

I Read It, But I Don't Get It
Comprehension Strategies for Adolescent Readers
by Cris Tovani
Reviewed by Joan E. Masaryk

This book is a must read for all teachers. Cris provides strategies to motivate adolescents to read. However, her strategies can be applied to all readers especially reluctant readers. Cris says there are two kinds of students: those who can't read and those who chose not to read. Cris' work with these readers, is revealed in her practical suggestions. On page 17 of her book, Cris lists seven strategies used by successful readers:

- *They use existing knowledge to make sense of new information.*
- *They ask questions about the text before, during and after reading.*
- *They draw inferences from the text.*
- * They use "fix-up" strategies when meaning breaks down.*
- *They monitor their comprehension.*
- *They determine what is important.*
- *They synthesize information to create new thinking.*

Cris is an expert at implementing these strategies with her students. Each chapter of her book describes her students, their attempts and challenges with curriculum and the interventions that worked for her students.

Cris shares ways to enable students to set a purpose for their reading. Setting a purpose determines what is important and helps one remember what one reads. Cris' students tend to not care about the topic, day dream and get bored. She helps students set a purpose for reading by highlighting what they think is important in one color, and then highlighting in another color what a book character thinks is important. Once Cris can help students establish a purpose when they read, she can move on to teach students a variety of purposes for reading which helps the students organize their thinking.

Cris has a variety of strategies to help students connect, wonder, think, infer, and reflect. The biggest obstacle to reading is " How to understand that I don't know?". Only when I know I don't know can I use "fix-up" strategies.

Page 51 has a list of fix-up strategies:

- *Make a connection between the text and your life, your knowledge of the world, and another text.*
- *Make a prediction.*
- *Stop and think about what you have already read.*
- *Ask yourself a question and try to answer it.*
- *Reflect in writing what you have read.*
- *Visualize*
- *Use print conventions.*
- *Retell what you have read.*
- *Reread.*

**Notice patterns in text structure.*

**Adjust your reading rate: slow down or speed up.*

The brilliance of this book is that Cris clearly describes her journey with her students in acquiring an efficient way to think while reading. On page 39 Cris says: " I had a decision to make: teach the reading or the reader? I chose to teach the reader, trusting that if I focused on process content would emerge."

The quality of our teaching is determined by the decisions we make. Cris helps teachers reflect and make decisions crucial to reading success. I highly recommend this book.