

Teaching Tips for Fiction

Before Reading

Help students understand that the illustrations can give information that will help them understand a story.

- As a pre-reading strategy, allow students to transform their own existing background knowledge into drawings. This strategy also works well for nonfiction.
- Ask students to look closely at the pictures of a story before reading it and make a list of what they see. Tell them to look for **ideas** as well as **things** that appear in the pictures, such as the main problem, supporting details, and characters.
- Have students make connections from one illustration to the next to understand sequence and the progression of events in the story. Using an appropriate story, have students draw a picture of what happens in the story between one illustration and the next.
- Have students "take a walk" through the pictures and tell what they see as they go along. Ask them to describe orally for **each** picture what or who appears in the picture; what is happening; what messages, ideas, or feelings are being shown; and how the picture makes them feel toward the characters and about what's happening.
- Ask students to describe how the artist uses such techniques as symbols, color, contrast, placement (composition), and point of view to communicate ideas and feelings. Work with the art teacher to help students understand these concepts so they can use them to comprehend what they read. Facilitate a discussion using the questions from "**Picture Analysis**."
- Before reading a selection, have them visualize settings, time periods, and so forth. Give students specific key images or words to visualize. Suggest things for them to see in their minds. Have students pair up to describe to one another what they see in their mind's eye. Include a discussion of students' feelings and senses. Connect the imagery to students' personal experiences.

During Reading

Help students make connections between the pictures and the text through visualizing while they are reading.

- Have students find a location in the passage (page, paragraph, etc.) that is illustrated. Discuss how the words and illustration support each other. What written information is also shown in the picture? Are there things in the picture that are not written in the text? Why? Are there things that are written in the text that are not shown in the picture? Why not?
- Ask students to read a portion of a story that is illustrated. Have them describe similarities and differences between the illustration and how they visualized this part of the passage.
- Select an illustration or illustrations from a story and ask students to write a sentence or two predicting what is likely to happen next. Then, have them read the story and write what actually does happen next in the story. Have them compare/contrast their predictions with what actually occurred. Discuss the clues they used to make their predictions. Then, have them play detective to find any clues they missed.
- Have students draw pictures as they read a chapter book to practice visual note taking. The pictures they draw can be literal representations or symbolic/conceptual pictures reflecting what they have read. When students go back to find information, they can use these visual cues to guide them to the appropriate place in the text.

After Reading

Provide opportunities and instruction for expressing words in pictures and expressing pictures in words.

- Have students pick out one or more main character(s) from the story and draw the character(s) using the descriptions from the story. Their drawings should reflect how the character acts and feels, as well as the character's physical appearance.
- To aid student understanding of the story's setting, use the following questions to help them visualize and feel themselves in the setting. Then, ask them to express their interpretation of the setting using a medium of their choice.

- What can I tell about the setting from the illustrations? Where does this story take place? In some make-believe place? In a place that looks familiar? In a city? In the country? In more than one place?
 - When does the story take place? Long ago? Modern times? During what season(s) or time(s) of day? Does it appear to take place all in one day, over a few days, or longer than that? Why do I think so?
 - Is there anything about the colors used in the illustrations that tells me where or when this story might take place?
- Have students draw a picture of their favorite part of the story, an important scene in the story, the solution to the problem posed in the story, or a message from the story.
 - Allow time for story painting after each chapter, letting students illustrate what they think are the key scenes or ideas in each chapter. To help them decide which scenes or ideas are most important, provide them with this guideline: If this story were to be made into a short movie, which scenes **must** be included for the story to make sense? Which scenes could be included for added interest, humor, et cetera?

Then, compile the illustrations into a book, with class summaries of each scene. This activity will help students sort main ideas and events from supporting details.

- Work closely with the art teacher to provide students with opportunities to learn creative thinking processes and artistic methods they can use to express their ideas. Have students practice communicating ideas to others visually. This process will help students understand how illustrators communicate their ideas to the reader.
- Assign students to read an entire passage without any pictures, and ask them to illustrate specific parts. As a class, review the drawings and discuss ideas students appear to have comprehended, as well as those they may have not comprehended adequately.

Teaching Tips for Nonfiction

Help students use images and visual imagery to improve reading comprehension.

- Select five to 10 pictures from a book the class will be reading. Choose some pictures that students would expect to see in the book, as well as others that may be less obvious.
 - Show students the pictures and ask them which ones they think would be in a book titled [*title of book*].
 - As a group, have students sort the pictures into three categories: in the book, not in the book, or not sure.
 - Ask students to cite the reasons for their decisions.
 - Have students read the book to confirm their choices. After reading, ask students to rearrange the pictures into the correct categories and discuss their reasons for moving them.
 - A variation on this activity would be to select pictures from the book to be read and from other books.
- Prior to reading an informational book or passage, conduct a guided imagery activity about the topic to prepare students for the reading (see the "**Guided Imagery**" lesson plan). The purpose of this activity is to help students create their own mental images so they have a fuller understanding of the information.
- Have students draw pictures to improve their understanding of a report.
 - Ask students to draw a picture of what they already know about the topic to be studied.
 - Have students form small groups to share their drawings and discuss similarities and differences in each other's drawings. Follow-up with a whole-class discussion.
 - Ask students to modify or make a new drawing based on what they read.

- Reconvene the small groups and ask students to compare and contrast their first and second drawings, focusing on what they learned that led them to make their changes. Encourage students to refer back to the reading assignment.
- Assist students in using pictures to conceptualize ideas in a report.
 - Before reading, have students view pictures, charts, maps, and other graphics in the order they appear in the report.
 - As a class, discuss the global ideas shown in all the graphics and the relationships among them.
 - Then, have students look at each individual graphic, read the caption, discuss its importance, and explain how it relates to the global idea.
- Guide students to create and use Venn diagrams, charts, grids, or other graphic organizers to understand commonalities and differences between two related texts.
 - Select two related texts and create a list of words and phrases that convey important information from each one; that is, things you plan to compare and contrast.
 - Have students read both texts.
 - Ask students to make a Venn diagram representing both readings. Direct them use the list of words and phrases to fill in the center (similarities) first, and then complete the diagram with information that is unique for each selection.

Students can practice the visualizing strategy using the **interactive student section** of this Web site. Video program #4, *Visualizing*, introduces this strategy and provides examples of teacher modeling and questioning techniques for use with visualization lessons.