



Comprehension strategies to use at home

These comprehension strategies are mental processes that effective readers use as they are reading in order to understand what they have read. As readers, we often use these strategies without even realising it. By making these strategies more obvious to your child, they will be able to use them when they come across new and challenging texts.

Good readers use these strategies as they read - before, during and after reading. They can also use different strategies at different times depending on what they are reading (e.g. novel or report) and why they are reading (e.g. an assignment or for pleasure). No two readers will use exactly the same strategies at the same time.

Making connections	<p>We make personal connections with the text, by comparing it to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ something in your own life (text to self) ■ another text (text to text) ■ something occurring in the world (text to world)
Predicting	<p>We use information from the text, images and our own experience to try to predict what might happen next, how the characters might respond or what the outcome might be.</p>
Questioning	<p>We ask and then answer questions that help clarify the meaning of the text, and also help us consider deeper meanings.</p>
Monitoring	<p>If we are reading a text and something doesn't make sense, we know it's okay to stop, reread and think about it to try and understand the meaning.</p>
Visualising	<p>We paint a picture in our head of the things that are being described and explained in the text.</p> <p>Visualising brings the text to life, engages the imagination and uses all of the senses</p>
Summarising	<p>We notice the most important things in the text, and can then put them together in our own words to describe what we have read.</p>

Discuss these strategies with your child, then work through the Ranger's Apprentice example fact sheet.



Ranger's Apprentice – Comprehension strategies example

Here's an example of how your child might use comprehension strategies, based on an excerpt from **The Ruins of Gorlan**, Book One in the Ranger's Apprentice series by Australian author, John Flanagan.

Have a discussion about the strategies before your child starts reading, so they can keep them fresh in their mind to help them get the most meaning out of the following excerpt.

Chapter One

'Try to eat something, Will. Tomorrow's a big day, after all.'

Jenny, blonde, pretty and cheerful, gestured towards Will's barely touched plate and smiled encouragingly at him. Will made an attempt to return the smile but it was a dismal failure. He picked at the plate before him, piled high with his favourite foods. Tonight, his stomach knotted tight with tension and anticipation, he could hardly bring himself to swallow a bite.

Tomorrow would be a big day, he knew. He knew it all too well, in fact. Tomorrow would be the biggest day in his life, because tomorrow was the Choosing Day and it would determine how he spent the rest of his life.

'Nerves, I imagine,' said George, setting down his loaded fork and seizing the lapels of his jacket in a judicious manner. He was a thin, gangly and studious boy, fascinated by rules and regulations and with a penchant for examining and debating both sides of any question – sometimes at great length. 'Dreadful thing, nervousness. It can just freeze you up so you can't think, can't eat, can't speak.'

'I'm not nervous,' Will said quickly, noticing that Horace had looked up, ready to form a sarcastic comment.

George nodded several times, considering Will's statement. 'On the other hand,' he added, 'a little nervousness can actually improve performance. It can heighten your perceptions and sharpen your reactions. So, the fact that you are worried, if, in fact, you are, is not necessarily something to be worried about, of itself – so to speak.'

In spite of himself, a wry smile touched Will's mouth. George would be a natural in the legal profession, he thought. He

would almost certainly be the Scribemaster's choice on the following morning. Perhaps, Will thought, that was at the heart of his own problem. He was the only one of the five wardmates who had any fears about the Choosing that would take place within twelve hours.

'He ought to be nervous!' Horace scoffed. 'After all, which Craftmaster is going to want him as an apprentice?'

'I'm sure we're all nervous,' Alyss said. She directed one of her rare smiles at Will. 'We'd be stupid not to be.'

'Well, I'm not!' Horace said, then reddened as Alyss raised one eyebrow and Jenny giggled.

It was typical of Alyss, Will thought. He knew that the tall, graceful girl had already been promised a place as an apprentice by Lady Pauline, head of Castle Redmont's Diplomatic Service. Her pretence that she was nervous about the following day, and her tact in refraining from pointing out Horace's gaffe, showed that she was already a diplomat of some skill.

Jenny, of course, would gravitate immediately to the castle kitchens, domain of Master Chubb, Redmont's Head Chef. He was a man renowned throughout the Kingdom for the banquets served in the castle's massive dining hall. Jenny loved food and cooking and her easygoing nature and unfailing good humour would make her an invaluable staff member in the turmoil of the castle kitchens.

Battleschool would be Horace's choice. Will glanced at his wardmate now, hungrily tucking into the roast turkey, ham and potatoes that he had heaped onto his plate.

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Ranger's Apprentice – Comprehension strategies example

Horace was big for his age and a natural athlete. The chances that he would be refused were virtually nonexistent. Horace was exactly the type of recruit that Sir Rodney looked for in his warrior apprentices. Strong, athletic, fit. And, thought Will a trifle sourly, not too bright. Battleschool was the path to knighthood for boys like Horace – born commoners but with the physical abilities to serve as knights of the Kingdom.

Which left Will. What would his choice be? More importantly, as Horace had pointed out, what Craftmaster would accept him as an apprentice?

For Choosing Day was the pivotal point in the life of the castle wards. They were orphan children raised by the generosity of Baron Arald, the Lord of Redmont Fief. For the most part, their parents had died in the service of the fief, and the Baron saw it as his responsibility to care for and raise the children of his former subjects – and to give them an opportunity to improve their station in life wherever possible.

Choosing Day provided that opportunity.

Each year, castle wards turning fifteen could apply to be apprenticed to the masters of the various crafts that served the castle and its people. Ordinarily, craft apprentices were selected by dint of their parents' occupations or influence with the Craftmasters. The castle wards usually had no such influence and this was their chance to win a future for themselves.

Those wards who weren't chosen, or for whom no openings could be found, would be assigned to farming families in the nearby village, providing farm labour to raise the crops and animals that fed the castle inhabitants. It was rare for this to happen, Will knew. The Baron and his Craftmasters usually went out of their way to fit the wards into one craft or another. But it could happen and it was a fate he feared more than anything.

Horace caught his eye now and gave him a smug smile.

'Still planning on applying for Battleschool, Will?' he asked, through a mouthful of turkey and potatoes. 'Better eat something then. You'll need to build yourself up a little.'

He snorted with laughter and Will glowered at him. A few weeks previously, Horace had overheard Will confiding to Alyss that he desperately wanted to be selected for Battleschool, and he had made Will's life a misery ever since, pointing out on every possible occasion that Will's slight build was totally unsuited for the rigours of Battleschool training.

The fact that Horace was probably right only made matters worse. Where Horace was tall and muscular, Will was small and wiry. He was agile and fast and surprisingly strong but he simply didn't have the size that he knew was required of Battleschool apprentices. He'd hoped against hope for the past few years that he would have what people called his 'growing spurt' before the Choosing Day came around. But it had never happened and now the day was nearly here.

Extract taken from Ranger's Apprentice: The Ruins of Gorlan, published by Random House Australia and copyright © John Flanagan.

One of the most valuable things we can do is 'think aloud' or talk about 'how' we understand what we are reading. The following sample questions include those that may be used before, during (as you are reading) and after reading.



Ranger's Apprentice – Sample questions

Making connections

Will is feeling nervous and excited about Choosing Day.

- Can you think of a time when you felt that way too? (text to self)
- Does this extract remind you of another book or movie? What about it is similar? (text to text)

The group are waiting for Choosing Day, which will change their lives.

- Do you know of an event or situation in the real world that affects teenagers future careers? (text to world)

Predicting

During reading - after the first paragraph:

- What do you think this chapter is about?
- What clues are there in the text?

After reading:

- What might happen next?
- Do you think Will gets chosen for Battleschool?
- What could happen to help Will get into Battleschool?
- Which characters do you think will stay friends?
- Why?
- Who do you think will become the main character or hero in this story?
- Why do you think that?

Questioning

As you are reading:

- In what time period (past or future) do you think this book is set?
- Why do you think that?
- The teenagers in this chapter are orphans. Why do you think this is significant?
- Do the adults sound kind or cruel?
- Will thinks George "would be a natural for the legal profession" and that a Scribemaster will pick him – what do you think a Scribemaster does?

Monitoring

- Is this story making sense so far?
- Do you need to slow down your reading to understand it?
- What do you think "wardmates" means?
- How could you find out what wardmates means? (e.g. Break the word down into ward/mates. Use a dictionary to find different meanings for "ward". Reread the sentences that use "ward".)

Visualising

- Can you describe the picture you created in your mind while you read this chapter?
- Is it bright and colourful or dark and dimly lit?
- What do you imagine Horace looks like?
- How might the teenagers be dressed?

Summarising

- What main themes or ideas are come up in this chapter?
- Why do you think these are important for the book?
- If you had to tell another person that the story so far but only using a few sentences, what would you include?
- What words are repeated the most?
- Are they important?