

## **Strategy:** Activating Prior Knowledge

### **Classroom Lesson 1:** Think-Aloud

- Introduce the book by using the think-aloud strategy as you take a picture walk through the text. Focus students' attention on particular text features, on details in the illustration, or on specific instances of the author's craft. Notice if the feature is used only once or throughout.
- Predict what is going to happen.
- Read the book. Ask students to notice if your predictions match or do not match the text.

#### *Home Connection*

See page 115 for Focusing Attention, the Home Connection for Classroom Lesson: Think-Aloud.

Focusing Attention: see Letter to Mom and Dad on page 115.

### **Classroom Lesson 2:** Oral Storytelling

- Choose one of the characters from the story and create a story starter featuring that character.
- Together, talk about how the story could be completed.
- In pairs, students draw their ideas and orally tell them to each other.

#### *Home Connection*

See page 116 for Finish the Story, the Home Connection for Classroom Lesson: Oral Storytelling.

Finish the Story: see Letter to Mom and Dad on page 116.

### **Classroom Lesson 3:** Question the Author

- Talk about how you are curious about where the author got the idea for this story.
- Look online and see if the author has recorded an interview or has a website. Share these with students.
- Read the story and talk about what questions the children would like to ask the author.
- Have students role play the interview in pairs, with one student as the author and the other the interviewer.

#### *Home Connection*

See page 117 for Questions Before, During, and After Reading, the Home Connection for Classroom Lesson: Question the Author.

Questions Before, During, and After Reading: see Letter to Mom and Dad on page 117.

### **Classroom Lesson 4:** Character Connections

- Before reading, ask for volunteers to retell the story.
- Talk about each of the characters in the story.
- Build a character profile for each of the characters: Words that describe what the character is like, what they do, how they move, where they live, etc.

## Home Connection

See page 118 for Retelling with Puppets, the Home Connection for Classroom Lesson: Character Connections.

Retelling with Puppets: see Letter to Mom and Dad on page 118.

### Touchstone Book: *Chester* by Melanie Watt

This book is filled with talking points from the front cover right through to the back of the book. In a war of words, Chester, a cat, tries to take over the writing of the story from the author. Chester's "revisions," written in red marker, change the story so it is about him. The book is funny and clever, and lends itself to multiple readings.

#### Classroom Lesson 1

- Introduce the book by using the think-aloud strategy as you take a picture walk through the text. Wonder aloud about the red writing; for example, notice how it carries through the entire text. Make predictions about what the author is trying to do, what is going to happen; notice small details in the illustrations.
- Read the story and ask the children to notice how your predictions match or do not match the text.

#### Classroom Lesson 2

- Reread the story and talk about the story possibilities for Mouse's story.
- In pairs, students draw their ideas for finishing Mouse's story and orally tell them to each other.

#### Classroom Lesson 3

- Prior to rereading *Chester*, talk about how the book makes you curious about where the author got the idea for this book.
- Reread the story and then have students generate questions they would like to ask Melanie Watt about the writing of *Chester*. You might want to have a few questions of your own to help get students' thinking started.

#### Classroom Lesson 4

- Before rereading, ask for volunteers to retell the story.
- Ask students to focus their attention on Chester. If he was a child, what would he be like? What does he do? How does he act toward others?
- After reading, talk about what the reader learns about Chester through Melanie Watt's story.

## Focusing Attention

Dear Mom and Dad:

In the book bag your child has brought home is a book filled with lots of talking points. The book is funny and clever, and lends itself to many enjoyable readings.

This picture book might be a little different from the books you may be used to reading with your child. Therefore, it is important to focus your child's attention prior to reading.

Here are some things to talk about before reading the story:

- Take time to look carefully at the front cover. Point out the title and the cover illustration. Talk about clues on the cover that hint as to what the story will be about.
- Discuss the general format of the story before you begin to read.
- Ask your child what he/she thinks the main character will be like. Talk about what you know about the main character thus far.

Focusing your child's attention to the stories you read helps your child's understanding of the story. By reading the story yourself before you read it with your child, you can also introduce any words or concepts that might be unfamiliar. Your efforts prior to reading will result in a better understanding of the story as a whole.

I hope you enjoy this book as much as I do!

Sincerely,

Your child's teacher

## Finish the Story

Dear Mom and Dad:

You and your child can have fun making up your own stories. Sometimes it is helpful to have an idea to start with. Look through children's books you have for interesting story beginnings. Write story beginnings on a strips of paper or index cards. Take turns selecting a card. Use the sentence to make up a story with your child. Encourage your child to use his/her imagination and create a story that is different from the original.

You can also use these story starters, or ones of your own, to get your child's creative juices flowing:

- I found a box in my attic. When I opened the box I found...
- A long time ago, in a land far away, there was a great, big...
- One day when I was walking to school I found...
- The day was going great until my cousin Harvey came over to visit. Then the trouble began.
- Once there was a rabbit who wished he was a...
- Yesterday, when my dad was having a nap, I accidentally...
- I was helping my mom in the kitchen when suddenly we heard a loud...
- I was playing in my yard when I heard...
- There was a crash, then a bang, and suddenly I saw...

### Here is what to do:

1. Read the story starter. Then invite your child to help you finish the story. You might have your child tell the story using pictures. Remind your child that the story will need a middle and an end. Once the pictures are drawn, have your child dictate the part of the story that goes with each picture. Transfer the words and pictures to your book.
2. To make the book, cut 8.5" x 11" sheets of paper in half. Cut as many pages as you need. Your child can re-draw the pictures at the top and you can write the text below, or you can cut and paste the drawings on each page. Be sure to design a cover. Staple the pages of your book together on the lefthand side.

You can do this activity several times, making up different stories from the same opening sentence or from different sentences. When you have made a book with your child, have him/her bring it to class to share. Happy writing!

Sincerely,

Your child's teacher

## Questions Before, During, and After Reading

Dear Mom and Dad:

Asking your child questions prior to reading helps to focus your child's attention on what he/she is about to read. This strategy can be very helpful when reading longer stories or information books.

Before reading, talk about the book with your child and talk about questions you might want to ask before reading. For instance:

- Ask questions that relate to the title.
- Ask questions about the picture on the cover
- If the book has an award certificate what does that mean? An award for what?
- Ask questions about the characters and setting

If this is the first reading of the book, continue asking questions throughout the reading. As you and your child discover the answers, talk about what you have learned and predict what might be going to happen next, or discuss why that information is important to know.

If this is a familiar story, ask "Do you remember..." questions:

- Do you remember why \_\_\_\_\_?
- Do you remember who did that?
- Why did the character \_\_\_\_\_?
- Can you tell me the story?

When you have finished the book, ask your child if he/she has any other questions they are wondering about. Discuss the possible answers.

This activity can be done with any book, so try to practice it whenever you can. Some questions might lead to further research. Go to an author's website or do a search on the Internet for more information about a topic, or consult your local librarian for books on the subject.

You can help your child develop this skill by focusing him/her on the reading, starting with the questions you ask before you read. Keep your questioning short and don't let it get in the way of enjoying the story together.

Sincerely,

Your child's teacher

## Retelling with Puppets

Dear Mom and Dad:

Retelling a familiar story prior to rereading it is one way to see if your child has understood the story or if he/she is confused about any of the parts. It alerts you to the parts of the book that you might need to talk about more as you read it together. There are many ways to make retelling fun, including taking turns drawing parts of the story as you tell it; acting out the story together using simple props and costumes; having your child tell the story in his/her own words while looking at the pictures in the book.

One way of retelling a story that most children enjoy is retelling with puppets. Here is a quick and easy way for your child to make puppets of the main characters:

1. Ask your child to draw each of the characters in the story on a piece of paper that is approximately 3" x 3".
2. Use crayons or markers to color the pictures.
3. Trim around each character and glue on to a craft stick, a twig, or a pencil. The stick becomes the handle for operating the puppet.

Once the book characters have been made, ask your child to retell the story. You can also divide the puppets between other members of the family and retell the story together. Keep the puppets in a decorative container or envelope so they can be reused. Have fun!

Sincerely,

Your child's teacher