

THREE LEVELS OF COMPREHENSION

LITERAL COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES

Some of the abilities needed are:

- Recalling or recognizing facts.
- Following specific directions.
- Identifying main ideas and supporting details.
- Using context clues to supply meaning.

INFERENTIAL COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES

Some of the abilities needed are:

- Interpreting figurative language.
- Drawing conclusions.
- Using main ideas and supporting details.
- Identifying cause and effect relationships.

CRITICAL THINKING COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES

Some of the abilities needed are:

- Passing judgment on quality.
- Judging logic.
- Judging reliability, accuracy, and truthfulness.
- Distinguishing fact from fiction.

COMPREHENSION — CRITICAL THINKING

Some suggested activities:

1. Read an editorial to or with your students. Ask the students if they agree or disagree with the opinions stated. Are the ideas and conclusions based on facts or are they only opinions? Is the author biased?
2. Acquaint your students with the usual propaganda devices used in advertising. Have the students identify statements which illustrate these devices:

Plain folks technique: Grandma in the rocking chair confides she uses Brand X.

Bandwagon: Everyone is switching to the new soap.

Card stacking: Two out of three over 40 need more bulk in their diets. Switch to bran cereal.

Testimonial: Football star X uses our aspirin. You should, too.

3. Questions that can be asked for various types of writing:
 - Do you think this could happen?
 - What do you think would happen if _____?
 - Is this information correct? Is it complete?
 - Do you agree or disagree and why?
 - Compare this idea with that one.
 - How do you think the author wanted you to feel about this issue?
 - How do you think the author wanted you to feel about the characters?
 - How do you feel about the characters?
 - Is the author biased for or against _____?
 - What do you think about this piece?

Critical thinking is one of the more demanding skills in comprehension. Do not be discouraged if your students find it difficult. Many will need a lot of practice and some may not be able to develop this ability at all.

If your students are very basic, the main thrust for developing critical thinking strategies should be through listening until some reading fluency is obtained. Do not neglect this aspect of teaching, as this will help your students in the future.

Source: Adapted from LVA Connecticut, Inc. and LVA Missoula, MT, Inc.