Weeklong Strategy Study” handout (p. 29). You can choose to have the participants work individually, with partners, or in small groups by grade level. Things to note each day on the grid include the following:

- ▶ Will you read for the first time, reread, or read just a portion of the text?
- ▶ What movement, writing, cross-curricular (i.e., math, science, social studies, art), or additional reading extensions will you plan?

**Lesson Progression Grid**

Anchor Book	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Anchor Book	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Anchor Book	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Anchor Book	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Anchor Book	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Anchor Book	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5

Fill out “Reading” and “Extensions” plans in small groups. Try out plans over the next week, with participants filling in the “Notes” section day by day of what went well, what didn’t, ways they changed the initial plan, and why they made the changes.

**Examples of Anchor Books Used in Weeklong Strategy Study**

*Anchor Book: One Piece of Butterflies by Bruce Goldstone and Joe Chen*

*Anchor Book: One Piece of Butterflies by Bruce Goldstone and Joe Chen*

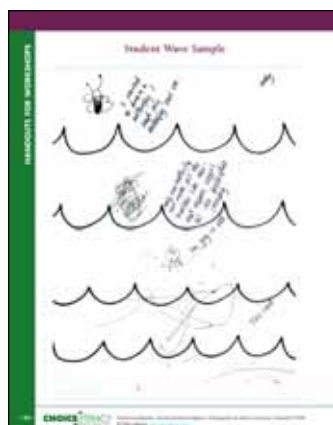
*Anchor Book: One Piece of Butterflies by Bruce Goldstone and Joe Chen*

*Anchor Book: One Piece of Butterflies by Bruce Goldstone and Joe Chen*

*Anchor Book: One Piece of Butterflies by Bruce Goldstone and Joe Chen*



## WORKSHOP 7 Analyzing Student Work Samples



View the bull's-eye and wave student conferences on the Day 2 and Day 3 segments of the DVD. Distribute the “Student Wave Sample” and “Student Bull's-Eye Sample” handouts (pp. 24–25) of sample bull's-eye and wave responses from children.

- ▶ What do participants notice about the different ways students synthesize and make sense of the text in their writing?
- ▶ Why and how does Andie write down the children's narratives? How do Andie's conferences with students help them clarify their own thinking?
- ▶ What do you notice about her language that prompts this thinking?





## WORKSHOP 8 The Language of Strategy Instruction



In this workshop, participants will be asked to view the video specifically noting the language used by Andie and the students.

Distribute copies of the “Three-Column Notes” handout (p. 28). Ask participants to jot down brief notes in these categories as they watch. Participants should note language Andie uses to describe the students’ thinking processes, especially words such as *lens*, *brilliant*, *thinking*, *schema*, *mind*, *head*, and *brain*. View the video. After viewing and note-taking, share in small groups what everyone noticed. Come together as a whole group and discuss patterns in the language that were discovered. What implications does this have for your language use with students?





# Commonly Asked Questions

Andie Cunningham

## *What are the demographics of the school in the video?*

Our school is in a northwestern U.S. urban area. It has the highest poverty numbers in the district, with 80 percent of students qualifying for free and reduced-price breakfasts and lunches. We have six half-day kindergarten classes in our 540-student K–3 school, each one with twenty to twenty-five students. Instructional assistants are sometimes available to come to our classes for thirty minute stretches. We have at least twenty identified languages and only two full-time in-house translators (for Spanish and Russian families).

Students in my classroom this year spoke six different languages: Hmong, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Spanish, Russian, and English. I speak some Spanish, and it improves every year as I use it more and more in my interactions with the children and their families. I invite the class to count in many languages when we do our calendar work and ask the parents to help me learn and write the counting numbers in their native languages.

## *What is the schedule for reading workshop?*

The district has a half-day kindergarten program, with children in the morning program working with me from 7:50 AM till 10:25 AM. Wednesday is a shortened session when the kindergartners are in school for only ninety minutes.

The daily schedule for reading workshop is predictable yet flexible. I begin the week with a mini-lesson focused on modeling the strategy we will explore and reading the anchor book for the first time.

On Tuesday, we revisit the mini-lesson; this time it is the children's turn to try the strategy I modeled the day before. Wednesdays are a late-start day at my school, and because the session is only 90 minutes long we do not typically have a reading workshop. When we return to the book on Thursday and Friday, we read the text a third and sometimes fourth time, using the workshop to digest the strategy more fully. Extensions might

include writing, painting, acting out pieces of the book, or trying the strategy with other books.

## *Why is the reading workshop noisy?*

Literacy is a social activity for learners in primary classrooms. Just as writers need a community in which to work, I have found that at this age, readers need other readers. This can be especially important if children are English language learners and need to be able to speak to others in their first language when possible.

The children are learning the value of sharing books, finding details in the pictures, helping each other make sense of illustrations and words, and discussing their ideas about the books the class is studying. The children are making connections between their lives and the texts in the classroom, so they need conversations in multiple places: what happened last night at home, life experiences, stories from a friend reading at the same table, or mini-lessons from the teacher.

Even if children are talking in regular conversation level voices, the sounds of twenty-five speakers can seem very loud to teachers used to quiet classrooms of children working alone. We want young children to be language users, and classroom talk provides rich opportunities for language learning.

## *What are other children doing while the teacher confers?*

While I confer with students, the other children in the class work on the reading strategy we are practicing or share books they have chosen with classmates. You will notice that there are no assigned seats in the classroom and that children are free to move about the room, finding a comfortable place to read. Some will move near the book tubs or the books laid out on tables or in a display, such as the butterfly books. The children sit in various places around the room such as chairs, couches, carpet squares, or corner nooks. Others cluster in groups of friends who might

have the same first language or share some of their interests in a book. This talk is vital for both their literacy and their oral language development as they tease out and explore ideas in English as well as different home languages.

***In what order do you teach the seven comprehension strategies? What is the progression throughout the year?***

The first part of the school year is devoted to studying schema and metacognition—Making Connections to texts. This three-month block of time includes focus on self-to-text, text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world. The block forms a foundation for strategy work, and we return to it throughout the year.

After our winter break, I typically spend three weeks on Mind Pictures (visualizing), a strategy study that is accessible to all the children. Although there is no set progression, Mind Pictures is a natural next step. The order of the next three comprehension strategy studies (Asking Questions, Determining Importance, and Digging Deeper) is more flexible. Which strategy we study depends on what I have noticed about my students—the strengths they are displaying and what seems to be interrupting their successes.

I purposely save Inferring and Synthesis for our last two strategy studies. I like to spend at least three or ideally four weeks on each of these crucial and difficult strategies. When students are using them successfully, they are accessing at least one and often more of the strategies we have studied earlier.

***Why are some children allowed to opt out of the movement reading extension?***

A majority of the reading workshop focus activities are invitational. Some students feel more comfortable moving to what they understand about a book, where others are more apt to draw what they are thinking. Although it is my hope that everyone will accept each learning opportunity offered, it doesn't help anyone when I insist that they participate. I change my invitations for any comprehension activity when I note students are consistently not joining us.

***How many children do you confer with each day in reading workshop?***

In reading workshop, there are many different kinds of conferences. We might talk as a whole class, sharing our connections to a piece of literature. Other times, when using the sticky notes, I do my best to capture and record the words of each child on their paper. With more complex strategy work, such as the bull's-eyes and waves, it took me two days to confer with each child.

***What advice do you have for someone just getting started with strategies instruction?***

The most important starting place is with our own reading process and use of the comprehension strategies. What we do as readers informs what we teach our students. Try using the strategies with the books you are reading outside the classroom.

Let yourself experiment with this new way of teaching. When I first started using the comprehension strategies in my classroom, I would read the book before class time, marking several pages where I used the strategy. As I became more comfortable teaching this way, I moved away from preparing my examples and trusted that my authentic connections to the book would occur in front of my students.

A final piece of advice: we need to choose books for classroom study that are challenging and intriguing for us as readers, so our responses to the literature are authentic. When I am fully invested in the book we are reading, my thoughtful connections are obvious and powerful.

***What special considerations are there for strategies instruction with young English language learners?***

English language learners deserve what all our young students need: someone who will listen to them, work to understand them, and respect the knowledge they bring to the classroom. That might mean spending extra time with them in conference to make sure the message you are receiving is the message they intend for you to receive.

I seek out adults who speak other languages, and use the language skills of the adult assistants

that I have. For example, I sometimes have a Spanish-speaking translator read a book with the Spanish-speaking students in the room. She translates the story into Spanish so that when they hear it in English, it makes more sense. Other times, I have had a translator or aide speak individually with the children.

I've learned to slow down, ask one question at a time, and wait. Let them get their meaning across to you using whatever techniques work for

them: mime and gesture, drawings, or words in their first language.

Check in often to make sure you know what they want you to know. Encourage them to nod or shake their heads to confirm.

Remember that they want to be heard and understood. Their brains are working twice as hard as ours as they maneuver between at least two languages.

# Sticky Notes: Comprehension Placeholders at Any Age

Andie Cunningham

Learners who focus on comprehension strategies rely on different tools. One of the most popular is the sticky note (also known as the Post-it). High school teachers like Cris Tovani and primary teachers such as Debbie Miller write about how they use these little notes in their comprehension work with students. What adaptations do pre-school and kindergarten teachers need to make to use these tools as successfully as teachers who work with older students?

## Tools

As a kindergarten teacher, my first challenge was to find larger sticky notes. I knew my students needed more room to create their messages with pictures or words and to write their names. I found the four-by-six-inch notes to be the perfect size. I also learned early on that fine-tipped black pens helped students add detail and clarity to their pictures. The pens also allowed the children to include letters, words, drawings and their names within the confines of the paper. Another important tool that I relied on is large easel paper (twenty-seven by thirty-four inches) for creating our anchor charts from the notes.

## Getting Ready for Sticky Notes

Before we start to use sticky notes, my students and I use other placeholders for our thinking. For example, long strips of butcher paper laid on the floor offer places for students to sit near each other and draw their thinking. Most children have plenty of room to draw their schema for the story we're studying. (Yes, occasionally someone writes over someone else's drawing or imaginary boundaries are violated, but in my experience, this is rare.) Students use crayons or markers from the same tubs we use during writing workshop. After everyone has finished, we use the long posters as discussion starters for how all our experiences connect with the book.

## Introducing Sticky Notes

Once the children know that their contributions to our community are important, using sticky notes to hold their thinking is a natural transition. Instead of drawing and writing on large pieces of butcher paper, they easily transfer their thinking to smaller placeholders: the sticky notes. Typically in November, after we have spent a month digesting and talking about our metacognition, I introduce this tool as we discuss schema.

On the first day, after intentionally focusing on the schema poster and reading a book aloud to them, I talk about my schema, then write my connection and name on a sticky note. I mount my sticky note on the chart paper I have already labeled with the title of the book and the words *Our Schema*. I verbally—and briefly—explain to the children what I have placed on the anchor chart. That's plenty for one day.

The next day, we return to the same text. Once again, I frame our thinking around schema and reread the book. Then I tell the students that it's their turn to use sticky notes and special pens to write or draw their connections with the book. I remind them that it is their job to write their names.



Distributing sticky notes to students.





Students draw and write their understanding on their sticky note.

## Creating Anchor Charts

I wander the room as children work, available to offer gentle support. When a student has finished his or her sticky note, I move with them to our anchor chart. Because this is reading workshop, not writing workshop, I serve as scribe, writing each student's exact words on their sticky note. I ask the student to explain what they have recorded on their note. Occasionally, their verbal explanation and the picture don't make total sense to me. This is my chance to help a student flesh out connections that may not yet be obvious. During these brief one-on-one conferences, I am careful not to prejudge a student's work. Knowing that I may get to ask only one question, I frame it



Children bring their sticky notes to me to post on our anchor chart.

intentionally and give the child time to answer. I wait at the chart for each student to bring me his or her work.

Children who are finished choose books to read or continue writing on other papers. If there is time, and my students have the energy to invest in a whole-

class conversation, we will gather and briefly discuss our new anchor chart.



A portion of a whole-class anchor chart featuring a sticky note from each child.

## Using the Charts

The primary use of the anchor chart is to hold the whole class's thinking in poster form. I use this basic format with all the comprehension strategies for the rest of the year, and I allow myself to use the structure creatively if a different variation would serve us better.

We can return to a chart when discussing the book on our third or fourth day of the week, or we can seek it out during other times of the day. For example, if the book is about trees and we are studying trees in science, we can revisit it to support our study. I also use the chart in parent-teacher conferences and to help me plan the next steps in my teaching. These charts are also wonderful conversation starters with teaching colleagues.



Discussing the anchor chart of sticky notes with the whole class.

# Comprehension Posters: What, Where, and Why

Andie Cunningham

Several years ago, I started creating permanent posters to use in my comprehension strategy work. My hope for the large posters was two-pronged. I wanted them to serve as visual references, ways for us all to narrow our focus over and over again when we turned to strategy work. The second hope was to show the children (and classroom visitors) how important the strategies were to all of our classwork. By creating and then displaying each poster for several weeks on our bulletin board, and then hanging the poster from the ceiling for the rest of the school year, I hoped to deepen our work as learners and as a community.

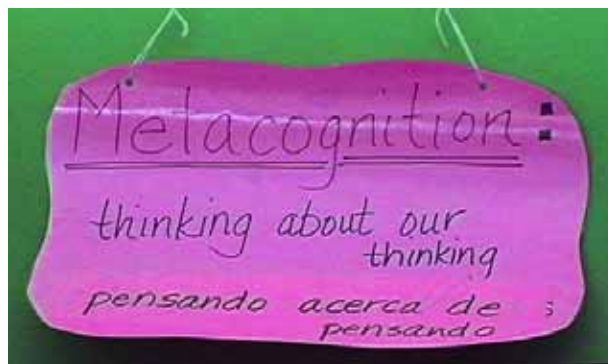
Sharing the decorating of the walls, windows, and doors with students is a commitment I make before the children enter the room in the fall. I work hard to limit how much space I take up with calendar, schedule, and other daily ritual necessities. The rest of the room is filled with the work of the children in as many places as I can find without overpowering the space and taking away the most important people in the room: the students. Keeping that in mind as I made (or asked more artistic adult helpers to make) the posters, I decided on their size, color, shapes, and wording.

I consistently have Spanish speakers in my classroom. Because I frequently speak that language in our classroom, I decided to include a translation of the strategy explanation in Spanish on most posters as well.

At the beginning of every year, I store all seven of the posters beside my desk and out of view of the children. I place the metacognition poster in a place where I can find it first when the moment arises. That moment is an important one. It often happens during our third or fourth week of being together.

Before I read a book aloud to the children, I invite them to notice what is confusing for them. I start listening for the moment someone says, “Andie, I don’t understand that word,” or “Andie, I don’t understand that picture” as I read a book aloud. That is the perfect opening and the one I

have been looking for. I leap up, scamper to the hidden poster, pull it out, and say, “You are brilliant. You have just used your amazing brain to show us metacognition. This big word means thinking about your thinking, and that means that when you know something doesn’t make sense to you, you are thinking about your thinking. You just did that—you just used metacognition!” With a giant grin on my face, I dramatically pin the poster onto our bulletin board right in the view of all in the circle. This is the beginning of our comprehension work together. When one child takes the enormous risk to speak of his or her misunderstanding, we have started on a path that will lead and inform us for the rest of the year.



Metacognition poster—the first comprehension poster introduced each year.

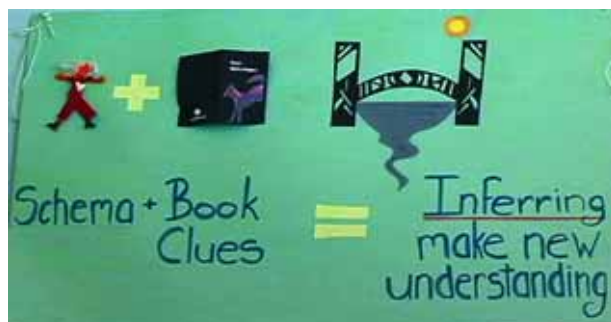
## Introducing Inferring

Much later in the year, we enter into the world of inferring. Inferring, creating a new meaning from your schema and the book you are reading, is tricky. It seems to be a strategy that children enter into by surprise. It is almost like I am simply giving them a label for the understanding and inferences they are making in the books we are reading. We are ready to study inferring after we have studied metacognition, schema, mind pictures, determining importance, and asking questions.

At this point in the year, often in April, I simply change the posters while the children are

away, placing whatever we just finished studying up on the ceiling with the other comprehension posters and pinning the new inferring poster on our bulletin board. On the first day of our week together, which is also the first day of inferring, I carefully and briefly explain this new strategy. I usually have the exact opening that I want to say written on my lesson plan so I can say what I want to say without wasting the children's time or focus. I intentionally offer them a metaphorical hand into the world of inferring, since I want their experience to follow smoothly and successfully with our other comprehension work.

After explaining what inferences are, I read our book for the first time and model my own inferring from the book. Typically, I have some sort of placeholder ready to record my inferences on, such as sticky notes for the anchor chart we will make in the coming days. A theme I return to verbally and frequently is that of a bridge, by taking what we know of our schema and what we know of the book and putting those two pieces together, we gain new understanding.

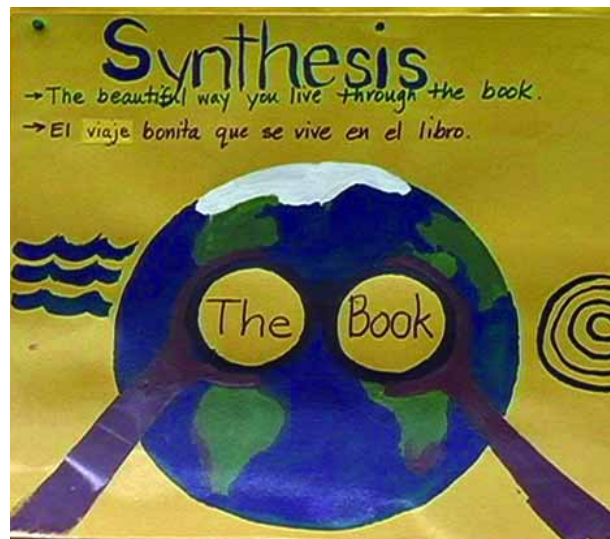


The comprehension poster on inferring uses the metaphor of a bridge.

## Introducing Synthesis

The last strategy we study each year is synthesis. I intentionally hold synthesis for late in the school year because I find it so difficult. In years past, I reserved three weeks for the study of synthesis, but this past year, I was able to carve out four, and the extra week allowed us to explore more deeply and at a more leisurely pace what our synthesis was in the books we read. To me, synthesis is like the finale, the grand last piece of work that really shows what you know, and when the children are

able to synthesize their understandings from the books we read, the miracles of their thinking are obvious.



The synthesis poster uses the metaphor of a lens.

The synthesis poster I designed is intended to help the children consciously view the book we are reading from two different places: their own lenses through which they see life and the lens of something or someone in the book. To us, synthesis is living in two places at once while finding ways to communicate that understanding to others.

I introduce synthesis much like I do inferring, with the intentional framing and explanation followed by a read-aloud and modeling. The poster I created offers us an idea of how to narrow our views into specifics of the book: we can move our hands like binoculars over our eyes and start to see our new understandings from a new place of reference. From here our work continues like with the other strategies, with us creating anchor charts, moving to our new understanding, and finding different ways to communicate what we know.

The posters in the classroom serve us well. What a trip we have taken from the beginning of the year and those often one-sided conversations about metacognition. What were confused faces in October and November have become the faces of children who find ways to show and speak of the ways they make sense of the books we read in our classroom community.



## What Are the Seven Reading Strategies?

A “strategy” is a plan developed by a reader to assist in comprehending and thinking about texts, when reading the words alone does not give the reader a sense of the text’s meaning.

In recent years, strategy instruction has come to the fore in reading instruction at all age and grade levels. By helping students understand how these flexible tools work, teachers enable readers to tackle challenging texts with greater independence.

Strategy instruction is rooted in the work of David Pearson and his colleagues, who studied the processes of proficient readers and then sought ways to teach these processes to struggling readers. Although there is debate about the relative importance of different strategies (and even whether some should be deleted from or added to the list), most researchers and practitioners agree about a core set of seven of them:

1. *Activating background knowledge to make connections between new and known information.* In many classrooms, this instruction is divided into three categories of connection as defined by Colleen Buddy: text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world (Buddy quoted in Keene and Zimmerman 1997).
2. *Questioning the text.* Proficient readers are always asking questions while they read. Sticky notes (Post-its) have become ubiquitous in classrooms in part because they are such a useful tool for teaching students to stop, mark text, and note questions as they read.
3. *Drawing inferences.* Proficient readers use their prior knowledge about a topic and the information they have gleaned in the text thus far to make predictions about what might happen next. When teachers demonstrate or model their reading processes for students through think-alouds, they often stop and predict what will happen next to show how inferring is essential for comprehending text.
4. *Determining importance.* In the sea of words that is any text, readers must continually sort

through and prioritize information. Teachers often assist readers in analyzing everything from text features in nonfiction text such as bullets and headings to verbal cues in novels such as strong verbs. Looking for these clues can help readers sift through the relative value of different bits of information in texts.

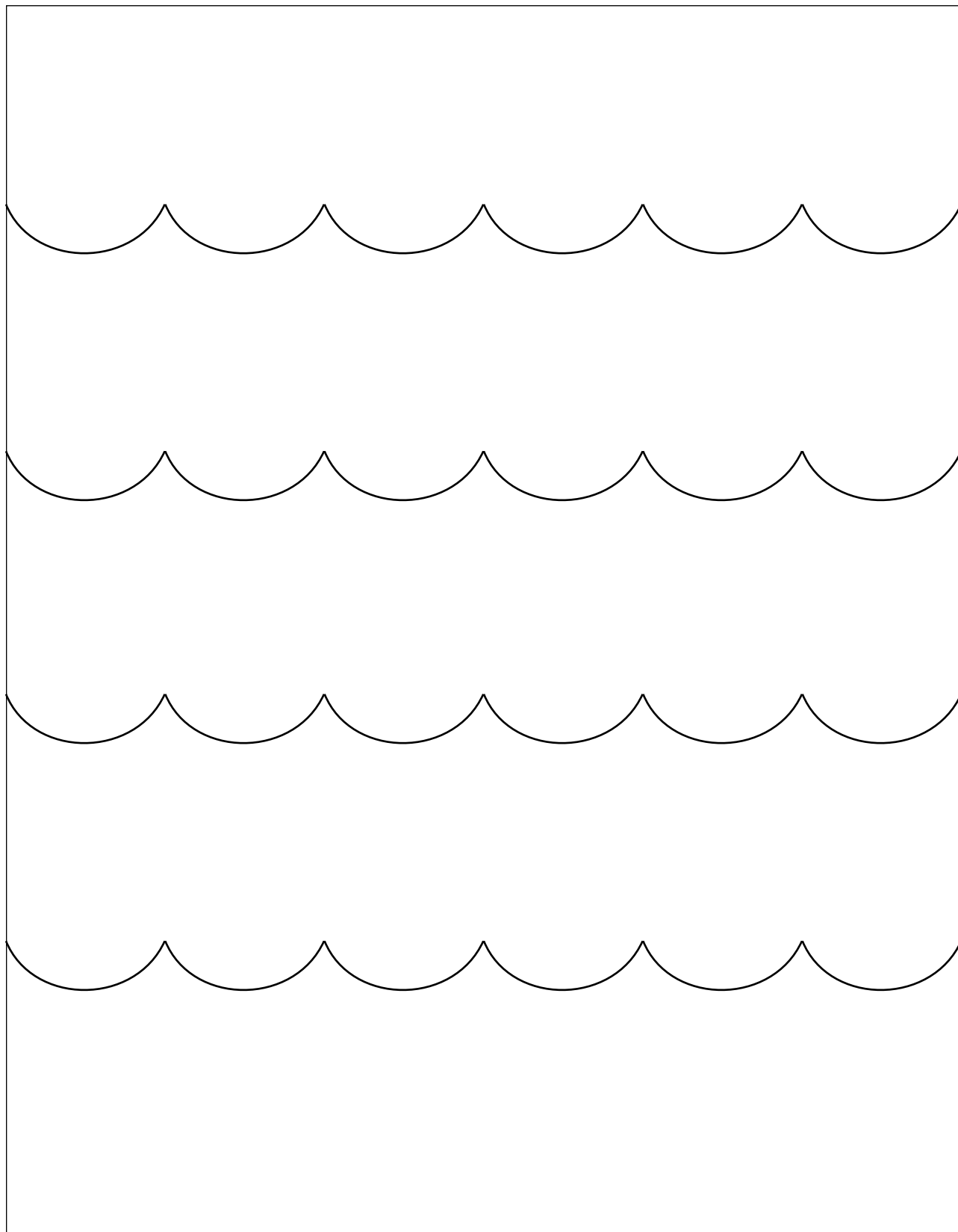
5. *Creating mental images.* Readers are constantly creating mind pictures as they read, visualizing action, characters, or themes. Teachers are using picture books with students of all ages, not necessarily because they are easy to read, but because the lush and sophisticated art in these books can be a great bridge for helping students see how words and images connect in meaning-making.
6. *Repairing understanding when meaning breaks down.* Proficient readers don’t just plow ahead through text when it doesn’t make sense—they stop and use “fix-up” strategies to restore their understanding. One of the most important fix-up tools is rereading, with teachers demonstrating to students a variety of ways to reread text in order to repair meaning.
7. *Synthesizing information.* Synthesis is the most sophisticated of the comprehension strategies, combining elements of connecting, questioning, and inferring. With this strategy, students move from making meaning of the text to integrating their new understanding into their lives and worldview.

## References

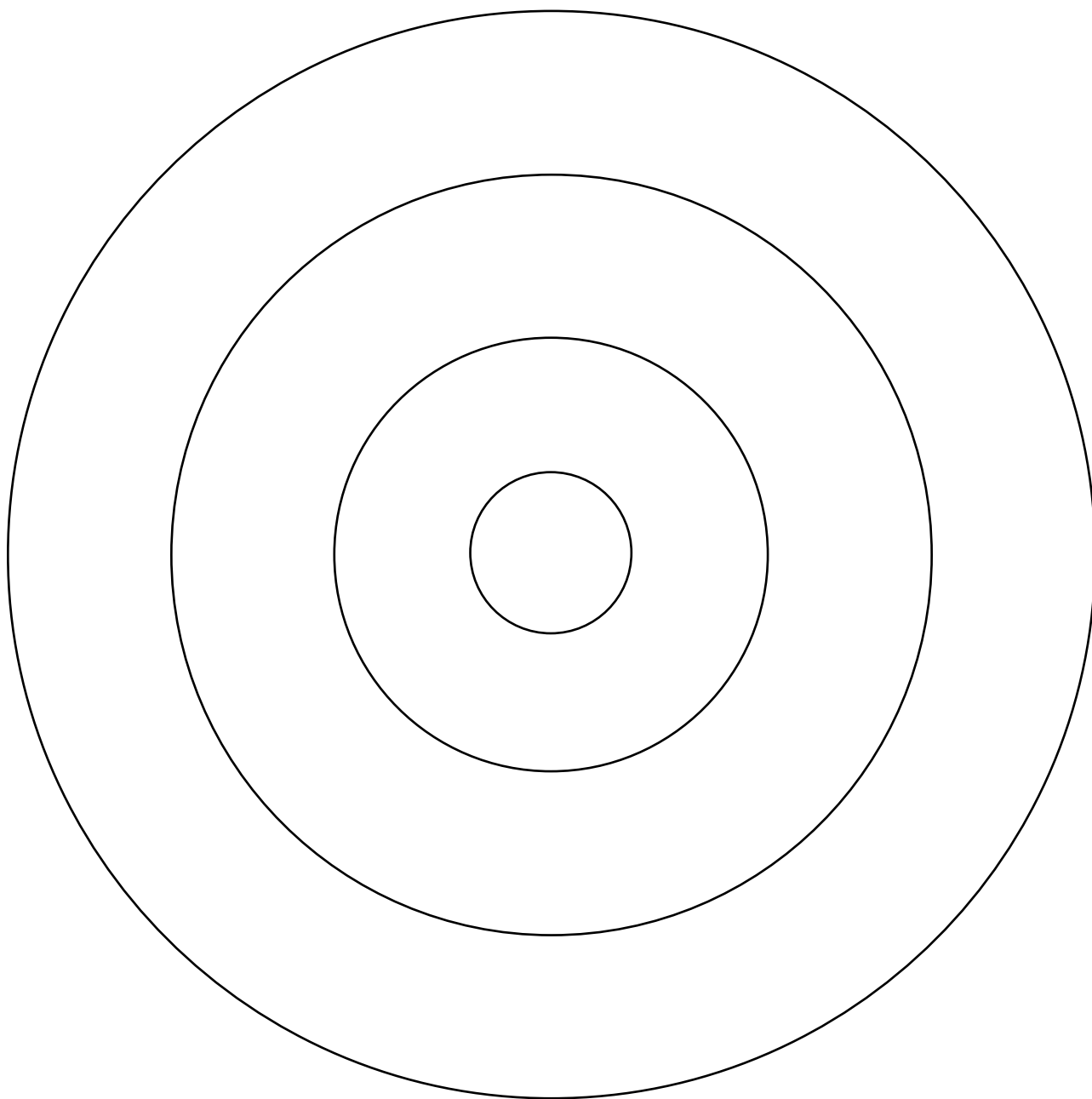
- Pearson, P. David, L. R. Roehler, J. A. Dole, and G. G. Duffy. 1992. “Developing Expertise in Reading Comprehension.” In *What Research Has to Say About Reading Instruction*, 2nd Edition. Edited by S. Jay Samuels and Alan Farstrup. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Zimmerman, Susan, and Ellin Keene. 1997. *Mosaic of Thought*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.



## Wave Template



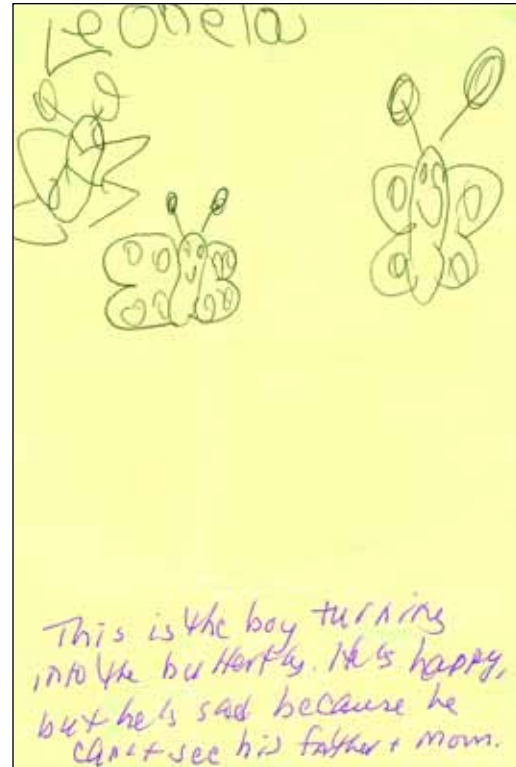
## Bull's-Eye Template



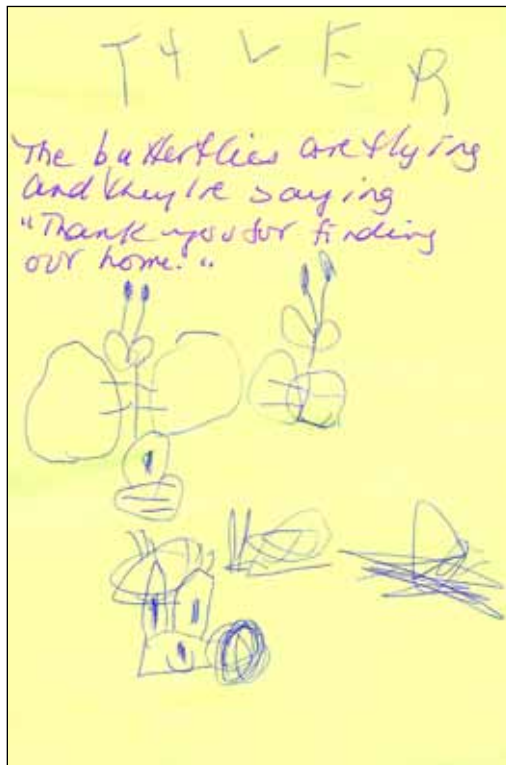
## Student Sticky Note Samples



"The boy turning into a butterfly. He's sad, but he's too macho to cry."



"This is the boy turning into the butterfly. He's happy, but he's sad because he can't see his father and mother."

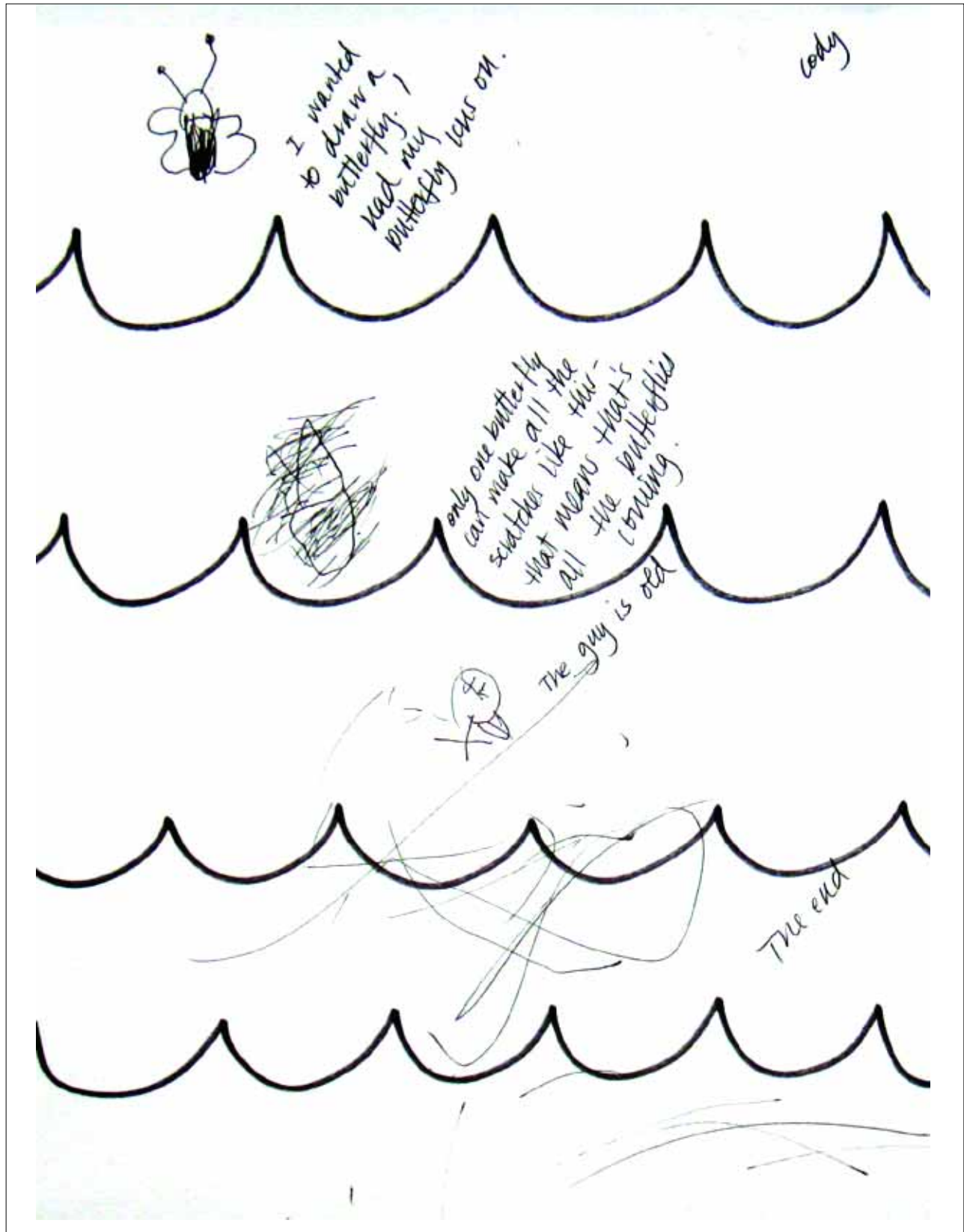


"The butterflies are flying they're saying 'Thank you for finding our home.'"



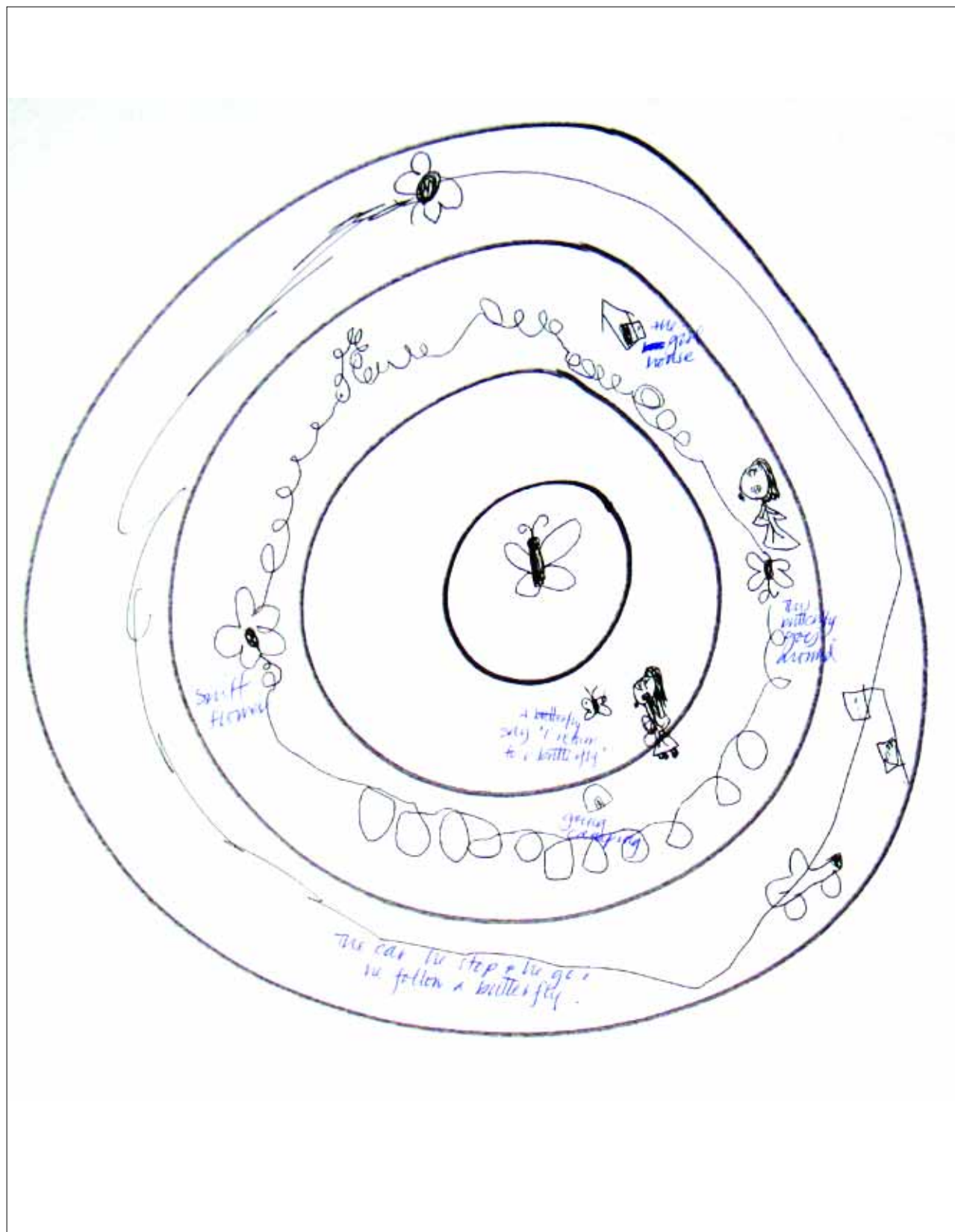
"The boy turning Kenzi into butterfly."

# Student Wave Sample





# Student Bull's-Eye Sample



# Lesson Progression Grid

Strategy:

Anchor Text:

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Reading:	Reading:	Reading:	Reading:	Reading:
Extensions:	Extensions:	Extensions:	Extensions:	Extensions:
Notes:	Notes:	Notes:	Notes:	Notes:

## Integrating Strategies into Themework Grid

<p>Theme: Butterflies Strategy: Synthesis</p> <p>Anchor Text: <i>The Prince of Butterflies</i> by Bruce Coville and Jon Clapp</p> <p>Extensions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Movement (after first reading)</li> <li>• Bull's-eye and waves writing (after second reading)</li> <li>• Response to "How does it feel to live like the butterfly?" on large sticky notes (Post-its)</li> </ul> <p>Notes:</p>	<p>Theme: Strategy:</p> <p>Anchor Text:</p> <p>Extensions:</p> <p>Notes:</p>
<p>Theme: Strategy:</p> <p>Anchor Text:</p> <p>Extensions:</p> <p>Notes:</p>	<p>Theme: Strategy:</p> <p>Anchor Text:</p> <p>Extensions:</p> <p>Notes:</p>

# Three-Column Notes

Language About Thinking	Andie's Questions	Students' Responses



# Examples of Anchor Books Used in Weeklong Strategy Study

Andie Cunningham

This video details our last comprehension study of the year, synthesis. At that point in May, student's work often shows the variety of strategies they use to understand the books we read. Throughout the year, I spend at least three weeks on each strategy using several books for each one. In the chart below, I show how I worked with one book over the course of a week within each strategy.

*A special note:* I often chose these books based on my students' "expert" writing at the start of the year—topics they list as those they know well, or want to learn more about through the course of our year together. I have books that I return to every year, and the list of books also changes in significant ways annually.

Strategy Study	Invitation/Writing Extension
<p><b>Example from Metacognition</b></p> <p><i>The Stray Dog.</i> Marc Simont. 2001. New York: Harper Trophy.</p> <p>This reader-friendly text about a lost dog finding its new family works well with my students who are new to books. Losing a dog can be a hot topic for children.</p> <p><i>Expert study:</i> Dogs (Kyle)</p>	<p>Week 2 of three-week study (included within the several month study of schema).</p> <p>Day 1: I read the book and ask students to tell me by wiggling their fingers when they don't understand something or get confused.</p> <p>Day 2: I reread the book and ask the children to draw the moment when they recognize their metacognition: when they knew that they didn't know or understand something in the text. (I give one sheet of 18" x 24" paper to each student).</p>
<p><b>Example of Schema</b></p> <p><i>Pumpkin Circle: The Story of a Garden.</i> Video and book by George Levens. Photography by Samuel Thaler. 1999. Berkeley, CA: Tricycle Press.</p> <p>This is one of my favorite texts about the life of a plant. The video is accessible, rhythmic, and enticing. What better way to enter the world of growing things, which we study every year, than with these two rich print and visual texts?</p> <p><i>Expert study:</i> Growing Things (Cody, Kenzi, and Michael)</p>	<p>Week 4 of schema study/Week 8 of three-month schema study.</p> <p>Day 1: I read the book and model what I understand on one piece of butcher paper and what I don't on another.</p> <p>Day 2: We watch the first half of the video. Students write to same prompt on same sheets as I did from Day 1.</p> <p>Day 3: We watch the second half of the video. Same response, same pages.</p> <p>I write students' words by their pictures on butcher paper on both Days 2 and 3.</p>
<p><b>Example of Mind Pictures</b></p> <p><i>Owl Moon</i> by Jane Yolen. 1987. New York: Philomel. (Use <i>Owl Moon</i> video as a supplement.)</p>	<p>Week 1 of three-week study.</p> <p>Day 1: I read the book and introduce the strategy. I model what my mind sees, talking and drawing the image on a</p>

Mornings in January in Oregon are dark. An owl calling fits perfectly with the darkness of winter. Reading the book also provides an opportunity to introduce a preserved barn owl that will grace a wall of my classroom for the rest of the school year.

*Expert study:* Owls (Tyler)

*Imagine a Night* by Rob Gonsalves. 2003. New York: Simon & Schuster.

This is another one of my favorite texts to use when studying the strategy of making mind pictures. The paintings are rich with nighttime details and unexpected twists. Both the words and the pictures ensure that no one answer is “right.”

*Expert study:* Drawing (Jesus, Brenda, and Luis)

### Examples of Asking Questions

*Owls* by Gail Gibbons. 2006. New York: Holiday House.

Gail Gibbons presents facts simply in a rich way for readers. The book connects well to our study of owls, and is a good prelude to our discussion of owl pellets.

*Expert study:* Owls continued (Tyler)

*Special note:* We wandered in and out of our study on owls over the course of several weeks, dipping into other expert topics at the same time.

*The Owl Who Was Afraid of the Dark* by Jill Tomlinson and Paul Howard. 2001. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick.

This was a new text to me this year. I thought it might be a good fit for students dealing with some issues of fear.

sticky note. We start the class anchor chart with my sticky note.

Day 2: I ask students, “What does your mind see in *Owl Moon*?” Students make a sticky note for the whole-class chart.

Day 3: We reread the book and make another whole-class anchor chart to the same prompt: What does your mind see in *Owl Moon*?

Whole-class share: We compare the two charts from different days and I ask students, “What do you notice?”

Day 4: Students lie down on floor and close their eyes. I ask them to picture the story, with owls flying and us in the snow. I tell the story of an experience hearing owls from my own life. We watch *Owl Moon* video.

Week 2 of three-week study.

Day 1: I model mind images as I read aloud. The whole class moves to the book, and we discuss the movement together.

Day 2: We complete a whole-class anchor chart to the prompt: What is your mind picture to this book? We move to the book.

Day 3: I review the Mind Pictures strategy and reread *Imagine a Night*. We move to *Imagine a Night*. We act out and guess what the movements of classmates represent.

Week 1 of three-week study.

Day 1: I introduce the strategy and read the book. I write my questions on a sticky note and add the note to a new anchor chart.

Day 2: We review the strategy and reread the book. Students write their questions and add to the anchor chart—I write their words as I post their sticky notes.

Day 3: We do a picture walk, and as we do so we verbally explore what students believe an owl's inner purpose or motivation is. I highlight questions students are asking. I ask students to draw on 9" x 12" sheets of construction paper the inner purpose of the owl.

Week 3 of three-week study.

Day 1: I model my thinking during reading (verbally) and after reading (on a sticky note).

Day 2: We reread the book. Students complete a sticky note using one of these prompts that they choose: I wonder, What?, or Why?

Expert study: Getting Stronger (Eddie)

Day 3: We do a picture walk of book. I ask each student to make a picture of their question.

### Examples of Digging Deeper

*The Hello, Goodbye Window* by Norton Juster and Chris Raschka. 2005. Boston: Michael Di Capua Books/Hyperion.

Colton wanted to be an expert on making windows, and my exhaustive search led me to this text. It worked very well metaphorically and helped us prepare to make window displays for our room and homes.

Expert study: Making Windows (Colton)

*No Such Thing* by Jackie French Koller and Betsy Lewin. 1997. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills Press.

We were working on understanding trust, and this book does a great job of explaining that complex concept simply.

Expert study: Be Self-Sufficient (Dorita)

Week 1 of three-week study.

Day 1: I model my thinking during read-aloud on sticky notes, demonstrating where I was confused.

Day 2: I reread the book. I ask each student to find a place where he or she is confused. I then ask them to act it out, with the option of sharing the movement with the whole class.

Day 3: We do a picture walk. I ask each child to write or draw a new sticky note using a character from the book as a focus.

Week 3 of three-week study.

Day 1: I read the book and move to what I don't understand.

Day 2: I review the strategy and reread the book. I explain, "Yesterday we read and I moved my body to what I didn't understand. Now I will read again and we will all have a chance to move. Our moves might be the same and they might be different. Let's see what happens." After completing the movement, we have a whole-group share.

Day 3: We complete a picture walk after I focus the students with these words: "Pay special attention to what you don't understand." I read the book again. Students represent what they don't understand with manipulatives. For this activity, I use materials from the classroom that I think will be accessible to the children: math pieces, small tiles, small building blocks, and small pieces of cloth.

### Examples of Determining Importance

*Miss Twiggly's Tree House* by Dorothea Fox Warren. 2002. Cynthiana, KY: Purple House Press. (book and video)

I discovered this book and video a few years ago. It serves as a wonderful conversation starter for us around the topics of community and listening. We had just had a classmate move when I first read this book, and our community was reeling from the loss. This text helped us deal with that event.

Expert study: none—community focused

Week 1 of three-week study.

Day 1: I introduce the strategy of determining importance. We watch the video and I model the "special clue" from the text that is most important in helping me make sense of it.

Day 2: We review the strategy of determining importance and view the video again. We make an anchor chart with the "special clue" that each student finds most important about the video.

Day 3: We use sticky notes to make a picture of what is most important about the video. We also use sticky notes to make a time line of the beginning, middle, and end of the video.

*The Grannyman* by Judy Schachner. 2003. New York: Picture Puffins.

This book presents a cat's life cycle as it nears death. At least one child was dealing with the death of a grandfather the spring I first used the book.

*Expert study:* Family (Ollie, Kenzi, Anna)

Day 4: We use clay to make tree houses. I tell students to be sure to show what is important about the clues they include.

Week 3 of three-week study.

Day 1: I review the Determining Importance strategy and read the book. I model on a new class web what I believe to be important in the book (2–3 ideas, each on a small sticky note). I ask students to move to show one clue they feel is important with their bodies. If time permits and the class is ready developmentally, students may draw their important clue on a sticky note to include on a whole-class chart.

Day 2: We review the strategy and reread. Students make their own webs.

Day 3: We review the strategy and do a picture walk. Students again move to clues that are important. The whole class gathers in a circle. Students who want to demonstrate their clue can and the rest of us guess their clue. (We also might focus again on beginning, middle, and end if it seems appropriate.)

### **Example of Inferring**

*Wings* by Christopher Myers. 2000. New York: Scholastic.

This book is a favorite of mine—it is a difficult read about judgment and making friends.

*Expert study:* none

Week 3 of four-week study.

Day 1: We review the Inferring poster and I read the book aloud. I model my inferences verbally and draw a picture of my thinking on an 18" x 24" piece of construction paper.

Day 2: I review the strategy and reread the book. I ask students, "What inferences are you making?" Each child draws their inferences on 18" x 24" construction paper, cuts out the pictures, and glues them on large butcher paper to create a whole-class mural of inferences. In the whole-group share I ask, "What do you notice?"

Day 3: We do a picture walk of the book. I ask students to pick three hard places in the book and move like those three things together. I ask students, "What did you infer?" Children draw inferences on sticky notes, and we create a class anchor chart together.

### **Examples of Synthesis**

*Where's Grandpa?* by T. A. Barron and Chris Soentpiet. 2001. New York: Puffin.

The story is about a boy whose grandfather dies and who doesn't understand where one goes after death. It is a favorite of mine. This book is

Week 1 of four-week study.

Day 1: I introduce the Synthesis strategy and read the book. I model my own synthesis verbally.

Day 2: I review synthesis and reread the book. We move like one character in the book as a whole class. We go through all the characters in the book in the same way, moving together.



accessible to my students, and they make connections with death, grandparents, special places, and family when we read it.

*Expert study:* not connected.

*Visiting Day* by Jacqueline Woodson 2002. New York: Scholastic.

This book is about a girl preparing to visit her father in prison. Several of my students were going through similar life experiences.

*Expert study:* not connected

Day 3: We review the strategy again and reread the book. I ask students to use their lens of life to decide who from the book they want to act like. I then ask them to act like that character in small-group synthesis conferences with an adult.

Week 2 of four-week study.

Day 1: We review Synthesis, and I introduce the book: "Today I have a hard book for us to read. Wear your lens for synthesis as I read." I model my synthesis using a bull's-eye chart.

Day 2: We review the book, and I prompt students to put on their "lens" before I reread. I briefly model bull's-eye writing again. Students use the bull's-eye structure to record synthesis.

Day 3: I ask students to review and put on their lenses again as I reread. I ask students to move to the book. I use these questions: What does it feel like to move like the girl getting ready to get on the bus? What does it feel like to be the girl getting off the bus? What does it feel like to be the dad?

## Introducing Bull's-Eyes and Waves in Synthesis Work

My students helped me understand that to synthesize what you are reading you have to stand in two places at once: in your own shoes and in the shoes of the part of the book you are trying to understand. For me, it is like looking through a pair of binoculars at the book I am reading while the rest of everything I know is on the outside of those lenses. At the same time, I am consciously holding on to all that knowledge and experience in those two areas of viewing.

My students find different ways to communicate their synthesis, but we found we needed a substantial way to hold on to our knowing and in some cases, further unpack and give definition to it. To help all of us create placeholders for what we know, and to offer my students appropriate tools for explaining what connections they are making, we use two tools, the bull's-eye and waves sheets, both created on 18" by 24" manila or white construction paper.

On the paper before my students arrive for school, I draw the structures on enough pieces of paper for everyone to have one (see templates on pages X and X). If we are in the first week of our synthesis study, I draw only bull's-eyes. We all practice with this structure together in our analysis of whatever book we are reading. It is important to me that we all start at the same place, with the same intention: working to create our own posters of what we synthesize from our reading. If it is the second or third week, AND I think a majority of my students understand the use of the bull's-eye structure, I will add the waves structure as another tool available for documenting knowing. I wait for them to let me know they are confident in using the first tool before we launch into the second. We are in no rush.

I begin by introducing the students to the strategy of synthesis. I lead this first lesson, thinking aloud about what synthesis means, reading the book through for the first time, noting aloud what changes my thinking as I read. Next, I model picture metaphors to document my thinking. Again, for the first week or two, I use the bull's-eye structure that I learned from Debbie Miller's

book, *Reading with Meaning* (Stenhouse 2002). I start my first synthesis drawing at the center of the circle, a starting point I want all of us to use consistently. It feels important for us to start in the same place so we can effectively use all of the posters in whole-group conversations, seeing where others' starting points were and where their synthesis moved to next on the poster. The first day of this strategy instruction is like the others; my turn only. I want them to watch and listen, to get their mind's eyes moving before I invite them to have a go themselves tomorrow.

The next day, I review synthesis and invite them to try on their lenses for the book. This year's class was very physical, actually bringing their hands to their faces as if they were pulling binoculars to their eyes. Perfect! They get at least this piece: we are moving into another world in our reading. I reread to them. I then invite the students to draw and detail their synthesis. In this first week, I remind them to start in the center of the bull's-eye.

In our second and third week, I add another optional structure: waves. I say something like, "When I think of waves, I draw them like this, with peaks. It looks like water; it looks like waves." I draw four lines of waves across the construction paper. I ask the children where they might draw their first picture, hoping to help them find the "home" in their new synthesis thinking.

The students and I work through where we place our changing thinking on each type of recording paper. I want to be sure that they know how to order their thinking on the written page—and I want to be sure they are documenting their own changes in thought, not mine. Then I send them off to have their first try at documenting their synthesis.

Later, when they are ready to talk through their thinking, I confer with as many children as I have time for. I make sure to create time to talk fully with each child before our week is over, ideally the same day as they created their placeholder. I write the child's actual words on their

sheet, and hopefully near their drawing so we can remember their brilliant thinking accurately later.

When I confer with the children, I ask each student specific, open-ended questions. I start at their starting point, the center of the bull's-eye or the bottom of the waves.



Conferring with Anna over her wave drawing.

My questions are ones that I do not yet know the answers. In the synthesis work, I am not surprised that the children have drawn or written messages that they struggle to put into words. It takes thoughtful questioning to help them verbalize what is drawn on their papers. “I don’t know” from students is often an important sign to me to slow down, and when students get confused, I might give them some extra time and come back to them later or invite them to go get a drink and try again in a few moments.

When we finish with our posters, each child is aware of his or her thinking. At this point of the year, when I ask them if they know how incredibly smart they are, they usually say yes. They know the truth of how intelligent they are, and they have just discovered some more ways to detail and document what they know.

# Movement and Books: Another Way In

Andie Cunningham

Physically moving our bodies is another opportunity to make sense of the books we read. My students don't always use drawing and writing to comprehend texts; they also benefit from using their bodies and movement to make meaning. Many young children still struggle with talking through what is going on in their minds, so I found that moving to the books we read is another way to explore what we know and wonder about.

I feel comfortable moving my body with my students, and I feel comfortable with my students moving in my classroom. I let myself off the hook a long time ago in expecting each piece of the work we do to serve as a presentation to some unknown audience, such as adults walking through the hallway and administrators dropping in. We bring who we are to our work, and the moves my body makes (both silly and serious) are part of who I bring with me. Students are often eager to see me move in response to our work: to them, I am simply living in my body, like they do so well.



Darlene and her classmates move like caterpillars climbing.

My inviting students to move is all the permission many need to discover and express what they know with their bodies in our room. I am clear about boundaries before we start: no climbing on tables or counters, no moving in the hall-

way, no body parts hanging out the windows. I often wait to list these boundaries until a moment for reminder is needed. Only occasionally does a child climb onto a table, and with a gentle and quiet, "Please move with feet on the floor," our work can continue uninterrupted. However, if I am uncertain about a group's response or it feels necessary to state these boundaries for safety first, I might tell my students first before we move.

It took me awhile to realize that not everyone has to participate for the movement activities to work, nor do they have to participate in every single opportunity. Some students prefer to watch our wild movements around the classroom, surprising me with wanting to share their new (and often changing) interpretations when we gather as a whole group and have time to show what we understand to the whole class.



Some of the children move like butterflies, while others opt to watch.

Some students leap to their feet as soon as I make the invitation, ecstatic at the chance to use their bodies to make sense of the book we just read again. Others are somewhere in between, occasionally watching and occasionally moving. What amazes me most about moving to books is the new understanding that students speak of in the discussions that follow. Entire classes have found new meaning out of one person's interpretation of a piece of the book.