

Teach Your Students to STIRR up Their Thoughts When They Read

by Karen Antikajian

I attended a session with Stephanie Harvey and Ann Goudvis (authors of *Strategies That Work*) at the NCTE Conference in November. Here are some of the ideas Stephanie shared:

"Evolution of thought while you read is really comprehension. It is the voice in the head that speaks to the reader, the inner conversation. This active piece is comprehension and we must model it for students."

"Students need to know that they can (and should) ask questions. (In the old days only the textbook and the teacher asked questions.) Students need to be taught to develop a line of inquiry where each question leads to another question or speculation."

Stephanie introduced a mnemonic for active reading: STR, which stands for Stop, Think, React or Stop, Think, Respond. I have adapted this idea to create STIRR (see below).

Ann shared this important thought: "Do a lot of interactive reading aloud. But you must not always read aloud for instruction. Make sure that sometimes you read aloud just for the joy of it—with no interruptions."



A Recipe for Good Reading

STIRR up your thoughts while you read.
Don't just sit there—be an active reader!



STOP! Learn to stop when you read something new, interesting, puzzling, or challenging.



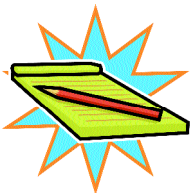
THINK about what it means, what point the author is trying to make, whether you agree or disagree, what might be confusing, or what you could do to understand it better.



IMAGINE what might happen next, what might be changed to make it better, what you might do if you were there, or what a word or phrase might mean.



REACT! Do you like the idea? Do you agree or disagree? Why? Do you think the author is being honest or just trying to persuade you?



RESPOND. Talk to others about it, write your ideas on a sticky note next to it, write about it in your journal, write an article or memo, or write a letter to the author.

"The book is the greatest interactive medium of all time. You can underline it, write in the margins, fold down a page, skip ahead. And you can take it anywhere."

Michael Lynton
British Publisher

"Without books, history is silent, literature dumb, thought and speculation at a standstill."

Barbara Tuchman
American Historian

The indefatigable Bennett Cerf, best remembered as the longtime publisher of Random House, told of a book called *The Ten Commandments* that was to be published for the armed services during World War II but was too long. One of Cerf's editors suggested "How about using only five of them and calling it *A Treasury of the World's Best Commandments?*"