The Reading Powers Model

Name: _____   Date: _____

Fill Your Brain with Reading Power!

QUESTION   VISUALIZE   INFER

CONNECT

TRANSFORM
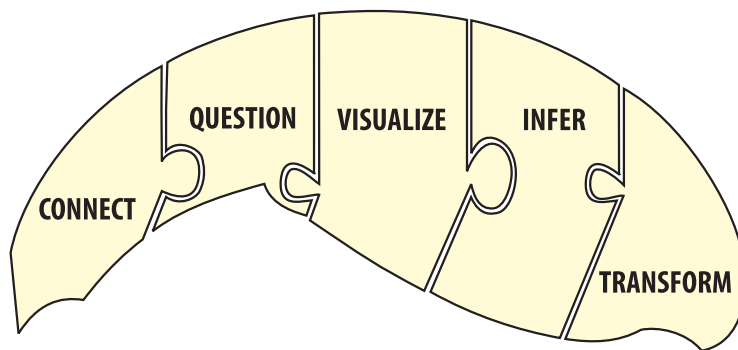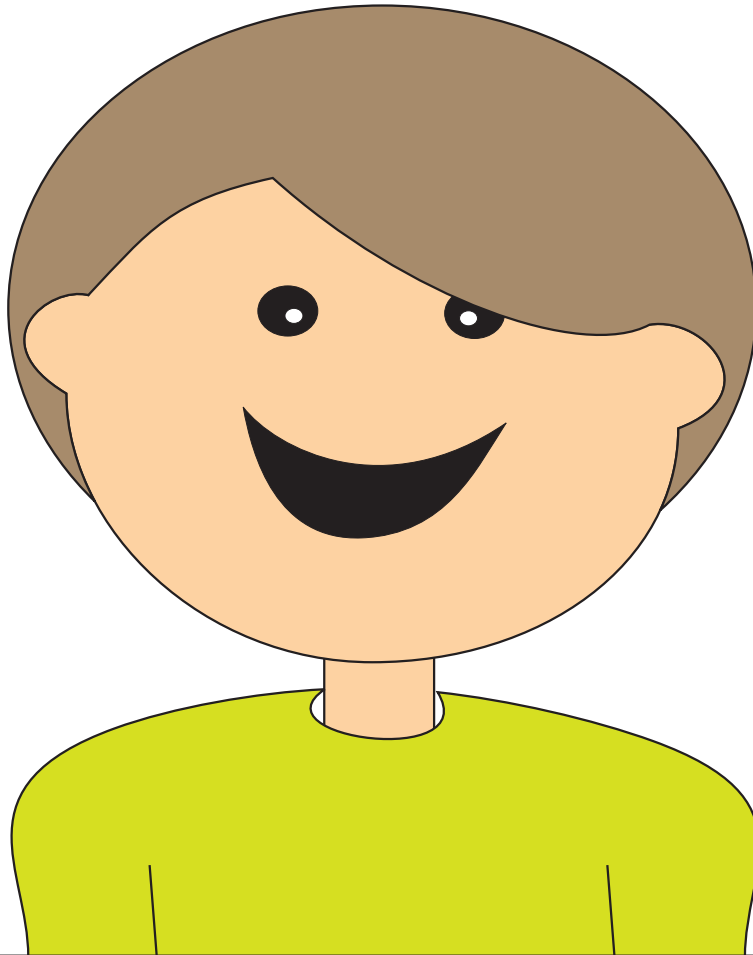
The Big Picture: Introducing the Thinking Brain

I usually begin my first Reading Power lesson with this question: What parts of your body do you use when you read?" It is a good question to ask, and I have had some VERY interesting answers. Young children often answer "hands" first, with the thought of holding the book. Other answers quickly follow: hands, mouth, eyes, ears. But "the brain" is not an answer that is very often given. Why? I think that we, as teachers, probably do not often refer to the brain when we talk about reading, so it should not really surprise us that our students aren't aware of the brain as an active part of reading.

I then bring out the Reading Powers Model and explain to the students that Howard (each head should be given a name!) is a good reader. With the puzzle pieces in hand, I go over, in brief, each of the reading powers, to help the students to see the "big picture" more clearly:

> The reason I know Howard is a good reader is that when Howard reads, his brain is busy. And if we could look inside Howard's head while he was reading, we would see five things going on in there. We call these five things "reading powers" because they've helped Howard become a powerful reader. Let's look inside Howard's brain to see what exactly is going on in there when he reads.

> (I have very young children use their magical "X-ray glasses" so they can look inside Howard's brain and watch while the pieces are placed inside.)

> One thing that Howard does in his brain when he reads, to help him understand the story, is called *Connect*. That means that Howard might be reading about something that reminds him of something that happened to him once. Or he might be reading about a character that reminds him of himself or someone he knows. Or he might be reading a book that reminds him of another book he's read. And when that happens, it's called a *connection*.

> (Place *Connect* piece in head.)

> Another thing Howard does inside his head while he reads, to help him understand the story better, is to ask *Questions*. Sometimes teachers ask him questions after he's finished reading, but good readers ask questions *while* they read.

> (Place *Question* piece in head.)

> Now Howard is reading chapter books and novels, and most of these books do not have pictures in them. But Howard can read a story and, while he's reading, he can make the pictures right in his head. That is called *Visualizing*, and good readers visualize when they read. Visualizing is making pictures in your head.

> (Place *Visualize* piece in head.)

> Another thing that Howard can do while he reads is called *Inferring*. That might be a word that you have never heard before, but good readers infer while they read. Howard knows that not all authors write everything down in words. Some authors leave clues in their pictures and stories, and it's up to Howard to try to

figure out what the author is trying to say. It's like he's filling in, in his head, what is not written on the page.

(Place *Infer* piece in head.)

The last thing that happens to Howard when he reads certain books is that he is actually *Transformed*. That doesn't mean he turns into a robot or a building, but it does mean that some changes happen inside his head. To transform is to change, and sometimes Howard's thinking changes while he's reading.

(Place *Transform* piece in head.)

(Hold an open book up to the Reading Powers Model.)

Let's watch Howard read for a while. Oh… Howard just made a connection. Now he's wondering something…. Now he's visualizing…. Now he's making another connection…. Now he's inferring…. Wow! Howard's brain is certainly busy, isn't it?

Well, that's what Howard's busy, thinking brain looks like while he's reading. Isn't that amazing?! Each of these reading powers helps him understand what he's reading. And because he's been reading this way for a long time, he's able to use the reading powers at the same time. He goes back and forth between them while he's reading—on one page he might ask a question, on the next page he might make a connection, then on another page he might make a picture in his head. But it's a little hard to do them all at once, so this year we are going to learn them one at a time. And I'll tell you something that might surprise you—you have all of these reading powers in your brains already, you just might not know it!

Children have often laughed at Howard, calling him Rainbow Brain and Helmet Head, but the Reading Powers Model has provided them with a concrete visual that they might not otherwise have. At my school, this visual has been the focal point for many children's conversations. One class may join another class for buddy reading and recognize the Model, but see a different piece inside the head. Different Brains have been given different names, and that becomes a conversation point as well.

Each time I begin a new reading power, I always go back to Howard and review the big picture with my students:

Why are we learning this again? We are learning this because good readers think while they read, and this thinking helps them understand the story better. Thinking looks different to every person because each of us has different ideas and experiences stored in our heads. But if we all learn to use our thinking brains by making connections or asking questions or making pictures in our heads, we will learn to how to understand the story better.