



Preface and Overview

Who Will Use This Book?

We have written this practical and useful book for inservice and preservice teachers. The book is ideal for professional development in schools, districts, and other types of programs where the focus is on comprehension instruction in the intermediate grades. It will also be a helpful supplement in undergraduate and graduate reading and language arts classes, as well as in clinical courses where there is a desire to provide useful strategies that have wide applicability with narrative and informational text.

What Are Some of the Outstanding Qualities of This Book?

1. The book contains comprehension strategies that have utility in reading as well as other areas of the curriculum.
2. The strategies are presented with helpful headings that quickly indicate when, why, and how to use them. You can also see whether the strategy can be used with narrative text, informational text, or both.
3. The strategies are presented in an easy-to-follow, step-by-step manner.
4. Most of the strategies contain one or more examples.
5. One or more reproducible masters accompany all of the strategies.

What Grade Levels Do the Strategies Address?

The strategies in this book were specifically written for use in the intermediate grades. After reading about a strategy, it should be quite easy to determine how best to use it with students. You may want to adapt some of the strategies to accommodate your teaching style and your students' particular needs. For some readers, the strategies may be used with materials you read to students. You can then complete the strategy through shared reading and writing. Other students will be able, after appropriate instruction, to use the strategies independently.

What Insights Have Been Provided by Research?

Comprehension can be viewed as a deep understanding of text that requires skill, will, explicitness, strategy, and purpose (Calfee, 2009).

There is little doubt that teaching results in student learning. A persistent problem is that of teachers mentioning a skill or assigning a task without taking the time to teach it. Instruction that is characterized by clear explanation, modeling, and guided practice can increase student learning (Duffy, 2002, 2003). The National Reading Panel (2000) compiled a large volume that offers several strategies for effective comprehension instruction. According to Cunningham (2001), the comprehension section of the report is potentially valuable. Other major reviews (Israel & Duffy, 2009; Pearson & Fielding, 1991; Tierney & Cunningham, 1984) and related writings (Ogle & Blachowicz, 2002; Pressley, 2000, 2002, 2005; Rand Study Group, 2002) support the following areas for an instructional focus.

1. Teach students to be aware of their own comprehension. This strategy is often referred to as comprehension monitoring.
2. Have students work together. This strategy is called cooperative learning.

3. Have students make graphic summaries of what they read through the use of graphic and semantic organizers.
4. Teach story and text structures.
5. Help students learn to ask and answer questions.
6. Teach students to summarize what they read.

The strategies selected for this book will help you in the area of comprehension instruction. The key ingredients, however, are your actions as the teacher.

- Take time to teach the strategies.
- Tell students how the strategies will help them become better readers.
- Model how the strategies are used.
- Think aloud by describing what goes on in your mind as you are using the strategy.
- Provide guided practice so students can learn how the strategy will help them understand the lesson or text.
- Reinforce students' efforts.
- Develop the strategies over time and remind students to use the strategies in a variety of contexts.
- Help students reflect on the strategies and evaluate their usefulness in various contexts.


Finally, we want to stress again the critical importance of teaching the strategies. Many of the strategies can be embedded in oral reading you share with students (Scharlach, 2008). This means you can teach the strategies as students are in the process of becoming independent readers.

Is This Book Easy to Use?

Yes! The format and organization of this book make it very user friendly. We have also included a Quick Reference Guide inside the front cover so you can quickly locate the various strategies and consider their use. Note that the strategies are listed in alphabetical order. In addition, there are further breakdowns of the strategies on the back cover so you can quickly locate them.

Where Should I Begin?

Glance at the Quick Reference Guide inside the front cover. Scan the strategies and find a particular strategy that interests you. Turn to the page for that strategy. Suppose you select Character Four Square on page 15. Under the title, you will see headings that include four areas (see example below).


 <h1 style="text-align: center; background-color: black; color: white; padding: 5px;">Character Four Square</h1>	
Text Type	Narrative, Informational
When to Use	After Reading
Comprehension Strategy	Inferring, Creating Images, Determining Importance, Synthesizing
How to Use	Individual, Partner, Small Group, Whole Group

1. **TEXT TYPE** refers to the type of text materials with which the strategies can be used. Narrative text refers to stories; informational text generally refers to nonfiction materials. Character Four Square can be best used with both narrative and informational text.
2. **WHEN TO USE** tells you if you should use the strategy before, during, and/or after reading. Character Four Square is best used after reading.
3. **COMPREHENSION STRATEGY** is based on the work of Duke and Pearson (2002), Keene (2008), Keene and Zimmermann (1997), Pearson, Roehler, Dole, and Duffy (1992) and others who have conducted and reviewed the research in comprehension. These strategies help students become thoughtful, independent readers who are engaged in their reading and learning. The following are brief descriptions of the seven major strategies we use in this book.
 - *Monitoring Meaning*—Students who monitor meaning as they read know if the text makes sense to them. If not, they use fix-up strategies such as pausing, rereading, and/or discussing their understanding with others to help clarify the meaning.
 - *Using Prior Knowledge*—Students use their background knowledge before, during, and after reading to make sense of, and remember, new information. They assimilate new information into their background knowledge. This is sometimes referred to as using and developing their schema.
 - *Asking Questions*—Students generate questions before, during, and after reading. They use their questions to help them focus on and remember important ideas from the text.
 - *Inferring*—Students combine their prior knowledge with that which is read to create meaning that is not explicitly stated in the text. Readers who infer draw conclusions, make and revise predictions, use and interpret information from the text, make connections, answer questions, and make judgments about the reading.
 - *Creating Images*—Using all five senses and their emotions, students create images during and after reading. They may use their images to make connections, recall, and interpret details from the reading.
 - *Determining Importance*—As they read, students make decisions about what they believe is important in the text. These might be words, sentences, or main ideas developed from the reading. They then draw conclusions about the key ideas or major concepts contained in the text.
 - *Synthesizing*—Students put together information from the text, from other relevant sources, and their background knowledge to create understanding of what they have read. Students use text structures and text elements as they read to predict, confirm or reject ideas, assimilate thoughts and create overall meaning. “A synthesis is the sum of information from the text, other relevant texts, and the reader’s background knowledge . . . produced in an original way” (Keene, 2008, p. 252).

Character Four Square gives students an opportunity to use the processes of inferring, creating images, determining importance, and synthesizing.

4. **HOW TO USE** refers to whether the strategy is best used with individuals, partners, small groups, and/or whole groups. Character Four Square can be used with individuals, partners, small groups, and/or whole groups.

Below these headings are the words *Description*, *Teaching Goals Related to Learner Outcomes*, and *Procedure* (see page vi). There is a brief description of Character Four Square, three teaching goals, and a step-by-step procedure for using Character Four Square. We like to think of the numbered steps as a systematic lesson plan to help you present the strategy to your students. You should, of course, feel free to adapt the steps and examples to fit the needs of your students.



Character Four Square

Text Type Narrative, Informational

When to Use After Reading

Comprehension Strategy Inferring, Creating Images, Determining Importance, Synthesizing

How to Use Individual, Partner, Small Group, Whole Group

Description
 Character Four Square is a strategy to help teach or review characterization in a story or selection. Students can make inferences to come up with some of the information requested. The information is then placed in four squares.

Teaching Goals Related to Learner Outcomes


- To help students describe various aspects of a character in a reading selection.
- To encourage students to select or suggest vocabulary that describes or portrays a character.
- To have students create images that help identify a character's traits and feelings.

Procedure

- Choose a book or story with a character (person or animal) that will be relatively easy for students to describe. Initially, use a short text with one main character to read to the entire class.
- Display the reproducible on page 18 or draw a square with four quadrants on the board. Label them as shown in the example below.

Character's Name	Physical Description
Feelings	Character Traits

We often provide one or more *examples* (see example below) of how the strategy might be used in your curriculum. You may quickly be able to think of logical extensions to your lessons in a variety of areas.



Character Four Square

Character's Name <i>Lou Gehrig</i> <i>(Iron Horse)</i>	Physical Description <i>strong but grew weaker</i>
Feelings <i>felt good because he helped his family</i> <i>frustrated as he became weak</i> <i>thankful for what he was able to do</i>	Character Traits <i>talented</i> <i>competent</i> <i>courageous</i> <i>modest</i> <i>shy</i>

To make the strategy especially useful, one or more *reproducible masters* are included with all of the strategies. You have the publisher's permission to reproduce and use the masters with your students within the guidelines noted on the copyright page of this book. Now, it's time for you to use the strategies to help develop and enhance your students' comprehension.

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