



## Mini-Lesson: Being Metacognitive

### **Background Information about Being Metacognitive**

Readers who are being metacognitive are constantly asking themselves if what they are reading makes sense and if they are getting what they want and need from their reading. They ask themselves questions like these: Does what I'm reading make sense? What do I do if I don't understand what I am reading? What could I be doing to better understand what the author is saying? Can I do something to help me remember the material better? Which of the strategies I know should I employ here?

In Digging Reading, the Being Metacognitive strategy is boiled down to two steps. Students are taught to:

1. Monitor their comprehension by repeatedly asking themselves, "Does this make sense?"
2. Use these fix-ups when they think they may not understand the text: Slow Down, Stop and Think, Reread, and Read On.

Both steps are modeled in this mini-lesson, but the emphasis is on **monitoring**—on helping students become aware when the text isn't making sense.

### **Time:**

10-15 minutes

### **Materials:**

a book or magazine article of your choosing

### **Objective:**

Students will be able to indicate when the text does not make sense.

### **Mini-Lesson:**

1. Write the word "metacognitive" on the board and have the students say it with you. Tell students that metacognitive readers are continuously monitoring their own comprehension. They pay attention to their reading and notice when the text doesn't make sense.
2. Model how to be metacognitive while reading a couple of pages from a book of your choosing. Pause at the places where you're confused by the text and think aloud about what doesn't make sense. Explain how you are resolving your confusion. You might:
  - Slow down because the ideas are becoming more difficult to understand
  - Stop and think (make an inference or use your prior knowledge)
  - Reread the sentence
  - Decide to read on

3. Tell students that now it's their turn to be metacognitive. You will read them two short stories. As you read, students will indicate whether they understand the story by opening and closing their hands. Have students put their hands in front of their chests and make a fist. They should keep their fist closed when the text makes sense to them. When it doesn't make sense, they should open their hand and turn it toward you as if signaling you to stop. They should keep their hands open until the text again makes sense to them.
4. Read the first part of Story 1 aloud. As you read, notice when students open their hands.

### **Story 1, Part 1**

*It was a long winter, but finally spring arrived. Once the weather changed, the battle began. Black monsters came into our house looking for food.*

5. By the time you have read “came into our house looking for food,” everyone's hand should be open. Ask students to identify what doesn't make sense. Students might say:
  - What battle is the author talking about?
  - Who are the black monsters?
  - Why are the black monsters coming for food?
6. Tell students you will continue reading. Once they have figured out who the black monsters are, they should close their hands. Continue reading:

### **Story 1, Part 2**

*They looked scary with all six of their legs creeping along the floor. The monsters followed each other in a line to the kitchen. We tried closing the door to stop them from coming in, but they came right under it. The monsters loved lemonade. They preferred to lick it off the floor where I had spilled some. We did not need the police or a super hero to take care of these monsters. When we cleaned up the spilled lemonade, the ants went away. We learned a lesson about ants. Now we keep the kitchen really clean.*

7. All of the students' hands should be closed after you read “the ants went away.” If all hands are not closed, tell students to listen carefully as you read the entire passage again. Have everyone begin with closed hands and then use the hand signals as before.
8. Ask students who the monsters were (the ants), and have them identify the point at which the story made sense to them. Tell students that they are being metacognitive—they are able to recognize when the text does or does not make sense.

9. Tell students you are going to give them another chance to practice being metacognitive. Again have them use hand signals to indicate when something doesn't make sense. Read the first part of Story 2 to students.

### **Story 2, Part 1**

*I was playing Hide and Go Seek in my backyard, when I saw something hanging from a plant. It looked like a big, green seed. I was really surprised when the seed split open and a slimy, black alien crawled out.*

10. Everyone's hand should be open at this point. Ask a student to identify what doesn't make sense.
11. Tell students you will continue reading. Once they have figured out what the alien is, they should close their hands. Continue reading:

### **Story 2, Part 2**

*As I watched, the alien started to get bigger. As it squirmed and wriggled, the two bumps on its back changed shape. When I looked closer, I realized the bumps were orange. In half an hour, they turned into wings. Was this alien going to fly? Yes, after a few hours the monarch butterfly left my yard to find some flowers. I didn't see it again.*

12. All of the students' hands should be closed after you read "the monarch butterfly left my yard." When you finish reading, ask students what the alien was (a monarch butterfly). Ask students to identify the point at which the story made sense to them. Commend them on their ability to be metacognitive.