



# THE READERS CLUB

## Handbook



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# THE READERS CLUB

## HANDBOOK

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Office of English Language Programs  
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs  
United States Department of State  
Washington, D.C.  
[americanenglish.state.gov](http://americanenglish.state.gov)



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# THE READERS CLUB HANDBOOK

## Introduction

### *What is a Readers Club?*

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

### *Why start or join a 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 speed and understanding.
- To have fun, learn new information, and talk about new ideas.

### *Who can join a Readers Club?*

- Anyone who wants to read in English: old or young, rich or poor, doctors, teachers, or taxi drivers—everyone is welcome.

### *Where can the 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, or park, or at a Member's house.



## 2 The Readers Club Handbook

### *When can the Readers Club meet?*

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

### *For how long can the Readers Club meet?*

- The meetings can be one hour, two hours, or once a month—Members decide.
- Clubs can meet for one year, two years, or many years.

### *What happens during Readers Club meetings?*

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



*A note about atmosphere ...*

- The goal of the Readers Club is to read and talk in English.
- Clubs have Leaders and Members who are equal partners in the Club.
- Leaders are NOT teachers—Members are NOT students.
- Leaders facilitate Club meetings.
- Leaders do NOT teach English or reading—they coach and guide Members.
- Members do NOT learn to read—they practice reading and talking.
- 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 Members opportunities to experiment with different ways of reading and talking about texts and/or visuals.
- Leaders and Members must be supportive, encouraging, and respectful.
- Leaders and Members must be kind, caring, and thoughtful.
- Club meetings must be safe, supportive 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 Readers Clubs

After the first four meetings, Members answer the questions below. There are several ways to complete this survey: 1) The Leader might make photocopies and pass out this form. Members can circle “yes” or “no” on the form. 2) The Leader might ask the questions orally while Members raise their hands to express agreement or disagreement. Keep track of how many “no” answers are received and for which questions. For “no” answers, read the section *Problems and Solutions for Readers Club Meetings* and discuss as a group how you can address these issues together.

## Successful Club Meetings

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

## Problems and Solutions for Readers Club Meetings

Problem	Solution
Some Members talk all the time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members decide how much time each person can speak (the recommended time is three minutes).</li> <li>• Pick a Timekeeper. The Timekeeper is the referee.</li> <li>• The Timekeeper watches the time and calls “time’s up” when appropriate.</li> </ul>
Members who are one gender speak more than Members who are another gender.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Leader talks with the women privately and the men privately to listen for solutions.</li> <li>• Two or three meetings can be for women only and two or three meetings for men only. Then, everyone meets and discusses what they talked about. This might lead to an interesting discussion about the differences when the genders meet separately.</li> <li>• For some Club meetings, the men and women can go into different rooms for forty-five minutes. Then, they return together and talk about this experience. Try this strategy for two or three meetings.</li> <li>• Choose texts for men and women (boys and girls).</li> </ul>

Problem	Solution
Some Members don't come regularly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Leader can ask Members:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is our meeting day and time convenient?</li> <li>▪ Is our meeting location convenient for most of us? If “no,” then brainstorm different dates, times, and locations.</li> <li>▪ Is it possible to change our reading topics and activities?</li> <li>▪ If the texts are not interesting, what would you like to read? The Members try to understand the problems and find solutions to the problems.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• At the end of each Club meeting, the Leader says:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Remember that we will meet [give date, time, and place].</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The Leader asks Members to call each other one or two days before the next meeting to remind them about the meeting.</li> </ul>
Some Members argue about English grammar or vocabulary.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Leader should:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Choose a Member to check the reading strategies for ways to help understand the word.</li> <li>▪ Choose a Member to check the reading strategies for a way to help explain the confusion.</li> <li>▪ Choose a Member to investigate the vocabulary or grammar question and report the answer at the next meeting.</li> <li>▪ Make sure Members give a report at the next Club meeting about the vocabulary or grammar problem.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Some Members get angry or disagree with other Members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Leader can say:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Remember that we are here to read in English and talk about what we've read—not to try to convince others to accept our point of view.</li> <li>▪ First, restate the Member's opinion. Then, say yours.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Problem	Solution
Some Members want to talk about politics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Leader can say:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ We are not here to talk about politics. We want to read in English and talk about what we've read;</li> <li>▪ 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;</li> <li>▪ Let's not discuss politics.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Some Members like to talk about government workers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Leader can say:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ We are not here to discuss people or politicians. We want to read in English and find ways to solve community problems.</li> <li>▪ Remember what President John F. 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.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Some Members like to talk about their religion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Leader can say:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ We are not here to talk about religion. We are here to read in English and talk about what we've read.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Some Members feel threatened or bullied because they struggle to speak at a meeting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Leader can say:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Remember that we are here to read in English and talk about the reading—not to criticize each other.</li> <li>▪ Remember that we want the Club to be a safe place where Members can speak freely.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The Leader must also remind Members to read, speak freely, and feel confident about English.</li> </ul>

## Suggestions for Using this Handbook

In the first Club meeting, we suggest that Members page through the *Handbook* to get an overview of its organization and contents. Members should give special attention to the sections and subsections in the *Table of Contents* to help them figure out which topics they would like to work on first.

Also, in the first meeting (and perhaps one to two subsequent meetings), Members should read, talk about—in detail—and complete the activities in the section *What is Reading?* This section gives Members an opportunity to understand the reading process. It is important that all Members know what reading is and what it is not.

After these first few meetings, Members should decide, as a group, how they would like to use the *Handbook*. They are free to choose strategies and topics that are interesting and relevant. Members do not need to follow the *Handbook* in sequence. They can read sections and subsections in any sequence, at any time.

Below are four suggested plans for organizing 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 listed in the *Strategies after Reading* section to use during the meeting.
3. Members use the strategy they chose to analyze either the reading or the visual they prepared at home before the meeting.
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 and Images* 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. Read the text or analyze the visual using the strategy they selected.
  - e. 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 strategies from the *Strategies before Reading* section. Or, if they have a visual, they choose one (or more) strategies for analyzing an image from the *Strategies for Viewing* section.
3. Next, Members choose one (or more) strategies to use while reading the text from the *Strategies while Reading* section (if they are reading a text).
4. Members then choose one (or more) strategies from the *Strategies after Reading* section.
5. Read the text using the Before, While, and After strategies.
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 and Images* section.
  - b. Agree on one suggested text/visual to bring to the next meeting.
  - c. Decide on the date, time, and place for the next meeting.

## Plan 3: All Members read the SAME text or visual source

1. When all Members read the same text or view the same visual, the Members can follow Plan 1 or Plan 2. Members should agree on the plan they want to follow.
2. 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 from DIFFERENT texts or visual sources

1. 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.
2. 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, often starting 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 and expression.

In many cases, teachers read a word or text, and then students repeated after the teacher. Some 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.

Researchers have continued to study reading and have developed a broader understanding of what reading is and how it can be made fun and enjoyable. They have identified what people need to know to read.



What must we know when we read? The following exercises will help demonstrate what is important.

## Activity

### Directions

With a partner or small group (three to four Members in each group), try to read the sentence below. Each dash (–) represents a missing letter. Try to figure out what the sentence says by guessing the words using the letters provided.

- nc– –p–n – t–m– th–r– wa– – b–t–f–l y–ng g–rl.  
Sh– l–v–d – y–ng m–n b–t h–r f–m–ly h–t–d h–m.
- 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.

### Discussion

Could you read Sentence 1? Could you read Sentence 2? Could you read Sentence 1 more easily than Sentence 2? Maybe you could not read Sentence 2 at all. What is the difference between Sentence 1 and Sentence 2?

Sentence 1 is easier to read because the consonants are in place. In fact, Sentence 1 did not have vowels. Sentence 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? With a partner or small group, use what you have just learned to come up with a theory about reading.

## Activity

### Directions

Read the three sentences below. Each dash (–) represents a missing letter. Once you finish reading, answer the questions.

- “W–at a gr–at cha– –e!” s– –d Ma– –e. S–e w–s ha– –y bec– –se s–e w–s go– –g to vi– –t h–r fr– –nd in Pa– –s.
- Thom– – we– – quick– – t– s– – hi– girlfri– – t– te– – he– th– go– – new–.
- –ey – –re – –ing –o – –e a – –ry – – – –tant t– te– – he– th– go– – new–.

### Discussion Questions

1. In Sentence 1, the middle letters are missing. In Sentence 2, the beginning letters are present, and in Sentence 3 the ending letters are present. Which of the three sentences is easier to read?
2. Did your partner find the same sentences easy? Or, do your opinions differ?
3. What might your answers tell us about reading? Discuss your ideas about reading based on this activity and your responses.

### Discussion

Research suggests that reading with the beginning letters (like in Sentence 2) is the easiest. Some people (and research) find that the ending 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 beginnings 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 activity.

### Activity

#### Directions

With your partner or small group, read the text. Do not use a dictionary. When you have finished reading, talk about the questions.

Aoccdrnig to rsceearh, it deosn't mttar in what oredr the ltteers in a wrod are, the olny iprmoatnt tihng is taht the frist and lsat ltteers 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.



### *Discussion Questions*

1. Could you read this?
2. What does this tell us about reading?

### *Discussion*

The text reads: 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 letters be in the right place. The rest can be a total mess and you can still read it without a problem. This is because the human mind does not read every letter by itself, but the word as a whole.

Therefore, when reading, we do not need to focus on each letter or even most letters in the middle of the words. What may be most important are the beginning and ending letters.

## Activity

### *Directions*

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 sparved the binky when he jibbled in the gorger.

"Clorsty mardson!" she boffed.

"That's a crouistish mardsan binky," 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?

### Discussion Questions

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? With your partner or small group, take a moment to talk about the questions before continuing to read.

## Activity

### Directions

It is possible to answer the questions because we know English grammar. For example, the line under the title in purple represents the reader's thoughts. How does the reader know that this is the title? What clues does the reader use? 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.

### A Mardsan Giberter for Farfie

*This first line must be the title because it is in the center and above the text.*

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 sparved the binky when he jibbled in the gorger.

"Clorsty mardson!" she boffed.

"That's a crouistish mardsan binky," 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."

### Discussion

When we find words we do not know, we can use our knowledge of English to help. Let's look at the first sentence: Glis was very fraper. Glis is probably a noun or the name of a person—the use of the word "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 do not 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 do not 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.

Another element that helped was when you talked about the text with a partner or in a small group. Talking about the text helps you read and understand it. This is called “social interaction,” and it is important for reading.

## Activity

### *Directions*

Read the story below individually and in silence. Next, answer the questions in pairs or small groups. Do not use a dictionary.

### *Practice*

The procedure is very simple. First you put things into different piles. One pile may be enough depending on what kinds of things you have and their color. It is better to do a few things at the same time—not many—because a mistake can be expensive and you may have to start all over again. After the procedure is finished, you need to fold the things and put them in different piles depending on the things you have and where they go. 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 (Weaver, 1994).

Answer these questions:

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

### *Discussion*

When you finish, turn to a partner or small group and talk about the story and your answers to the questions. Discuss your responses for four to five minutes before continuing to read this *Handbook*.

What is the procedure? Depending on your personal experience, you will have different answers. The correct answer is: “washing clothes.” 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 subject? Talk about these questions 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 did not know how to wash clothes, we may not understand this text. Do you agree? Do you disagree?

## **Activity**

### *Directions*

Read the two poems in silence. After reading in pairs or small groups, discuss the questions found following this activity.

#### *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.”

### *Discussion Questions for Poems 1 and 2*

- 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?

### *Discussion*

In addition to using our knowledge of English words and grammar, personal experiences and background knowledge help us understand text. First, look at Poem 2. Is this poem easy to understand? Is it easier or harder to understand than Poem 1? If you answered “easier,” what makes it easier? Discuss your answers with a partner or small group. Then, read our ideas about the reading below.

These poems may be easy to understand because we have personal experiences with winter or a rainy season. We may remember waiting for the snow or rain to stop when we were children. We did not want to go to school when it snowed or rained and get wet or cold on the way. If we did not have coats and umbrellas appropriate for the weather, we knew we would get wet or cold. Our personal experiences make these poems easy to understand. If we did not live in places with winter or a rainy season, we might have a harder time understanding these poems.

There is a second part in Poem 1 that may confuse us because it is cultural. Who is “she” in this poem? In many American families, it is common to have a pet (usually a dog) that lives in the house, like a member of the family. This dog is the “family pet.” To keep the house clean, pet owners take their dogs outside every day. The dog relieves itself outside the house. The idiom “to do her/his business” means to defecate or urinate. Poem 1 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.”

## Activity

### *Directions*

Re-read Poem 1 to see if you understand it. As you re-read, think about the ways in which personal experiences and knowledge help to understand a text. Talk with a partner or small group about these questions.

1. How can personal experience and knowledge help when reading?
2. What did you know about the rainy season that helped you understand Poem 2?
3. What did you know about winter that helped you understand Poem 1?
4. If you did not know anything about winter, did your partner or small group give you some information?
5. When you read the poems in silence, what did you understand?
6. 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?

### Discussion

Reading research tells us that knowledge including personal experiences, books, movies, or other materials we have read or seen can help us read. This type of knowledge is called “background knowledge.” Background knowledge is important to develop in order to improve our reading ability. It is not enough to be able to pronounce words correctly and read them out loud clearly, accurately, and with expression like we did in school. To read, we need our knowledge of language, 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. The “social interaction” we have with other people 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.

## Summary

### 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), 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 and conversations with others, we can create new, deeper meaning from texts.

This is the definition of reading we will use in this *Handbook*.

## Section References

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## STRATEGIES BEFORE READING

Each strategy in this section can be used before we begin reading a piece of writing. Some strategies can also be used while reading. To learn about and practice the strategies, complete the exercises in this section.

Keep in mind the following:

- Members may already know and use some of these strategies—that’s great!
- Members may find that some strategies are not unique or different and ask: Aren’t these strategies similar? Yes, in some cases, there are many similarities. Some are different. You can choose to use the strategies that make the most sense to you.
- Use the strategies you like before reading. It is not important to remember the name of each strategy.
- 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 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. For example, the text may contain information about the life and achievements of a well-known person. This indicates that the text will probably be categorized as an autobiography, which is a work of non-fiction. If the text that you are reading is found on a website specializing in the supernatural, the text would be classified as supernatural fiction.

Identifying the genre is important because we read genres differently. For example, we read non-fiction differently from fantasy. We read a poem differently from an advertisement. We read a letter differently from an obituary or horoscope or email.



## Activity

### *Directions*

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

- Comedy
- Fantasy
- Autobiography
- Biography
- Scientific Text
- Music Review
- Recipe
- Crime
- Mystery
- Horoscope
- Twitter Post
- Song Lyric
- Historical Romance

### *Discussion*

As a group, share the genres you added. Some texts may appear similar. Crime and mystery, for example, are 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.

## Activity

### *Directions*

Imagine that you have a romance novel and a recipe. In what ways do you think you would read these two differently? For example, where would you read them? How would you read them? Discuss your responses with a partner or in small groups.

### *Romance Novel*

Before reading a romance novel, you and your partner or small group may have decided that you would prepare yourselves by finding a quiet, comfortable place to read, perhaps lying on your bed or sitting in a comfortable chair. You might have a cup of tea and a plate of cookies. Or, you might walk to a park and sit 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 did not know. Then, after gathering the ingredients, you may re-read the recipe and begin to slowly follow the directions, step-by-step.

## Summary

To identify text style, we glance through the text, checking nouns and phrasing that might help us understand 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 understand how to read the text.

## Skimming/Scanning

Two strategies to use before reading, skimming and scanning, are similar because we do not read every word on a page. We glance through the text to find information.

When we skim, we want to get a general understanding of the text. We do not want details or specific information. 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. Read the directions and then complete the activity.

## Activity

### *Directions*

1. Members get into pairs or small groups and choose a Timekeeper. The Timekeeper should get ready to time the activity.

2. Members have ten seconds to skim [Members must remember to read only the first sentence of each paragraph]. The Timekeeper tells the Members when to start reading and when to stop.
3. After skimming, Members must answer these questions: What is this story about? Where do you think this story takes place? Is the story about language or people? Give a two- to three-word answer.
4. When each Member has shared an answer with your group, compare your answers with another group.

### *My Grandmother*

My grandmother came from a place that was always in dispute. She was a schoolteacher, 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 twenty-five, my grandmother came to Kinshasa, in the Democratic Republic of Congo. 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 ninety-one years old.

### Discussion

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, "My Grandmother." Complete the activity below.

### Activity

#### Directions

1. Members get into pairs or small groups and choose a Timekeeper.
2. Members 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 correct number, which will be one of these words:  
One Two Three Four Five Six Seven Eight Nine
4. The Timekeeper gives Members ten seconds to scan the story and find the answer to the question.
5. Members begin when everyone is ready and the Timekeeper says, "Start."

#### Discussion Questions

Did you find the number? What was it?

### Summary

For the strategies *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: Understanding New Words*). Members can choose either or 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 spellings and pronunciations <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 ten to fifteen percent of the words in a text, then this text is too difficult. Members should look for a text that is easier to read.

## Activity

### *Directions*

Take a piece of paper and pen/pencil [do NOT write in this *Handbook*]. In ten seconds, scan (in silence) the text below and write down the words that you are unfamiliar with. Remember: Scan—do NOT read the text.

### *Practice*

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.

### *Discussion*

How many words did you write down? Did you write down more than five words? There are approximately fifty words in this text. If there are more than five words you do not know, then this text is very difficult—too difficult to read in the Readers Club.

## Activity

### *Directions*

Take your paper and pen/pencil. In ten seconds, scan the text below and find words you do not know.



### Practice

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.

### Discussion

How many words did you write down? If you wrote down five words or fewer, 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 sections *Strategies while Reading: Understanding New Words* and *Strategies after Reading: Using New Words from Texts* in this *Handbook*.

## Summary

To use the strategy of *Looking for Vocabulary*, we scan 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, other languages we know, and our native/ mother tongue language—linguistic knowledge.

Let’s try to identify our background knowledge.

### Activity

#### *Directions*

Complete the activity with a partner or small group. Write down or say everything you can think of about the topic.

#### *Practice*

Imagine reading 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, or anywhere else. 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.

*Discussion Questions*

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.

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		

*Discussion*

By making this list, we have started to “activate” our background knowledge. Starting to use this knowledge will help us understand the topic and text more when we read.

Below are more words to practice “activating” (recalling) what we know. If you choose to make lists, compare your lists with other Members to see how much you know about each of these topics.

## Activity

### *Directions*

Below you will see three words. Identify what you know about each of these words academically, personally, and linguistically. Work individually and then compare your answers with a partner and/or small group. If you choose to make lists, compare your lists with other Members to see how much you know about each of these topics.

- Courage
- Railroad
- Ketchup

### *Discussion*

Using background knowledge is a great way to prepare to read.

## Summary

For the strategy of *Recalling 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 what will happen next, using our experiences. For example, if our mother or father always puts lots of ketchup in food, then we can predict with some accuracy that the food our mother or father will serve us tomorrow will have lots of ketchup in it. *Predicting* is similar to guessing.

Let's try predicting before reading.

## Activity

### Directions

Below are five titles of classic American texts. Try to predict what these titles might be about. Work alone, with a partner, or in a small group. Answer this question about each story title below: What do you think the story will be about?

### Practice

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

### Discussion

Let's read the following short summaries of the stories and see if your guesses are similar.

- *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 folk song 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 the text.



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 you 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. Below is a list of where to find them online:

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

[http://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource\\_files/design\\_for\\_drama.pdf](http://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/design_for_drama.pdf)

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

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

To 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>

## Summary

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 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. 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, or wondering about what we will read.

## Activity

### *Practice*

Imagine that your 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. Compare your list with another group. Write down any of the questions that they have that are different from your questions. When you have at least five questions, continue reading to see some of the questions the authors of this *Handbook* would ask.

### Discussion

Here is a list of the questions we asked.

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?
- Are you happy with the story and your writing?

### *Discussion*

We can use the questions above to help us read and find the answers. Some questions will have answers we will find and others may not. Either way, asking questions and reading to find the answers will help us become curious about reading. It will also help us understand the reading at a deeper level and become more thoughtful readers.

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

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

### Summary

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, and some strategies can be used after reading. To learn and practice the strategies, complete the activities.

Some strategies are not unique or different. Members may ask: Aren't these strategies similar? Yes, in some cases, there are similarities. This allows Members to use whichever strategy they like the most.

Remembering the name of each strategy is not important. Instead, Members should focus on using the strategies and thinking about them while reading.

Remember: Members pick and choose the strategy they want to learn or practice.

### 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, or visualize, what we are reading. We can visualize in our heads and/or on paper. When we create pictures, we can interact with 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. Don't worry about your drawing. Focus on whether or not your drawing represents the ideas in the story to you.

## Activity

### *Directions*

Below is a short text. Read in silence. While reading, sketch or draw the story. Do not look up any words.

### *Practice: 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 wrap dress 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?

### *Discussion*

When finished, share your sketch/drawing with a partner or small group. Talk about these questions: 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?

## Activity

### *Directions*

Read the text. This time, do not make a sketch on paper. Try to make a picture in your mind. Imagine what it would be like to be there.

### *Practice: My Grandmother*

By the time my grandmother was ninety, 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 dress that my mother and her sisters bought for her. She wrapped the belt of that dress two times around her thin, small body. My grandmother always carried a walking stick in her left hand. That stick fascinated me the most!

### *Discussion*

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.

## Activity

### *Directions*

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 this question: Which format do you prefer—drawing or making a picture in your “mind’s eye”? Explain to your partner or small group.

### *Discussion*

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 to different towns or cities, drawing a map can help readers understand and remember. Another type of drawing is a timeline or chart using information from the story. Members can brainstorm other kinds of visuals that can be helpful when reading.

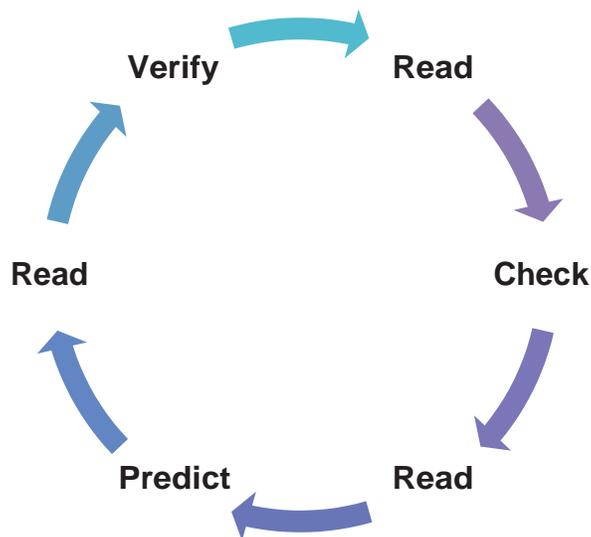


## Summary

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 of what we read.

## Checking for Understanding

This strategy is like a circle that continually turns. We predict, read, check our understanding, read, predict, and verify our predictions. Based on how accurate our predictions are, we might change or make new ones and read more. This cycle continues through the text. This process of reading is cyclical and unique to each reader. It is similar to the image below.



In the previous section, *Strategies before Reading*, the strategy called *Predicting* was introduced. This strategy requires us to read, guess what will come next, read to verify, change our prediction if needed, and continue reading. Prediction requires readers to monitor their own reading.

## Activity Part 1

### *Directions*

Below is a short text. In silence, read a line and predict what the next line will be about. Then, read the next line and verify your prediction. Follow this process until the end of the text. Do NOT look up new words.

### *Practice: The Warden*

I wear a suit of grey and white,  
that helps me disappear in the shallows.

I patrol my area day and night,  
watching from the shadows.

I am known for a terrifying bite  
to those in my Pacific Ocean home.

I am a Great White.



## Activity Part 2

### *Directions*

In pairs, re-read this text out loud. One person should read the poem while the other person reads the words in purple. The purple text is composed of predictions, checks, and verifications of the reader thinking while reading a new poem. As you read, think about this question: What is the reader doing to understand the text?

### *Practice: The Warden*

I think a warden is a man or woman who runs or controls a jail or prison. Being a warden is a powerful position. I predict that this poem will be about someone powerful and strong.

I wear a suit of grey and white, OK. This is probably the uniform of the warden.

that helps me disappear in the shallows. Wait, disappear in the shallows? This is not a prison guard. “The shallows” refers to the water. What is grey and white that lives in the water? Is this a kind of fish or whale?

I patrol my area day and night, The use of the word “patrol” seems like this fish is either really dangerous or territorial. I wonder if it is a shark.

watching from the shadows. This language sounds like some kind of predator. I believe this must be about a type of shark. What kind of shark is grey and white?

I am known for a terrifying bite Great white sharks are scary and have big bites. I wonder if this is about a great white shark.

to those in my Pacific Ocean home. So, they live in the ocean. Great whites live in the ocean.

I am a Great White. Ha! I was right. It is about a great white shark. But why is the poem called “The Warden”? That must be the name of the shark.

### *Discussion*

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. If the text is not easy, then the reader may take more time, ask more questions, and check more often to verify predictions.

The more 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.

## Activity

### Directions

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 *Handbook*). Then, write your thoughts next to the words as you read. Share with a partner or small group.

### Practice: *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 people 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 man dug into his pocket—pulled out 50 U.S. Dollars.

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 100 U.S. Dollars.”

## Summary

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 he or she reads. 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.

## 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 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 are the text or characters in the text similar to other texts 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 are the text or characters in the text different from other texts I have read?	What events in this text are different from the real world?



Let's practice finding and making connections.

## Activity

### Directions

Read the text 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 or re-reading *Strategies while Reading: Understanding New Words* at the next Club meeting.

### Practice: My Grandmother

By the time my grandmother was ninety, 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 dress that my mother and her sisters bought for her. She wrapped the belt of that dress twice around her thin, small body. My grandmother always carried a walking stick in her left hand. That stick fascinated me the most!

### Discussion

When you finish reading, share with a partner or small group the connections 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 the way we create meaning that is important because it helps us read better.

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



## Summary

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 three 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 schoolbooks, 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 do not know all the words. In fact, if we know ninety percent 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 do not understand? There are several answers to this question.

When we find a word we do not 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 Vocabulary*)
- Ask a friend or English speaker to explain the word
- Make an intelligent guess ...
  - Look for familiar word parts
  - Use context clues
  - Use personal knowledge of experience

Let's practice using each of these strategies with words from a text.

## Activity

### *Directions Part 1*

Read the text below but do not look up any new words. Do not talk with anyone about the words you do not know. Please work alone and in silence.

### *Practice*

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.

### Directions Part 2

Now, get a pencil/pen and paper. Read the text (in silence). Write down the words you do not know. (Do NOT write in the *Handbook*.)

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. In other words, which of the words can we not know the meaning of and still understand the sentence. 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 understand the basic meaning. Because we have this knowledge, we can skip this word.

Let's try the second word, unlike. If we read the words that come after unlike, "... the other fish, however, its beautiful body glistened ...," can we guess what unlike means? The words give away fewer clues to help us understand the meaning, 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 write this word down 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

By Looking 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. For example, 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	Context
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 very well. For example, we know that -ed is used to show past tense. The suffix -ly is used to show characteristic. Therefore, the word lively means “the characteristic of live.” We can make an intelligent guess that the characteristic of “live” is energetic, animated, and 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 and valuable can be linked to the word families red and value. This means we can use two different words parts, suffixes and 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 Knowledge of Experience

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 does not have to be accurate—it just has to be an idea, a suggestion. Try to guess what these words mean without looking below. 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 or caught fish 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.

Advice: It will take time to become comfortable using some of these strategies. Members can help each other as they read by reminding each other about different ways to understand new words.

## Activity

### *Directions Part 1*

Let's try one more text that we have previously read. Use some of the strategies presented here to find the meanings of words. 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.

*Practice: My Grandmother*

By the time my grandmother was ninety, 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 dress that my mother and her sisters bought for her. She wrapped the belt of that dress twice around her thin, small body. My grandmother always carried a walking stick in her left hand. That stick fascinated me the most!

*Directions Part 2*

When finished reading, guess the meanings of the new words with a partner or small group. Then, read the example of the thoughts of an imaginary reader about the new words. The imaginary reader's thoughts are in purple. Compare the imaginary reader's decisions about the new words with yours.

*Practice: My Grandmother*

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

By the time my grandmother was ninety, she looked very, very old. **Wow! She is older than my grandmother** Her weathered, chocolate brown skin **So, she is biologically African** was as smooth as 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 yellow 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** My grandmother always wore the blue dress that my mother and her sisters bought for her. She wrapped the belt of that dress twice around her thin, small body. 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!

### Discussion

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.

### Summary

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

1. Skip the word.
2. Note the word and check for meaning later.
3. Look the word up in a dictionary or online.
4. Ask a friend or English speaker to explain the word.
5. Make an intelligent guess:
  - a. Look for word parts: beginnings of words (see chart of prefixes), word endings (see chart of suffixes), and word families (look for word parts we know)
  - b. Use context clues
  - c. Use personal knowledge of experience



## 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 and practice using them, do the activities.

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 after 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.

### 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 from researcher Constance Weaver (1994) for talking after reading. Most ideas require Members to be creative and imaginative.

1. Members create *Asking Information Questions and Answers*. These questions check for information in the text by asking questions starting with: Who, What, When, Where, and How. Members then guess possible answers.
2. Members have *Thinking Conversations* (Weaver, 1994) about the text. These conversations encourage Members to make inferences and connections about the text.
3. Members *Do a Role-play* about the text (see *Using Drama with Texts*).
4. Members *Interview the Author* about the text.
5. Members *Interview the Characters* [in the story—and beyond the story].
6. Members *Talk Back* (Weaver, 1994) to a character.
7. Members *Present a Commercial* about the text.

Let's practice each idea using the following text, "The Family Secret."

### Directions

First, read “The Family Secret” in silence. When finished, practice using each of the seven strategies mentioned above with a partner or small group. Members check answers with the text to be sure they are correct. When finished, read the following sections to check your work.

### Practice: *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 wrap dress 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?

## Asking Information Questions and Answers

Information questions should begin with the words: Who, What, When, Where, and How. The questions are then answered.

Here are examples of information questions Members could have asked about the previous text:

- How did the sister enter the room?
- What did she do with the door?
- What furniture was in the room?
- Who hid the money?
- Where was the book?
- Was the book open or closed?
- What color were the flip-flops?
- What is a *Batta*?

After practicing this activity, Members can talk about these questions: How many information questions 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 *Strategies 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 the 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 your favorite sentence].

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 *Strategies after Reading* activities.

## Activity

### *Directions*

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 have read, and our real-world experiences.

## Doing Role-plays

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 by identifying which characters in the story Members will play and which event they will be role-playing. Then, reenact the story. You can use your imagination during the reenactment.
- 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.

## Activity

### *Directions*

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 the role-play in private.
4. When prepared, present the role-play to Members.

### Discussion

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 *Doing Role-plays*: 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 using your imagination to fill in the information you do not know. For example, the sisters argue with their parents. One sister wants money to start a business, and the other sister, who has the money, wants to use the money to help their parents. Role-play the argument and 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 between the sister and her boyfriend.
- 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, catching her in the act of taking the money. They have a fight. Role-play the fight.

### Interviewing the Author

One Member pretends to be the author of the text. All other Members are interviewers—journalists from radio or television. Interviewers ask the author questions. The Member pretending to be the author answers as if he or she wrote the text. Or, if possible, a Member looks for information about the author and answers the Members’ questions based on what he or she learned about the author and what he or she believes the author would say.

## Activity

### Directions

To practice *Interviewing 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?

Here is an example of *Interviewing 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 in Malawi and went to university in Russia 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? *Interviewing the Author* can be paired with other *Strategies after Reading* activities.

## Interviewing the Characters

Similar to *Interviewing the Author*, Members volunteer to be characters in a story. Other Members interview the characters. Members use imagination and creativity in the interview. Practice this strategy below.

## Activity

### Directions

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 answers.
4. All Members use imagination and creativity.

### Discussion

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

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

When Members are finished, they can discuss if this is an interesting activity to do in the Club when reading other texts. *Interviewing the Characters* can be paired with other *Strategies after Reading* activities.

## Talking Back

Similar to *Doing Role-plays*, Members volunteer to be characters in the text. Other Members talk back to the characters in the text. Members can express emotions about the other characters and get angry at the characters, disagree, or shout! 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 ...

## Activity

### *Directions*

Members volunteer to be characters in “The Family Secret.” Other Members talk back to the characters and the characters answer.

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

## Presenting 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 Members. Now, read and do the next activity.

## Activity

### *Directions*

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.

When partners or small groups are ready, they present the commercials to all Members.

### Discussion

When all the commercials are presented, 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? Would you like to do this activity again? This activity can be paired with other *Strategies after Reading* activities.

### Summary

Readers understand texts in different ways. The reading process is different for each reader because we each bring our personal experiences, knowledge of English, and knowledge of the real world to every text that we read. Talking about texts helps readers extend their understanding and knowledge about the text by comparing their thoughts and ideas. A text might mean different things for different readers, and talking about the texts makes reading more pleasurable.

### Section Reference

Weaver, Constance. *Reading Process and Practice: From Socio-Psycholinguistics to Whole Language*. 2nd ed., Heinemann, 1994.

## Writing about Texts

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

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

- Members write *Information Questions and Answers*. 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.

### Activity Part 1



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

### *Practice: The Dance*

The silence before a dancer goes on stage is at once exhilarating and terrifying. A dancer is waiting backstage at the Youth America Grand Prix, where it is a competition of life or death for the ballet dancer's career. The judges sitting in the front row award scholarships to the top dance schools in the world. This competition will change a dancer's life. For those who make it, they will become professional ballet dancers.

"Michaela DePrince" is announced over the loudspeaker. She takes off her warm-up leggings. The judges get their pens and papers ready. The audience, aware of the stakes for the ballet dancer, sits in silence, waiting. Hundreds of eyes focus on the stage. Backstage, the dancer, Michaela, feels the pregnant pause.

Michaela is waiting in the wings. She jumps up and down to keep her muscles warm before going onto the stage. Michaela is waiting for the chords to her music to sound. Every time her right foot hits the stage, she winces in pain. She has a serious injury called tendonitis. One wrong move and this injury will end her career and dream of becoming a ballerina.

## 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 activity below. When finished, continue reading.

### *Directions*

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"?

### *Discussion*

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

### Activity

#### *Directions*

With a partner or small group, write a role-play using “The Dance.” Use one of the ideas above or your own idea. Begin by identifying the characters in the role-play and the Member(s) who will write the role-play. Members should write the role-play together. When finished, Members present the role-play to the group. (See *Talking about Texts* for more ideas about role-plays).

After Members write their role-plays, Members should decide if they liked writing role-plays and if this is an interesting activity for the Club to do with other texts.

## Different Genres

### Activity

#### *Directions*

Alone, with a partner, or as a small group, Members select a genre that they would like to use. Then they write in the genre using the text as the “backdrop” 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 Text Style* for additional information if needed).

Novel	Non-Fiction Text	Advertisement	Recipe
Comic Book	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	Letter	Twitter Post	Map
Romance Novel	Memoir	Poetry (rhymes, concrete, free-verse)	Magazine Article

Practice writing in a different genre.

## Activity

### Directions

Members decide to work alone, with a partner, or in a small group. Next, Members choose a genre they would like to use to write a short text using the characters or events from “The Dance.” The genre can be from the list above or another not listed. Members write using the genre, characters, and event. When Members finish, they choose to read their writing out loud or give their writing to another Member who reads it.

### Discussion

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.

### Discussion Questions

1. Did you enjoy writing? If yes, why? If no, why not?
2. What was easy to do—choosing a character, 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.

Below are two examples of different genres of writing. Each text is about the dancer in the short story biography called “The Dance.” The first example uses the writing style: Tweet/Twitter Post. It is about a performance that the writer saw with the young, beautiful dancer. The tweet takes place in 2017, several years after “The Dance.”

### *Tweet*

Tweet: @Michdeprince #rocks the dance world in another feat of #dancingmagic. Crushing it at the #DutchNationalOperaandBallet

The second example (below) is also based upon “The Dance.” It uses the writing style: Newspaper Dance Review. The review discusses an event that occurs several years after “The Dance.”

### *Newspaper Dance Review*

A Beguiling Black Swan

June 19, 2013

Michaela DePrince has it all—beautiful presence on stage, stunning technique, and, after yesterday’s performance as Odile, the Black Swan, our hearts. Performing in the Ted Shawn Theater at Jacob’s Pillow, Michaela danced the two-act pas de deux partnered with the majestic Samuel Wilson as the prince. The Dance Theatre of Harlem cast the dance perfectly, as it began with Michaela as the delightfully evil Odile, daughter of sorcerer Von Rothbart, working her magic to lure the prince away from his true love, the White Swan, Odette.

Earlier in the season, Michaela’s performance was technically perfect, but her inherent sweetness unconvincing as the cunning, manipulative Black Swan. Something has changed. When Michaela danced last night, she was terrifying as the seductress Odile captivating the prince. Over the course of the summer tour, she has transformed from Michaela dancing as the character to becoming Odile.

As partners, Samuel Wilson and Michaela DePrince perfectly complemented each other. So wrapped up in the incredible performance and on-stage chemistry between the two, one was almost left rooting for the prince and the evil Odile. Tickets are still on sale for their final performance, June 21, 2013.

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

## Summary

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. The act of writing about texts helps extend readers' understanding and knowledge about the text. 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. 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. Creating new ideas is great!

Here are some ideas for *Using Drama with Texts*. These ideas require us 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 below.



## Activity

### *Directions*

When we use drama to develop our understanding of a reading, there are several steps we should follow. Here are the steps for *Using Drama with Texts*:

1. Choose the type of drama to perform;
2. Plan the drama;
3. Practice the drama;
4. Evaluate the drama;
5. Modify the drama as needed;
6. Practice the drama again if necessary;
7. Perform the drama for an audience.

These steps help to make the drama stronger. They also model good writing practice with planning, writing, evaluating, rewriting, and evaluating again. First, read the full biographical story “The Dance” below. Read in silence or with a partner or small group. Use “The Dance” with the activities in this section.

### *Practice: The Dance*

The silence before a dancer goes on stage is at once exhilarating and terrifying. A dancer is waiting backstage at the Youth America Grand Prix, where it is a competition of life or death for her ballet career. The judges sitting in the front row award scholarships to the top dance schools in the world. This competition may change her life. If she makes it, she will have the chance to become a professional ballet dancer. She waits in silence for her name to be called.

“Michaela DePrince” is announced over the loudspeaker. She takes off her warm-up leggings. The judges get their pens and papers ready. Everyone waits for them. The audience, aware of the stakes for the ballet dancer, sits in silence. Hundreds of eyes focus on the stage. Backstage, the dancer, Michaela, feels the pregnant pause.

She is waiting for the chords of her music to sound. In the wings of the stage, Michaela jumps up and down to keep her muscles warm. Every time her right foot hits the stage, she winces in pain. She has a serious injury called tendonitis. One wrong move and this injury will end her career and dream of becoming a ballerina.

Her dream to become a professional dancer was considered audacious for those who knew Michaela as orphan number twenty-seven in Sierra Leone. The civil war claimed her biological parents, and her uncle sold her to an orphanage immediately after their deaths. The staff was afraid of her because she had spotty pigmentation on her upper body. Unaware that this is a non-communicable skin condition called vitiligo, the orphanage staff feared that the strong-willed three-year-old was possessed.

Michaela was not possessed. As the brightest of the children, she would create games for the orphans to play to pass the time. She spoke five languages and could already write in Arabic due to her father's homeschooling and faith in her academic abilities.

While Michaela had been deeply loved and protected by her parents, life at the orphanage was hard. It grew harder when the rebels started attacking their city. The orphans lived in constant hunger and fear that the orphanage would be attacked.

One day, Michaela was standing at the gates of the orphanage during a windstorm when a ballet magazine hit her in the face. The three-year-old pulled the magazine from her face and gazed at the image of a happy ballerina on the cover. She thought to herself: "I want to be happy like this. I want to be a ballerina." She tore the cover off the magazine and carefully stored the photo in her underwear, the only item of clothing she owned.

The photo represented hope. Not long after, rebels killed her favorite teacher and almost killed her when Michaela tried to save her teacher. One of the night watchmen at the orphanage saved her life. After her teacher's death, Michaela was devastated. Becoming a ballerina became her only hope.

Several months later, Michaela and her best friend, orphan number twenty-six, were adopted by an American family. In the hotel room with her new American mom, her best friend already asleep, Michaela showed her mom the picture of the ballerina and pointed to herself. Her new mother understood her dream, and they worked as a family to get Michaela to the Youth America Grand Prix competition for a chance to become a professional.

Michaela thought about this now as she waited, holding her breath, for the music to begin. The first chord of music sounded, and she leapt onto the stage, the pain in her foot displaced by adrenaline. For three minutes she smiled, leapt, spun, and moved with breathtaking grace and beauty. The judges smiled. The audience broke into loud cheers and clapped their hands loudly to praise her performance when she stopped dancing.

The pain came back when she got backstage, and Michaela grimaced. Though the pain was intense, she felt happy. Several hours later, her dream came true with a scholarship to study for a year at the Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis School at the American Ballet Theatre. Her hard work, belief in herself, and talent helped her achieve her dreams.

Now working as a professional dancer and inspirational speaker, her message to the world is: Life is not a fairy tale. Believe in yourself and keep working hard towards your dreams. Everyone has a right to dream.

Next, complete the activities that follow. Remember to use “The Dance” with all the activities in this section.

## Role-play, Skit, or Drama

To create a *Role-play, Skit, or Drama*, Members select a section of “The Dance” and decide how they would like to present it (they can turn back to the section on role-plays on page 58 for help if needed).

Let’s try!

### Activity

#### *Directions*

With a partner or in a small group, decide to orally present or write a role-play. Next, choose an event and characters in “The Dance” to use in the role-play. Once the event and characters are chosen, finalize the plan of the role-play and practice performing it. Evaluate the practice performance. What went well? What should be changed to make the story easier to follow? If someone was watching this for the first time, would he or she be able to understand the skit? Make appropriate adjustments to the role-play. When ready, perform the role-play for the group.

#### *Discussion*

After the performance(s), Members talk about their experience creating a role-play using the questions below. Members talk about whether or not they enjoyed the activity of creating a role-play, not about the individual role-plays the groups performed.

### Discussion Questions

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 these texts?
6. Did you have fun?
7. Would you like to use this activity in another 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 activity with an imaginary conversation between Michaela and her mother after she performed in "The Dance."

## Activity

### Directions

1. Choose a Leader.
2. The Leader divides Members into two groups.
3. The Leader assigns the character Michaela to Group One and assigns the character Michaela's mother to Group Two.
4. Each group practices reading their dialogue.
5. When the groups are ready, the Leader begins the *Choral Reading*. Each group of Members reads each character's dialogue with one voice.

### Practice: Choral Reading

Michaela has just come backstage after her performance and sees her mother in the hallway. They embrace.



Read the script below out loud as a group:

Mom:	Michaela! That was fantastic. I stopped breathing. I don't think I breathed during the entire time you were on stage. Now I'm gasping for breath.
Michaela:	Thanks, Mom! Did you like it?
Mom:	Like it? I loved it. It's the best I've ever seen you dance. Your timing was perfect. How's your foot?
Michaela:	The dance felt good, but I was so worried about my foot. But when I got on stage, all my pain disappeared. I felt nothing, like I wasn't even myself. I'm so happy!
Mom:	Me too, honey. Now, let's go put some ice on your leg to reduce the swelling. The judges are still watching other dancers. We've got to wait till tomorrow for the news of the scholarships.
Michaela:	Thanks, Mom. I'm not really nervous anymore. I know that I did my best. I felt it.
Mom:	Good. OK honey, lean on me as we walk down this hall. Try not to put too much weight on your foot. Your sister, Mia, is waiting in the dressing room.
Michaela:	Perfect! I can't wait to share this with her. Is there any way we can go out for a little celebration?
Mom:	Of course!

### *Discussion Questions*

After the performance, Members talk about their experiences using the questions below.

1. Do you like this activity? 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 these texts?
5. Did you have fun?
6. Would you like to use this activity in a Club meeting? Explain.

As a follow-up activity, the group can choose another imaginary scene inspired by “The Dance” or another reading and create their own dialogue to perform.

## 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 activity below—using “The Dance”—to create and perform a *Role Drama*.

## Activity

### Directions

1. Choose a Leader.
2. Choose a problem that one (or more) of the characters experience in “The Dance.”
3. Create a scene that presents different events, or more ideas about the problem.
4. Working with the Leader, Members plan the drama, practice performing the drama, and revise the drama.
5. Perform the *Role Drama* for the group, or invite friends and family to be an audience.
6. Evaluate the performance. Discuss what went well and what could be improved.

### Discussion Questions

After the performance, Members talk about the activity using the questions below.

1. What are your reactions to this activity?
2. Do you like it? Why?
3. What kinds of texts would you use this activity for?
4. What are the advantages or disadvantages of using these texts?
5. Did you have fun?
6. 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 the story using body movements and facial expressions in silence. Vocal sounds can be used, but no words are spoken. To perform a pantomime, or mime, a narrator reads a passage and actors perform the actions in silence. Let's try!

## Activity

### Directions

1. One Member volunteers to be the narrator. This person reads the text.
2. Members volunteer to each be a character in "The Dance."
  - a. Michaela
  - b. A judge (there are six judges)
  - c. Another dancer
  - d. Her best friend and sister, Mia
  - e. Michaela's teacher
  - f. The workers at the orphanage
  - g. Her biological mother
  - h. Her biological father
  - i. Her biological uncle
  - j. Her mother
  - k. Her father
3. As the narrator reads the text, each volunteer Member acts out the story.
4. Members practice the pantomime.
5. Members perform the pantomime for other Members or another audience.

### Discussion Questions

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 or why not?
3. What kinds of texts would you use this activity for?
4. What are the advantages or disadvantages of using these texts?
5. Did you have fun?
6. Would you like to use this activity in a Club meeting? How might you use it? What text would you like to use?

### 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 Dance.”

#### *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 Dance.”

*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, or does physical movements that will help other Members guess where the volunteer Member is pretending to be located. For example, if the Member pretends to be in a bowling alley, the Member would pretend to bowl the bowling ball at the pins. When a Member correctly guesses where the Member is pretending to be, then a different volunteer can choose a new place and the game begins again.

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

*Discussion Questions*

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 Members find interesting.

## Summary

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 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!

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## 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 texts.

These strategies can be used with the activities we tried in the previous sections of this book. Members may discover or create additional ways to use new words from texts. Members can 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.

### Activity

#### Directions

First, read the text below and note new words. Then, use your word list to practice these strategies (with the first part of “The Dance”).

#### Practice: The Dance

The silence before a dancer goes on stage is at once *exhilarating* and *terrifying*. A dancer is waiting *backstage* at the Youth America Grand Prix, where it is a *competition* of life or death for her *ballet* career. The judges sitting in the front row award *scholarships* to the top dance schools in the world. This competition may change her life. If she *makes it*, she will have the chance to become a professional ballet dancer. She waits in silence for her name to be called.

“Michaela DePrince” is *announced* over the loudspeaker. She takes off her warm-up leggings. The *judges* get their pens and papers ready. Everyone waits for them. The *audience*, aware of the *stakes* for the ballet dancer, sits in silence. Hundreds of eyes focus on the stage. Back-stage, the dancer, Michaela, feels the *pregnant pause*.

She is waiting for the chords of her music to sound. In the *wings* of the stage, Michaela jumps up and down to keep her muscles warm. Every time her right foot hits the stage, she *winces* in pain. She has a serious injury called *tendonitis*. One wrong move and this injury will end her career and dream of becoming a ballerina.

## Vocabulary

Here are the meanings of the words noted above:

Exhilarating	To cause someone to feel very happy and excited—usually used as (be) exhilarated
Terrifying	Causing great fear
Backstage	Behind the stage of a theater
Competition	The activity of trying to get or win something (such as a prize or a higher level of success) that someone else is also trying to get or win
Ballet	A kind of dancing that is performed on a stage and that uses dance, music, costumes, and scenery to tell a story; female dancers wear special shoes called toe shoes that have a hard, rounded top that dancers can stand on; male dancers wear ballet shoes without the toe support
Scholarship(s)	An amount of money that is given by a school, person, or an organization to a student to help pay for the student's education
To make it	To succeed
Announced	To make something known in a public or formal way; to officially tell people about something
Judges	People who form an opinion about something or someone after careful thought
Audience	A group of people who gather together to listen to something (such as a concert) or watch something (such as a movie or play); the people who attend a performance

Stakes	Something that you could win or lose in a game, contest, or competition
Pregnant pause	A temporary stop in action or speech that builds up suspension for the listener/viewer for dramatic effect
Wings	The area that conceals the sides of the stage from the audience; wings may be used for actors or dancers to enter and exit the stage
Wince(s)	To have an expression on your face for a very short time which shows that you are embarrassed or in pain
Tendonitis	A painful condition in which a tendon in your arm, leg, or elsewhere becomes inflamed

## 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 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 Members to remember.

The 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 activity below with a partner.

## Activity

### *Dictionary*

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.
5. Write the meaning of the new word and an example of the new word in a sentence in the right column.
6. Choose another new word and repeat Steps 4 and 5.

### *Discussion Questions*

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 for encouraging Members to use new words. Using new words is the best way to learn them.



### *Word Games*

There are many Word Games that 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 ten words (or as many as they like) and look for different categories for them.

### Activity

#### *Directions*

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 additional 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.

### Activity

#### *Directions*

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 fifteen words—a total of thirty 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 papers.

## Summary

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 three new words at each meeting.



## STRATEGIES FOR VIEWING

This section introduces 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 powerful messages in powerful ways. It is important that we understand the power and importance of visuals. It is equally important that Members learn to critique visuals as carefully as they do text.

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



### Activity

#### Directions

Look at the image and discuss the questions with a partner or small group.

- What does this image mean?
- How do you know?
- Did you focus on the red color? Explain why or why not.
- Did you focus on the octagon shape (eight-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 experiences or personal knowledge?
- Did you use color, size, shape, and letters?
- Did you think about a story you read? Which one, for example?

### *Discussion*

When viewing this image, we see color, shape, and letters. We probably used all of these to help us with this visual. 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 color, shape, and our previous experiences or knowledge. We use all of these ideas when we read and when we view images.

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, and “yellow” is happiness. “Red” can be passion, love, fire, the Devil, or hatred. Other colors convey different moods. It is also not always true that these colors only convey one feeling.

## Activity

### *Directions*

1. With a partner or small group, make a list of the types of juices in your local supermarket.
2. For each type of juice, think about the color used in the advertisements. For example, what color is used when advertising orange juice (or pomegranate juice)?
3. Now, talk about these questions: What do these colors suggest? What message is the juice company trying to tell its customers about their juice?

### *Discussion*

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 activity.

## Activity

### *Directions*

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



Image One



Image Two



Image Three

Most people agree that Image One 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 Two suggests power. We are looking up at the house. The angle suggests the house is big and we are small. In Image Three, we are looking down at the dog. This suggests that the dog is not strong. We, the viewers, are strong.

## Size and Distance

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

## Activity

### Directions

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



Image One



Image Two



Image Three



Image Four

### Discussion

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 One: 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 middle and left side of the image. This keeps us looking at the image, absorbed. The color of the image is mainly blue. We can see a bright blue sky and deep blue water speckled with ice. The color of the sky is also reflected in the buildings, leaving the viewer to feel that it is a cold environment. Luckily, there's a sense of warmth coming from the red-toned buildings, making the city more accessible and friendly. This leaves the viewer feeling that while literally cold, the city might be full of welcoming people and a hub of activity.

Image Two: This image may also give the feeling of distance, but our eyes focus on the birds in the photo. The white and tan colors of the birds, coupled with the orange of their beaks, draw our attention. It's clearly wintertime and chilly because there is no grass or leaves, but the birds have formed a community (flock), which gives the image a sense of well-being in spite of the sky, which looks as if it might snow or rain. Our eyes are drawn to the middle of the birds, because the right and left sides are slightly out of focus. The birds look like they are communicating with each other, which enforces a sense of community. The brown and red colors of the photo also project a sense of warmth.

Image Three: This is another distance photo. There is no action, no focus, no movement, except the light reflecting off the snow, which gives a sense of movement and liveliness even though nothing is moving. The trees in the distance draw our eye, but do not give us a feeling that the trees are important. Our eyes may also be drawn to the house covered in snow in the distance, but we do not get a feeling that the house is important either. There's no evidence of life. The sun sparkling off snow gives a sense of cold tranquility.

Image Four: In contrast to Image Three, this photo suggests that the tree is important. The tree takes up most of the photo and is clearly the focus. We can see snow covering the tree and bathed in the pale pink light of the morning sun. The pink and purple hues of the photo give a sense of hope and lightness because they seem to be pushing back against the cold blue of the tree. In the distance, we can make out a farmhouse and barn also covered in snow and bathed in the beautiful morning sunlight. We imagine that all is right with the world and the people are snug

with a cup of tea, watching the morning sun slowly rise. The image draws our eye to the right. When we look to the right, it is as if we are getting ready to “turn a page,” and our eyes (and our brains) may ask, “What is coming next?”

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 visuals. Using all the information about viewing, let’s critique the following visuals from around the world—and websites of the U.S. Department of State’s English Language Programs.



Image One



Image Two



Image Three



Image Four



Image Five



Image Six



Image Seven



Image Eight



Image Nine



Image Ten



Image Eleven



### Discussion

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

## 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 and images. The third column has only images.

PRINT-ONLY TEXTS	COMBINATION PRINT/ IMAGES	IMAGES ONLY
Novels	Newspaper Articles	Photos
Short Stories	Magazine Articles	Artwork
Biographies	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	Calendars	
Non-fiction Books	Maps	
Information Books	Charts and Graphs	
Skits	Catalogs	
Plays/Dramas	Websites	

PRINT-ONLY TEXTS	COMBINATION PRINT/ IMAGES	IMAGES ONLY
	Horoscopes	
	Advertisements	
	Commercials	

## Places to Look for Texts and 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 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 Members become aware of these opportunities for reading and viewing, 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.

## Activity

### *Directions*

#### Steps for Searching Online

1. Go to a search engine;
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 sites and make decisions about which websites are interesting to read and talk about.

### Practice

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

1. Go to a search engine.
2. Let's look for texts and/or images about musicians. Choose your favorite musician and enter the name. For example, try typing: Musician Beyoncé.
3. Check the first five 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 Members to read.

### Discussion

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

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beyoncé>

<http://www.beyonce.com>

<https://www.instagram.com/beyonce/?hl=en>

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

Here are a few tips about some of the websites.

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

Instagram—a photo site that posts photos and short video clips.

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. It must be noted that sites in the following lists are not comprehensive, nor do they represent the policy objectives of the U.S. government. 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 United States, 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 United States. <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](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](http://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resolutions_game_0.pdf)
- The month of January has an important holiday for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. To learn more about him and his life, visit this website. [http://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource\\_files/martinlutherkingday.pdf](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 & Valentine's Day

### 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](http://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/blackhistorymonth.pdf)
- 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/>

### Valentine's Day

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](http://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/valentinesday.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 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 United States 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, maintained by the U.S. Department of State's Office of English Language Programs, gives information and ideas about Women's History Month.  
[http://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource\\_files/womenshistorymonth.pdf](http://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/womenshistorymonth.pdf)
- These websites give information about Women's Rights in the United States and the world. How do these movements compare to those in your country?  
<https://www.nps.gov/wori/learn/historyculture/womens-rights-movement.htm>  
<https://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment/addressing-gender-programming/strengthening-womens>
- Think of a popular female journalist in your country and find an article or website about this person.

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.

- Save your waterways! This website from the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center presents steps that you can take to fight climate change.  
<http://ecosystems.serc.si.edu/take-action/>
- The National Museum of American History and the Smithsonian Gardens teach how to grow victory gardens.  
<http://www.gardens.si.edu/come-learn/docs/Grow%20Your%20Own%20Victory%20Garden.pdf>
- Greenhouse gasses impact the Earth’s atmosphere, and the National Museum of Natural History shows how on their interactive website.  
<http://forces.si.edu/atmosphere/index.html>
- Can young people make an impact on climate change? Visit this page to find out! <https://share.america.gov/we-need-your-help-fighting-climate-change/>
- This website gives tips from the National Museum of Natural History on what actions you can take to be a steward of the ocean.  
<http://ocean.si.edu/ocean-news/5-simple-things-you-can-do-ocean>
- This website stays up-to-date with wonderful news stories about the environment and our world.  
<https://share.america.gov/theme/theme-environment/>

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. The first day of May, May Day, is a day for many people in the Western hemisphere to welcome the start of spring. People are happy that winter has 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 United States. Americans also remember all the military people who died while serving to defend the United States. Here are a few websites that have information, images, and interesting articles about these holidays and the themes of war and peace.

- This Voice of America News article shows recent May Day celebrations worldwide.  
<http://www.voanews.com/content/rallies-mark-may-day-around-the-world/2744314.html>
- This link is an article with photos that explains the Memorial Day holiday.  
[http://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource\\_files/memorialday.pdf](http://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/memorialday.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:

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

## June: Food & Health

In the United States, 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.

- Which foods are healthier to eat than others? Visit this website to learn more about healthy foods.  
<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/>
- 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.whatscooking.fns.usda.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,” or “Games” to find more information:

- Health, Mind
- Body Health, Exercise
- Meditation
- Nutrition, Food, Diet

## July: Independence & Freedom

In the United States and many other countries, there is a day when people celebrate their nation’s freedom. July 4th 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](http://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/independenceday.pdf)
- This website gives more information about this holiday.  
[http://www.americaslibrary.gov/jb/modern/jb\\_modern\\_independ\\_1.html](http://www.americaslibrary.gov/jb/modern/jb_modern_independ_1.html)
- 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>



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. Here are websites that have information, images, and interesting articles to read and talk about.

- This website gives lots of information and articles about American art and culture.  
<https://www.voanews.com/z/602>
- This website gives information about American art and some of the most famous paintings by American artists.  
<http://picturingamerica.neh.gov/>
- You can see many online exhibits and learn more about the premier museum system in the United States by visiting the Smithsonian Institution.  
<http://www.si.edu/>

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 most parts of the United States 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.

- Use this U.S. government website to find information and ideas about different career options.  
<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/>
- On this website you can learn many things about applying to study and studying in the United States.  
<https://educationusa.state.gov/>
- 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 Employment] articles
- Education [or Employment] quotes
- Education [or Employment] 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.

- Listen to this conversation about volunteering. What do you do in your community?  
<https://share.america.gov/everyday-conversations-lets-volunteer/>
- This website is hosted by a university in the United States. 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/what-is-service/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>

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](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 what many American families do on this day.

[http://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource\\_files/thanksgivingday.pdf](http://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/thanksgivingday.pdf)

- This website explains the Native American tradition called the “powwow.”

[http://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource\\_files/nativeamericanpowwows.pdf](http://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/nativeamericanpowwows.pdf)

- This website is for the 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,” or “Poetry.” Also try “Foods,” “Recipes,” “Famous Quotes,” or “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, a group, or an 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.

- Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1932, 1934, 1941  
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/1600/presidents/franklindroosevelt>
- Martin Luther King, Jr., 1963  
[http://www.americaslibrary.gov/aa/king/aa\\_king\\_subj.html](http://www.americaslibrary.gov/aa/king/aa_king_subj.html)
- The Computer (Machine of the Year), 1982  
<http://americanhistory.si.edu/comphist/>
- The Endangered Earth (Planet of the Year), 1988  
<https://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/environment-and-global-climate-change>
- The Peacemakers (Palestine, Israel, South Africa), 1993  
<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1993-2000/oslo>  
<http://www.voanews.com/content/remembering-nelson-mandela/1804730.html>
- The Ebola Fighters, 2014  
<https://share.america.gov/ebola-west-africa-goal-zero/>

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 all Africa]
- 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 Members. When visiting these links, look for other articles that may be interesting and share them with Members.

- 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 your location on Voice of America by visiting this link. <http://www.voanews.com/>
- Do you think American English and British English are the same? Read this web article to find the answer.  
<http://learningenglish.voanews.com/a/six-difference-between-britsh-and-american-english/3063743.html>
- Do you think women can be airplane pilots? Read this web article and find the answer. <http://learningenglish.voanews.com/a/women-only-crew-mans-ethiopian-air-flight/3066833.html>
- Why should we save endangered species? Read and look at the photos on this website to find the answer.  
<http://nationalzoo.si.edu/SCBI/CCS/>
- In many countries, the first day of April is called “April Fool’s Day.” On this day, people play tricks on each other and tell jokes or “tall tales.” Check this website 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://learningenglish.voanews.com/a/3261929.html>
- 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://learningenglish.voanews.com/a/1651145.html>





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is impossible to acknowledge all the people whose hard work, dedication, and insights into the needs of English language learners in the DRC inspired this project. Let me begin by thanking the people at the Congo-American Language Institute (CALI), the Public Affairs Officer, Ellen Masi, in the U.S. Embassy, Kinshasa, and the Regional English Language Officer, Maria Snarski, at the U.S. Embassy, Pretoria. Without their unwavering support, this project would not have been possible.

I am grateful to all those who offered ideas for reading and viewing activities. I am grateful to the CALI Teacher Corps, 2014 and 2015, for their feedback, suggestions, and advice during the field-testing phases of my work. This project was developed because of numerous collaborative exchanges I had with Dr. Bryce Smedley, Senior English Language Fellow at CALI—I am grateful for our lively give-and-take.

I give special thanks to Richard Beadon for his technical assistance, feedback, patience, and support. I am particularly grateful for his attention to detail and willingness to teach me various features of Adobe Photoshop.

Finally, I wish to credit those individuals whose ideas in this *Handbook* generate passionate, powerful, and pleasurable reading experiences—and I accept full credit for the ideas that are less appealing.

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Kinshasa,

La République Démocratique du Congo, 2015

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# Practice English!

Choose Interesting Activities!

Be Creative!

Help the Community!

Have Fun!



United States Department of State  
Office of English Language Programs  
[americanenglish.state.gov](http://americanenglish.state.gov)

