

Behavioral Markers of Deep Understanding

The following behaviors are associated with comprehension (what we might observe in the classroom when children are understanding).

- ✧ We **are deeply engaged**—we experience a sense that the world around us has disappeared, and we are subsumed by the world of the text. We choose to **focus on particular ideas** for longer periods of time, in silence and/or in conversation with others. We maintain **fervent attention**; we may concentrate with a focus that is nearly impenetrable.
- ✧ We **want to take action in the world based on what we have read**. Inspired by discussions, writing, drama, or art, we feel an urge to do something or act in some way to mitigate or resolve related conflicts in the world. We can talk about how a book changed us, caused us to think and act differently in our own lives. We may want to **leave a written, artistic, or dramatic legacy**—we want to make an observable contribution to the world around us based on what we read.
- ✧ We **show willingness to struggle**, to challenge ourselves in order to understand more deeply. We consciously fight any influence of negative self-judgment and confidently seek to solve complex problems.
- ✧ We can **describe our progress as readers**—our processes and preferences. We can describe, for example, how we used a comprehension strategy and how it improved our understanding. We can **define and describe how our thinking has changed** and can ascribe those changes to the use of comprehension strategies or other factors.
- ✧ We **engage in rigorous discourse**. We speak with others to develop deeper understanding and/or defend our ideas, but we remain **open to multiple perspectives** and consider others' ideas seriously, often integrating them into our own background knowledge. We **argue/defend**—we may challenge others' ideas and beliefs and/or defend our own with evidence from the text and from background knowledge (schema).
- ✧ We are **renaissance learners**—we meander among a wide range of topics, interests, genres, and authors, pursuing study in areas we find compelling or aesthetically rewarding. We **pursue a compelling question**—we may decide to tackle a topic of intense interest in order to build a knowledge base, or to satisfy curiosity.
- ✧ We **experience insight**—we experience and can describe a moment of clarity, of “seeing” for the first time, possibly due to our efforts to recognize patterns and structures in text.
- ✧ We **remember**—we reapply previously learned concepts and ideas in new learning situations.