

# Think-Aloud 2



## Reading Skills

- Monitoring reading

## Overview of the “Think-Aloud” Strategy

The purpose of this strategy is to help struggling readers think about how they make meaning when they read. While one student is reading aloud selected paragraphs from *Wish You Well* and pausing to “think aloud,” a partner records on a tally sheet the types of comments made by the reader. The goal is to help students learn to monitor their comprehension silently as they read. This exercise should be practiced 10 to 15 minutes once a week in order to achieve the desired results. If you feel the need to give a grade for this exercise, assess and grade the students on participation.

## Activity for the “Think-Aloud” Strategy

1. Explain to the class the purpose of this exercise and that they will work in pairs to help each other. Tell the students that asking questions about a text is actually a means of identifying comprehension problems.
2. Distribute copies of the “Think-Aloud” example from the first three paragraphs of chapter 10 in *Wish You Well* and the tally sheet (see next two pages).
3. Ask the students to look at the “Think-Aloud” tally sheet as you explain the nature of the types of comments:
  - “Lou and Oz raced past the empty yard and inside the schoolhouse. Breathless, they hustled to their seats.” (chapter 21, opening) [*It sounds as if they’re late to school.*] — **predicting what will happen next**
  - “She had passed secret coves overhung with willow and corralled by rock. Many of the coves were graced with cups of frothing springwater. There were neglected fields of long-vanished homesteads, the broomsedge flourishing there around the rock bones of chimneys without houses.” (chapter 26, section 3) [*It’s easy to imagine that this was once a thriving community.*] — **picturing the text**
  - “They prepared for winter by sharpening tools with the grinder and rattail files, mucking out the stalls and spreading the manure over the plowed-under fields.... They brought the livestock in, kept them fed and watered, milked the cows, and did their chores, which now all seemed as natural as breathing.” (chapter 31, section 3) [*My mother grew up on a farm and had to do the same things.*] — **making comparisons**
  - “Louisa brought over a bucket and a glass. She put the glass on the table, draped a cloth over it, and poured the milk from the bucket into it, foam bubbling up on the cloth.” (chapter 12, section 2) [*I don’t understand what Louisa is doing in these sentences.*] — **identifying comprehension problems**
  - “Lou looked at her glass. ‘What’s the cloth for?’ ‘Take things out the milk you don’t need in you,’ answered Louisa.” (chapter 12, section 2) [*Oh, I now understand why the milk was poured through the cloth.*] — **fixing comprehension problems**
  - “The barn smelled of stacked hay, wet earth, large animals and their warm manure. The floor was dirt covered with straw. On the walls hung bridles and harnesses, some cracked and worn out, others well oiled and supple.” (chapter 12, section 2) [*I like the way these sentences paint a picture and make me almost see and smell the barn.*] — **making comments**
4. Read aloud from the model, pausing to make the bracketed “Think-Aloud” comments.

5. Have the students use the tally sheet to identify the types of comments made on the model sheet.
6. Pair up the students. Have one student in each pair read assigned paragraphs from a particular chapter in *Wish You Well* and pause to make comments. Have the listening partner identify and tally the comments made on the reading partner's tally sheet.
7. Have the pair switch roles and read the next set of consecutive paragraphs, the first reader filling out his/her partner's tally sheet.
8. When they have finished their "Think-Alouds," have the students discuss their tally sheets.

## Excerpt for Think-Aloud 2

From *Wish You Well*, Chapter 10, opening paragraphs:

The kitchen shelves were worn, knot-holed pine, floors the same. The floorboards creaked slightly as Oz swept with a short-handled broom, while Lou loaded lengths of cut wood into the iron belly of the Sears catalogue cook stove that took up one wall of the small room. Fading sunlight came through the window and also peered through each wall crevice, and there were many. An old coal-oil lamp hung from a peg. Fat black iron kettles hung from the wall. In another corner was a food safe with hammered metal doors; a string of dried onions lay atop it and a glass jug of kerosene next to that. *[This reminds me of my great grandmother's house.]*

As Lou examined each piece of hickory or oak, it was as though she was revisiting each facet of her prior life, before throwing it in the fire, saying good-bye as the flames ate it away. The room was dark and the smells of damp and burnt wood equally pungent. *[I wonder if the house could catch on fire.]* Lou stared over at the fireplace. The opening was large, and she guessed that the cooking had been done there before the Sears cook stove had come. The brick ran to the ceiling, and iron nails were driven through the mortar all over; tools and kettles, and odd pieces of other things Lou couldn't identify but that looked well-used, hung from them. In the center of the brick wall was a long rifle resting on twin braces angled into the mortar. *[From this description, I can see how difficult cooking in the past must have been.]*

The knock on the door startled them both. Who would expect visitors so far above sea level? Lou opened the door and Diamond Skinner stared back at her with a vast smile. He held up a mess of smallmouth bass, as though he was offering her the crowns of dead kings. Loyal Jeb was beside him, his snout wrinkling as he drew in the fine fishy aroma. *[I bet that Diamond plans to have Lou cook these fish.]*

# Tally Sheet for Think-Aloud 2

Reader \_\_\_\_\_

Listener \_\_\_\_\_

| <b>Think-Aloud Comments</b>        | <b>Tally</b> |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
| Identifying comprehension problems |              |
| Fixing comprehension problems      |              |
| Predicting what will happen next   |              |
| Picturing the text                 |              |
| Making comparisons                 |              |
| Making comments                    |              |