




# Contents

Introduction	4
Personal Connections	7
Think Abouts	13
Visualization	19
Predictions	25
Story Maps	31
Character Analysis	37
Character Perspective	43
Setting	49
Context Clues	55
Problem and Solution	61
Details	67
Point of View	73
Cause and Effect	79
Compare and Contrast	85
Summary	91
Main Idea	97
Figurative Language	103
Journal Responses	109
References	112



to recall information from the story and label story elements, including characters, setting, problem, and solution.

The three activity pages gradually increase in difficulty. The introductory level asks students to come up with the title, main characters, setting, problem, and solution. The intermediate level requires students to give more details in the description of the setting and to list all attempts to solve the problem. Finally, in the challenging level, students must categorize characters as major or minor, state effects of the setting, and describe both primary and secondary problems, attempts to accomplish goals, and the solution. Each level is purposely designed to require more of the reader than the last, so that each assignment is increasingly challenging.

## How to Use This Book

The diverse group of grades 4–8 teachers who tested these organizers all took different approaches; they used the graphic organizers for leveled responses, as an avenue for scaffolding, and for individual projects. How you decide to use these graphic organizers will depend on your students' needs, your academic goals, and your teaching style. Keep in mind that by modeling the target skill prior to assigning the graphic organizers, you help prepare

students to better understand and complete the activity. You'll find teaching tips under the Model Lesson section of each chapter and further teaching tips under the description of each organizer.

### • **Leveled Responses**

Some teachers modeled the introductory level organizer in a large-group mini-lesson and then assigned the three organizers according to the needs of each student. Assessment was instantaneous. Teachers recognized immediately when a task was too easy or too difficult, and had the students try a different level or made a note to assign them the more appropriate level when they reviewed that skill.

How the leveled responses were assigned depended on individual teaching styles. For example, some teachers approached the assignments in the same way they assigned leveled books in guided reading; they explained to their students that every reader is different and requires a different challenge. If students were uncomfortable—or too comfortable—with the activity, the teacher would encourage them to try a different level. These teachers emphasized individual challenge and flexibility. They made sure no student was “trapped” on a particular level.



# What's the Message?



Book title \_\_\_\_\_ Page number/section \_\_\_\_\_

What's being explained or described in this part?

Describe meaningful connections you make with characters, objects, places, ideas, and emotions in the passage. Use the connections you make below to write your own similes.

A simile is a comparison between two unlikely items, linking them with *like* or *as*. For example, if you make a connection with a character's feelings, you might say "After she yelled at Maniac, Amanda Beale felt like an already chewed piece of bubble gum."

## Connections to my own experiences

### Connection 1

This connection helps me understand ...

### Connection 2

This connection helps me understand ...

## Connections to other sources (movies, books, other people)

### Connection 3

This connection helps me understand ...

## Super Similes



Pick a connection you listed above. Connection # \_\_\_\_\_. What does it make you want to learn more about? Write your answer on the back of this page.



# Think Abouts

**Skill:** Use strategies to self-monitor reading comprehension.

## About Think Abouts

Good readers use a variety of monitoring strategies to comprehend texts. These strategies include, but are not limited to, prediction, explanation, elaboration, visualization, asking questions, and drawing conclusions. Less accomplished readers may not realize that these strategies exist, while others may be aware of them but may not be able to apply them. Teachers and students may use think abouts as a way to share the thought processes they use to construct meaning from print. Students can “see” exactly what strategies to use while reading.

## Why Is This Skill Important?

When students can explain their thinking, we gain a clearer picture of what goes on in their minds as they comprehend a story. Teachers can assess whether the student is misinterpreting or confusing issues in the story as they do think abouts. More important, this also helps students see their own confusion as they discuss their thoughts with others.

## GETTING STARTED

**Model Lesson:** Using think-about strategies with *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* by Mildred D. Taylor (Bantam Books, 1976)

- \* **Select a short passage to model several think-about strategies you use to better understand the text.** In these introductory paragraphs, Taylor describes a scene in which children are walking to school. The youngest is about to make them late. She writes:

“Little Man, would you come on? You keep it up and you’re gonna make us late.”

My youngest brother paid no attention to me. Grasping more firmly his newspaper-wrapped notebook and his tin-can lunch of cornbread and oil sausages, he continued to concentrate on the dusty road. He lagged several feet behind my other brothers, Stacey and Christopher-John, and me, attempting to keep the rusty Mississippi dust from swelling with each step and drifting back upon his shiny black shoes and the cuffs of his corduroy pants by lifting each foot high before setting it gently down again. (page 1)

- \* **Think aloud about the strategies you used and note the places in the passage where you stopped to reflect.** Although there are a number of strategies that can be used to construct meaning, I use this passage to focus on prediction, personal connections, and asking questions.

First, I *predict*, saying, “I wonder if the child telling this story is afraid that she (or he) will be late for school again. The

# Think-About Strategies

Book title \_\_\_\_\_

Stop at three points in the passage you're reading. In each cloud, write what you are thinking about each time you stop. In each book, list information from the text that sparked this idea. In each box, identify the strategy you used as you were thinking about the text.

1. Page \_\_\_\_\_, paragraph \_\_\_\_\_

What I'm thinking about ...

This is a:

 Prediction  Explanation Connection  Question

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Information from the text ...

2. Page \_\_\_\_\_, paragraph \_\_\_\_\_

What I'm thinking about ...

This is a:

 Prediction  Explanation Connection  Question

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Information from the text ...

3. Page \_\_\_\_\_, paragraph \_\_\_\_\_

What I'm thinking about ...

This is a:

 Prediction  Explanation Connection  Question

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Information from the text ...

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Map It!

Book title \_\_\_\_\_

Author \_\_\_\_\_

**Main Characters:** List them and write a brief description for each one. Put a star next to the character who changes over the course of the story.

--	--	--

## Problem!

What went wrong and who is involved?

Attempts to solve:

First, \_\_\_\_\_

Then, \_\_\_\_\_

(Other attempts) \_\_\_\_\_

## Solution



### Setting 1

Time and place  
where the story begins

--



### Setting 2

Time and place  
where the problem happens

--



### Setting 3

Time and place  
where the problem is solved

--