Reading for Meaning

# Remembering what it’s like…

# Adults tend to forget just how challenging the act of making meaning out of the words on a page can be. Thus, we begin on Reading for Meaning with a few short texts that can put us in better touch with the challenges that many of our students face as readers. Texts were deliberately chosen as reminders that understanding what we read is not always a snap. The following five texts are called "An Anthology of Rigorous Readings." Preview all of the readings and then **pick two for close reading**—the one you believe will be the most challenging, and the one you believe will be the least challenging.

|  |
| --- |
| An Anthology of Rigorous ReadingsReading One: Excerpt from the Federalist Papers, "Concerning the General Power of Taxation," by Alexander Hamilton It has been already observed that the federal government ought to possess the power of providing for the support of the national forces; in which proposition was intended to be included the expense of raising troops, of building and equipping fleets, and all other expenses in any wise connected with military arrangements and operations. But these are not the only objects to which the jurisdiction of the Union, in respect to revenue, must necessarily be empowered to extend. It must embrace a provision for the support of the national civil list; for the payment of the national debts contracted, or that may be contracted; and, in general, for all those matters which will call for disbursements out of the national treasury. The conclusion is, that there must be interwoven, in the frame of the government, a general power of taxation, in one shape or another. Reading Two: "There's a certain Slant of light," by Emily Dickinson *There's a certain Slant of light, Winter Afternoons — That oppresses, like the Heft Of Cathedral Tunes — Heavenly Hurt, it gives us — We can find no scar, But internal difference, Where the Meanings, are — None may teach it — Any — 'Tis the Seal Despair — An imperial affliction Sent us of the Air — When it comes, the Landscape listens — Shadows — hold their breath — When it goes, 'tis like the Distance On the look of Death —* Reading Three: A Description of the Healing Process Adapted from a High School Biology Textbook Endothelial cells bud and grow from existing blood vessels, undergo canalization, and form a vascular network by connecting to other cell buds. New vessels are all similar in appearance, with thin walls made of endothelium. Protein leaks out of the vessels, bathing the wound area in plasma and providing a rich nutrient medium that promotes rapid cell growth. Once this nutrient medium is established, differentiation can begin. Some vessels will become venules, which are large and have thin walls, while others will become arterioles, which have muscular coats. As granulation tissue steadily changes, some vessels will disappear. Those that remain will become part of the capillary bed. Reading Four: Excerpt from The Souls of Black Folk, by W. E. B. Du Bois Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question: unasked by some through feelings of delicacy; by others through the difficulty of rightly framing it. All, nevertheless, flutter round it. They approach me in a half-hesitant sort of way, eye me curiously or compassionately, and then, instead of saying directly, How does it feel to be a problem? they say, I know an excellent colored man in my town; or, I fought at Mechanicsville; or, Do not these Southern outrages make your blood boil? At these I smile, or am interested, or reduce the boiling to a simmer, as the occasion may require. To the real question, How does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word. Reading Five: What Is the Hailstone Sequence? Exploring a Mathematical Mystery One mystery that has puzzled mathematicians for years is a strange series of numbers known as a hailstone sequence. To create a hailstone sequence, take any positive integer *n*. If *n* is even, divide it by 2. If *n* is odd, multiply it by 3 and add 1. Then, take the result and repeat the process over and over to generate a sequence of numbers. If we apply this procedure to *n* = 11, we get: 34, 17, 52, 26, 13, 40, 20, 10, 5, 16, 8, 4, 2, 1, 4, 2, 1. . . . These sequences are called *hailstone sequences* because the numbers mimic the up-and-down movement of hailstones as they form in clouds.  Notice that the sequence above ends in a repeating pattern—4, 2, 1, 4, 2, 1. . . . It is believed that every value for *n* will settle into this 4, 2, 1 pattern. But some values generate long sequences before the pattern emerges. For example, *n* = 27 yields 109 numbers before the 4, 2, 1 pattern begins. So what's the mystery? No mathematician has yet proven that *every* positive integer will generate a sequence that eventually settles into a repeating 4, 2, 1 pattern. |

So, how did you do?

Were your pre-reading predictions correct?

Did the reading you expected to be more challenging end up being more challenging? *How* did you read your selected texts? What was your mind doing to help you understand what you read? Take a look at the list of reading and thinking skills below. Did you use any of these skills to help you make sense of the more challenging texts? **Check off any skills you found yourself using.**

Before reading did you …

* □ Draw forth relevant background knowledge to help you put the reading in context?
* □ Make predictions about what the text would say or include?
* □ Establish a purpose for reading?

During reading did you …

* □ Apply criteria that helped you separate critical information from less relevant information?
* □ Pay attention to how the ideas were presented and organized?
* □ Make notes to help you highlight and clarify important ideas?
* □ Form images in your head to help you "see" the content?
* □ Note when the text confirmed or refuted your initial ideas or pre-reading predictions?

After reading did you …

* □ Reflect on what you read?
* □ Try to assess and shore up gaps in your comprehension? (What do I need to better understand?)
* □ Look for opportunities to discuss your ideas with other readers?

# **Assignment: Thinking About the Skills of Comprehension**

Identify the texts you chose as your most and least challenging.

Copy and paste this last page with your check marks and completion of the questions below. Submit as a word document.

|  |
| --- |
| **1. How did the skills you checked off help you understand the texts you read?** |
| **2. What are some ways you teach these skills in your classroom?** |
| **3. What are some of the recurring challenges you face in helping students build their reading and reasoning skills?** |