**How to Read Like a Detective: 15 Strategies**

1. **Be a pattern-noticer: Use the “again and again” strategy.**

Notice and note anything that appears repeatedly in the

text: words or *phrases, objects, events, feelings of the*

*characters.*

Ask the right questions: *Why is the author showing me this*

*pattern? What does the author want me to notice*?

**2. Be a detail-noticer: Use the “Why is this here?” strategy.**

Don’t overlook small details, minor characters, or seemingly

insignificant events and descriptions.

Ask the right questions: *This detail doesn’t seem important.*

*So why did the author include it? What does this detail*

*have to do with the main ideas of the text?*

**3.Be ready to notice! Use the “pencil in hand” strategy.**

Have a pen or pencil nearby and ready to note anything

you think is especially interesting, important, or puzzling.

Ask the right questions: *What am I not understanding?*

*What am I excited about? What do I especially like?*

**4. Be a collaborator: Use the “share your noticings” strategy.**

Two heads are better than one. Compare notes with

a partner. Talk about why you noted what you did.

Exchange ideas, adding your partner’s notes to

yours.

Ask the right questions: *What am I not understanding?*

*What am I excited about? What do I especially like?*

**5. Be a visualizer: Use the “movie in the mind” strategy.**

Reading is seeing. If you are not making mental pictures

as you read, you are not comprehending. Focus on the

concrete nouns in the text. They will show you pictures.

Ask the right question: *What does the author want me to*

*see as I read?*

**6**. **Be a re-reader**. **Use the “revisiting” strategy.**

The first time around, you are finding out what the story

is about. In re-reading, you will be able to notice the subtle

details such as foreshadowing, symbolism, author’s craft, even the meanings of some words that you didn’t have enough

context for the first time.

Ask the right question: What did I not notice the first time?

*How does my second reading advance my understanding?*

**7**. **Be a leisure reader: Use the “fine dining” strategy.**

Quality literature is meant to be savored, not gulped down.

Read at the same pace you would if you were reading it

aloud.

Ask the right question: *Am I reading this slowly enough to*

*savor the words?*

**8.** **Be a punctuation reader: Use the** **“road signs” strategy**.

Marks of punctuation are there to guide you, to separate

parts of sentences, and sentences from each other, so that

you read at the intended pace. Punctuation marks are like

road signs: to ignore them and just plow ahead as if they

weren’t there will result in *word collision*, and the text

won’t make sense.

Ask the right question: *Am I following the punctuation*

*road signs to create the “music” of the text?*

**9.** **Be a meaning-layerer. Use the “toe-in-the-water” strategy for**

**informational (not literary) text.**

When reading for social studies and science, get an overview

by skimming first. Read the headings. Look at the pictures, graphics, and captions. If there are end-of-chapter questions, read them. Then, go through and read the first sentence of each section. Then, go back and read the whole text. You will find that by doing this procedure, the new information will be more comprehensible and more meaningful.

Ask the right question: *Am I building my understanding of*

*the text by getting the broad structures of it before reading*

*the details?*

**10. Be a test-maker. Use the “create-my-own test” strategy**.

In writing up your own test questions about the text, you

give yourself a strategy that takes you deep inside the text—

Ask the right questions: *What are the main ideas?*

*How do the details reinforce the main idea? What do the words*

*and phrases mean in this context?*

**11**. **Be a title-maker: Use the “phrase-in-the-text-is-a-title” strategy**.

Find a key word or phrase in the text that could be used as its

title.

Ask the right question: *What word or phrase in the text captures its main idea?*

**12. Be a data-presenter: Use the “make a chart” strategy.**

Express the main ideas and how the details relate to them in

the form of a graphic: a table, labeled diagram, flow chart,

or other layout.

Ask the right question: *How is this text organized?*

**13**. **Be a re-caster: Use the “change-the-genre” strategy**.

Re-create the story or information in the form of a different

genre: a poem, skit, script, newspaper article, journal entry,

mime, Q&A series, interview, etc.

Ask the right questions: *What should I include and what*

*should I leave out in expressing this text in another form*?

**14. Be a filler-inner: Use the “find-the-missing-parts” strategy.**

Stories have “holes” in them. That is, unanswered questions,

“missing” episodes, periods of time that the author leaves

out but are part of a character’s life, places that are not

described, etc.

Ask the right question: *What might be going on in the*

*“hidden” parts of the story? What might a character be*

*doing when we’re not seeing him or her in the story?*

**15.** B**e a good strategy-selector. Use the “use the right strategy” strategy.**

Not all reading strategies will work best for a given text or reader.

Ask the right question: *Is my strategy deepening my understanding of and/or ability to remember the text?*

*Do I like using my strategy?*