



Resource

Different Ways to Check for Understanding

Throughout *Reading Without Limits*, suggestions were given for how to check for understanding. Here is a list of those suggestions.

- **Classic Whole Group:** Ask students to do exactly what you modeled during direct instruction.
- **White Boards:** Ask students to reply to questions by writing on white boards. White boards suit short phrase answers and rankings.
- **Envelope, Please:** Preplan questions that you don't want to forget to ask, and put them in envelopes. Distribute the envelopes at the beginning of class. Students open the envelopes, think about the questions, and answer the questions once you ask the question later in the lesson.¹¹⁵
- **Create a Non-example:** Instead of asking students to generate a model of what you taught, ask them to create a non-example.
- **Turn and Talk:** Before asking students to share an answer, give them an opportunity to collaborate with a partner first.

- **Force Rank:** Students determine a ranking system for anything that you are teaching. It could range from ranking a character's traits to ranking the most important criteria in the aim.
- **Rotten Tomatoes:** Give students a range of models and non-examples of the skill or strategy you are teaching. Ask them to give it a percentage score using the criteria.
- **Criteria Check:** Using criteria for success, ask students to evaluate each others' attempt at the strategy they tried as a guided practice.
- **Accountable Talk:** Give students sentence starters like "I agree with . . ." when discussing texts or each others ideas.
- **Questioning Hierarchy:** Developed by George Hillocks, Questioning Hierarchy is a taxonomy of questions that go from literal to inferential thinking.
- **Real-Life Questions:** Ask questions that push students to transfer the learning from class to what they do in their real lives.
- **Change It Questions:** Ask students to use specific criteria to change something in the text.
- **Summarizers:** Push students to summarize the aim that you taught that day. There are a variety of fun summarizers shared throughout this book.
- **Nod Your Head If You Are with Me:** Use this one-liner as a quick way to check for understanding.
- **Green & Red Paper Dipstick:** Give students a sheet of green and red paper. Ask them to use the papers as a means to show you when they understand (green) or don't understand (red).
- **Thumps Up, to the Side, or Down:** Another quick one-liner you can use to check for understanding.
- **Rank Your Understanding on a Scale of 1–5:** Try this self-assessment throughout the lesson.
- **i-Think Journals:** An i-think journal is a place to record all strategic thinking that is textually relevant.

Figure R.1 Check in with Students with the Thumbs-up Strategy



- **Class Blogs:** Set up a class blog where students respond to a question or strategy that you post. It's especially effective when students build off each other's ideas.
- **I Love Reading Pages:** Students represent their strategic thinking creatively through drawings, diagrams, and 3-D representations.
- **Exit Slips:** End class with an exit slip. Ask students to respond to a question or produce another sample of the strategy that you taught that day. Collect and assess.
- **Sticky Notes Showing Strategic Thinking:** Instead of an i-Think journal, students demonstrate their thinking by writing it on a sticky note and sticking it directly on the text.
- **Double-Entry Journals:** Type up an excerpt and put it in the left column. Students record their thinking about the reading in the right column.
- **So What? Graphic Organizer:** Great for nonfiction, a So What? graphic organizer pushes students to show why the fact they recorded is important.
- **Cornell Notes:** Set up a two-column note-taking system for nonfiction. Students record important facts in the right column. They generate their own subheadings in the left column. They can also incorporate their thinking, including questions, predictions, and *aha* moments.