



STEPS

to Assess Whether a Student Can Independently Read a Book with Strength

1 *Ask her to read a bit aloud and a bit to herself.* Listen to the student read. If there are more than a few places where she struggles, this book will be a challenge!

2 *Ask him some questions about the passage.* Have the student retell what he just read, and expect it to be pretty spot-on, since he has read only about three hundred words or so. Then check in with a few general deeper questions, like “What does this scene show you about the character?”

3 *Find out how badly she wants to read this book.* Desire matters. Even if a book is a tough read, if a student really wants to read it, often that title can become a launching pad for her reading, particularly if she is reading it with friends.



STEPS

to Finding a Strategy for a Reading Skill

1 *Do a bit of the reading work yourself.* One of the best ways to know how to help a student read more powerfully is to practice what you are asking him to do yourself. Read a bit of the text and talk out or write your authentic thoughts.

2 *Generalize what you did.* Once you have tried out a skill, step back and ask, “What did I just do? What steps did my mind take?” Try to put that work into universal language, like “I noticed tone of voice and what it revealed about the hidden motivations and traits of the characters.”

3 *Put it into kid-friendly language.* Kid-friendly will be relative, of course, but write out that strategy in a way that your students can grab onto. Use vocabulary that will resonate, and try to keep it short.



STEPS

for Choosing a Whole-Class Novel

1 *Ask your students what kinds of books they want to read.* Poll your class, spend time online researching great titles, have kids and teachers give book talks. Spend some time finding out what topics, issues, and texts your classes might find most relevant.

2 *Collect book titles that fit with a skills focus for the unit.* Consider the skills your students need to become more powerful and independent readers. As you choose a book, check to see that the book matches the skill (most will). If you want to focus on analyzing craft, for example, the book should lend itself to that study.

3 *Consider diverse voices to match a diverse world.* Putting effort into offering novels that cover a range of identities and experiences helps students to see their own hopes and struggles reflected in books, and it helps prepare them for the world they are living in.