

Notes

Reader #1: Meagan Towne

Skill level: Novice (AP English student)

What the text segment says	What the reader says	My comments and thoughts
"A couple of summers ago, I was walking along the edge of the island to see what I could see in the water and mainly to scare frogs."	The scare frogs thing reminds me of what we would do with the tadpoles in fishing for tadpoles.	Connection with real life <i>Background: My sisters and I used to go down by our pond and catch tadpoles in a bucket. We'd look at them for a while and then release them.</i>
"Frogs have an inelegant way of taking off from invisible positions on the bank just ahead of your feet, in dire panic, emitting a froggy "Yike!" and splashing into the water. [...] At the end of the island, I noticed a small green frog [...]. and he didn't jump."	They referenced how frogs normally, if you get too close, they'll freak out and splash in the water. And then at the end, that's kind of brought back up in the fact that this one frog didn't do it.	Retelling/summarizing She does this a lot as a way of making sense out of the text.
"Incredibly, this amused me, and, incredibly, it amuses me still."	I thought that was, one, it was kind of confusing because I wasn't expecting it, but two, I think it's a good technique because the first incredibly references the past tense and then the second one references future or present tense.	Analyzing sentence structure to work through confusing parts.
"Frogs were flying all around me."	They say frogs were flying. It's like, they're not actually flying, but it's more or less figurative language [...]. It might be hyperbole cause it's stretching the truth.	Analyzing figurative language to deepen understanding.
"Frogs were flying all around me. At the end of the island, I noticed a small green frog. He was exactly half in and half out of the water, looking like a schematic diagram of an	I feel like we're going to get to a turning point because these last three sentences kinda foreshadow it. [...] I feel like this is a transition or it will be a transition to the next paragraph. [...] This might relate back to a personal moment in her life, not a personal memory, but an	Predicting future events or moments in the text

amphibian, and he didn't jump."	actual moment in her life where she had to switch around maybe, or she witnessed someone have to make a switch.	
"The frog skin bag started to sink."	So I'm guessing the frog died. But it's kind of sad because I think when she saw him, he already was dead.	Inference about the text
"He was a very small frog with wide, dull eyes."	She kept moving closer and she was kneeling down and she was staring at it and its eyes were dull and wide. And it had a sad expression on the frog's face. And so either it was already dead like it was just empty or it was just really sad.	Retelling/summarizing
"And just as I looked at him, he slowly crumpled and began to sag. The spirit vanished from his eyes as if snuffed."	So that makes me think that the frog was already dead. [...] But then this next sentence kinda flipped me the other way because the spirit vanished from his eyes "as if snuffed" so I wanna think that the frog isn't actually dead, it's just all of his spirit is gone and he's just a sad frog.	Retelling/summarizing
"His skin emptied and drooped; his very skull seemed to collapse and settle like a kicked tent. He was shrinking before my eyes like a deflating football."	This whole thing could just be a metaphor. It's on the brink of two different things, you know? So I feel like that could mean something. Um, when he was shrinking deflating, like a football that's simile.	Identifying literary devices
"[...] lay in floating folds like bright scum on top of the water: it was a monstrous and terrifying thing. I gaped bewildered, appalled. An oval shadow hung in the water behind the drained frog."	So I want to say he was just decomposing, although she mentioned that it was a terrifying thing and it's something not pleasant to watch. Then I'm guessing that the frog was dead and that she just wasn't expecting it and she was like bewildered and appalled from that experience. Also one thing, "an oval shadow hung in the water behind the drained frog." Well, the use of drain makes me think that it wasn't actually dead. It was just like a	Retelling/summarizing She isn't telling the story through her own words most of the time which makes me think she isn't reaching any type of deep understanding.

	tired, sad frog, but it could also be drained as in like physically gone. I don't know.	
“ An oval shadow hung in the water behind the drained frog; then the shadow glided away.”	That makes me think there was something there and it had just killed this frog and it was watching, making sure it was dead, but I don't know. That's kind of mysterious.	Predicting future events or moments in the text.
“‘Giant water bug’ is really the name of the creature, which is an enormous, heavy-bodied brown bug. It eats insects, tadpoles, fish, and frogs.”	The repeated use of the word bug and like giant water bugs specifically, makes me feel like it's not an actual bug. It could be just a creature or some poisonous thing. For some reason, my mind went to scorpion, but that doesn't make sense.	Activating prior knowledge
“This event is quite common in warm fresh water.”	So I'm guessing that this isn't the first time Annie Dillard if this is her actual story that she's seen this, you know, because she says, it's common. So she must know like, oh yeah, this happens a lot. Just wasn't expecting to see it on this day.	Making connections to the author, trying to understand her point of view
“ I had been kneeling on the island grass; when the unrecognizable flap of frog skin settled on the creek bottom, swaying, I stood up and brushed the knees of my pants. I couldn't catch my breath.”	She just kind of stood up and she brushed the knees of her pants, which I'm guessing could also be a little bit of a metaphor for brushing off the experience. I think it could have a double meaning. Like, you know, I see this all the time, but then you get to, I couldn't catch my breath. And I think she was like, this is a horrible thing to experience even though it is quite common in this area, but it's still not fun to see. So it still kind of catches her off guard even though I'm guessing she's probably seen this a bunch of times.	Analyzing literary devices to find deeper meaning.

Reader #2: Veronica Towne

Skill level: Expert (Master's Degree in English literacy)

What the text segment says	What the reader says	My comments and thoughts
"At the end of the island I noticed a small green frog. He was exactly half in and half out of the water, looking like a schematic diagram of an amphibian, and he didn't jump."	Was this an actual frog? Or just a drawing of a frog? He didn't jump, schematic drawings. Was it like grass and moss type stuff in the shape of a frog?	Asking questions about the text. She does this frequently, but later she revisits her questions and answers them.
"A couple of summers ago, I was walking along the edge of the island to see what I could see in the water and mainly to scare frogs."	I remember with you girls walking along the edge of the water and looking for tadpoles and watching the frogs jump and trying to find those frog eggs. The first part made me think of that. The title frogs makes me think of these itty bitty frogs. We used to go walking and there was a path that we used to walk on, with mom and dad go hiking. I can't remember who it was hiking, but there were just little itty bitty frogs. And every step you took they jumped right into the trees.	Connection(s) with real life
"I watched the taut, glistening skin on his shoulders ruck, and rumple, and fall. Soon, part of his skin, formless as a pricked balloon, lay in floating folds like bright scum on top of the water: it was a monstrous and terrifying thing."	Is she just dreaming? I don't understand what she's looking at. Is it Changing into something? I don't know if it's real or not. Sounds like it's transforming into something.	Asking questions about the text.
"It seizes a victim with these legs, hugs it tight, and paralyzes it with enzymes injected during a vicious bite. That one bite is the only bite it ever takes. Through the puncture shoot the poisons that dissolve the victim's muscles and bones and	Okay, so this must be the giant water bug that it's talking about. That's why the frog went all limp and deflated.	Referring back to the text and previous questions

organs—all but the skin—and through it the giant water bug sucks out the victim’s body, reduced to a juice.”		
“The frog I saw was being sucked by a giant water bug.”	I wonder if we have these water bugs around here, I should check that out.	Questioning the text in relation to the real world

Compare & Contrast

Type of reader	Strategies that the reader uses
Novice - AP English Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Making Connections with Real Life - Retelling/Summarizing (surface level) - Identify and Analyze Figurative Language - Making Predictions and Inferences - Connecting with the Author
Expert - Master’s in Reading Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Asking and Answering Questions - Making Connections with Real Life - Referring Back to the Text for Clarification

Reflection

Conducting this reading study was super interesting. I had my sister and my mom read the passage I chose which was an excerpt from Annie Dillard’s essay “Of Frogs And Flowers.” It is primarily a work of nonfiction, though this author incorporates some fictional elements which made this a challenging piece of text for both readers. Additionally, the text had some biological connections within it that added to the readers’ unfamiliarity. My sister was the novice reader for this study seeing as she is an AP English student this year, and my mom was the expert reader because, although she is an elementary school teacher, she recently received her Master’s degree in English literacy.

Before I sat down to analyze the results from both readings, I was really surprised by the raw data. I went in with the assumption that the expert reader would talk more about the essay and the novice wouldn’t have much to say, but the opposite was true. The novice in my study

actually worked with the text 2.5 times longer than the expert, but it also seemed like the novice was more confident with her thinking than the expert. This worried me a bit at first because I thought I may need to find another reader, however, when I took a deeper look at the strategies used to understand the text, there were some interesting trends.

The novice reader used a much wider range of reading strategies including making connections, identifying and analyzing figurative language, making predictions and inferences, and connecting with the author. Her most used strategy, though, was retelling and summarizing. Meanwhile, the expert reader stuck with just a few strategies, namely making connections, referring back to the text for clarification, and, most often, asking and answering questions. Even though the novice used more strategies, her thoughts about the text were mostly surface-level insights. For example, she would retell or summarize a section of the reading, but she would use many of the same words as the text, or she'd identify and try to analyze figurative language, but she couldn't tell me what effect it had on the rest of the essay. The expert's responses, on the other hand, were very targeted to the text, and even though she thought the text was confusing, she was able to ask questions about the text that would eventually be answered in later paragraphs. Additionally, there were times when the expert would read a confusing passage and then she would go back into the text and look for what she needed throughout everything that had already been read. This is very different from the novice because she would also get confused at times, but she wouldn't look for answers except in the text close to her point of confusion. There wasn't a lot of overlap between the strategies used by the novice versus the expert, but both made some connections to the real world, which is helpful when reading challenging texts because it helps to relate what's written to something you know.

Because of my results, I was able to conclude a few things about my readers. In regards to my novice reader, I believe the confidence she displayed simply had to do with the fact that she is actively practicing textual analysis in school. I also think this is why she used so many different strategies when reading the text. Also, while she did talk for a long time about the text, there wasn't a lot of substance to it because many of her thoughts were reiterations of the text using slightly different vocabulary or the same thought multiple times. Additionally, her choices in strategies seemed to be the result of trial and error rather than the deliberate use of a specific strategy. In other words, to understand parts of the text, the novice would have to try multiple strategies before finally figuring out which would be most effective. With my expert reader, she didn't vocalize lots of different strategies because it wasn't necessary to better her understanding of the text. She was able to instinctively chose strategies that were the most effective at different points within this piece of writing. I believe my expert reader was using other strategies beyond what they voiced during the reading because each question they asked was thoughtful and related to later parts of the text. In order to do this, she would have to be making predictions and/or inferences subconsciously because there was no verbal indication of this during the study. I think this means that lots of practice with literacy strategies over time allows the reader to use them without really thinking about it.

By comparing my readers, I was able to think about how this reading study connects to disciplinary literacy. I've already talked a lot about the strategies my readers used, but this is where disciplinary literacy comes into play. A novice reader may use a lot of strategies, but they aren't that specific to the discipline. My novice reader mostly just summarized what was said in the text which is a very common strategy in all disciplines. To use this strategy in a discipline-specific way, the novice reader would also have to summarize what was left unsaid by

the author. Meanwhile, an expert reader will know which specific strategy they should use to get the understanding they need. Also, even though the strategies an expert reader uses may not be specific to the discipline they are reading in, they know how to apply them in a discipline-specific way. For instance, my expert reader asked a lot of questions about the text, which isn't specific to English, but it was done as a way to predict what might later in the text and to help clarify parts where inference was necessary for understanding.

The information I learned from this study will be incredibly useful in my future teachings. Based on what I saw from my novice reader, as well as what we've talked about in class, it is very important to provide explicit instruction of literacy strategies to students. Without this, students don't know when to use certain strategies which leads to the trial-and-error process that my novice reader resorted to during the study. I also need to pay attention to the strategies my expert reader used and how they were applied because these are the strategies I should be focusing on with my future students.