

# Higher level language skills for reading comprehension

## Reading comprehension

Reading comprehension is multidimensional with both the ability to identify individual words (word reading) and to construct meaning from text (language comprehension) required (Catts and Kamhi 2017; Nation 2019; Hoover and Tunmer 2021). Reading comprehension is an outcome (not a strategy) that teachers create by explicitly teaching the skills that underpin word reading and language comprehension (Catts 2018).

## Higher level language skills

The oral language skills that contribute to language comprehension can be referred to as lower and higher-level language skills (Hogan et al. 2011). The lower-level language skills of vocabulary and syntax are used to construct the literal meaning of a text and provide the foundation for the higher-level skills of inferencing, comprehension monitoring and text-structure knowledge (Hogan et al. 2014). Higher-level language skills are required to construct a more accurate and deeper understanding of what the author has written (Hogan et al. 2011). The different aspects of vocabulary, syntax, text structure, inference, comprehension monitoring, and background knowledge, support listening comprehension through the development of a mental (situation) model (Kintsch and Kintsch 2005; Such 2021).

## Mental model

As students read, they build a mental representation of the situation being described by the text, linking information from the text with relevant background knowledge. A mental model is a rich and cumulative interpretation of the text that goes beyond what is explicitly stated, and that dynamically changes as students read (Hogan et al. 2014; Kintsch 2009). The product of reading comprehension emerges from the formation of this rich mental model (Castles et al. 2018).

## The resource

The higher-level language lesson plans have been written to supplement not replace an educator's usual methods of instruction or curricular choices. Evidence-based features of instruction in dialogic reading, inferential questioning, Questioning the Author and visual scaffolding are utilised to provide an explicit and flexible approach to building students' skills in the key areas of:

- Inferential language
- Comprehension monitoring
- Text structure knowledge

## Next steps

For more information, contact your school speech language pathologist or the Reading and Writing Disorders Advisory Service. The Advisory service may be accessed by telephone or email on weekdays between 8:30am and 4:30pm.

Phone: (07) 3328 6950

Email: [readingandwritingdisorders@qed.qld.gov.au](mailto:readingandwritingdisorders@qed.qld.gov.au)