



Oral comprehension: talking your way to understanding

Oral comprehension involves children teasing away at the meaning of a text and sharpening and shaping their ideas through a well-orchestrated discussion.

To enable the children to collectively deepen understanding, the teacher should:

- Model being a curious reader.
- Relinquish control – encourage the class to discuss the text collectively.
- Ask authentic questions that require reflective thought.
- Encourage the class to ask significant open questions.
- Respond to what children say - repeat ideas, draw threads together, refocus and recap.
- Rephrase ideas and hold them up for further inspection.
- Help the class focus on significant issues.
- Scaffold questions to deepen thinking.
- Provide thinking time and encourage them to explain things with depth.

The key principles of dialogic talk:

1. **All ideas are accepted** – everyone’s idea will be listened to, valued and taken seriously.
2. **Everyone should ‘have a go’** – everyone is expected to be thinking, joining in and ready to share their ideas, even if they are not yet well formed.
3. **Everyone should be ready to change their mind** – grow understanding through sharing different ways of looking at the text and justifying suggestions. Ensure that we are not expecting children to guess our opinions.
4. **Act as a facilitator** – be a good listener and encourage the pupils to listen to each other.
5. **Help students initiate discussion by being tentative**, e.g. “We wondered whether...”. Provide sentence stems that support them to initiate discussion.

How to frame thoughts and opinions:

- **Suggest a new idea** – I think... because...
- **Challenge** – I’d like to challenge Jenny...
- **Build on an idea** – I’d like to build on Raj’s idea...
- **Explain ideas** – Can Kabir explain further why...? I think I can explain why...
- **Question** – We were wondering why... I’d like to ask if anyone has any ideas about what/why/how/when/where/whether...
- **Justify** – The author states... I think that... because it states that...



Sentence stems that support initial discussion:

- *I was wondering if ...*
- *I am starting to think that ...*
- *I'm not certain, but ...*
- *Some people are beginning to think that ...*
- *It reminds me of ...*
- *I'm not sure but ...*
- *We wondered whether ...*
- *I like that idea but ...*
- *It is the same as ...*
- *It appears to be ...*
- *We think that ...*
- *The writer suggests that ...*
- *Perhaps, ...*
- *It makes me think of ...*
- *The main point might be ...*

Comprehension grids that might support initial thought

Likes ...	Dislikes ...	Feelings ...	Summarise ...
Puzzles ...	Patterns ...	Images ...	Questions ...
Observe ...	Wonder ...	Surprises ...	Memories ...
Interests ...	Magpie ...	Questions ...	Predictions ...