Thinking Strategies Used by Proficient Readers
(Based on the research synthesis of P. David Pearson and Janice A. Dole)

A strategy is an intentional plan that is flexible and can be adapted to meet the demands of the situation.

Proficient Readers:

- **Activate background knowledge** and make connections between new and known information.

- **Question the text** in order to clarify ambiguity and deepen understanding.

- **Draw inferences** using background knowledge and clues from the text.

- **Determine importance** in order to distinguish details from main ideas.

- **Monitor comprehension** in order to make sure meaning is being constructed.

- **Reread and employ fix-up strategies** to repair confusion.

- **Use sensory images** to enhance comprehension and visualize the reading.

- **Synthesize** and extend thinking.
Vietnam vet and winner of the National Book Award, Tim O'Brien provides a number of sharp vignettes. This one hurts, even as it shows we are often blind to our cruelty and its costs.

**The Man at the Well**  
Tim O’Brien

He was just an old man, an old Vietnamese farmer. His hair was white, and he was somewhere over seventy years, stooped and hunched from work in the paddies, his spine bent into a permanent calcified arc. He was blind. His eyes were huge and empty, glistening like aluminum under the sun, cauterized and burnt out. But the old man got around.

In March, we came to his well. He stood and smiled while we used the water. He laughed when we laughed. To be ingratiating, he said, “Good water for good Gls.” Whenever there was occasion, he repeated the phrase.

Some children came to the well, and one of them, a little girl with black hair and hoops of steel through her ears, took the old fellow’s hand, helping him about. The kids giggled at our naked bodies. A boy took a soldier’s rifle from out of the mud and wiped it and stacked it against a tree, and the old man smiled.

Alpha Company decided to spend the day in the old man’s village. We lounged inside his hut, and when resupply brought down cold beer and food, we ate and wasted away the day. The kids administered professional back rubs, chopping and stretching and pushing our blood. They eyed our C-rations, and the old, blind man helped when he could.

When the wind stopped and the flies became bothersome, we went to the well again. We showered, and the old fellow helped, dipping into the well and yanking up buckets of water and sloshing it over our heads and backs and bellies. The kids watched him wash us. The day was as hot and peaceful as a day can be.

The blind farmer was showering one of the men. A blustery and stupid soldier with blond hair and a big belly, picked up a carton of milk and from fifteen feet away hurled it, for no reason, aiming at the old man and striking him flush in the face. The carton burst, milk spraying on the old man’s temples and into his cataracts. He hunched forward rocking precariously and searching for balance. He dropped his bucket, and his hands went to his eyes then dropped loosely to his thighs. His blind gaze fixed straight ahead, at the stupid soldier’s feet. His tongue moved a little, trying to get at the cut and tasting the blood and milk. No one moved to help. The kids were quiet. The old man’s eyes did a funny trick, almost rolling out of his head, out of sight. He was motionless, and finally he smiled. He picked up the bucket and with the ruins of goodness spread over him, perfect gore, he dunked into the well and came up with water, and showered a soldier. The kids watched.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thinking Strategies</th>
<th>Disciplinary Reading Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Activating and Building Background Knowledge| ✤ What do I know about the topic, time period, concept, or issue and how do I use it to make sense of new information?  
  ✤ How does the reading relate to what I know and to current events?  
  ✤ Where do I go to build background knowledge about the topic? |
| Asking Questions                            | ✤ What questions do I need to ask?  
  ✤ What factual information do I need to make sense of this topic, time period, and concept?  
  ✤ What questions can be answered in the text and which ones require an inference? |
| Inferring to Draw Conclusions               | ✤ How can I generalize the information to draw conclusion or make predictions about the future?  
  ✤ What information can I glean from the graphs, data, and pictorial representations?  
  ✤ How does factual information help me predict and generalize trends or patterns?  
  ✤ How does past performances compare to actions of the day? |
| Determining Importance                      | ✤ From whose perspective is the text written?  
  ✤ What information is based on bias and what is based on evidence?  
  ✤ How do I use the information I already have to suggest possible solutions?  
  ✤ What relevant information is held in the datum, graphs, charts, and tables?  
  ✤ How will I record my thinking so that I can remember and reuse it?  
  ✤ How do I organize the information in a useful fashion? |
| Monitoring Comprehension                    | ✤ What makes sense and where am I confused?  
  ✤ How do I explain my position to someone else?  
  ✤ What is the essential vocabulary?  
  ✤ What names, dates, and places are necessary to remember?  
  ✤ Based on my purpose, what information matters most? |
| Rereading to Repair Meaning                 | ✤ How can I reread from a different perspective?  
  ✤ What question can I ask to isolate my confusion?  
  ✤ Is my information accurate and how does my thinking change based on new information? |
| Synthesizing and Extending Thinking         | ✤ How has my thinking grown and changed?  
  ✤ What generalizations can I make about the current state of affairs?  
  ✤ What different sources/perspectives can I use that will add to my thinking?  
  ✤ How will I use what I’ve figured out to continue my research?  
  ✤ What is my version of the “truth?” |

Tovani 2013
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thinking Strategies</th>
<th>Disciplinary Reading Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activating and Building Background Knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking Questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inferring to Draw Conclusions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determining Importance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring Comprehension</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rereading to Repair Meaning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesizing and Extending Thinking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tovani 2013
Using Inner Voice to Help Students Interact With Complex Text

**Conversation Voice (useful voice)**

This voice helps readers to:
- Relate to the text
- Make connections between the book and the reader
- Ask questions
- Give opinions
- Talk back to the text
- Remember what is read

**Reciting Voice (waste of time voice)**

This voice causes readers to:
- Lose track of what is being read
- Stray from the text
- Forget what is read
- Not care about the reading

Turn off the wandering voice by selectively rereading for a specific purpose.

**Reading Purposes**

Some purposes are:
- Ask a question
- Look for the answer to a question
- Make a connection
- Look for clues to help draw an inference
- Retell what has been read
- Try to visualize a picture
Annotating Text: Recording thinking so that it can be remembered and reused

“It’s all about cause and effect.” Joe Colacioppo

Recording thinking while reading helps a reader remember what he has read. It also provides an opportunity for the reader to wrestle with meaning. Knowing what to write when annotating gives the reader a purpose and also helps the reader determine what is important. Below are some options for annotation:

• Record the **Who**. Define who are “biggies” in the selection and why they important. Consider their political affiliation, special interests, and with whom they align.

• Record the **What**. Describe what is significant about the event and what conditions made the event possible.

• Record the **When**. Pinpoint when the event occurred and consider when the issue(s) concerning the event will resurface.

• Record the **Where**. Where in the world is this happening? Is the geography significant and have other significant events happened here before?

• Record questions.

• Record connections.

• Record opinions.
# Reading Complex Text

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When I Read Complex Text, I...</th>
<th>So...I must shift my instruction by...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Need to reread the text more than once.</td>
<td>Giving kids time to also reread a text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Have different ways to reread.</td>
<td>Making time to show kids how to reread differently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Sometimes know a part in the text is important but I don’t know why.</td>
<td>Honoring ambiguity and highlighting that meaning doesn’t arrive but is constructed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Sometimes my questions aren’t answered directly in the text.</td>
<td>Modeling how I infer or go to different sources to get more information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Complex text for me is sometimes easy text for my colleagues.</td>
<td>Recognizing that complexity changes depending on the reader’s expertise and motivation means I must provide, when I can, more than one text for my students to read.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tovani 2013
Workshop 2: How Do I Know What Students Know? Assessing, Planning, and Differentiating for Students’ Literacy Need

- How do you know what students know & need at the end of the day? How do students know what they know and need at the end of the day?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills/Strategies</th>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>Questions Related to the novel</th>
<th>Information needed to be a better reader of literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Quotation marks & paragraphs help the reader know who is talking | • love nest  
• billow  
• pompadour  
• boarder  
• scanty  
• colossal  
• bewilderment  
• nebulous  
• yachting | What is the significance of the song on page 95? Do students understand that the words in italics are the lyrics?  
Who is Dan Cody and what is his significance to Gatsby? | Students are reading the text literally.  
Do they understand tone?  
How do authors show the “inside” of a character by what he or she says and does? |
<p>| David, Jose, Shanille etc...aren't annotating through out the entire passage. Why? | | | |
| AB, Natnail, Shaunice, Xavier are fake reading. What do they need? | | Gatsby has fantasized about meeting Daisy for so long that she can't possibly meet his dreams. | |
| | | Ewing is Klipspringer’s first name but students don’t even know who Klipspringer is. | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Long Term Learning Target</th>
<th>Assessments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Supporting Targets</td>
<td>(Most are graded with points, but not all – See “Why I Grade This Way” for more information)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| I can demonstrate how reading makes me smarter. | Annotated text  
Double entry diaries  
Inner voice sheets  
Reading response logs  
Exit Tickets  
Journal Responses |
| • I can reread a chunk of text and connect new information to something that I already know. | Final Essays/Products/Projects that illuminate big content ideas (based on themes, units of study, required texts, etc.) |
| • I can make a picture in my head of something I’ve read in order to remember what I’ve read. | |
| • I can use my background knowledge to interpret clues left by the author. | |
| • I can go beyond the words on the page to infer meaning. | |
| I can use my discussion group to sustain my reading. | Journal Reflections/exit tickets  
Group Observation Forms  
Scripts of/quotes from group discussions |
| • I can discuss with my group members to clear up my confusion about a text. | |
| • I can discuss with my group members to expand my knowledge and understanding of a text. | |
| I can get unstuck and build endurance for reading to get smarter. | Response journals  
Exit tickets: What is causing confusion?  
Sticky notes with questions placed in the text where the reading becomes confusing. |
| • I can recognize when my mind is wandering. | Annotated text  
Double entry diaries  
Inner voice sheets  
Reading response logs |
| • I can reread a chunk of text that I don’t understand and ask a question in order to isolate confusion. | |
| • I can read for extended periods of time. | Stamina chart (over time) in reading journal |
| I can get unstuck & build endurance for writing to get smarter. | Drafts in writing folder  
Revisions and edits on drafts  
Running list in writer’s journal of what I notice other writers doing |
| • I can increase my writing stamina by producing more than one draft. | |
| • I can find others who will read my writing and give me useful feedback. | |
| • I can use published works to mentor my writing. | |
- I can show courtesy to my readers by attending to spelling, punctuation, and grammar.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I can use writing to demonstrate and clarify my thinking.</th>
<th>Drafts in writing folders with revisions/annotations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- I can reread what I’ve written and recognize parts that don’t make sense.</td>
<td>Exit Tickets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I can use conferences with my teacher and writing group to revise confusing parts.</td>
<td>Journal reflections/writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I can re-enter a piece of writing and make changes that reflect how my thinking has evolved.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I can use writing as a way to create awareness and gain access to power in the world.</th>
<th>Final products/projects with real-world purpose and audience:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Supporting learning targets vary by project/product</td>
<td>- 3-5 minute i-movie that creates awareness in peers surrounding a contemporary issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- A commentary sent to the local paper stating a position on a local issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- An annotated summer reading list</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Book reviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- A recommendation to teachers/departments about the use of current works students are reading or should read.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Letters to various organizations/audiences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tovani 2012
Learning Targets:
I can read for fifty minutes with momentary breaks.
I can remember what I read. I can share my thinking about what I read.
I can write a response that reflects new thinking.

Name:

Title of Book______________________________________________________________

Began reading on page__________ ended reading on page______________________

In at least FOUR sentences, write what you remember reading. Share facts, new information, or retell what you remember reading.

What were you thinking as you read? In at least FOUR sentences include: questions, connections, opinions, INFERENCES, new thoughts, and/or ideas that you think are important.

Out of 25 points, how many do you deserve? As you assess yourself, consider how well you shared your thinking on this sheet and how long you stayed engaged with your reading.

____ I make pictures in my head when I read.  ____ I can ask questions when I read.

____ I can predict what’s might happen.  ____ I can make connections to my BK.
Dear Ninth Grade Me Letter
Final copy due: May 14, 2013

I can write an interesting, one-page letter to a Prairie eighth grader. In this letter I will demonstrate the following:

20  I can share a lesson that I learned in 9th grade and explain how I am wiser because of it.

20  I can share something that I wish I could do over again.

10  I can discuss the concept of “legacy” in my letter.

10  I can use tone to convey mood. My letter may have a sense of playfulness, seriousness, or regret.

10  I can read my letter aloud without stumbling over my words.

10  I can write a letter that has a beginning, middle, and end.

10  I can use conventional punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

90  Total points

Please describe how your writing process worked for this assignment. What are you getting better at doing and what do you need to continue working on?
**Workshop Model as a Structure for Assessment:**

*Creating & Collecting Data to Figure Out What Students Know and Need EVERYDAY*

---

**Mini-lesson link to best practices in assessment:** Should be based on students’ work the previous day – targeted specifically to patterns of student understanding – what they need next to go deeper or to clarify misconceptions and clear up confusion. Teachers show students HOW to meet learning targets by:

- Sharing examples of strong and weak work so students can build a vision of what they will produce
- Focusing on one point of instruction so students can hone in to create higher-quality work
- Periodically slowing down and focusing on practices of self-assessment: reflection and goal setting
- Modeling focused revision for students so they can close the gap between their own work and a strong model

**Opening link to best practices in assessment:** A routine to share and ensure students understand the daily learning target.

**Student created assessment data can include:**

- Conversation calendars
- Short response to topic or target of the day

**Debrief link to best practices in assessment:** During debrief the teacher gains a sense of patterns of understanding, confusion, and/or growth of the whole class that she uses to plan the next day to:

- Determine the next learning target
- Focus on one point of instruction to help students get smarter tomorrow
- Use an example of strong student work from today to motivate and engage other learners tomorrow
- Teach students focused revision to produce higher quality work
- Help students see where they are in relation to the target

During the debrief students can:

- Synthesize their thinking to help the teacher figure out next steps
- Self-assess to the learning target and set goals for future learning
- Keep track of and share their learning

**More Work time (release) link to best practice assessment:** More time to create “work” – i.e. data that helps us know students’ strengths, weaknesses and needs to better target instruction.

**Worktime link to best practices in assessment:**

**Teacher** confers to individuals and small groups to help every student get smarter everyday. During conferences teachers can:

- Clarify learning targets
- Use examples of strong and weak work
- Offer descriptive feedback
- Teach students to self-assess and set individual learning goals
- Focus on one point of instruction at a time
- Teach students focused revision
- Engage students in self-reflection and help them keep track of and share their learning

**Teacher created assessment data:**

- Conferring notes,
- Group Observation Form

**Catch linked to best practice assessment:** Many times the catches are unplanned, based on patterns of understanding or confusion the teacher notices as she confers with individuals and groups. This allows a teacher to:

- Offer descriptive feedback based on student performance during work time

Teachers can build in pre-planned catches connected to the learning target to re-engage learners with points of access. These may include: sharing a new text(s), or new task(s) [i.e. first read, then write, then talk]. This allows learners to:

- Focus on one point of access to re-engage, deepen thinking, or build stamina
- View models of strong or weak work to clarify the vision or offer another option to re-engage

---

Bennett/Tovani 2010

---

14