

The American Readers Club Handbook

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THE AMERICAN READERS CLUB HANDBOOK

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INTRODUCTION

American Readers Club: A Definition

What is an American Readers Club?

- A group of people—Club Members—who meet regularly to read and talk in English about a text (books, pieces of writing) and/or visuals (pictures, images, websites) created in English;
- A series of regular meetings where Club Members consider texts and/or visuals created by Americans and/or focused on the United States of America.

Why start or join an American Readers Club?

- To read and talk about interesting topics with like-minded people;
- To advance in a career that requires fluent readers;
- To work in international organizations where knowledge of English is required;
- To improve reading—to read long texts quickly—and understanding;
- To have fun, learn new information, and talk about new ideas.

Who can join an American Readers Club?

- Everyone who wants to read in English;
- Old and young, rich and poor, doctors, teachers, and taxi drivers—all who want to develop a passion for reading in English;
- Professionals, workers, children, and grandparents—all who want to read in English.

Where can the American Readers Club meet?

- At a convenient place with easy access to transportation;
- In American Corners, American Spaces, or American Libraries;
- At public places such as a school, library, church, park, or a member's house.

When can the American Readers Club meet?

- At a convenient time for Club Members;
- Once a week, twice a month, or once a month—a convenient time for Members;
- In the evening for professionals, Saturday afternoons for secondary students, or Saturday nights for university students, or before or after a religious service for community members—at a convenient time for Club Members.

For how long can the English Club meet?

- The meetings can be one hour ... two hours—Club Members decide;
- Clubs can meet for one year ... many years—Club Members decide.

What happens during English Club meetings?

- At the first meeting, Club Members choose a Club Leader and a meeting time, date, and place. Note: The Club Leader can hold this position for several meetings, for one meeting, or the position can rotate among all members—the Club Members decide how to select the Club Leader;
- Club Members use *The American Readers Club Handbook* to plan meetings;
- English is spoken at meetings and Members contribute texts and/or visuals in English that the Members talk about at each meeting.

A note about atmosphere: Remember ...

- The goal of the American Readers Club is to read and talk in English;
- Clubs have a Club Leader and Club Members who are equal partners in the Club;
- Club Leaders are NOT teachers—Club Members are NOT students;
- Club Leaders do NOT teach English or reading—they coach and guide Club Members;
- Club Members do NOT learn to read—they practice reading and talking;
- Club Leaders facilitate Club Meetings;
- Club Meetings are fun, interesting, and supportive,
- Club Meetings encourage Members to read and talk about a text or a visual in English;
- Club Meetings give Club Members opportunities to experiment with different ways of reading and talking about texts and/or visuals;
- Club Leaders and Members must be supportive, encouraging, and respectful;
- Club Leaders and Members must be kind, caring and thoughtful;
- Club Meetings must be safe places where people read, talk and practice without fear;
- Club Meetings have Members who want to read, talk and help their community.

Good luck!

Read and talk in English!

Help the community!

Have fun!

Successful American Readers Clubs

Successful Club Meetings

After the first 4 meetings, Club Members answer the questions below. For “No” answers, read the section, *Problems and Solutions for Club Meetings*.

| | YES | NO |
|---|-----|----|
| Do all Club Members read before the Meetings? | | |
| Do all Club Members—men & women (boys & girls)—talk in the Meeting? | | |
| Do all Club Members feel free to talk in the Meeting? | | |
| Do all Club Members want to read in English? | | |
| Do all Club Members have equal time to speak? | | |
| Do Club Members help each other use reading strategies? | | |
| Do Club Members use reading strategies to practice grammar and vocabulary? | | |
| Do most Club Members attend regularly? | | |
| Are the meetings fun, lively, and interesting? | | |
| When the meeting ends, do Club Members select the reading and/or visual for the next meeting? | | |
| When the meeting ends do all Club Members know the next meeting date and place? | | |

Problems and Solutions for American Readers Club Meetings

| Problem ... | Solution ... |
|--|--|
| Some Club Members talk all the time ... | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Club Members decide how much time each person can speak [recommended time is 3 minutes]. |
| Some Club Members talk all the time ... | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pick a Time Keeper. The Time Keeper is the referee. • The Time Keeper watches the time and calls “time’s up” when appropriate. |
| The Club Members who are men speak more than women. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Club Leader talks with the women privately and the men privately to listen for solutions. • 2-3 meetings can be for women only and 2-3 meetings for men only. Then, everyone meets and talks about the differences when the genders meet separately. • For some club meetings the men and women can go into different rooms for 45 minutes. Then, they return together and talk about this experience. Try for 2-3 meetings. • Choose texts for Women & Men (Boys & Girls). |
| Some Club Members don’t come regularly. | <p>The Club Leader can ask Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Is our meeting day and time convenient?</i> • <i>Is our meeting location convenient for most of us?</i> <p>If “No”, then brainstorm different dates, times and locations.</p> |
| Some Club Members don’t come regularly. | <p>The Club Leader can ask Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Is it possible to change our reading topics and activities?</i> • <i>If the texts are not interesting, what would you like to read?</i> <p>The Club Members try to understand the problems and find solutions to the problems.</p> |
| Some Club Members don’t come regularly. | <p>At the end of each Club Meeting the Club Leader says:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Remember that we will meet [give date, time & place];</i> <p>The Club Leader asks Members to call each other 1-2 days before the next meeting.</p> |
| Some Club Members argue about English vocabulary or grammar. | <p>The Club Leader should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose a Club Member to check the reading strategies for ways to help understand the word; • Choose a Club Member to check the reading strategies for a way to help explain the confusion; • Make sure Club Members give a report at the next Club Meeting about the vocabulary or grammar problem. |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Some Club Members get angry or disagree with other Club Members.</p> | <p>The Club Leader can say:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Remember that we are here to read in English and talk about what we've read--not convince others to accept our point of view;</i> • <i>First tell us the Club Member's opinion and then say yours.</i> |
| <p>Some Club Members want to talk about politics.</p> | <p>The Club Leader can say:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>We are not here to talk about politics. We want to read in English and talk about what we've read;</i> • <i>Politics is usually connected to problems—what is the problem? Tell us in English and we will try to find a reading about this problem;</i> • <i>Let's not discuss politics.</i> |
| <p>Some Club Members like to talk about government people.</p> | <p>The Club Leader can say:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>We are not here to discuss people or politicians. We want to read in English and find ways to solve community problems.</i> • <i>Remember what President Kennedy said, "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." Now, let's find ways that the Club can help our people?</i> |
| <p>Some Club Members like to talk about their religion.</p> | <p>The Club Leader can say:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>We are not here to talk about religion. We are here to read in English and talk about what we've read.</i> |
| <p>Some Club Members feel threatened or bullied because of what they said at a Meeting.</p> | <p>The Club Leader can say:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Remember that we are here to read in English and talk about the reading—not to criticize each other;</i> • <i>Remember that we want the Club to be a safe place where Members can speak freely.</i> <p>The Club Leader must also remind Club Members to read, speak freely and feel confident about English.</p> |

Suggestions for Using this Handbook

In the first Club Meeting, we suggest that Club Members page through the *Handbook* to get an overview of its organization and contents. Members should give special attention to the sections and sub-sections in the Table of Contents.

Also, in this first meeting (and perhaps 1-2 subsequent Meetings), Members should read, talk about—in detail—and complete the exercises in *The Introduction: What is Reading?* This introduction gives Members an opportunity to understand the reading process. It is important that all Club Members know what is—and what is not—reading.

After these first few meetings, Members should use the *Handbook* as they wish. Members are free to choose strategies and topics that are interesting and relevant. Members do not need to follow the *Handbook* in sequence. Members can read sections and sub-sections in any sequence, at any time.

Below are four suggested plans for organizing American Readers Club Meetings.

Plan #1: All Members read **BEFORE** the Meeting

1. Members read the text or view the visual at home **BEFORE** the Meeting;
2. At the beginning of the Club Meeting, Members choose one of the *Strategies After Reading* to use in the Meeting;
3. Members use the *Strategy After Reading* with the reading/visual they prepared;
4. When Members finish talking about the text/visual using the *Strategy*, they plan the next Meeting. To plan the next meeting, Members should:
 - a. Look at the *Suggested Texts/Visuals* section;
 - b. Agree on a text/visual to read at home **BEFORE** the next meeting;
 - c. Look at the *Strategies Before Reading* section and choose one strategy to use at home when they read;
 - d. Select one of the *Strategies While Reading* to use when they read;
5. Members decide on the date, time, and place for the next Meeting.

Plan #2: All Members read **DURING** the Meeting

1. Members come to the Meeting with the text/visual they will read and talk about in the Meeting;
2. When the meeting begins, Members choose one (or more) of the *Strategies Before Reading*. If they have a visual, they choose one (or more) of the *Strategies for Viewing*;
3. Members choose one (or more) of the *Strategies While Reading* if they will read a text;
4. Members choose one (or more) of the *Strategies After Reading*;
5. Members read the text using *Strategies—Before, During and After*;
6. When the Members have finished reading and talking about the strategies and/or activities, they plan the next Club Meeting, checking the *Handbook* for suggestions as needed. Members should:
 - a. Look at the *Suggested Texts/Visuals* section;
 - b. Agree on one suggested text/visual to bring to the next Meeting;
7. Members decide on the date, time, and place for the next Meeting;

Plan #3: All Members read the SAME text/visual

- When all Members read the same text or view the same visual, the Club Members can follow Plan #1 or Plan #2. Members should agree on the Plan they want to follow.
- At the end of the Meeting, Members decide on the date, time, and place for the next Meeting and the text/visual to read.

Plan #4: Members all read DIFFERENT texts/visuals

- If Members read different texts BEFORE the Club Meeting, then they give a brief summary of their text before talking about the text with Members;
- If Members read different texts DURING the Club Meeting, then Members each select different *Strategies Before Reading, Strategies While Reading, and Strategies After Reading*;
- At the end of the Meeting, Members decide on the date, time, and place for the next Meeting and the text/visual to read.

What Is Reading?

Most of us learned to read in school. We usually started learning to read in our first year of primary school. Teachers usually taught us how to:

- Pronounce letters correctly;
- Pronounce words correctly;
- Read sentences out loud and with accuracy;
- Read sentences out loud and with expression;
- Read several sentences and/or paragraphs out loud with accuracy & expression.

Teachers usually read a word or text and then we repeated after the teacher. Teachers selected students to read out loud. Teachers wanted us to read clearly, accurately, and out loud. When we made mistakes, teachers stopped us and corrected us. Many of us were afraid to read out loud. We were afraid to make mistakes. We were afraid the teacher would criticize us. Many of us did not like to read.

Because of these experiences, most of us believe that good readers read a text (sentences and/or paragraphs) out loud with clarity, accuracy and expression.

In addition to reading clearly, accurately and with expression out loud, teachers wanted us to answer questions about what we read. Teachers wanted us to answer the questions using information from the text. Teachers usually asked questions about: Who, what, when, where, and how. Teachers asked questions like these:

- Who were the characters in the story?
- What did the characters do first?
- When does the story take place?
- Where does the story take place?
- How did the story end?

This way of teaching reading in school focused on all students at the same time. It focused on teaching reading to recognize words and pronounce them. Reading to understand specific information in the text was also important.

Today, many researchers study reading. They have identified what people need to know to read. To get an idea about what researchers found, let's try some fun exercises.

What must we know when we read? With a partner or small group (3-4 members in each group), read the sentences below. Each dash (—) represents a missing letter.

1. -nc- -p-n - t-m- th-r- w-a - b---t-f-l y--ng
g-r-l. Sh- l-v-d - y-ng m-n b-t h-r f-m-ly h-t-d
h-m.
2. O-e -a- a -i- -a- -a-e -o -e- -ou-e a--
a--e- -e- a -ue--io- a-ou- -e- -a-i-y.

Could you read #1? Could you read # 2? Could you read #1 more easily than #2? Maybe you could not read #2 at all. #1 is easier to read because the consonants are in place. In fact, #1 did not have vowels. #2 has only vowels and was probably impossible to read. Researchers tell us that we can read without vowels. What might this tell us about reading? Talk with a partner or small group. Then, read the three sentences below. Each dash (-) represents a missing letter. Is there one sentence that is easier to read? Which one?

1. "W-at a gr-at cha--e!" S--d Ma--e. S-e w-s ha--y
bec--se s-e w-a go--g to vi--t h-r fr--nd in Pa--s.
2. Thom-- we-- quick-- t- s-- hi- girlfri--- t-
te-- he- th- go-- new-.
3. --ey --re --ing -o --e a --ry -----tant
----son --en --ey -----ved -n ----nce.

In #1, the middle letters are missing. In #2, the beginning letters are present and in #3 the ending letters are present. Which was easiest to read? What might this tell us about reading? Talk with a partner or small group and then continue reading below.

Research suggests that reading with the beginning letters (#2) is the easiest. Some people (and research) find that the end letters are more important than the middle letters. Here are ideas about what these exercises tell us about reading.

- The beginnings and ends of words are important;
- The beginnings of words are most important, maybe because we read from left to right and we see the beginning of words first when we read;
- The beginnings of words are more unique so they are more necessary than the ends of words—ends of words usually follow patterns;
- Ends of words may be more predictable because they may follow grammar rules;
- The beginning of words may give us information about vocabulary and the ends of words may give information about grammar;
- Consonants are more important than vowels.

Let's try another exercise. With your partner or small group, read the text. Do not use a dictionary. When you are finished reading, look for and talk about the questions below.

Aoccdrnig to rscheearch, it deosn't mttar in what oredr the ltteers in a wrod are, the olny iprmoatnt tihng is taht the frist and lsat ltteer be in the rghit pclae. The rset can be a taotl mses and you can sitll raed it wouthit a porbelm. Tihs is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteter by istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe.

Could you read this? What does this tell us about reading? Take a moment to answer and then continue reading ... According to research it doesn't matter in what order the letters in a word are, the only important thing is that the first and last letter be in the right place. The human mind does not read every letter by itself, but the word as a whole.

So, when reading, we don't need to focus on each letter or even most letters in the middle of sentences. What may be most important are the beginning and ending letters.

If you enjoy these exercises, here is another ... Read the story and answer the questions with a partner or small group. Do not use a dictionary.

A Mardsan Giberter for Farfie*

Glis was very fraper. She had denarpen Farfie's mardsan. She didn't talp a giberter for him. So she conlanted to plimp a mardsan binky for him. She had just aparved the binky when he jibbled in the gorger.

"Clorsty mardson!" she boffed.

"That's a crouistish mardsan bink," boffed Farfie, "but my mardsan is on Stansan. Agsan is Kelsan."

"In that ruspen," boffed Glis, "I won't whank you your giberter until Stansan."

- 1. Why was Glis fraper?**
- 2. What did Glis plimp?**
- 3. Who jibbled in the gorger when Glis sparved the binky?**
- 4. What did Farfie bof about the mardsan binky?**
- 5. Why didn't Glis whank Farfie his giberter?**

Did you understand this story? Could you answer the questions? What made it possible to answer the questions—what made it easy, what made it difficult?

Take a moment to talk with a partner or small group and then continue reading.

It is possible to answer the questions because we know English grammar. Look at some of the strange words above and try substituting English words. What kinds of words are you using? How do you know these words might make sense? Take a moment to talk with a partner or small group ... then continue reading.

When we find words we don't know, we can use our knowledge of English to help. For example, we know that **A Mardsan Giberter for Farfie** is the title because it is in the center and above the text. Let's look at the first sentence, **Glis was very fraper. Glis** probably a noun or the name of a person—"was" helps us know this. **Fraper** probably describes **Glis**. The word "was" is again the clue.

If we substituted words in English, it might be: George was very unhappy. Or, Mary was very unhappy. Or, Tom was very happy. We don't know the exact meaning but we have a general idea about the words. If you substituted real English words to "read" and "answer" the questions, your knowledge of English grammar helped. We don't need to know the meaning of the words to answer the questions. This exercise shows us that reading is more than pronouncing words. We need knowledge of grammar and language to help us read.

Also, you talked about the text—with a partner or small group. Talking about the text, helped you read it, understand it. "Social interaction" is important for reading.

Would you like to try one more exercise? Read the story below individually and in silence and answer the questions. Do not use a dictionary.

The procedure is very simple. First you put things into different piles. One pile may be enough depending on what kind of things you have. It is better to do a few things at the same time—not many—because a mistake can be expensive. After the procedure is finished, you need to make different piles depending on the things you have. You will need to put these different piles into their appropriate places. After they are used, you will have to start the procedure all over again.*

Answer these questions:

- 1. What is the procedure described in this text?**
- 2. Are there words you do not understand? What are they?**

When you finish, turn to a partner or small group and talk about the story and your answers to the questions. Then, continue reading below.

What is the procedure? Depending on your personal experience, you will have different answers. Women may—sometimes—agree that the procedure is “Washing clothes.” That’s right! Now you know the procedure is “washing clothes.” Re-read the text. As you re-read, think about what helps you now understand the text. Is it knowing the words? Is it knowing the title? Talk with a partner or small group. Then continue reading.

We understand the reading now because we know the procedure and we also know how to wash clothes. If we didn’t know how to wash clothes we would still not understand this text. Do you agree? Do you disagree? Now read the two poems below in silence.

#1—The Walk

**Wind blows—snow falls. It’s winter.
I put on my fur* coat—and look at her.
She’s got her fur coat on. She’s ready to go.
She doesn’t want a hat or scarf—I do.
Outside we walk at a brisk pace.
It’s cold.
She does her business. We run home.
Happy to be back where it is dry and warm.**

**Fur—the hair on a goat, cow or other animal.*

#2—The Walk

**Wind blows—rain falls. It’s the rainy season.
I put on my raincoat—and look at her.
She’s got her umbrella. She’s ready to go.
She doesn’t want a raincoat—I do.
We step outside. It’s raining—hard and fast.
We’ll get wet—should we be late?
We wait and watch.
Finally, the rain stops. We run to school.
“Please excuse us, teacher. We didn’t want to get wet.”**

With a partner or small group use the questions that follow to talk about these poems and your experiences while reading them.

- Are there any words you do not understand? If there are, explain them to each other or look them up in a dictionary or online.
- Do you like either of the poems?
- Which one do you like? Why do you like it?
- If there is a poem you don't like, explain why.
- If there is a poem you don't understand, talk about why you don't understand it. What makes the poem difficult to understand?
- If there is a poem that is easy to understand, talk about why it is easy to understand. What makes it easy to understand?

When you are finished talking about these questions, continue reading.

In addition to using our knowledge of English words and grammar, personal experiences and background knowledge help us understand text. First, let's look at #2—The Walk. Is this poem easy to understand—or easier than #1? If you answered “Yes,” what makes it easier? Talk with a partner or small group. Then, continue reading.

#2 may be easy to understand because we have personal experiences with the rainy season. We probably all waited for the rain to stop when we were children. We didn't want to go to school when it rained—even if we were lucky to have raincoats and umbrellas. And even with raincoats and umbrellas we probably knew we would get wet, so we waited for the rain to stop. Our personal experiences make this poem easy to understand.

Now look at #1. Maybe we know all the words in the poem—but have we lived in a country with winter? If not, then this poem can be hard to understand. In addition, if we lived in a country with winter, there is a second part in this poem that may confuse us.

Who is “she” in this poem? In many American families, it is common to have a pet—usually a dog—who lives in the house, like a member of a family. This dog is the “family pet.” To keep the house clean, pet owners take their dogs outside every day. The dog poops (goes ca-ca) and pees (goes pee-pee) outside—not in the house. The idiom, **to do her/his business**, means poop and pee. This poem, #1—The Walk, is about a dog owner and her dog. They go for a walk outside in winter. The owner has a coat made of fur and “she” [the dog] has a [natural] fur coat. The owner and dog do not want to go outside but they must so the dog can “do her business” (poop and pee).

Now, re-read #1 to see if you understand it. As you re-read, think about the ways in which personal experiences and knowledge help—or make it difficult—to understand a text. Talk with a partner or small group about this question: How can personal experiences and knowledge help when reading? Below are more questions to talk about.

1. What did you know about the rainy season that helped you understand #2?
2. What did you know about winter that helped you understand #1?
3. If you didn't know anything about winter, did your partner or small group give you some information?
4. When you read the poems in silence, what did you understand?
5. When you talked with your partner or small group, did this conversation help you understand either—or both—poem better or in a different way? If yes, how did the conversation help you? If no, what was the problem?

When your conversation is finished, continue reading.

Reading research tells us that background knowledge including personal experiences, books and other materials we have read or seen, can help us read. Thus, it is not enough to be able to pronounce words correctly, read them out loud clearly, accurately and with expression—like we did in school. To read we need to use not only our knowledge of language but also our personal experiences, background knowledge, and other information.

Research also tells us that we understand texts better when we talk with others about what we read. It is the “social interaction” we have with other people that helps us with our reading. In fact, reading in silence is just one part of reading. The process of reading includes what we do in our heads and what we do with each other.

To summarize ...

What is Reading?

Reading is a process that requires readers to use many processes at the same time. When we read we use our knowledge of language including words, grammar, and punctuation. We use our knowledge of genres—writing styles—and our personal experiences and knowledge of the world. We use our knowledge from other texts we have read. We can improve our reading by talking with others about texts we read. Through social interaction, conversations with others, we can create new, deeper meaning from texts.

We will use this definition in this *American Readers Club Handbook*.

The following references were used in this section, *What is Reading?*

Bruce, B. (2003). *Literacy in the information age: Inquires into meaning making with new technologies*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Goodman, K. (1996). *On reading: A common-sense look at the nature of language and the science of reading*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

*Weaver, C. (1994). *Reading process and practice: From socio-psycholinguistics to whole language (2nd Ed.)*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

STRATEGIES BEFORE READING

Each strategy in this section can be used before reading. Some can also be used while reading. To learn about and practice the strategies, complete the exercises in the boxes.

It is possible Members already know and use some of these strategies—that’s great!

Members may find that some strategies are not unique or different. Members may ask: Aren’t these strategies similar? Yes, in some cases, there are many similarities.

It is not important to remember the name of each strategy. It is more important that Members try to use the strategies before reading.

Remember: Members do not need to read each strategy in order. Members are free to choose the strategy they want to learn or practice. Ready? Let’s begin!

Identifying the Text Style

Before reading, it is important to identify the style or “genre” of the text that we will read. To identify the genre, we glance at the text or consider the place where we found the text. Looking at the text—without reading it—or considering the place where we found the text can help us identify “genre.”

Why is it important to identify the genre? Because we read different genres differently. For example, we read a novel differently from a poem or an advertisement. We read a letter differently from an obituary or horoscope or email.

What are examples of different genres? See the list below. There are other genres not on this list. Can you and a partner or small group add others? Take a few minutes to look at the list and add a few more if you can.

| | | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| Novels | Non-Fiction Texts | Advertisement | Recipe |
| Comic Books | Autobiography | Editorial | Music Review |
| Adventure Story | Biography | Letter to the Editor | Song Lyric |
| Mystery Story | Scientific Text | Horoscope | Obituary |
| Crime Story | Political Commentary | Email Message | List |
| Science Fiction | Letters | Twitter Post | Map |
| Romance Novel | Memoir | Poetry (rhymes, concrete, free-verse) | Magazine article |

Share with Club Members other genres you added to this list. Then, continue reading.

Some texts may appear similar. Crime and mystery, for example, are quite similar. This is not a problem. What is important is to have an idea about the genre because the genre will help us prepare to read.

Let's try this exercise.

Consider these two texts: A romance novel and a recipe. In what ways will we read these two differently? Talk with a partner or small group and decide what you might do before you begin reading:

- The romance novel
- The recipe

Romance Novel

You and your partner or small group may have decided that you would prepare yourselves before reading by finding a quiet, comfortable place to read, perhaps lying on your bed or sitting in a comfortable chair or going outside and sitting under a tree. Maybe you would bring a dictionary, maybe not.

Recipe

To read the recipe, you may have decided you would be in the kitchen. You may read through the recipe quickly to see if you have all the ingredients. Maybe you would need to use a dictionary if the recipe had words you didn't know. Then you may re-read it and begin to slowly follow the directions, step-by-step.

To summarize ...

To use the Strategy, *Identifying the Text Style*, we look at the text, glancing through it to check the style. Or we may be able to determine the style based upon where we find the text. Identifying the style before we read helps us when we read.

Skimming/Scanning

These are two *Before Reading* strategies. They are similar because we do not read every word on a page. We glance through the text because we are looking for information.

When we skim, we want to get a general understanding of the text. We do not want details or specific information. We only want a general idea about the text on the page. We use our eyes and move them down the page without reading every word. If we read, we only read the first sentence of a paragraph—we are looking for the broad, general idea of the reading. Let's practice skimming. Complete the exercise in this box. Then read below.

Directions:

1. Members choose a Timekeeper and prepare to skim the story below;
2. Members have 10 seconds to skim [Members must remember to read only the first sentence of each paragraph];
3. Members must answer this question: What is this story about? Give a 2-3 word answer;
4. Members begin when everyone is ready.

My grandmother came from a place that was always in dispute. She was a school teacher and every time the land changed control she had to teach in the new ruler's language. Sometimes she taught in Swahili and other times in Lingala. She also had to teach in Pende, Tshiluba, and Flemish. My grandmother spoke five languages by the time she decided to leave her region.

At the age of 25, my grandmother came to Kinshasa. She first settled in Limete. Many people from her region were there. A few years later, my grandmother met my grandfather. They married and moved to Lemba. They had six children, all girls. My mother was the fifth daughter.

My grandmother and grandfather didn't speak French. When my mother started school, she didn't know French. She learned French in school—like her sisters. As the sisters grew older they only spoke French. Soon they could not speak with their parents because their parents didn't speak French.

Even though she spoke many languages, my grandmother never learned French. I don't know why. She knew only a few French words so when she visited, I had to learn phrases in her language. Even today, I remember how to say—*Time to eat*—in her language. My mother says that my grandmother never learned French because she was too tired to learn one more language. My grandmother died when she was 91 years old.

If you skimmed this story quickly, you read the first sentence of each paragraph. What do you think this story is about? Maybe you decided it is about language or people? Did you decide that this story is about “My Grandmother?” Yes? Then, you are correct.

Now, let’s try scanning. When we scan, we use our eyes in a similar way to skimming. We move our eyes slowly down each page. Our purpose in scanning, however, is different from skimming. When we scan we look for specific information. Let’s try scanning with the story above about **My Grandmother**. Complete the exercise in the box below.

1. Members choose a Timekeeper;
2. Members prepare to scan the story *My Grandmother* and look for the answer to this question: How many languages did my Grandmother speak?
3. Before scanning, Members should prepare their eyes to look for the answer—a number—one of these words:

one two three four five six seven eight nine
4. The Timekeeper gives Members 10 seconds to skim the story and find the answer to the question;
5. Members begin when everyone is ready.

To summarize ...

For the Strategy, *Skimming/Scanning*, we use our eyes to look quickly through the text. Skimming and scanning are used for different purposes.

- We skim to find the general theme or idea of a text. We use our eyes and move them quickly down the page, focusing on the first sentence of each paragraph;
- We scan to find specific information we want or need from a text. We prepare our eyes to look for the kind of information we need by imagining/guessing the words we are looking for.

Both strategies require us to use our eyes and move them quickly over a text without reading every word. It is not important to remember the words (skim/scan). It is important to remember the strategy of looking/glancing quickly through a text to find information. We can use this strategy to help us become interested and curious about reading the text more carefully.

Looking for Vocabulary

Before reading, we may want to scan (see *Strategies Before Reading: Skimming/Scanning*) a text and look for words we may not know. On the other hand, we may want to begin reading and choose new words while reading (see *Strategies While Reading: Selecting New Words*). Club Members can choose either/both of these strategies.

Let's consider the strategy, *Looking for Vocabulary*. To use this strategy, we need to scan the text before reading. As we scan we look for words we do not know. When we find a new word, we can note it by underlining it, writing it on a separate piece of paper, or (if we are online) highlighting it. Remember: We do not need to know every word when we read. When we scan we should select only words that seem important and unfamiliar to us.

Once we have selected new or unfamiliar words, we can look for their meaning. To find word meanings we can ask our friends or an English speaker. Or, we can look them up in different places. For example:

- A [paper] dictionary;
- Online, using a website:
 - This website includes a dictionary, thesaurus and translation tools <http://dictionary.reference.com/>
 - This website is for non-native English speakers and offers British English and American English <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>

Remember: Do not look up all the words! In fact, enjoyable texts to read should not have lots of new words. If we need to look up **more than 10-15%** of the words in a text, then this text is **too difficult**. Members should look for a text that is easier to read.

Let's practice this strategy now. Take a piece of paper and pen/pencil [Do NOT write in this *Handbook*]. In 10 seconds, scan [in silence] the text in the box and write down the words that you are unfamiliar with. Remember: Scan—do NOT read the text.

The blonke was quite lively like all the others. Unlike the other blonkes, however, it had crinet completely covering its fairly delicate scales and concealing, just below the gills, a small wam. This particular blonke was very drumly and almost lost consciousness. When yerden, it did not stop fighting like the other blonkes.

How many words did you write down? Did you write down more than 5 words? Answer these questions with a partner or small group. Then continue reading.

There are approximately 50 words in this text. If there are more than 5 words you don't know, then this text is very difficult—too difficult to read in the American Readers Club.

Let's try the strategy again. Take your paper and pen/pencil. In 10 seconds, scan the text in the box below and find words you do not know.

This fish was more lively than the others. Unlike the other fish, however, its beautiful body glistened with very delicate reddish scales. Also, hidden just below the gills, were stronger, gold-colored scales. This particular fish was very rare and very valuable. When we held it in our hands, it did not stop fighting like the other fish.

How many words did you write down? If you wrote down 5 words or less, then this text is at a good reading level for you and you may want to find the meanings for the words you do not know. Compare your answers with a partner or small group. Then continue reading.

Let's consider the words you may not know in the text about the fish. Did you write down these words?

lively glistened reddish scales gills valuable

There is one more feature of this strategy to consider. When deciding which words to look up, we suggest you look up words repeated in the text. These may be more important than words used only one time. In the text above, the most important word to check is: **Scales.**

For further ideas about what to do when reading new words, check the *Strategies While Reading: Understanding New Words* and *Strategies After Reading: Using New Words*.

To summarize ...

To use the Strategy of *Looking for Vocabulary*, we skim the text and note/write down new vocabulary. If there are a lot of new words, then we look for a different text to read. If there are a few new words then we can ask a friend or an English speaker to help. We can also look up the words in a dictionary or an online site.

Recalling What We Know

Before reading a text, it can be helpful to recall (remember) what we know about a topic or theme BEFORE we read. We call this “activating” our background knowledge. To help us recall what we know, we can talk to a partner or small group. Recalling what we know before we read will make the reading more interesting.

There are three broad areas of knowledge that we can “activate” (recall). They are:

- Information we learned—usually in school—academic knowledge;
- Knowledge we learned—usually in our lives—personal knowledge;
- Language skills we learned—from English and the other languages we know including French and our native/mother tongue languages—linguistic knowledge.

Let’s see what happens when we try to identify our background knowledge. Complete the activity in the box with a partner or small group.

Let’s imagine we are going to read a story with the title ...

The Devil and Tom Walker

Tell your partner or small group everything you know about *The Devil*. Think about what you learned in school, at home, in church. Think about your personal experiences too. Then think about the English language and this word. You may want to make a list of everything you know. With your partner or small group, make this list.

Now, compare your list with the list below. Is your list similar to the list below? What is different? What is similar? How much do we know about *The Devil*? It is not important that our lists are the same. It is important that we collect everything we know. Talk about this list with your partner or small group and compare it with your list.

| SCHOOL/ACADEMIC KNOWLEDGE | PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE | LINGUISTIC KNOWLEDGE |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| Imaginary character | Appears in our dreams—nightmares—when we sleep | A singular noun |
| Referred to in many different religions | Makes us worried, afraid, uncertain | Name of a person/creature/character |
| Scary, fiery, red | Has supernatural powers | Used with the article, “the” |
| Dangerous | Tempts us to do bad things | Noun/name is capitalized |
| Character in literature | Might be linked to witchcraft | |
| Looks like a man | Talked about in church | |

By making this list we have started to “activate” our background knowledge. This will help us when we read.

Do you want to try again? In the box below are more words to practice “activating” [recalling] what we know. Talk with a partner or small group. How much do you know about each of these words—academic, personal and linguistic. If you choose to make lists, compare your lists with other Club Members to see how much you know about each of these topics.

Consider these words ... Identify what you know about each of these words. Work individually and then talk with a partner and/or small group:

Courage

Railroad

Pili-pili

To summarize ...

For the Strategy of *Identifying What We Know*, we think (and list) everything we know about the word, topic or theme using—our academic, personal and linguistic knowledge—before we read. When we read, we can check to see if what we know matches with the text we are reading (see *Strategies While Reading* for more ideas).

Predicting

We use this strategy every day. We predict—guess—what will happen next, using our experiences. For example, if our mother (or wife or girlfriend) always puts lots of pili-pili in food, then we can predict—guess—with some accuracy that the food she serves us tomorrow will have lots of pili-pili in it. Predicting is similar to guessing.

Let's try predicting—before reading. In the box below, there are titles of classic American texts. Try to predict (guess) what these titles might be about. Work alone, with a partner or small group. When you finish trying to predict, continue reading.

To practice the strategy of *Predicting*, answer this question about each story title below. What do you think the story will be about?

1. *The Devil and Tom Walker*
2. *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*
3. *The Gift of the Magi*
4. *I've Been Working on the Railroad*
5. *The Red Badge of Courage*

- *The Devil and Tom Walker* is a short story (and a play) about a man named Tom Walker, an agreement he makes with the Devil, and the consequences of this agreement;
- *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* is a story about the experiences of a young orphan American boy named Tom Sawyer who lives by the Mississippi River;
- *The Gift of the Magi* is a short story about a husband and wife with no money, their love for each other, the sacrifices they make, and the Christmas gifts they give each other;
- *I've Been Working on the Railroad* is an American folksong about a railroad worker and a woman named Dinah;
- *The Red Badge of Courage* is a novel about a young soldier fighting in a war. He sees many wounded soldiers and wonders what it feels like to be wounded.

Some of these titles are easier to predict than others. When we predict we may not always be accurate or correct BUT predicting helps us become interested in text. Let's try another exercise to see if we agree that predicting can help us become interested in reading.

Think about the titles above. Now that we have predicted what we think they are about and we have more information, is there a title we might like to read? Which one? Why? Talk about these questions with a partner or a small group. If there is internet, you can look at all of these texts ... here is where to find them online:

To find the play, *The Devil and Tom Walker*, go to this website:

http://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/design_for_drama.pdf

To find the book, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, go to this website:

<http://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/adventures-tom-sawyer>

For find the short story, *The Gift of the Magi*, go to:

<http://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/gift-magi-and-other-stories>

To get the lyrics and audio for the song, *I've Been Working on the Railroad*, go to:

<http://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/sing-out-loud-traditional-songs>

To read the novel, *The Red Badge of Courage*, go to:

<http://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/red-badge-courage-and-other-stories#child-465>

To summarize ...

For the strategy of *Predicting*, we ask ourselves this question:

- What do we think the text will be about?

We use what we know to try to answer this question before we read. We guess what the reading might be about. When we predict, we become curious. We want to read to find out if our prediction is correct or not.

Asking Questions

We are familiar with asking questions. In school, teachers ask students lots of questions. When students read, teachers ask questions to help students read a text.

In the American Readers Club, we—the readers—ask questions. We ask questions because we want to know or learn something. We ask questions because we are curious, puzzled, confused, scared, angry, or happy. Who can we question? We can ask questions to:

- The author
- Ourselves
- Each other
- The text
- A friend
- An expert

Asking questions is important because it helps us read with interest. Why? Because we want to answer our questions. We are not looking to answer questions from our teacher, to make our teacher happy, or to have a good grade. We ask our own unique questions because we are curious, interested, wondering about what we will read.

Let's try asking questions. Follow the directions in the box below and work with a partner or small group to practice this strategy, *Asking Questions*, before reading.

Imagine that your American Readers Club wants to read *The Red Badge of Courage*. You know that this is a novel, written by an American writer. It is about a young man who fights in a war. While fighting he sees many wounded soldiers. He thinks about these wounded soldiers and what it feels like to be wounded.

You are not interested in wars or fighting but you agree to read this novel. You think about the young man in the story. If he were sitting beside you now, what questions would you ask him. If you could speak to the author, what questions might you ask him?

Make a list of questions that you and your partner or small group might ask as you prepare to read this novel. When you have at least 5 questions, continue reading below.

It is important to remember that each Club Member, partner and small group will have different questions—and some people might have some questions in common. Below are some of the many questions we—the authors of this *Handbook*—would ask.

To the *young man*, character in the Story

- What is your name?
- What war are you fighting in?
- Do you agree with the reason for the war? Explain
- How old are you?
- Why are wounds so important or interesting to you?
- Where are you, where is the war?
- We wonder if you're happy or sad ...
- Is your family safe—or in danger?

To the author:

- Is this a story about a real war?
- Why is the badge red?
- Where was this war? When was it? Or is it an imaginary war?
- What is the “Badge of Courage”?
- I wonder if you fought in a war—if you did, what war?
- What do you want me, the reader, to remember about your story?
- I wonder if you are happy with the story and your writing.
- I wonder if you want to change the story—to tell a different story.

What can we do with our questions when we read? We can use our questions to help us read—because we want to find the answers to our questions. Some questions will have answers and we will find them—and others may not have answers. Either way, asking questions and reading to find the answers will help us become curious about reading.

To read *The Red Badge of Courage*, go to this website:

<http://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/red-badge-courage-and-other-stories#child-465>

To summarize ...

To use the strategy, *Asking Questions*, we imagine we can ask questions to the author, the characters in the text, a friend, an expert, or to each other. When we read, we can look for the answers to our questions.

STRATEGIES WHILE READING

Each strategy in this section can be used while reading. Some strategies can be used after reading too! To learn and practice the strategies, complete the exercises.

It is possible Members already know and use some of these strategies—that’s great!

Some strategies are not unique or different. Members may ask: Aren’t these strategies similar? Yes, in some cases, there are similarities.

It is not important to remember the name of each strategy. It is more important that Members try to use the strategies and think about them while reading.

Remember: Members pick and choose the strategy they want to learn or practice. Members choose! Ready? Let’s begin!

Visualizing

This strategy is very useful when reading a text that has description. To help us better understand what we read, it may help to create an image—to visualize—what we’re reading. We can visualize in our heads and/or on paper. When we create pictures, we can interact and understand the story in meaningful ways.

To begin, let’s try visualizing with pen/pencil and paper. It is not important for us to draw well. It is important that we try to represent what we read on paper—with simple sketches. Our ability to draw is not important.

Let’s try drawing. Read the text below. While reading, sketch or draw the story. After reading and drawing, continue reading below. (Note: Do NOT look up any words. Consider reading *Strategies While Reading: Understanding New Words* at the next Meeting.)

She entered the bedroom in silence and closed the door. She had three minutes to find the money. Where did her sister hide it? She stood at the door and looked around the room. As she looked, she whispered, “Could the money be here—or there?”

To her left was a small wooden table with a lamp. The lit lamp gave the room a soft, golden glow. A book was on the table, open—as if her sister left in a hurry. The table was simple, four legs and a top—no drawers. Next to the table was the bed. The mattress was covered with a piece of fabric, an African pagne of blues, reds, and oranges. She saw a pair of flip-flops under the bed—simple blue Battas.

She checked her watch. Her sister would arrive in two minutes. Where was the money?

When finished, share your sketch/drawing with a partner or small group. Talk about this question: Did the act of drawing make it easy—or difficult—to understand the text? Does your sketch help you think about where the money might be?

Let's try to visualize again ... this time, do not make a sketch on paper. This time try to make a picture "in your mind's eye" ... in your head. Read the text below and use the words to make a "mental" picture.

By the time my grandmother was 90, she looked very, very old. Her weathered, chocolate brown skin was as smooth as silk but old, wrinkled lines were everywhere. She always wore a faded yellow kerchief, a piece of fabric on her head that she tied in the back. My grandmother always wore the blue pagne that my mother and her sisters bought for her. She wrapped that pagne two times around her thin, small body. My grandmother always carried a walking stick in her left hand. That stick fascinated me the most!

Talk with a partner or small group about the mental picture you have. Did making this picture help—or make it difficult—to read the text? Complete the next exercise.

- 1. Re-read the text about "my grandmother and draw/sketch as you read.**
- 2. When finished, talk with a partner or small group and share your drawings.**
- 3. Answer these questions: Which format do you prefer—drawing or making a picture in your "mind's eye?" Explain to your partner or small group.**

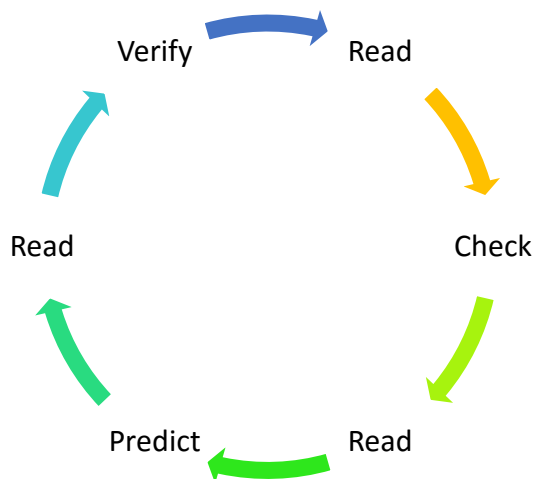
This strategy of *Visualizing* is good to use with texts that have descriptions. It can help with texts that tell stories about different places too. For example, if characters in a story go from one place to another or different towns or cities—drawing a map can help readers understand and remember. Or, readers can create a timeline or chart using information from the story. Club Members can brainstorm other kinds of visuals that can be helpful when reading.

To summarize ...

To use the strategy of *Visualizing*, we draw/sketch what we read with pen/pencil and paper and/or we create a mental image in our "mind's eye" of what we read.

Checking for Understanding

This strategy is like a circle that goes around and around. We read a few sentences or paragraphs, check that we understand, read more, predict what may come next, read, and verify our predictions [change or make new ones], and read more ... and on and on. This process of reading is cyclical and unique to each reader. It is similar to the image below.



One part of this strategy is similar to the *Strategy While Reading: Predicting*. It requires us to read, guess what will come next, read to verify [or change our prediction], and continue reading. It is a strategy that requires readers to self-monitor.

Let's see how this strategy works. Below is a short text. In silence, read a line and predict the next. Then read another and verify or predict. When you finish continue reading. Do NOT look up new words.

The Black Widow*

I am a widow—

I always wear black,

From my eight dainty legs

To my shiny round back.

Do not disturb me.

My fangs carry venom,

I am a widow—

I don't wear blue denim.

—By Douglas Florian

Let's re-read this text out loud. What can a reader think when *Checking for Understanding*? The words in red in the box below are predictions, checks, verifications of one [imaginary] reader. As you read, think about this question: What is the reader doing to understand the text? If you wish, let your partner read the poem and you read the [imaginary] reader's thoughts—in red. When you finish reading, continue below.

The Black Widow

I think a widow is a woman—when her husband dies. When her husband dies, she is called a widow. So, I predict that this poem is about a lonely African woman.

I am a widow—

O.K. I'm right. This poem is about a woman. Is she African? She could also be American.

I always wear black,

No, she's probably not African. I wonder if this woman lives in Italy. I think that women wear black clothes in Italy when their husbands die.

From my eight dainty legs

What???? 8 legs? Women don't have 8 legs—my prediction is wrong. What has 8 legs? Ah—an insect. Which one? I think spiders have 8 legs. Let me draw a spider so I can be sure it is the right insect. The one



that has 8 legs ... Yes, this looks like a spider. So does a widow also mean a spider?

To my shiny round back.

O.K. Now I'm sure this is about a spider.

Do not disturb me.

Why not?

My fangs carry venom,

Fangs? Don't snakes have fangs with poison? Is this a snake? No! Now I remember ... in school I learned about the black widow spider—it's poisonous. If it bites, the poison can kill people ...

I am a widow—

O.K. ... like the title says ... a B-L-A-C-K widow spider ... now I understand this poem.

I don't wear blue denim.

I like this last line! It's cute to think she doesn't wear blue jeans!

—By Douglas Florian* I liked this poem. I think I want to read more poems by this person.

Is this reader thinking—predicting, checking predictions, verifying predictions and then reading more? This thinking can happen very, very quickly inside a reader’s head—especially if the text is easy. If the text is not easy, then the reader may take more time, may ask more questions, check more often to verify predictions.

The more Club Members use this strategy, the better they will understand what they read. The more they understand, the quicker they will read. Do we check for understanding and then become better readers or are we good readers because we check for understanding? There is no, one right answer, no one right way to practice this strategy.

Let’s try *Checking for Understanding* once more. Read the poem below—in silence. When finished, share your thoughts with a partner or small group. Or, if you prefer, write the poem on a piece of paper [do NOT write in this *Manual*]. Then, write your thoughts next to the words as you read. Share with a partner or small group.

The Truck

He drove his truck with pride.
 His friend watched—happy to wait his turn—knowing they would share.
 Until the day *they* came.
 In a big, black Land Rover, driving fast on the sandy road.
 It stopped. Two mondele got out—a young man and an old woman.
 They looked at the boy—at his truck—and whispered to each other.
 The stranger asked, “How much?”
 The truck driver gave no answer.
 The young mondele dug into his pocket—pulled out 5,000 CF.
 His friend grabbed the money—scooped up the truck—handed it to the strange man.
 That night the truck driver told his family,
 “I need more sticks, small pieces of wood, old wire, string, small wheels.”
 “Tomorrow I’ll be ready to sell my new toy truck—this time for 10,000 CF.”

To summarize ...

To use the strategy, *Checking for Understanding*, we make predictions as we read. We read to verify or refute our predictions. We continue to make predictions and read to check, modify, or delete our predictions. This is a cyclical process. Each reader has different predictions and different ways of checking, modifying, and verifying as they read. There is no one right way to read and check for understanding. Each reader uses different ideas. Reader ideas are not right or wrong—they are all different.

* Florian, D. (2002). The Black Widow. *Insectopedia*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. For more poems, check Douglas Florian’s website: <http://www.douglasflorian.com/>

Finding and Making Connections

To use this strategy, readers self-monitor while reading. Readers think about connections they have to the text. There are three basic connections readers can make:

- Connections between the text and the reader’s personal experiences;
- Connections between the text and other texts the reader read before;
- Connections between the text and the real world.

The box below gives suggested questions readers can use to think about connections while reading. Connections will be different for each reader and for each text.

| Connections between the Text and Personal Experiences | Connections between the Text and Other Texts | Connections between the Text and World Experiences & Our Knowledge about the World |
|---|--|--|
| Have I had experiences that are similar to—or different from—this story? | What other text/story does this one remind me of? | What does this text make me think about in the real world? |
| Have I had experiences that are similar to—or different from—the experiences of the characters in this story? | How is this text or characters in the text similar to others I have read? | What events in this text are similar to the real world? |
| Does this story remind me of something similar to—or different from—my own life? | How is this text or characters in the text different from other texts I have read? | What events in the text are different from the real world? |

Let’s practice finding and making connections. Read the text in the box below and think about connections you, as the reader, have as you read. Use the questions above to help make connections. Remember that connections can be similar to—or different from—the story. Connections will be unique and individual for each reader. Do NOT use a dictionary. Skip words you do not understand and consider reading *Strategies While Reading: Understanding New Words* at the next Club Meeting.

My Grandmother

By the time my grandmother was 90, she looked very, very old. Her weathered, chocolate brown skin was as smooth as silk but old, wrinkled lines were everywhere. She always wore a faded yellow kerchief, a piece of fabric on her head that she tied in the back. My grandmother always wore the blue pagne that my mother and her sisters bought for her. She wrapped that pagne twice around her thin, small body. My grandmother always carried a walking stick in her left hand. That stick fascinated me the most!

When you finish reading, share with a partner or small group, the connections—similar and different—you made between the text and your personal experiences, the text and other texts, and the text and other events. Think about connections that may be similar and different that came to your mind as you read “My Grandmother.”

When we read and make connections, we begin to understand the reading and we begin to find meaning in the reading beyond the words on the page. It is this “making of meaning” that is important because it helps us read better.

This strategy can be used for most readings. Club Members can practice this strategy while reading and/or viewing images.

To summarize ...

To use the Strategy of *Finding and Making Connections*, we self-monitor while reading. We read and think about connections we may have to the text. There are 3 connections we can make:

- **Connections between the text and our personal experiences;**
- **Connections between the text and other texts we have read;**
- **Connections between the text and events in the world.**

The connections we find may be similar to the text or different from the text. Each reader will make different, unique connections because each reader has different experiences, reads different texts and knows about different events in the world.

Understanding New Words

New words can create big problems for readers. In school we learned that we needed to know every word when we read. We needed to know how to pronounce all the words and read them correctly. We learned that good readers pronounce words and read them correctly out loud.

If we look at old school books we may find that we translated word-for-word. This kind of reading is slow, boring and tedious. We read like this because we believed we needed to know all the words or we would not understand the story.

Today, reading research shows that it is not necessary to know every word when reading. We can read and understand even if we don't know all the words. In fact, if we know 90% of the words in a text then we can read a text and understand it. The text is not too easy or not too difficult. We will probably enjoy what we read.

What can we do when we read words we don't understand? There are several answers to this question.

When we find a word we don't understand, we can:

- Skip the word;
- Note the word and check for meaning later;
- Look the word up in a dictionary or online (see *Strategies Before Reading: Looking for New Words*);
- Ask a friend or English speaker to explain the word;
- Make an intelligent guess ...
 - Look for familiar word parts;
 - Use context clues;
 - Use personal experiences or knowledge.

Let's practice using each of these strategies with words from a text. Read the text in the box below but do not look up any new words. Do not talk with anyone about the words you do not know. For the moment, please work alone, in silence.

Now, get a pencil/pen and paper. Read the text (in silence). Write down the words you don't know. [Do NOT write in the Handbook.] Then continue reading after this box.

This fish was more lively than the others. Unlike the other fish, however, its beautiful body glistened with very delicate reddish scales. Also, hidden just below the gills, were stronger, gold-colored scales. This particular fish was very rare and very valuable. When we held it in our hands, it did not stop fighting like the other fish.

Let's imagine that the words below are on our list of words we do not know:

- Lively
- Unlike
- Glistened
- Reddish
- Scales
- Valuable

Let's try the strategies below to help us make intelligent guesses about the meaning of these words.

SKIP THE WORD

Re-read the text and see if we can skip any of the words. Let's try to skip the first word, **lively**. For example, if we read, "The fish was more ----- than the others" ... what can we understand? We know that this fish was different from the others. We do not know how it is different but we still have the basic meaning ... so we could skip this word.

Let's try the second word ... If we read, "----- the other fish, however, its beautiful body glistened" What can we understand? We have less understanding so we may need to try a different strategy with the word **unlike**.

NOTE THE WORD AND CHECK FOR MEANING LATER

This strategy is similar to **skip the word**. Let's try this strategy for the word **unlike**. Let's note this word and check for meaning later.

LOOK THE WORD UP/ASK A FRIEND

We can always use this strategy for words we think are important. Right now let's try a few more strategies before we look up words or ask a friend.

MAKE A GUESS ...

Look for Familiar Word Parts

There are three kinds of "word parts" we can look for and use to make intelligent guesses about word meanings. Beginning parts of words, called prefixes, can help.

Let's consider the word **unlike**. We can divide the word into **un** and **like**. The prefix is **un**. There are many prefixes used in English. Here is a short list of some of the most common prefixes. Meanings and examples of words are included in the list. So, the word **unlike** means **not like** or we could also say **different**.

| Prefix | Common Meaning | Example |
|--------------|----------------|---------------|
| A- | Without | Apolitical |
| Anti- | Against | Antisocial |
| Com-/Con- | With | Combat |
| Contra- | Against | Contradict |
| De- | Down | Descend |
| Dis- | Negative/Not | Disadvantage |
| Extra-/Extro | Outside | Extraordinary |
| In- | Without/Not | Inappropriate |
| Mal- | Bad | Malcontent |
| Non- | Negative/Not | Non-smoker |
| Pro- | In support of | Pro-African |
| Re- | Again/Repeat | Repaint |
| Trans- | Across | Transatlantic |
| Un- | Not/Negative | Unhappy |

Ending parts of words are called “suffixes.” Most commonly used suffixes are linked to grammar rules that we know every well. For example, we know that **–ed** is used to show past tense. **–ly** is used to show “the characteristic.” So, the word **lively** means “the characteristic of live.” We can make an intelligent guess that the characteristic of “live” is energetic, animated, enthusiastic.

Here are a few commonly used suffixes that are not linked to grammar rules.

| Suffix | Common Meaning | Example |
|--------|-------------------------|----------|
| -able | Ability | Solvable |
| -an | Person | Musician |
| -en | Made of | Wooden |
| -ful | Full of | Careful |
| -ious | Having the qualities of | Gracious |
| -ish | Having the qualities of | Childish |
| -less | Without | Careless |

The third way to recognize words is to look for word families. Word families are usually (but not always) found in the middle of words. For example, **reddish**, **valuable** can be linked to the word families **red** and **valuable**. So, we can use two different words parts: Suffixes or word families to guess the meaning of the word.

Use Context Clues

When we try to understand a word because of other words around it, we are using **context clues**. This means we are using the context, the surrounding words, to help us understand the meaning of a word. Let's consider the word **scales**. Here is the sentence where the word first appears, **Unlike the other fish, however, its beautiful body glistened with very delicate reddish scales.**

We know that this is connected to the body of the fish because of the word **with**. So **scales** are part of the body of the fish.

What about the word **glistened**? What connection does this word have to the sentence. If you guessed that it is connected to the **body** of the fish—you are right. We can see that this is an action that the **body** of the fish does because it is the action/verb for the fish.

Use Personal Experience or Knowledge

Let's continue to think about these words, **scales** and **glistened**. If you have personal experiences with fish, can you use these experiences to help you guess the meaning of these words? The guess doesn't have to be accurate—it just has to be an idea, a suggestion. Take a moment now and try to guess what these words mean. When you have made a guess, continue reading.

Scales are the thin, flat bones that cover and protect the skin of the fish. When we cook large fish, we clean the scales away because they are too hard to eat.

Glistened is the action of shining. If you are familiar with fresh fish, or caught and held them in the light, you see their bodies shine. Glisten means shine.

If you guessed that **scales** are something and **glistened** is an action then you are using lots of different kinds of knowledge to help you make intelligent guesses about words. Good job!

Advice: It will take time to become comfortable using some of these strategies. Club Members can help each other as they read—reminding about different ways to understand new words—without looking up every word in a dictionary!

Let's try one more text together. Let's use some of the ideas presented here. In the text that follows, read silently and quickly. While reading, decide which words to skip and make intelligent guesses about words that seem important. After reading silently, share decisions about new words with a partner or small group. Note: Maybe this text appears elsewhere in this *Handbook*. Here, we use it to understand new words.

My Grandmother

By the time my grandmother was 90, she looked very, very old. Her weathered, chocolate brown skin was as smooth as silk but old, wrinkled lines were everywhere. She always wore a faded yellow kerchief, a piece of fabric on her head that she tied in the back. My grandmother always wore the blue pagne that my mother and her sisters bought for her. She wrapped that pagne twice around her thin, small, shapeless body. My grandmother always carried a walking stick in her left hand. That stick fascinated me the most!

When finished reading, guess the meanings of the new words with a partner or small group. Then, read below. This is one [imaginary] reader's decisions about the new words. The [imaginary] reader's decisions are in **red**. Compare the [imaginary] reader's decisions about the new words with yours.

My Grandmother

I have a grandmother. How is my grandmother and the grandmother in this story similar—or different? Where is this grandmother from?

By the time my grandmother was 90, she looked very, very old. **Wow! She is older than my grandmother** Her weathered, chocolate brown skin **So, she is an African grandmother** was smooth like silk **I don't know "silk" but I don't think it is important. It is just telling me more about the skin of the grandmother so I am going to skip this word** but old, wrinkled **I don't know "wrinkled" but I see it is something about old skin so I guess it means the old lines ... lines were** everywhere. She always wore a faded kerchief **I don't know these words. I think I can skip them** a piece of fabric on her head that she tied in the back **now I see—a kerchief is a scarf on the head—another word for a Congolese "foulard."** She always wore the blue pagne that my mother and her sisters bought for her. She wrapped that pagne twice around her thin, small, shapeless body. **I know "shape" so I guess this means "no shape"** My grandmother always carried a walking stick in her left hand. That stick fascinated **I think this is a verb—what could the stick do for me? Maybe it "interested" me?** me the most!

Remember these points when reading and talking about texts:

- We each have different experiences and knowledge;
- We each may know different words—this is good;
- We should all think about DIFFERENT ways to approach new words while reading;
- It is NOT important to know ALL the words in a text;
- It is important to understand the most important words;
- It is important to guess the meanings of words that are not important.

To summarize ...

The strategy, *Understanding New Words*, gives us ways to read and think about new words and their meanings. The strategies are:

- **Skip the word;**
- **Note the word and check for meaning later;**
- **Look the word up in a dictionary or online;**
- **Ask a friend or English speaker to explain the word;**
- **Make an intelligent guess ...**
 - **Look for familiar word parts;**
 - **Beginnings of words (see chart of prefixes);**
 - **Word endings (see chart of suffixes);**
 - **Word families (look for word parts we know);**
 - **Use context clues (look for connections to other words in the sentence—and beyond);**
 - **Use personal experiences or knowledge.**

STRATEGIES AFTER READING

Each strategy in this section can be used after reading. Some can be used with *Strategies While Reading*. To learn about these strategies, do the exercises in the boxes.

It is possible Members know and use some of these strategies—that's great!

Members may find that some strategies are not unique or different. Members may ask: Aren't these strategies similar? In some cases, there are many similarities.

It is not important to remember the name of each strategy. It is more important that Members try to think about and use the strategies while reading.

Remember: Members do not need to read or practice each strategy in order. Members should pick and choose the strategy they want to learn or practice. Members choose! Ready? Let's begin!

Talking about Texts

Talking about texts is a quick and easy strategy to use. There are different ways to talk about texts. Members can try these ideas after reading a text. Members may discover or create new ways to talk about texts. It's great if Members create new ideas! Note: There are similarities and overlap between *Talking about Texts* and *Writing about Texts*.

Here are some ideas for talking after reading. Most ideas require Members to be creative and imaginative.

- Members create **Information Questions and Answers**—like teachers. Members check for information in the text by asking questions—Who, What, When, Where, and How—and answering;
- Members have **Thinking Conversations*** about the text. These conversations encourage Members to make inferences and connections about the text;
- Members present a **Role Play** about the text (see *Using Drama with Texts*);
- Members **Interview the Author** about the text;
- Members **Interview Characters** [in the story—and beyond the story];
- Members **Talk Back*** to a Character;
- Members **Present a Commercial** about the text.

Let's practice each idea using the following text, **The Family Secret**. First, read the text in silence. When finished, practice the talking strategies with a partner or small group.

The Family Secret

She entered the bedroom in silence and closed the door. She had three minutes to find the money. Where did her sister hide it? She stood at the door and looked around the room. As she looked, she whispered, “Could the money be here—or there?”

To her left was a small wooden table with a lamp. The lit lamp gave the room a soft, golden glow. A book was on the table, open—as if her sister left in a hurry. The table was simple, four legs and a top—no drawers. Next to the table was the bed. The mattress was covered with a piece of fabric, an African pagne of blues, reds, and oranges. She saw a pair of flip-flops under the bed—simple blue Battas.

She checked her watch. Her sister would arrive in two minutes. Where was the money?

Information Questions and Answers

With a partner or small group—Members ask each other information questions about the text. Questions should begin with the words: Who, What, When, Where, and How. Members check the text to be sure the answers are correct.

Partner or small groups ask each other information questions about **The Family Secret. Members check answers with the text to be sure they are correct. When Members are finished, they should continue reading below.**

Here are examples of Information Questions Members could have asked:

- How did the sister enter the room?
- What did she do with the door?
- What furniture was in the room?
- Where was the book?
- Was the book open or closed?
- What color were the flip-flops?

After practicing this activity, Members can talk about these questions: How many **Information Questions and Answers** did Members ask and answer? Was this activity interesting? Do Members want to use this activity with other texts? Remember: Information Questions should be paired with other *After Reading* activities.

Thinking Conversations

Using **The Family Secret**, Members think and talk with a partner or small group about the story using the question “why” and sentence starters below. These phrases and questions can help start thinking conversations:

- Why do you think ...?
- I wonder how ...
- I remember an experience I had that was similar. In my experience, I ...
- I wonder why ...
- I can't imagine why ...
- What do you think [the character] will do next? Why do you think this?
- How do you think the story will continue?
- I remember reading a story about ... and it is similar to this one ...
- I remember hearing about a similar experience on the radio ... it was ...
- While I was reading, I remembered [another story, a movie, a personal experience] ...
- There was a part of the text that I didn't understand. It was [identify the place and ask a question about the text].
- I had a favorite sentence in the text. It was [identify the sentence and read it to other Members. Explain why this is a favorite sentence].

With a partner or in a small group, use the questions and sentence starters above and have a Thinking Conversation about **The Family Secret. How many other questions and statements can you use to talk about this text? Remember: With Thinking Conversations, there are no right or wrong answers. These are conversations that use inference and make connections between our personal experiences, other texts and stories we've read, and real world experiences.**

When Members are finished, they can talk about this activity: Is it an interesting activity to do in the Club when reading other texts? *Thinking Conversations* can be paired with other *After Reading* activities.

Role Play

Members can create a role play of this text. Members volunteer to play each of the characters in the story. Members can make many different role plays. For example:

- Role play the story;
- Role play events before the story begins—using imagination;
- Role play events after the story ends—using imagination;
- Role play events about characters connected to the story;

With a partner or small group, create a role play using *The Family Secret* and one of the ideas above—or create your own idea. Follow these steps:

1. Identify the character(s) for the role play
2. Identify the Member(s) who will play each character role.
3. Practice—in private—the role play.
4. When prepared, present the role play to Club Members.

After the role plays, Members talk about them. Use these sentence starters:

- I liked [this role play] because ...
- I found [this role play] interesting/provocative/funny/scary because ...
- This role play helped me think more about ...
- This role play made me wonder about ...

When finished, Members answer this question about the activity of **Role Play**: Is it an interesting activity to do in the Club with other texts?

Below are some ideas for role plays for *The Family Secret*.

- Role play the story with one character [sister who hid the money]; Role play events before the story begins—use imagination: For example, the sisters argue in a church with their parents. One sister wants money to start a bar and the other sister—who has the money—wants to use the money to help their parents. Role play the argument; imagine what the parents and sisters say and do;
- Role play events about characters connected to the story: For example, the sister returns to her room and takes the money she hid and goes to her boyfriend's house. Role play the conversation;
- Role play events after the story ends. For example, the sister finds the money, takes it and leaves; as she leaves the house, her sister and parents arrive; they have a fight. Role play the fight.

Interview the Author

One member imagines to be the author of the text. All other Members are interviewers—journalists from radio or television. Interviewers ask the author questions. The author imagines answers. Or, if possible, a Member looks for information about the author and answers [truthfully] Club Member questions.

To practice the Interview the Author, use **The Family Secret**.

1. One member volunteers to be the author.
2. Members ask the volunteer [author] questions. For example: **Where did you write the story? Why did you write this story?**
3. Volunteer Author answers the questions using imagination.

Here is an example of **Interview the Author** questions—and answers:

- Why did you write this story? [I wrote this story because all families have secrets and secrets can be mysterious.]
- Are the characters people from your own life? [Yes, but it wasn't my sister who hid the money, it was my mother. She hid the money from my father because ...]
- Where did you live as a child? [I grew up as a refugee outside the Congo and ...]
- Did you like school? What happened to you in school? [No, I didn't because children always teased me. They didn't like me because ...]

When Members are finished, they talk about the activity: Is it an interesting activity to do in the Club when reading other texts? *Interview the Author* can be paired with other *After Reading* activities.

Interview the Characters

Similar to **Interview the Author**, Members volunteer to be characters in a story. Other Members interview the characters. Members use imagination and creativity in the interview. Now, try the exercise below.

1. Members volunteer to be characters in **The Family Secret**.
2. Other Members volunteer to be interviewers. Volunteer-interviewers ask the volunteer-characters questions
3. The Volunteer-characters answer questions, using the story as the foundation for the questions and answers.
4. All members use imagination and creativity.

When finished, continue reading with a partner or small group.

Here are a few examples of characters and interviewers for **The Family Secret**:

- Characters to be interviewed: The two sisters, the parents, boyfriends, cousins, bank manager;
- Interviewers could be: Journalists, police detectives, a religious leader, radio station announcer, television reporter.

When Members are finished, they can talk about the activity: Is it an interesting activity to do in the Club when reading other texts? *Interviewing the Characters* can be paired with other *After Reading* activities.

Talk Back

Similar to **Role Play**, Members volunteer to be characters in the text. Other Club Members **talk back** to the characters in the text. Club Members can get angry at the characters, disagree, shout! Club Members can express other emotions they feel towards the characters. They can use these sentence starters:

- [This character] should have done ...
- You [the character] should not have done ... because ...
- When I read that you did [something], I felt very [sad, happy, angry, frustrated] and you should not have done ... because ...

Members volunteer to be characters in **The Family Secret. Other Members talk back to the characters and the characters answer. When finished, read below.**

When Members finish, they talk about the activity: Is this interesting to do in the Club when reading? *Talk Back* can be paired with other *After Reading* activities.

Present a Commercial

Members create a commercial to “advertise” the text. The commercial can encourage people to read the text—or discourage people from reading the text. Members should use creativity and imagination in presenting the commercial as a skit. This activity can be combined with *Writing about Texts: Different Genres*.

When Members are finished preparing their commercials, they present the commercials to the other Club Members. Now, read and do the next exercise.

1. Partners or small groups decide if their commercial will encourage—or discourage—others from reading the text.
2. Partners or small groups prepare a short commercial to convince others to read the text—or not. Members must be sure to use information from the text in the commercial. The commercial can imitate commercials on television or radio.
3. When partners or small groups are ready, they present the commercials to all Club Members.

When all commercials are presented, Club Members can share their reactions to the commercials. Reactions can use the following sentence starters:

- I liked [this commercial] because ...
- I found [this commercial] interesting/provocative/ because ...
- This commercial helped me think more about ...
- This commercial made me wonder about ...

When Members finish, they talk about the activity: Is this interesting to do in the Club when reading? This activity can be paired with other *After Reading* activities.

To summarize:

Readers understand texts in different ways. The reading process is different for each reader because of personal experiences, knowledge of English and the real world. *Talking about Texts* can help readers extend their understanding and knowledge about texts. When readers talk about texts, there is a greater chance that they will enjoy reading. It is also important to remember that there is no one, right way to understand texts. When we read, we each bring our personal experiences, knowledge about other texts and information about the real world when we read. Our *Talking about Texts* will be influenced by all of this.

The following reference was used in this section:

*Weaver, C. (1994). *Reading process and practice: From socio-psycholinguistics to whole language* (2nd Ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Writing about Texts

There are many different ways to write about texts after reading. Some of the ideas can be paired with *Talking about Texts*. This section presents writing ideas. Members may find overlap between *Talking* and *Writing*. Members can try any one of these ideas after reading a text. Members may create new ways to write about texts. It's great if Members create new ideas!

Here are some ideas for writing after reading. Most ideas require Members to be creative and imaginative.

- Members write **Information Questions and Answers**—like teachers. Members check for understanding about the information in the text by asking each other: Who, What, When, Where, and How;
- Members write a **Role Play, Skit or Drama** about the text (see also *Using Drama with Texts*);
- Members write in **Different Genres** based on the text.

Let's practice each idea using the text in the box below. First, read **The Dance**. Read in silence. When finished, practice *Writing about the Text* with a partner or small group using the exercises below.

The Dance

The handsome young man takes the arm of the beautiful young woman. They walk to the dance floor and turn to face each other. As the music begins, their bodies move.

The trumpet's song is muted and melancholy. The electric guitar mimics with a soft, gentle melody. The singers tell of love and death—warning about the dangers of love, of sex—and the disasters that can happen—in one quick moment.

The handsome young man and beautiful young woman dance. Their eyes see—only each other. The audience watches, entranced by the couple's sensual moves in beat to the music.

Hidden in the shadows, a tall muscular man smiles and nods to his short, stocky partner. Together they stand, never taking their eyes off the couple.

Information Questions and Answers

Information questions ask about facts and information from the text. Questions use the words: Who, What, When, Where, and How. Members can ask and answer these kinds of questions. Try the exercise below. When finished, continue reading.

With a partner or in a small group, write information questions about *The Dance*. When finished, exchange questions with other Members and write the answers to the questions. Check the answers with the text to be sure they are correct. How many information questions can you write about *The Dance*?

When finished, Members should answer this question about the activity: Is it an interesting activity to do in the Club when reading texts? **Information Questions and Answers** should be paired with other *After Reading* activities.

Role Play, Skit or Drama

Members write a role play (skit or drama) about the text. Members volunteer to play characters in the role play. Members can be creative and imaginative. For example:

- Write a role play based on the story;
- Write a role play about events before the story begins—use imagination;
- Write a role play about events after the story ends—use imagination;
- Write a role play about characters connected to the story;
- Write a role play about events connected to the story.

With a partner or small group, write a role play using *The Dance* and one of the ideas above—or create your own idea. Begin by identifying the characters in the role play and the Member(s) who will write the role play. Members should collaborate on writing. When finished, Members present the role play (see *Talking about Texts* for more ideas about role plays).

After Members write their role plays, Members should ask if they liked—or didn't like—writing role plays and decide if this is an interesting activity for the Club to do.

Different Genres

Alone, with a partner, or small group, Members select a genre that they would like to use. Then they write in the genre using the text as the “back-drop” for their writing. When they are finished, they share their writing with other Members. Here are examples of different genres of writing (see *Strategies Before Reading: Identifying the Text Style* for additional information if needed).

| | | | |
|-----------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|
| Novels | Non-Fiction Texts | Advertisement | Recipe |
| Comic Books | Autobiography | Editorial | Music Review |
| Adventure Story | Biography | Letter to the Editor | Song Lyric |
| Mystery Story | Scientific Text | Horoscope | Obituary |
| Crime Story | Political Commentary | Email Message | List |
| Science Fiction | Letters | Tweet—Twitter Post | Map |
| Romance Novel | Memoir | Poetry (rhymes, concrete, free-verse) | Magazine article |

To practice writing in a different genre, complete the exercise in the box below.

Members decide to work alone, with a partner or in a small group. Members make individual decisions. Next, members choose a genre from the list above or a genre not from the list above. Members choose characters and an event from **The Dance** for their writing. Members write using the genre, characters and event. When Members finish they choose to read their writing out loud or give their writing to other Members who read it—in silence or out loud.

When Members are finished, they can talk about this experience of writing in a different genre. Below are questions Members can use to talk about this experience.

1. Did you enjoy writing? If yes, why? If no, why not?
2. What was easy to do—choosing a character, or event, or writing style?
3. Why was this easy?
4. What was difficult—choosing a character, event or writing style?
5. Why was this difficult?
6. Would you like to use this activity in a Club Meeting? Explain

When Members finish their conversations, they can continue reading.

Below are two examples of **Different Genres** that are about **The Dance**. The first example uses the writing style: Obituary. It is about the young, beautiful woman. It is based upon information on the story. It takes place 5 years after **The Dance**.

Obituary—On July 7, 2015 Maria Salongo died quietly in her family home. She was 25 years old and died of AIDS [SIDA]. She was a dedicated primary school teacher and her students loved her very much. She is survived by two daughters and her parents. The funeral will take place on July 10 at St. Ignatius Church in Limete.

The second example (below) is also based upon **The Dance**. It uses the writing style: Television Announcement. It is based upon the event in **The Dance** with the two men in the shadows.

Televised Police Announcement

We interrupt our program for this police announcement. Last night at the Soukous Bar, a young man, Paul Matete, and a young woman, Marie Salongo, were kidnapped. Anyone with information about their whereabouts should contact the police immediately at the toll-free hotline. All information will remain confidential.

Remember: There are many different texts that Members can write. The examples above are two of many possibilities.

To summarize ...

Readers understand texts in different ways. The reading process is different for each reader because we all have different personal experiences, knowledge of English and information about the real world. When *Writing about Texts* readers extend their understanding and knowledge about texts. When readers write about texts, there is a greater chance that they will enjoy reading. Also remember: There is no one, right way to understand texts. When we read, we each bring our personal experiences, knowledge about other texts and information about the real world when we read. Our *Writing about Texts* will be influenced by all of this.

Using Drama with Texts

When Members try *Using Drama with Texts*, they may need to combine *Talking about Texts* and *Writing about Texts*. This section presents ideas for drama. As Members try these ideas, Members may discover or create new ways to dramatize texts. It's great if Members create new ideas!

Here are some ideas for *Using Drama with Texts*. These ideas require Members to be creative and imaginative—and have fun!

- Members perform a **Role Play, Skit or Drama** about the text (see also *Talking about Texts* and *Writing about Texts*);
- Members perform **Choral Reading**;
- Members perform **Role Drama**;
- Members use **Pantomime**;
- Members play **Theatre Games**;

Let's practice these ideas using the text in the box below. First, read the text. When finished, practice the exercises with a partner or small group. Use the text in the box that follows for all the exercises in this section.

There are several steps for *Using Drama with Text*. They are:

- Choose the type of drama to perform;
- Plan the drama;
- Practice the drama;
- Evaluate the drama;
- Modify the drama as needed;
- Practice the drama again if necessary;
- Perform the drama for an audience.

First, read **The Disappearance** in the boxes on the next two pages. Read in silence or with a partner or small group. Use this story, **The Disappearance**, with the exercises that follow.

The Disappearance

The handsome, young man takes the arm of the beautiful, young woman. They walk to the dance floor, turn, and face each other. Lights from the band spotlight the couple. The music begins, their bodies embrace.

The band sets the tone. The trumpet's song is muted and melancholy. The electric guitar mimics with a soft, gentle melody. Three singers tell of love and death—the dangers of passion—the disaster that happens—in one quick moment.

The handsome man and beautiful woman hear—only the music. Their eyes see—only each other. The audience watches, entranced by the magic these dancers create, blending music and body into a tempting, sensual dance.

Hidden in the shadows, a tall, muscular man nods to his short, stocky partner and points to his watch, "It is almost time," he says. They fix their eyes on the two young dancers.

The music stops. The handsome, young man and beautiful, young woman stop. In silence, the young dancers and their audience count, "Three-two-one." The trumpet takes the lead, blaring loud and strong, commanding the dancers to change their step, pick up the beat. As they bend and sway, the audience chants, "Go, go! Dance, don't stop."

The dancers smile—the magic is broken. They nod to the audience.

"Go, go! Dance, don't stop." The chants continue.

The dancers nod again—moving their bodies in rhythm to the music—and chants from the audience.

The dancers turn their backs to the band and face the audience. They open their arms. "Join us," they signal, "Come and dance floor."

In the audience, men and women take quick sips of beer and stand. They do not need a second invitation to the dance floor.

The chants fade as the young crowd of dancers step onto the floor. The two men, hands in their pockets, join the crowd. The tall, muscular man leads. The short, stocky man follows. No one notices as they push through the crowd.

No one watches the handsome young man. No chants encourage the beautiful young woman. The tables—and shadows—are empty. Everyone dances—except the two men.

The tall man turns right and steps behind the handsome, young man. The short, stocky man turns left and moves behind the beautiful, young woman.

The tall man takes out a small black cloth and covers the face of the young man. The short man does the same, covering the face of the beautiful, young woman with a small black cloth.

Three seconds later, the couple stops dancing. They collapse into the arms of the men. In an instant, the men pull the couple into the dark, empty shadows that encircle the dance floor.

“What do we do now?” The short man whispers to the tall one.

“Did anyone see us? Is anyone watching?” The tall man answers, looking around.

“No, everyone is dancing.”

“O.K. Let’s go,” the tall man says. He drags the young man towards the exit.

He opens the door and a security guard steps into his path, “Just a minute. What do you think you’re doing? Where are you going?”

“You idiot, don’t you see this man is drunk? We’re taking him and his girlfriend outside. Move aside so we can go,” the tall man shouts. Then, he turns to his partner and says, “Come on, Tom, let’s get these two out of here.”

“Right,” says Tom. He lifts the young woman onto his shoulders and carries her out, pushing aside the guard as he goes.

Outside, the two men stop at a small, red Peugeot. “That was lucky,” says Tom.

“Don’t worry, I paid him. He won’t tell anyone,” the tall man replies.

Tom opens the rear car door and drops the beautiful, young woman on the back seat. Seconds later the handsome, young man is thrown next to her. The night club music fills the air.

“I bet they’ll dance until dawn,” the tall man says, laughing. “No one noticed this disappearance and tomorrow no one will remember when this couple left.”

“I wish I was as confident as you,” says Tom.

From the back seat, they hear sounds. The couple is beginning to stir.

“Let’s get them to the boss,” says Tom, “before they wake up.”

“Right,” says his tall, muscular partner.

Next, complete the exercises that follow. Remember to use **The Disappearance** with all the exercises in this section.

Role Play, Skit or Drama

To create a **Role Play, Skit or Drama**, Members select a text and decide if they want to talk or write the role play. Next, they plan the role play and then practice it. When they are ready, Members perform before other Members.

Let's try the exercise below—using **The Disappearance**.

With a partner or in a small group, decide to talk or write the role play. Next, choose an event and characters in the text. Next, plan, then practice performing the role play. Evaluate the practice performance and make adjustments to the role play. When ready, perform the role play for all the Club Members.

After the performance(s), Members talk about it using the questions below.

1. What are your reactions to this activity?
2. Do you like it? Why?
3. If you don't like it, why not?
4. What kinds of texts would you use this activity for?
5. What are the advantages or disadvantages of using this text?
6. Did you have fun?
7. Would you like to use this activity in a Club Meeting? Explain

Choral Reading

Choral Reading, also called choral speaking, is an old form of drama, from the Greek plays. To do **Choral Reading**, the text must have dialogue between two people. Members choose a Leader to organize the choral reading. The Leader divides the Members into two groups. The Leader assigns each group one character in the text. Members read the text as a group, each character's dialogue is read by one group. The groups read with one voice. Try this exercise with **The Disappearance**.

1. Choose a Leader;
2. The Leader divides Club Members into two groups;
3. The Leader assigns the character, **Tom**, to group #1 and assigns the character, **the tall, muscular man**, to group #2;
4. Each group practices reading their dialogue;
5. When the groups are ready, the Club Leader begins the Choral Reading in **The Disappearance**.
6. Each group of Club Members reads each character's dialogue with one voice.

After the performance(s), Members talk about it using the questions below.

1. Do you like it? Why?
2. If you don't like it, why not?
3. What kinds of texts would you use this activity for?
4. What are the advantages or disadvantages of using this text?
5. Did you have fun?
6. Would you like to use this activity in a Club Meeting? Explain

Role Drama

To do a **Role Drama**, Members select a central problem in the text for one—or more—of the characters. Another scene is created and dramatized that may be different or give more ideas about the character's problem. Members choose a Leader to organize this activity.

Let's try the exercise below—using **The Disappearance**—to create and perform a **Role Drama**.

1. Choose a Leader;
2. Choose a problem that one (or more) of the characters experience in **The Disappearance**;
3. Create a scene that presents different events, more ideas, about the problem;
4. Working with the Leader, Club Members plan the drama, practice the drama, revise the drama;
5. Perform the Role Drama for Club Members or a different audience;
6. Evaluate the performance—talk about it.

After the performance(s), Members talk about it using the questions below.

1. What are your reactions to this activity?
2. Do you like it? Why?
3. If you don't like it, why not?
4. What kinds of texts would you use this activity for?
5. What are the advantages or disadvantages of using this text?
6. Did you have fun?
7. Would you like to use this activity in a Club Meeting? Explain

Pantomime

Pantomime is a drama technique also called **Mime**. Most Western cultures, and some in the non-Western world, are familiar with this form of drama. The Mime artist does not speak, acting out a story in silence. Vocal sounds can be used—but no words spoken. To perform a pantomime—or mime—a narrator reads a passage and actors perform the actions in silence. Let’s try the exercise below—using **The Disappearance**—to perform a **Pantomime**.

1. One Member volunteers to be the narrator. This person reads the text;
2. Members volunteer to each be a character in **The Disappearance** (the handsome young man, the beautiful, young woman, the band including trumpet and guitar players, three singers, the audience, the two men);
3. As the Narrator reads the text, each Member-volunteer acts out the story as the Narrator reads;
4. Members practice the Pantomime;
5. Members perform the Pantomime for other members or another audience.

After the performance(s), Members talk about it using the questions below.

1. What are your reactions to this activity?
2. Do you like it? Why?
3. If you don’t like it, why not?
4. What kinds of texts would you use this activity for?
5. What are the advantages or disadvantages of using this text?
6. Did you have fun?
7. Would you like to use this activity in a Club Meeting? Explain

THEATRE GAMES

There are many theatre games that can be used in Club Meetings. Here are a few that Members may enjoy using: **Slow Motion**, **Who Am I?**, and **Where**.

Slow Motion

Members perform the drama in slow motion. Acting can be slow and words can be spoken slowly. Members use their imagination to create or modify a **Role Play**, **Skit** or **Drama** in slow motion. Members can try this with **The Disappearance**.

Who Am I?

One Member volunteers to leave the room. Members in the room choose one of the characters from the text and agree to interact with the Volunteer as if the Volunteer is this character from the text. When Members agree, the Volunteer is invited to return to the room. Members interact with the Volunteer as if the Volunteer is the character from the text. When the volunteer correctly guesses the character, the game begins again. Members can try this with **The Disappearance**.

Where?

In this game, a Member volunteers to perform the drama. The Volunteer Member chooses a place from the text and pretends to enter the place. The Member pretends to carry objects into the place that will help other Members guess the place where the Volunteer member is. When a Member guesses **Where** then the game stops and another Volunteer Member can begin the game again.

To Conclude ... To play any of these **Theatre Games**, Members can use **The Disappearance**. When Members finish, they can talk about these games using the questions below.

1. What are your reactions to these games?
2. Do you like them? Why?
3. If you don't like them, why not?
4. What kinds of texts would you use for these games?
5. What are the advantages or disadvantages of using these games in our Club?
6. Did you have fun?
7. Would you like to use these games in our next Club Meeting? Explain

CHOOSING TEXTS FOR DRAMA

Using Drama with Texts may not work with all texts. Texts must have the following features:

- Important ideas;
- Conflict between characters;
- Action between characters;
- Simple dialogue;
- A text that Club Members find interesting.

To summarize ...

Readers understand texts in different ways. The reading process is different for each reader because we all have different personal experiences, knowledge of English and information about the real world. When *Using Drama with Texts* readers extend their understanding and knowledge about texts. When readers dramatize texts, there is a greater chance that they will enjoy reading. Also remember: There is no one, right way to understand texts. When we dramatize what we read, we each bring our personal experiences, knowledge about other texts and information about the real world. *Using Drama with Texts* will be influenced by all of this. It is most important when using this strategy to ... HAVE FUN!

The following references were used in this section:

- Spolin, V. (1986). *Theatre games for the classroom*. Chicago, IL: Northwestern University Press.
 Weaver, C. (1994). *Reading process and practice: From socio-psycholinguistics to whole language (2nd Ed.)*.
 Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Using New Words from Texts

We use words in two basic ways—in speaking and writing. When speaking, we learn these words every day with other people. We learn and use written words when we read and write. It is harder to learn written words because we may not read or write every day. This section presents activities to use with new words found in text.

These strategies can be used with *Before Reading*, *While Reading*, *After Reading*, and *Using Drama with Texts*. Members may discover or create additional ways to use new words from texts. It's great if Members create new ideas! Here are activities for *Using New Words from Texts*. Members should:

- Keep a **New Word List**;
- Practice making **Meaningful Use of New Words**;

Let's practice these ideas. First, read the text below and note new words. Then, use your word list to practice these strategies (Note: this story is different from earlier versions).

The Dance

The distinguished young man takes the arm of the striking young woman. They stride to the dance floor and turn to face each other. As the music begins, their bodies undulate to the beat.

The trumpets blare. The electric guitars twang. The singer tells the mournful story of love and death. It's a warning about the dangers of love, the dangers of unsafe sex and the disaster that can happen—in one quick moment.

The distinguished young man and striking young woman continue to dance. They don't see the people watching them. They don't feel the danger in the room. They dance, enjoying the sounds and rhythms.

Hidden in the shadows, a tall burly man smiles and nods to his partner, equally Herculean. Together, they advance onto the dance floor.

Here are the meanings for the words noted above:

Distinguished—handsome, beautiful—used only for men

Striking—beautiful, used for men or women

Stride—to walk with confidence

Undulate—to dance and move smoothly to music

Blare—the loud noise of the trumpet

Twang—the sound made when pulling the strings of a guitar

Mournful—sad, like death

Shadows—Silhouette, dark shape made when something stops the sun

Burly—muscular, very strong

Herculean—like the Greek mythical male god, Hercules—very, very, very strong

New Word List

Members should find a small notebook or other place where they write down new words. These words should be words that Members want to remember because they want to use them, find them important, or like their sound or meaning. Every word in the **New Word List** should be important for Members. Members can keep a **Club New Word List** or **Individual New Word List**. Or Members may want to keep both.

One Member should be responsible for the **Club New Word List** and bring it to each Club Meeting so new words can be added. Members should agree—at the end of the Club Meeting—what words to put on the list. The responsible Club Member should be sure to add each new word and its meaning. Members should put on this list **ONLY** the words they believe are important for all Club Members to remember.

Club New Word List and **Individual New Word List** should have two columns. On the left column should be the new word and on the right column should be the definition, notes, and/or examples of ways to use the new word.

Let's practice making an **Individual New Word List**. Complete the exercise in the box below with a partner.

1. Find a small notebook that will be the Individual New Word List;
2. Create two columns on each page;
3. Choose new words from **The Dance**;
4. Write one new word in the left column of the Individual New Word List;
5. Write the meaning of the new word, example of the new word in a sentence, in the right column;
6. Choose another new word and repeat #4 and #5;

When Members finish this exercise, they can talk using the questions in this box.

1. What are your reactions to this activity?
2. Do you like it? Why?
3. If you don't like it, why not?
4. What are the advantages or disadvantages of using this activity?
5. Did you have fun?
6. Would you like to use this activity in a Club Meeting? Explain

Meaningful Use of New Words

There are many ways to use new words. It is most important that Members remember to use the words. Meetings can be organized so that new words are used in every Meeting. Here are some ideas that can help Members use new words.

Integration into other *Strategies*

When Members use *Strategies After Reading* they should make a conscious effort to use words from the **Club New Word List** or **Individual New Word List**. Members should select new words and try to use them in any of these activities. If Members forget to use new words, one Member can volunteer to be the New Words Volunteer. This Member will be responsible to encourage Members to use new words. Using new words is the best way to learn them.

Word Games

There are many **Word Games** that Club Members can play during Club Meetings. Some require no preparation. Others require preparation.

Categorizing

In this game, members identify categories and try to group new words into the appropriate category. Or, members pick 10 words (or 20 or 30) and look for different categories for them.

Look at the new words from *The Dance*. Categorize them into nouns and verbs. Next categorize them into words that are used for people and words used for objects. Next, categorize them into words that seem positive and words that seem negative. When each category is finished, talk with a partner or small group and defend and support the words in the different categories—explaining your reasons for putting them into one category or another. [There are many more different categories that can be imagined. Members should be creative! Have fun!]

Matching

During one Club Meeting, Members can prepare this game and play it at subsequent meetings. Needed: Small pieces of paper, all the same size—or small pieces of cardboard, all the same size.

On one piece of paper (or cardboard) write a new word. On another piece of paper write the definition. Do this for approximately 15 words—a total of 30 pieces of paper, each with either a word or definition.

To play the game, all pieces of paper are laid out on a flat surface with the writing turned down so no one can see what is on the papers. Members take turns turning up two pieces of paper. Their goal is to match the word with the meaning. When the match is made, the Member collects the two pieces of paper and takes another turn. When a match is not made, the next Member takes a turn. The game continues until all words and meanings are matched. The winner is the Member with the most cards.

To summarize ...

To learn new words, it is extremely important that Members use the new words in as many meaningful contexts as possible. It is not enough to look up words and write them down. Members must practice using them, being mindful to use new words and help all Members use as many new words as possible at each Club Meeting. Members should try to use 3 new words at each Meeting

Remember—Make the practice fun, be creative!

STRATEGIES FOR VIEWING

This section introduces Club Members to *Strategies for Viewing* images including photos, posters, graphics, cartoons, symbols, charts, maps, and other visuals. With the internet it is important that readers understand that “reading” includes not only texts but also visuals. Sometimes visuals convey messages in powerful ways and visuals convey powerful messages. It is important that we understand the power and importance of visuals. It is equally important that Members critique visuals as carefully as they do text.

On the following pages, Members will find exercises that present the basic steps involved with viewing and critiquing—interpreting—images.

Viewing Images

When we view images, we need to “read” them. There are three basic areas to consider when viewing images. These include color, angle, and size (distance). When we understand the role that each of these plays in viewing, we will be able to interpret images.

Let’s look at the image below and complete the exercise that follows.



- Look at the image.
- Talk with a partner or small group.
- Guess what this image means.
- Answer this question with your partner or small group: What did we use to help us guess what this image means?
- For example, did we use color, size, shape, letters?
- When Members are finished, continue reading below.

When viewing this image we see colors, shapes, and letters. We probably used all of these to help us with this visual. Answer the questions in the box with a partner or small group.

- **Did you focus on the color—red? Explain**
 - **Did you focus on the shape—an octagon (8-sided figure)? Explain**
 - **Did you notice the white letters in the middle of the octagon? Explain**
 - **Did you use personal knowledge and/or experiences? What, for example?**
 - **Did you think about a story you read? Which one, for example?**
 - **Did you think about pictures you saw? Which ones, for example?**
- When Members have finished answering these questions, continue reading below.**

What did you guess about this image? If you guessed that it was some kind of stop sign, you are correct. This is a stop sign in Turkey. “Dur” in Turkish means “Stop.”

This is a good example of how we “view” images and how we may interpret them. In this case, we used colors, shapes and our previous experiences or knowledge. We use all of these ideas when we read and when we view.

There are a few “tricks” that we can use when we view visuals. If we use these “tricks” consciously, we can better interpret and critique what we see.

Here are a few of the basic tricks.

Color

Let’s begin with “Color.” Businesses have done a lot of research into the use of color. Color can convey feelings, moods, and atmosphere. It is generally believed that “green” conveys peace, “blue” suggests cold, “yellow” is happiness. “Red” can be passion, love, fire, the Devil, hatred. Other colors convey different moods. It is also not always true that these colors only convey one feeling. Let’s try this exercise.

- 1. With a partner or small group, make a list of the beers in Congo.**
- 2. For each beer, think about the color used in the advertisements. For example, what color is used when advertising Primus, Skol, Tembo?**
- 3. Now, talk about these questions: What do these colors suggest? What message is the beer company trying to tell its customers about their beer?**

There are no “correct” answers, no established rules, because colors can convey different moods and feelings for different people. Advertisers hope that their use of color conveys the same general feeling for most people.

Angle

Angle, or the direction of an image, conveys power—superiority or inferiority. When we “look up” at an image this generally gives the feeling that the object is powerful. When the angle “looks down” this generally suggests no, or little, power. Let’s try this exercise.

1. Look at the three images below.
2. Talk with a partner or friend about the angles in each image.
3. Answer these questions: Do we feel we are looking up or down at images #1, #2 and #3? Which image(s) suggest power and which suggest no power?

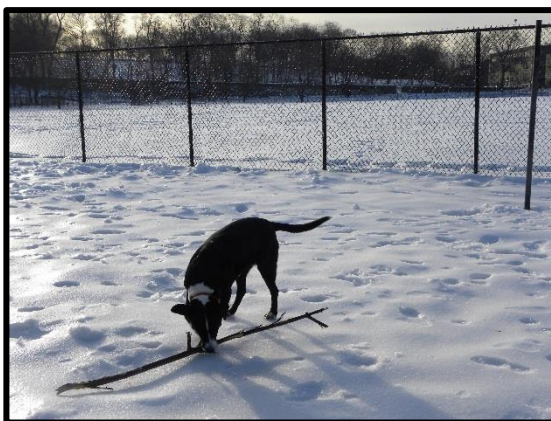
Image #1



Image #2



Image #3



Most people agree that Image #1 does not express power. There is no angle. We are looking directly at the house. We are looking straight in line at the house. This is a neutral angle. Image #2 suggests power. We are looking up at the house. The angle suggests the house is big and we are small. In Image #3 we are looking down at the dog. This suggests that the dog is not strong. We, the viewers are strong.

Size/Distance

The size of an image, or the distance of the image, are also suggestive and useful to consider when critiquing an image. A broad, wide view may suggest expanse, openness. A close-up view suggests detail, focus, attention. Let's try this exercise using the images below.

1. Look at the four images below.
2. Talk with a partner or friend about the sizes and/or distance of each image.
3. Answer these questions: Which image suggests importance? Which suggests broad expanse? Which image suggests detail, attention?
4. After answering these questions, consider the angle and color of these images. How do these contribute to your view of these images?

Image #1



Image #2



Image #3



Image #4



When Members are finished talking about the images, continue reading below.

There are many different ways to consider the four images above. Using what we have considered so far, here are a few ways to view the images. Remember that there is no one right way to view an image. These are our interpretations and interpretations can be subjective—not always objective ...

Image #1: This image gives the feeling of distance. We are viewing the scene from a distance. Even though the buildings are big, they do not appear big (and powerful or impressive) because we are looking at them from a distance. The position of the buildings in the photo draws our eyes to the right side of the image. When we look to the right, it is as if we are getting ready to “turn a page,” our eyes (and our brains) may ask, “What is coming next?”

Image #2: This image may also give the feeling of distance but our eyes focus on the birds in the photo. The ones in the air give the feeling of movement. The shades of gray in this photo (as in Images #3 and #4) suggest sadness or cold.

Image #3: This is another distance photo. There is no action, no focus, no movement. The tree in the distance draws our eye but does not give us a feeling that the tree is important.

Image #4: By contrast to #3, this photo suggests that the tree is important. The tree takes up most of the photo. The shapes on the left side, under the tree, may make us wonder what their purpose is but they are far away and not clear.

How can we use what we see to understand the messages, “interpret” the meanings?

Interpreting Visuals

Now that we have a basic understanding of viewing, let’s look at some familiar visuals. Using all the information about viewing, let’s critique the following visuals from Kinshasa—and websites of the U.S. Department of State’s English Programs.

Image #1



Image #2



Image #3

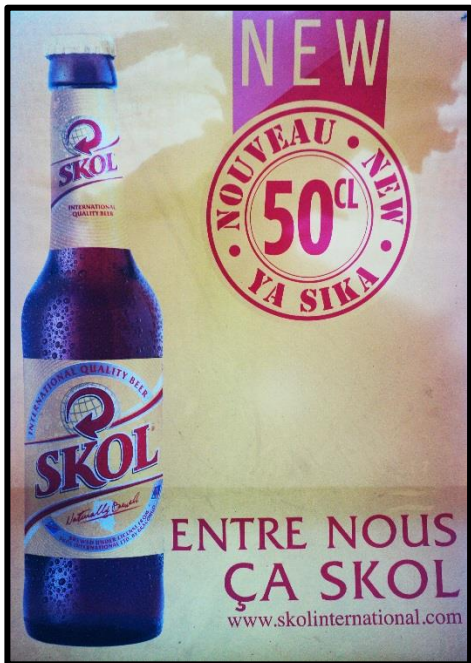


Image #4



Image #5



Image #6



Image #7



Image #8



Image #9

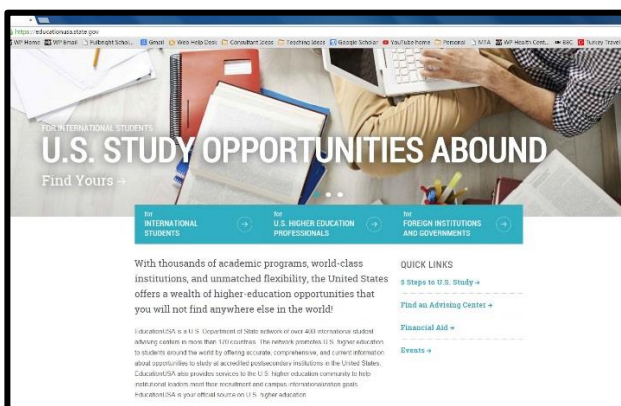
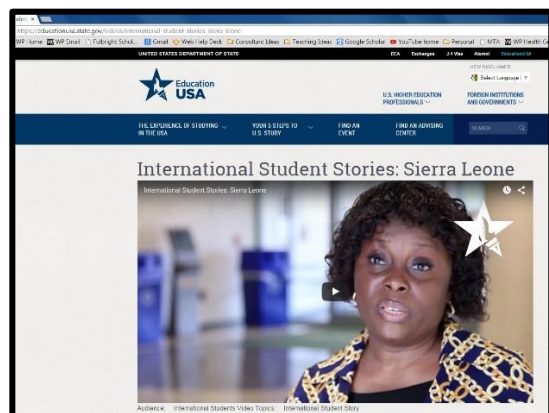


Image #10



Remember: There are individual interpretations for each of these images. Some of them are quite straightforward while others are not. What are each of these trying to suggest to viewers? What are the explicit and implicit messages that each image is sending?

Good luck! Have fun!

SUGGESTED TEXTS AND IMAGES

There are lots of different kinds of texts—and lots of images we can talk about including photos, graphics, maps, charts, tables, cartoons, and other visuals.

Here is a list of the types of texts and images that Members may want to use in Club Meetings. This list is not complete. Over time, as Members gain experience, they will find other types of texts and images. This list can be a place to start.

The list has three columns. The first column has print-only texts. The second column has a combination of print/ images. The third column has only images.

| PRINT-ONLY TEXTS | COMBINATION PRINT/IMAGES | IMAGES ONLY |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| Novels | Newspaper Articles | Photos |
| Short Stories | Magazine Articles | Artwork |
| Biography | Concrete Poems | Wordless Picture Books |
| Historical Documents | Picture Books | Movies |
| Song Lyrics | Internet Articles | Video Clips |
| Letters | Photos with Captions | |
| Journal Entries | Graphic Novels/Comic Books | |
| Recipes | Postcards | |
| Menus | Stamps | |
| Poems | Calendar | |
| Non-fiction Books | Maps | |
| Information Books | Charts and Graphs | |
| Skits | Catalogs | |
| Plays/Drama | Websites | |
| | Horoscope | |
| | Advertisements | |
| | Commercials | |

SUGGESTED PLACES TO LOOK FOR TEXTS & IMAGES

Look for texts to read and images to view in the American Corners, American Spaces and other locations created by the Embassy of the United States of America. Also, schools and public libraries will have lots of texts and images that Club Members can bring to Club Meetings to read and talk about.

Billboards along roadsides, signs, flyers, and brochures also offer opportunities for reading and viewing. When Club Members become more aware of texts, they will be “on the lookout” for text and images to bring to Meetings to read and discuss.

Another place to look for texts and images is the internet. Here are steps to follow for Members who want to look for texts and images online. We suggest that either a pair of Members or small groups of Members search together. When working together, Members may get different ideas and/or understand more easily what they see.

Steps for Searching Online

1. Go to a search engine—for example, Google, Bing, or Yahoo;
2. Enter two, three or four key words for the topic or idea you are looking for;
3. When links appear, select a few links and search carefully;
4. Note: Sometimes the first few links can be “advertisements” and not actual topics or websites—most search engines use the letters “AD” to show that these are advertisements and not actual websites;
5. As Members visit websites, they can talk about the site and make decisions about which websites are interesting for Members to read and talk about.

Let’s try searching online. Work in pairs or small group. You will need to be online.

1. Go to a search engine ... let’s try Google ... <https://www.google.cd>
This is the link for Google in DRC. To search on the American or international Google website, use this link: <https://www.google.com>
2. Let’s look for texts and/or images about musicians. Choose your favorite musician and enter the name. For example, try typing: Musician Angélique Kidjo ...
3. Check the first 5 websites that appear and talk with your partner or small group about the websites.
4. Which ones seem interesting? Which ones are advertisements?
5. Pick one website to recommend to Club Members to read.

When finished completing this exercise, continue reading.

Some websites change every day and some do not. Here are a few sites that appeared for the key terms, **Musician Angelique Kidjo**, when we wrote this manual:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ang%C3%A9lique_Kidjo

<http://www.kidjo.com/>

<https://www.youtube.com/user/angeliquekidjo>

<https://www.facebook.com/angeliquekidjo>

Here are a few tips about some of the websites.

Wikipedia—similar to an encyclopedia, or dictionary, online. A public website with general information about topics, people, ideas, history. Some university professors do not like this site because they believe some information may not always be accurate.

Youtube—video site that posts music, movies, short video clips, and other kinds of videos.

Facebook—personal or organizational information and pictures/images.

Here are a few website end codes that can be useful.

| Website End Code | Meaning |
|------------------|--|
| .com | Usually a business site, trying to sell something, make money |
| .org | Usually a not-for-profit site, not trying to sell or make money |
| .net | May be a business site or not-for-profit site |
| .gov | These sites are supported by a government office or department; they provide useful information for the public |

SUGGESTED TOPICS

This section gives suggested readings and places to look for readings that address a particular theme based on the months. Members may use these suggested sites as a guide or place to start. Members should choose to read/view what they want to read/view and talk or write about. Club selections should always be made based on Member interest.

January: The New Year

In many countries, including the U.S.A., there are big celebrations to welcome the New Year. Here are a few websites that have information and interesting articles to read.

- This site gives information about the New Year traditions in the U.S.A.
<http://americanenglish.state.gov/content-spotlight-new-year>
- This site explains the U.S. traditions on New Year's Eve.
http://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/newyearsday.pdf
- This site is a transcript from a Voice of America broadcast and can be read by different people, similar to a radio play.
<http://learningenglish.voanews.com/content/a-23-2006-01-01-voa1-83129182/125913.html>
- This site gives information about New Year's Resolutions.
<http://americanenglish.state.gov/content-spotlight-new-years-resolutions>
- This site is a board game that Members can play about making resolutions.
http://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resolutions_game_0.pdf
- The month of January has an important holiday for Dr. Martin Luther King. To learn more about him and his life, visit this website.
http://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/martinlutherkingday.pdf

To search online for more readings and images, use a search engine (to learn about using online search engines read the section, *Places to Look for Texts and Images*) and enter the following key terms:

- New Year
- New Year [Name of a country to learn about celebrations there]
- Resolutions

February: Black History

During this month, teachers and students focus on learning about the history of Black Americans, who are also called African-Americans. School and community events celebrate the contributions and achievements of this important group of American citizens. Here are a few websites that have information and interesting articles to read.

- This webpage gives information about several important Black Americans and their accomplishments. There are photos and text in this link.
http://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/blackhistorymonth.pdf
- This is the website in Wikipedia that explains how and why Black History Month was created in the U.S.A.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_History_Month
- This is the U.S. Library of Congress website. It has lots of information and ideas for reading about African American History Month (Black History Month).
<http://www.africanamericanhistorymonth.gov/>
- This website is for the Association for the Study of African American Life and History—the founders of African American History Month. Each year there is a new theme for the month. Check the “Annual Themes” tab to find the theme for each year’s celebration.
<http://asalh100.org/>

Valentine’s Day, celebrated on February 14, is a popular day for many Americans. On this day, people express their love for each other in different ways.

- This link has information about this day.
http://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/valentinesday.pdf
- This link gives information about the history of Valentine’s Day.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valentine%27s_Day

To search online for more readings and images, use a search engine (to learn about using online search engines read the section, *Places to Look for Texts and Images*) and enter the key terms below. Also add “History,” “For kids,” “Activities,” “Facts,” “Men,” or “Women” to find more information and different links.

- African Americans
- Black Americans
- Valentine’s Day [add terms like “Poems,” “Cards,” “Expressions of Love,” “Gifts”]

March: Celebrating Women

The month of March is often called *Women's History Month*. Teachers and students in American schools may take extra time this month to learn about the accomplishments and contributions of women in the U.S. and around the world. March 8 is International Women's Day. Celebrations are held around the world to recognize the achievements and lives of women. Here are a few websites that have information and interesting articles to read.

- This website gives information about how the International Women's Day was started.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Women%27s_Day
- This website is maintained by the United Nations and gives information about this day and events from previous years.
<http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/international-womens-day>
- This United Nations website gives information about the history of International Women's Day. It includes ideas for events and activities for people to celebrate women.
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/iwd/history.html>
- This website is hosted by the American newspaper, *The Washington Post*. The link below gives facts about the lives of women around the world.
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/fact-checker/wp/2015/03/09/international-womens-day-factcheckathon-fact-checks-from-around-the-world/>
- This website, maintained by the U.S. government's American English Program, gives information and ideas about Women's History Month.
http://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/womenshistorymonth.pdf
- This website is hosted by the American Civil Liberties Union. It gives information about Women's Rights in the U.S.A. and the ways in which this organization helps women.
<https://www.aclu.org/issues/womens-rights>
- Visit this website and this journalist (Jina Moore) to read about women's issues in Africa.
<http://www.buzzfeed.com/search?q=jina+moore>

To search online for more readings and images, use a search engine (to learn about using online search engines read the section, *Places to Look for Texts and Images*) and enter the following key terms:

- International Women's Day
- International Women's Day [Name of a country to learn about celebrations there]
- Women's Rights

April: The Environment

This month is a time to focus on the environment. Countries around the world celebrate Earth Day on April 22. People use the day to improve their community by cleaning up parks or streets. Here are a few websites that have information, images, and interesting articles.

- This website gives information about Earth Day, the event that celebrates the earth and works to protect its environment.
<http://www.earthday.org/>
- This website gives information about recycling around the world. Recycling is one way to protect the environment.
<http://www.bir.org/>
- This website gives information about climate change using *Participant Media*, a company dedicated to entertainment that inspires and encourages viewers to make social change. There are not only articles and images but also videos to watch and discuss.
<http://www.participantmedia.com/>
- This website is hosted by a famous American activist on climate change. There are articles, images, photos, and video clips too.
<http://www.vanjones.net/>
- This website is for Earth Justice, an organization that is fighting for the rights of everyone to live in a healthy, clean environment.
<http://earthjustice.org/>
- This website is hosted by an international organization interested in preserving rainforests. The second link goes to their video site.
<http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/>
<https://www.youtube.com/user/rainforestalliance>

To search online for more readings and images, use a search engine (to learn about using online search engines read the section, *Places to Look for Texts and Images*) and enter the key terms below. Also try to add terms like “For kids,” “Activities,” or “Facts.”

- Climate Change
- Global Warming
- Environmental Information

May: War & Peace

There are several important celebrations in May. May Day, the first day in May, is a day for many people in the Western hemisphere to welcome the start of spring. People are happy that winter is ended. May 12 is International Nurses Day. The last Monday in May is Memorial Day, a day when Americans remember military people, and their families, who are serving to protect the U.S.A. Americans also remember all the military people who died while serving to defend the U.S.A. Here are a few websites that have information, images, and interesting articles about these holidays and the themes of war and peace.

- This link gives information about May Day, the history and celebrations today that take place in the U.S.A. and around the world.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May_Day
- This link gives information about International Nurses Day.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Nurses_Day
- At this website, there is information about the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, both groups who work to protect humanity.
<http://www.ifrc.org/>
- This link is an article with photos that explains the Memorial Day holiday.
http://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/memorialday.pdf
- This link is a list of wars that involved the U.S.A.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_wars_involving_the_United_States
- This link includes a list of wars that the U.S.A. was involved in and war letters written by military people and their families.
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/timeline/warletters/>
- This link gives information about the work of MONUSCO, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
<http://monusco.unmissions.org/>

To search online for more readings and images, use a search engine (to learn about using online search engines read the section, *Places to Look for Texts and Images*) and enter the following key terms:

- May Day [add terms such as Flowers, Poems, Celebrations]
- International Red Cross/Red Crescent [and terms like Volunteers, Employment, News]

June: Food & Health

In the U.S.A. June is the month when lots of fresh fruits and vegetables are ready to eat. The websites below have information, images, and interesting articles to read and talk about.

- Can mangoes make you rich? Read this link to find the answer to this question.
<http://allafrica.com/stories/201206110754.html>
- Are you tired of eating the same food over and over again? Check out this website to find a new recipe and try it!
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/food/>
- Do you eat cheese from Goma? Find out more about this delicious food at this website.
<http://allafrica.com/view/group/main/main/id/00036881.html>
- Is spicy food—made with pili-pili—good for us? Find the answer at this link.
<http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/health-news/people-who-regularly-eat-spicy-food-have-lower-mortality-rate-than-those-who-dont-10437941.html>
- Do only people with white skin get skin cancer? Read this article to find out.
<http://www.buzzfeed.com/essencegant/dear-brown-people-you-can-get-sun-burned#.jn9GJDQLn>
- Can eating insects save the world? What do you think? Find the answer in this article.
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/guides/zy7s39q>
- Which foods are healthier to eat? Visit this website to learn more about healthy foods.
<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/>
- In addition to eating healthy foods, we also must exercise. Check out the information at this website.
<http://www.letsmove.gov/>

To search online for more readings and images, use a search engine (to learn about using online search engines read the section, *Places to Look for Texts and Images*) and enter the following key terms and add “For Kids,” “Activities,” “Games” to find more information:

- Health, Exercise
- Nutrition, Food, Diet

July: Independence & Freedom

In the U.S.A. and many other countries, there is a day when people celebrate their nation's freedom. July 4th in the U.S.A. marks the day when the American colonies declared their independence from Great Britain. Here are a few websites that have information, images, and interesting articles to read and talk about.

- This website gives information about U.S. Independence Day celebrations and the meaning this day has for Americans.
http://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/independenceday.pdf
- This website gives more information about this holiday.
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Independence_Day_\(United_States\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Independence_Day_(United_States))
- This website gives information about Independence Day dates worldwide.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_national_independence_days
- This website give 7 quotes about Independence and Freedom. Read each and decide which one you like.
<http://www.goodnet.org/articles/1157>
- Read this news story and decide if the South Sudan government is right or wrong in shutting down a national newspaper—or is there an acceptable middle choice?
<http://www.voanews.com/content/south-sudan-media-newspaper-forced-close/2902686.html>
- Visit this website to learn more about ways to improve voting rights around the world.
<https://www.ndi.org/>
- Find out what one non-profit organization, *The Carter Center*, is doing to help DR Congo.
<http://www.cartercenter.org/news/multimedia/slideshows/drc-crying-out-for-reform.aspx>

To search online for more readings and images, use a search engine (to learn about using online search engines read the section, *Places to Look for Texts and Images*) and enter the key terms below and add “For Kids,” “Activities,” “Songs,” or “Poems” to find more articles to read.

- Independence
- Freedom

August: The Arts & Culture

This month we look at a variety of art—paintings, music, sculpture, literature, drama—and culture. Just as the U.S.A. has a rich heritage in the arts, so too does the Congo, DR. Here are websites that have information, images, and interesting articles to read and talk about.

- Visit this link to learn about an exhibit of art from the DR Congo.
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-33645766>
- To get the latest information about music in different African countries, visit this website.
<http://allafrica.com/music/>
- What are the best books about Congo, DR? Read this article and decide for yourself.
<http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2013/dec/12/best-books-democratic-republic-congo-review>
- This website gives information about music in Congo, DR. Is this information correct? Do you agree? Check out the website to see what you think.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music_of_the_Democratic_Republic_of_the_Congo
- Check out this website to see if you agree with what this travel agency is telling the world about Congo, DR.
<http://theculturetrip.com/africa/dr-congo/>
- Is it true that the song, “Africa,” sung by the musical group called Toto, is the best song in the world? Check out this website and decide for yourself.
<http://www.buzzfeed.com/alexisnedd/i-see-to-cure-whats-deep-inside#.uagdjVJmp>
- This website gives lots of information and articles about American art and culture.
<http://learningenglish.voanews.com/archive/learningenglish-home-arts-entertainment/latest/965/965.html>
- This website gives information about American art and some of the most famous paintings by American artists.
<http://picturingamerica.neh.gov/>

Search online for more readings and images by using a search engine (to learn about search engines read the section, *Places to Look for Texts and Images*) and enter these key terms:

- Fine arts [music, art, dance, photography, literature, poetry, sculpture, drama]
- Culture

September: Education & Employment

In the U.S.A. and many countries around the world, September is the start of the school year. This is a time when children and their families buy school uniforms and pay school tuition. Education is important because we usually find better employment opportunities when we have a good education. These websites have information, images, and interesting articles to read and talk about.

- This is an inspiring story about a young woman and her education. Read it and see if you feel inspired.
<http://www.buzzfeed.com/andreborges/hes-never-given-up-on-me#.wnxQvNzKE>
- This young woman fights for the rights of all children to an education. Read her story at this link.
<http://www.buzzfeed.com/maryangeorgantopoulos/watch-live-malala-yousafzai-accepts-the-nobel-peace-prize#.ymaxk2pj9>
- This link follows up on the story about Malala (see link above). Read about what she's doing for children in Syria.
<http://www.buzzfeed.com/mbvd/malala-yousafzai-turns-18#.bk8woNv2P>
- Use this U.K. link to find information and ideas about different career options.
<https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/Pages/Home.aspx>
- Use this U.S.A. government website to find information and ideas about different career options.
<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/>
- Americans are going to Germany to study. Can you study there too? Read and find out!
<http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-32821678>
- Can you cook? Find a country where you can get a job as a chef.
<http://www.voanews.com/media/video/2901959.html>

To search online for more readings and images, use a search engine (to learn about using online search engines read the section, *Places to Look for Texts and Images*) and enter the key terms:

- Education [or Freedom] articles
- Education [or Freedom] quotes
- Education [or Freedom] games
- Career Opportunities [or Scholarships]

October: Community Service

When we belong to a community, it is important that we help the community flourish. Here are websites with information, images, and interesting articles to read and talk about.

- This website tells us about the term, “Community Service.”
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community_service
- This website is hosted by a university in the U.S.A. It gives reasons why we should do community service. See if you agree or disagree with these reasons.
<https://students.ucsd.edu/student-life/involvement/community/reasons.html>
- This website gives ideas from the U.S. government about community service projects. Which ones can you adapt or modify and try in your community?
<http://www2.epa.gov/students/community-service-project-ideas-students-and-educators>
- This website gives information and ideas about how to start a community service project with a focus on the environment and animals. It was started by a famous woman, Jane Goodall, who studied chimpanzees for many years in Tanzania.
<http://www.rootsandshoots.org/content/get-started>
- This website, although designed for Americans to use, gives ideas about creating community service projects and encouraging others to “take part” in such actions.
<http://www.takepart.com/>
- Shortly, this Nobel Peace Prize winner will create a foundation that may offer opportunities and ideas for Congo, DR. Visit this website for more information.
<http://www.kailashsatyarthi.net/>
- Would you like to volunteer to work in a different country with the United Nations? Find information here about how to do this.
<http://www.unv.org/what-we-do/countries/democratic-republic-of-the-congo.html>

There is one holiday in October that is especially for children. It is called Halloween and it is celebrated on October 31. Here is information about this children’s holiday.

http://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/halloween.pdf

Search online for more readings and images (to learn about using online search engines read the section, *Places to Look for Texts and Images*) by entering the key terms:

- Community Service Projects
- Examples of Community Service

November: Thanksgiving

Every fourth Thursday in November, Americans celebrate Thanksgiving. This holiday was started after a celebration of thanks in 1621 when the first settlers from Great Britain (the Pilgrims) thanked the Native Americans for helping them survive their first long, cold winter.

- This website gives information about the history of Thanksgiving.
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thanksgiving>
- This website gives information about what many American families do on this day.
http://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/thanksgivingday.pdf
- This website explains the Native American tradition called the pow-wow.
http://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/nativeamericanpowwows.pdf
- This website also gives information about the history of this holiday.
<http://www.plimoth.org/learn/multimedia-reference-library/read-articles-and-writings/thanksgiving-history>
- This is the website for the museum that Americans visit to learn and experience the lives of the Native Americans and Pilgrims in the 1620's. This type of museum is called a "living history museum." Visit this website to learn more about this kind of museum.
<http://www.plimoth.org>
- This website has songs that Americans sing at Thanksgiving.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Thanksgiving_songs
- This website is for the U.S.A. National Museum of the American Indian and has lots of information about Native American Indians.
<http://www.nmai.si.edu/>

Search online for more readings and images (to learn about using online search engines read the section, *Places to Look for Texts and Images*) by entering the key term below and additional terms such as "For Kids," "Activities," "Games," "Songs," "Speeches," "Poetry." Also try "Foods," "Recipes," "Famous Quotes," "Prayers."

- Thanksgiving

December: Year's End

Many news organizations make selections at the end of the year that “look back” at the year. News organizations like to choose the most important people and/or events of the previous year. They select the “Person of the Year” and explain why the person was selected. *Time Magazine* started this in 1927, picking a person, people or organization that contributed to world events. Sometimes the selection was for positive contributions and other times for negative impact. Here are some of the *Time Magazine* selections.

- This website has a complete list of all the *Time Magazine* selections:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Time_Person_of_the_Year#Persons_of_the_Year
- Mahatma Gandhi, 1930
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahatma_Gandhi
- Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1932, 1934, 1941
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franklin_D._Roosevelt
- Martin Luther King, 1963
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Luther_King,_Jr.
- The Computer (Machine of the Year), 1982
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Personal_computer
- The Endangered Earth (Planet of the Year), 1988
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmentalism>
- The Peacemakers (Palestine, Israel, South Africa), 1993
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oslo_I_Accord
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nelson_Mandela
- The Ebola Fighters, 2014
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ebola_virus

Search online for more readings and images (to learn about using online search engines read the section, *Places to Look for Texts and Images*) by entering the following key terms:

- Person of the Year [add date] [add CNN, BBC, Al Jazeera, or AllAfrica]
- Event of the Year [add date] [add CNN, BBC, Al Jazeera, or AllAfrica]

Funny, Informative, and Provocative Articles & Photos

At the time this *Manual* was written the websites below were active. Read through the list and choose the ones that interest you and/or Club Members. When visiting these links, look for other articles that may be interesting and share them with Members.

- How do you learn? Take this questionnaire to find out your personal learning style.
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/keyskills/extra/module1/1.shtml>
- Are farmers happy? Read this article to find out.
<http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-33728876>
- Click on this link for Voice of America news. Listen and read stories of interest about Africa and around the world.
<http://www.voanews.com/>
- Find your favorite programs about Africa on Voice of America by visiting this link.
<http://www.voanews.com/programindex.aspx>
- This website gives information about the “Robot Cops” in Kinshasa.
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/31753667>
- This website reports on interesting events at some funerals in DR Congo.
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-33220531>
- Where is the longest train in the world? Find the answer at this website.
<http://www.cnn.com/2014/12/14/travel/yixinou-worlds-longest-train-journey/>
- Look at these photographs, ask yourself ... Which place would you like to visit—if you could only visit one place?
<http://travelmonster.me/2015/05/25-most-beautiful-places-you-must-visit-before-you-die/>
- See what Americans are doing wrong—compared to the British.
<https://thescene.com/watch/buzzfeed/things-americans-are-doing-completely-wrong>
- If you would like to know how and why mosquitoes bite us, visit this website.
http://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-33640212?post_id=818942028189579_851315864952195

- Do you think that English is the language of the British and Americans? To find the answer, visit this link.
<http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20150619-how-india-changed-english>
- Do you think American English and British English are the same? Read this web article to find the answer.
<http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20150715-why-isnt-american-a-language>
- Do you think women can be airplane pilots? Read this web article and find the answer.
<http://www.bbc.com/capital/story/20150716-piloting-life-and-work>
- Is it possible to stop sexism at work? Read this link to find out.
<http://www.bbc.com/capital/story/20150720-goodbye-sexist-office>
- Great progress have been made in helping children survive across many countries in Africa. Find out what the most successful countries are doing to keep children alive.
<http://www.bbc.com/news/health-29161620>
- How much does it cost to buy a bride in different countries in Africa? Find out by reading this article.
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-33810273>
- Why should we save endangered species? Read and look at the photos on this website to find the answer.
<http://www.bbc.com/earth/story/20150715-why-save-an-endangered-species>
- In many countries, April 1st is called “April Fool’s Day.” On this day people play tricks on each other, telling jokes, or “tall tales.” Check these websites to find out some of these stories. Be careful—if you believe these stories then it is an “April Fool’s” joke on you!
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/32149573> <http://hoaxes.org/aprilfool/P90>
- These sites have texts that can be read in one minute. By reading at least one of these per day, Members can increase their reading speed.
<http://www.theweek.co.uk/one-minute-read>
<http://www.amomentintime.com/>

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Kinshasa,
La République Démocratique du Congo,
2015

Read and Talk in English!

Help the Community!

Have Fun!



Ambassade des Etats-Unis d'Amérique

Kinshasa, La République Démocratique du Congo