

Table 11.3. Comprehension Strategies Characteristic of Proficient Readers

Make Connections to Prior Knowledge	Reading comprehension results when readers can match what they already know (their schema) with new information and ideas in a text. Proficient readers activate prior knowledge before, during, and after reading, and they constantly evaluate how a text enhances or alters their previous understandings.
Generate Questions	Comprehension is, to a significant degree, a process of inquiry. Proficient readers pose questions to themselves as they read. Asking questions is the art of carrying on an inner conversation with an author, as well as an internal dialogue within one's self.
Visualize and Create Sensory Mental Images	Comprehension involves breathing life experiences into the abstract language of written texts. Proficient readers use visual, auditory, and other sensory connections to create mental images of an author's message.
Make Inferences	Much of what is to be understood in a text must be inferred. Authors rely on readers to contribute to a text's meaning by linking their background knowledge to information in the text. In addition to acknowledging explicitly stated messages, proficient readers read between the lines to discern implicit meanings, make predictions, and read with a critical eye.
Determine Importance	Our memories quickly overload unless we can pare down a text to its essential ideas. Texts contain key ideas and concepts amidst much background detail. Proficient readers strive to differentiate key ideas, themes, and information from details so that they are not overwhelmed by facts.
Synthesize	Proficient readers glean the essence of a text (determine importance) and organize these ideas into coherent summaries of meaning. Effective comprehension leads to new learning and the development of new schema (background knowledge). Proficient readers make evaluations, construct generalizations, and draw conclusions from a text.
Monitor Reading and Apply Fix-Up Strategies	Proficient readers watch themselves as they read and expect to make adjustments in their strategies to ensure that they are able to achieve a satisfactory understanding of a text.

Table 11.4. Comprehension Issues With Academic Texts

1. Students are best at reading to identify facts.
2. Students have significant difficulties reading at an inferential level, making generalizations, drawing conclusions.
3. Students tend to fare best with fictional literature (story form, narration).
4. Students struggle most with expository texts (nonfiction, informational texts characteristic of most academic discourse).
5. Students benefit from embedded comprehension instruction as they read to learn in science, social studies, math, and other content disciplines (scaffolding).