



Learning Project 3 Reading Stories

Inquiry Activity 3-1: Passage Reading Strategy – Monitoring

Monitoring is the reading strategy introduced with this passage. Monitoring is a metacognitive strategy that helps readers engage the passage and understand what they are reading. To begin monitoring takes time and guidance. That guidance is introduced here under Doing the Work. You can model the strategy for your learners by using the Think Alouds in Appendix B.

(Note: Italicized portions should be directed to students.)

1. Identifying the Problem (Reading Passage only for Practice Test Items #s 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12)

Look over the passage (Don't read word for word.).

Have you seen passages like this before? Where? When? Why?

What are you being asked to read? What will you have to do to be successful in this Activity?

How does it look to you? Think about what you see and what you think you're going to see.

In this excerpt from the novel *My Antonia* readers will see no particular text guidance.

Jot down your thoughts or share them with your partner.

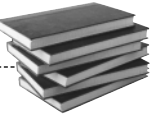
WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JIM AND ANTONIA?

She turned her bright, believing eyes to me, and the tears came up in them slowly, "How can it be like that, when you know so many people, and when I've disappointed you so? Ain't it wonderful, Jim, how much people can mean to each other? I'm so glad we had each other when we were little. I can't wait till my little girl's old enough to tell her about all the things we used to do. You'll always remember me when you think about old times, won't you? And I guess everybody thinks about old times, even the happiest people."

As we walked homeward across the fields, the sun dropped and lay like a great golden globe in the low west. While it hung there, the moon rose in the east, as big as a cart-wheel, pale silver and streaked with rose colour, thin as a bubble or a ghost-moon. For five perhaps ten minutes, the two luminaries confronted each other across the level land, resting on opposite edges of the world.

In that singular light every little tree and stick of wheat, every sunflower stalk and clump of snow-on-the-mountain, drew itself up high and pointed; the very clods and furrows in the fields seemed to stand up sharply. I felt the old pull of the earth, the solemn magic that comes out of those fields at nightfall. I wished I could be a little boy again, and that my way could end there.

We reached the edge of the field, where our ways parted. I took her hands and held them against my breast, feeling once more how strong and warm and good they were, those brown hands, and remembering how many kind things they had done for me. I held them now a long while, over my heart. About us it was growing darker and darker, and I had



to look hard to see her face, which I meant always to carry with me; the closest, realest face, under all the shadows of women's faces, at the very bottom of my memory.

"I'll come back," I said earnestly, through the soft, intrusive darkness.

"Perhaps you will"-I felt rather than saw her smile. "But even if you don't you're here, like my father. So I won't be lonesome."

As I went back alone over that familiar road, I could almost believe that a boy and girl ran along beside me, as our shadows used to do, laughing and whispering to each other in the grass.

Willa Cather, *My Antonia*, 1918

2. Becoming Familiar with the Problem

Pre-reading strategies: Becoming familiar with the passage. Four pre-reading strategies are introduced and used consistently to help the learner develop the pre-reading skills for use with any reading they might do. The pre-reading strategies are:

- Preview the Passage
- Activate Prior Knowledge
- Consider/Build Interest
- Set a Purpose

Resist over-explaining the strategies. Encourage learners to answer the questions for each passage and allow them to come to their own insights about pre-reading.

Remember, in this step, we are focusing on becoming familiar with the question through pre-reading strategies, not answering it from the passage.

Scan the passage and ask yourself questions like the following as the first step to understanding the passage.

Preview the Passage: *What do you see? What do you notice about the passage? Describe it. What does this tell you about how the passage might be organized? Does it help you understand it?*

Activate/Build from Prior Knowledge: *From reading the title and the first paragraph what do you already know about the topic of the passage?*

Antonia's dialogue in the first paragraph indicates that they were childhood friends who have not seen each other in some time.

What do you know about this situation from previous experiences or reading?

Willa Cather wrote a number of books early in the 20th Century about the early settlers of the Midwest. Some of the experiences she writes about may be familiar to those who watched *Little House on the Prairie* or other television shows about frontier life.

The specific instance in this passage of old friends seeing one another for the first time in several years is something most people have experienced.

Consider/Build Interest: *Are you interested in the situation of childhood friends seeing one another again? How do you like reading stories?*

Set a Purpose: *The purpose is to read the passage and **monitor** your understanding by identifying the things you remember and thinking about the things you may not understand.*

The title of the passage can help readers focus their understanding of what they are reading.



3. Planning, Assigning, and Performing Tasks

The task that you will complete is to read the passage.

Planning: Determine if you want to work individually, with a partner, or in a small group. If this is the first time you are using the **monitoring** strategy, it is best to work with a partner or a small group. Once you are familiar with the **monitoring** strategy, try to use it on your own.

For **monitoring**, you will need a piece of paper divided into two columns. When working in a group, decide if each person will have his or her own paper or if you will have one paper with just one recorder.

Assigning: If you are reading the passage aloud in pairs or in groups, determine who will start reading.

Doing the Work: As you read the passage, do the following:

Clarify:

Read the passage. Find and mark any words you might not know. See if the passage gives you enough information to **clarify** the meaning of those words. If not, find the meaning by asking somebody or looking it up.

Two words in this passage, **cart-wheel** and **singular**, are used in unusual ways for modern readers.

Were there any places in the passage where you did not understand what was going on?

Monitor:

After reading the passage, put it away or turn it over, think about the events and characters of the story you remember very well. In the left column of your divided paper write down the things you remember very well, and in the right column those things you don't understand or that are not clear to you.

Now, have another group member look at the passage and ask specific questions like "Do you remember what was happening with the sun as Antonia and Jim walked across the field?" If you do, write it down in the left column. If you don't, write "I don't remember what happened with the sun as they walked across the field" in the right column.

Where do you think this is taking place? Other questions to ask include: Who do you think Jim and Antonia are? How old do you think they are? What might be their relationship to one another? What do you think they are talking about with one another? If you know the answer put it in the left column. If it is not clear, write in the right column "I'm not sure how old Antonia and Jim are."

Keep doing this, writing what you remember very well in the left column and in the right column write the things you don't remember or things that are confusing.

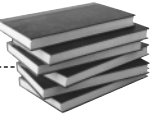
Now, go back and reread the passage to make sure the things you said you remembered are in the passage and to clear up the confusing items you identified in the right column.

4. Sharing with Others

Telling other people what you know helps you to understand the material better. So take this opportunity not only to share the knowledge, but also to learn it more completely.

Small Groups: Compare your **monitoring** lists with the others in the group. Discuss as a group whether keeping in mind the purpose for reading the passage (**monitoring**) helped you to read and understand the passage better.

The **monitoring** process at this point is time-consuming. As readers get more accustomed to **monitoring**, they will find that they incorporate it more naturally into the reading process. Some will find they do not need to write out the clear and confusing points for long, but will assess them internally.



Whole class: Share what your group remembered really well and what you found unclear. Were your items similar or different from other groups?

5. Reflecting, Extending, and Evaluating

Reflecting: Think about how well you understand the work you did.

Here are some questions to start you thinking about the experience you just had. Thinking about what you have experienced is part of the learning process. When the focus is only on the answer, you don't get much time to think about what you learned.

Look back at *Doing the Work*. If you were telling someone else how you **monitor** as you read, what words would you use to describe what you do?

How did **monitoring** help you to understand the passage better?

For most learners, active **monitoring** will be a new process. It will be interesting to hear the reactions your learners have to this reading comprehension strategy.

Have you ever tried **monitoring** as you read before? Explain.

How did becoming familiar and then doing the work help you to better understand the passage when you read it? Explain.

Extending: Extend what you learned to new situations.

In extending, you are being asked to transfer the information presented in the Practice Test to other information or situations.

Where else have you seen, read about or experienced some of the ideas you found in this passage?

Most of us in growing up have left some good friends behind. In this passage, Jim and Antonia, who have not seen each other in many years, re-establish some of the friendship they enjoyed as children.

Do you read any stories? If yes, what kind? How do you **monitor** your understanding?

With a friend, read another passage and **monitor** your understanding by each completing a chart where you write in the left column what you remember well and in the right column the things that are confusing or not clear to you. Compare your charts.

How does this help you understand the passage?

Evaluating: Assess what you learned and how you learned it.

In this last step, you get a chance to review the content of what you learned and the methods used to learn. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions; it is your chance to look more closely at your learning style and the opportunity to state how you benefited or didn't benefit from the content and/or the methods presented in this IA.

What did you learn from this Inquiry Activity?

What parts of the activity worked best for you? Explain.

What parts did not work well for you? Explain.

What parts of this Inquiry Activity will you use when taking the GED test? Why?

How did reading this way make you feel?