

Classroom Talk During Reading

Say Something

Often struggling readers struggle because while they read, their eyes move over the words but their minds are on thoughts of other things. “Say something” (Harste, Short, and Burke, 1988) is a simple strategy that interrupts a student’s reading of a text, to give the reader a chance to think about what s/he is reading. They make a prediction, ask a question, clarify confusion, comment on what’s happening, or connect what’s in the text to something they know.

What it Looks Like

Students get into groups of two or three and take turns reading a portion of a text aloud. As they read, they occasionally pause to “say something” about what was read. The partner responds to what the first student has said, and then a different student continues the reading until the next time they pause to say something.

Making it Work

- 1) First, model the strategy
- 2) Explain the procedure to students
- 3) Give students “stem starters” to give them ideas for comments. (See p.2)
- 4) Let students practice using “Say Something” on very short texts—just a few paragraphs.
- 5) If you want to grade students on “Say Something,” you can give them a participation grade or have them write a reflection on what did and learned during the exercise.

Rules for Say Something

1. With your partner, decide who will say something first.
2. When you say something, do one or more of the following:
 - ❖ Make a prediction
 - ❖ Ask a question
 - ❖ Clarify something you had misunderstood
 - ❖ Make a comment
 - ❖ Make a connection
3. If you can’t do one of those five things, then you need to reread.

Stem Starters

Make a Prediction

- ❖ I predict that...
- ❖ I bet that...
- ❖ I think that...
- ❖ Since this happened (fill in detail), then I bet the next thing that is going to happen is....
- ❖ Reading this part makes me think that this (fill in detail) is about to happen...
- ❖ I wonder if...

Ask a Question

- ❖ Why did...
- ❖ What's this part about...
- ❖ How is this (fill in detail) like this (fill in detail)?
- ❖ What would happen if ...
- ❖ Why...
- ❖ Who is ...
- ❖ What does this section (fill in detail) mean ...
- ❖ Do you think that ...
- ❖ I don't get this part here...

Clarify Something

- ❖ Oh I get it...
- ❖ Now I understand...
- ❖ This makes sense now....
- ❖ No, I think it means...
- ❖ I agree with you. This means...
- ❖ At first I thought (fill in detail), but now I think....
- ❖ This part is really saying...

Make a Connection

- ❖ This reminds me of ...
- ❖ This part is like...
- ❖ This character (fill in name) is like (fill in name) because...
- ❖ This is similar to ...
- ❖ The differences are ...
- ❖ I also (name something in the text that has also happened to you) ...
- ❖ I never (name something in the text that has never happened to you) ...
- ❖ This character makes me think of...
- ❖ This setting reminds me of...

Make a Comment

- ❖ This a good (or interesting) because...
- ❖ This is hard because...
- ❖ This is confusing because...
- ❖ I like the part where....
- ❖ I don't like this part because...
- ❖ My favorite part so far is...
- ❖ I think that...