• planning strategies that help students approach the page with a specific reading focus in mind.
• reinforcing the notion that confusion is natural and should even be welcomed.
• teaching them to monitor exactly when and where their comprehension begins to falter.
• modeling strategies to help them fix their comprehension when it gets shaky.

With repeated modeling, I expect that my students will, first consciously and then unconsciously, begin using the strategies good readers use to make sense of their first-draft reading—or, as Anne Lamott might call it, their reading “down” draft. Let’s now turn our attention to the “up” draft—second-draft reading, where students move beyond the literal interpretation of the text toward uncovering deeper meaning.

Recently my wife, Kristin, and I rented The Sixth Sense, a film we had heard good things about but hadn’t seen when it was playing in the theaters. The movie is essentially a ghost story, with lots of good jolts and a surprise ending. Allow me to amend that by saying I was surprised by the ending—Kristin calmly informed me that she had figured out the ending thirty minutes before the final credits rolled. “Impossible!” I said, not wanting to admit that she had outsmarted me. She then slowly and methodically pointed out the many hints embedded in the first half of the film that allowed her to predict the ending. (I’ll refrain from stating the ending here out of respect for those of you who have yet to see the film. I still haven’t forgiven Gene Siskel for giving away the surprise twist in The Crying Game in his review.)

The next day I watched The Sixth Sense again, this time with my radar alert to any and all hints as to how the film would end. I was surprised to see how many clues I had missed during my first viewing and how seemingly inconsequential scenes took on entirely new importance the second time around. Having a basic understanding of the film freed up room in my brain to focus on the subtleties on the repeat viewing and as a result I became aware of a higher level of craft in the filmmaking—a level I had
initially missed. I walked away from the film the second time with a much richer and deeper "reading" of it.

This raises an interesting question: If seeing *The Sixth Sense* a second time allowed me to appreciate the film on a more complex level, does this mean I did not understand the film the first time I saw it? No, of course not. After all, I came away from that first viewing with an understanding of the plot points, the major conflicts and themes, and the resolution. But there is richness to that film—a depth—that I was unable to appreciate during my first viewing. The complexity of the film made it impossible for me to immediately "get" it. I was in surface-level mode the first time around; I did not attain a deeper appreciation of the film until I was able to revisit key scenes with some entry-level viewing experience under my belt. The more complex the film, the more worthwhile a second viewing becomes.

Much like "reading" a complex film, reading a complex book requires the reader to revisit it if a deeper appreciation is to be developed. Most adolescents simply cannot read *Beloved* or *Macbeth* one time and "get it." The benefit comes, as R. J. Tierney and P. D. Pearson note in their article "Toward a Composing Model of Reading," from multiple readings in which one's comprehension is refined. Students need to return to the text to help them overcome their initial confusion, to work through the unfamiliarity of the work, to move beyond the literal, and to free up cognitive space for higher-level thinking. They need both a "down" reading draft to comprehend the basics and an "up" reading draft to explore deeper meaning.

Students come to us with an "I read it—I'm done" mentality. It is up to us to show them the value of second-draft reading.

**Second-Draft Reading**

If I want students to buy into the idea that rereading is often necessary to move beyond surface-level comprehension, I have to demonstrate this in terms they understand. I need to teach them that good readers infer when they read; that is, they see and consider things that are not literally on the printed page. The ability to infer is essential for every excellent reader, but unfortunately I have found it to be a difficult concept for many of my students to grasp. They are more comfortable seeing and thinking about their reading in literal terms. This presents both bad news and good news for teachers of adolescents: the bad news is that many of our students begin the year unable to see beyond the literal; the good news is that the ability to infer can be taught.

I try to ease my students into the concept of inference. For example, I may read them the following and have them hypothesize where the narrator is sitting:

I can't believe I have been sitting here among all these sick people for over an hour waiting for them to call my name. Why do they overschedule so many patients? I hope I am called next, for I don't know how much longer I can tolerate this sore throat.

Students have no trouble telling me the narrator is sitting in a doctor's office or a hospital emergency room. When I ask them how they could possibly know this, since the words "doctor's office" or "emergency room" are not in the passage, they tell me that there are enough hints in the passage that they can figure out where the narrator is sitting. I ask them to identify the words in the passage that gave them these hints; they can say without hesitation that the hints are found in the words *sitting, sick people, waiting, patients,* and *sore throat*. Giving students a few obvious examples like this, or, better yet, having them write examples of their own for their peers to guess helps introduce them to the idea of inference.

From there we move on to passages that are not as obvious. I ask them to read the following:

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
All the King's horses and all the King's men,
Couldn't put Humpty Dumpty together again.

I ask them how many of them have heard this before. Every hand rises. Then I say, "It may surprise you to hear that Humpty Dumpty is not really about an egg. What do you think it might really be about?" Every time I have asked this question, the students' reactions are the same:

1. They look at me like I'm crazy.
2. I look back at them like I'm not crazy.
3. They come to the realization that I'm not kidding—that my question is serious.
4. Almost on cue, they return to the page to read the nursery rhyme again. This, of course, is the point of this exercise—getting them to
return to the text and to consider it at a deeper, previously unseen level.

5. Lightbulbs begin to turn on and they begin theorizing.

Very rarely do my students come up with the answer. In fact, even historians are unsure of the origins of this rhyme. Here are three leading theories:

1. The rhyme refers to King Richard III, who fell from his horse in the Battle of Bosworth Field. Richard was surrounded by enemy troops in the battle and butchered on the spot.

2. The rhyme refers to Charles I of England, who was toppled by the Puritan majority in Parliament. The King's army could not restore his power and he was subsequently executed.

3. "Humpty Dumpty" was the name of a powerful cannon during the English Civil War. It was mounted on top of St. Mary's at the Wall Church in Colchester in 1648. The church tower was hit by enemy fire and was knocked off, sending the cannon tumbling to the ground. It could not be repaired.

Though students do not know these historical references, this exercise teaches them that meaning can often be found beneath the surface of text and to truly appreciate higher levels of comprehension they need to revisit the passage and start digging. In reading "Humpty Dumpty," for example, just knowing there was more to the nursery rhyme than meets the eye compelled them to go back and read it again. Usually during this second reading, the students see it in a new light and come to the conclusion that maybe the poem is about a fallen leader. It is not important that their inferences be exactly historically correct for the purposes of this lesson. After all, aren't adult readers' inferences sometimes wrong? This doesn't mean we should stop inferring—rather, it suggests that inferring correctly takes much practice, and the more we infer the better we get at it. With my students, what is important in studying "Humpty Dumpty" is that they learn to see different levels of text and that they practice making inferences.

After Humpty Dumpty, my students and I move on to Dr. Seuss. I read them Yertle the Turtle. Yertle is a turtle who wants to rule as far as he can see. He climbs on the backs of other turtles to get a view of the entire pond. Not satisfied with ruling the pond, he orders other turtles to join the stack so he can see the entire farm. His goal is not only to rule the turtles, but also to rule all the other farm animals. Still, this is not enough for Yertle, who wants to rule the land beyond the farm. He commands more and more turtles to bear the weight of the stack, until finally, the turtles underneath him can take it no more. They collapse and Yertle lands face first in the mud. He has lost his grip of tyrannical power and is finished as their leader.

I tell the students that this is a children's classic, but—you guessed it—it's not really about a turtle. After they wrestle with that idea for a few minutes, I give them a hint: the book was written in 1952. I ask them to consider who Yertle might really be, given the historical context. Someone always correctly identifies Yertle as Hitler.

Students get a kick out of deriving meaning that is not directly spelled out for them. Through Humpty Dumpty and Yertle the Turtle they begin to learn that developing the ability to infer is intellectually challenging and rewarding. Once students have internalized the basics of drawing inferences, they can use these basics throughout the year as we read works of literature. Reminding them that Yertle is not really a turtle comes in handy when I want to introduce them to the idea that Simon from Lord of the Flies is not just a boy (he's a Christ figure) or that To Killing a Mockingbird is not really about killing a mockingbird. Just telling my students that they are "only seeing turtles" is enough to get them to begin probing deeper.

What Does It Not Say?

After Humpty and Yertle, then it's off to real-world text. I use articles, graphs, and charts in the newspaper for practice. Here, for example, is a recent bit of information I shared with students:

Influenza-related deaths have increased dramatically since the 1970s.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influenza Deaths</th>
<th>Influenza Deaths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximately 18,000</td>
<td>Approximately 65,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I asked my students to read the table and list everything it tells them on the left side of a t-chart. After completing the left side, we get to the really interesting question: What does the chart not say? I ask them to brainstorm their responses in the right-hand portion of the chart. (See Figure 5.1.)

Underneath these two columns, I then have students consider the following question: What might have caused such a dramatic rise in flu-related deaths? I chart their inferences and we discuss them as a class. In
Analyzing Flu Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What Does the Chart Say?</th>
<th>What Does the Chart Not Say?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Influenza deaths have increased dramatically since the 1970s.</td>
<td>1. What caused such a dramatic rise in deaths?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. In 1977, there were approximately 18,000 flu-related deaths.</td>
<td>2. Deaths where? In the USA?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. In 1999, there were approximately 65,000 flu-related deaths.</td>
<td>3. Who is the source of this information?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What caused such a dramatic rise in flu-related deaths?

What I think:
- There are more strains of flu than ever before.
- There are nastier strains of flu today than there were twenty years ago.
- People don’t have good medical care.
- The vaccines don’t work anymore.
- There are more people than there were twenty years ago.
- There are more elderly people than ever, and they are the most vulnerable.

doing so, I am trying to train my students not only to notice what is said, but also to infer what is left unsaid. I want them to be aggressive, active readers, capable of looking under the surface of the literal. More and more, it seems to me that students come to me willing to accept whatever they read at face value. I want them to know that this is a dangerous way to read your way through life. I want them to realize that every time something is said, something remains unsaid, and that every time something is written, something remains unwritten.

To further help students see the unwritten, I present them with the table shown in Figure 5.2. I teach in Orange County, California, and in this county there are 568 schools located in twenty-six separate school districts. Every year, students throughout the county are assessed on state-mandated exams. The schools are then ranked on an Academic Performance Index (API). The higher a school’s API, the better. The table in Figure 5.2 lists the ten schools in Orange County that had the lowest API scores in 2002.

When students are asked what this table tells them, they are able, without much difficulty, to generate a list like the following:

What the Table Says
- Which ten schools in Orange County had the lowest test scores.
- The grade levels of these schools (elementary/middle school/high school).

Their numerical API scores.
- The school district where each school is located.
- That one district, Santa Ana Unified, had nine of the ten schools.

This table was printed in our local newspaper without any further explanation. This broke my heart for the teachers and administrators working in these schools because, clearly, this table leaves much unsaid. I am concerned that the general public, much like my students, will not look below the surface of this table and ask themselves the key questions: What does this table really mean? What’s not being said here?

Even if you have never heard of any of these schools, and even if you have never been to southern California, I’m guessing you could accurately infer much about these low-scoring schools—information not found in the table printed in the newspaper:

What the Table Doesn’t Say
- There is a very high percentage of non-English-speaking students at these schools.
- There is a high mobility rate among students at these schools; students come and go frequently.
- These schools are located in low-income neighborhoods.
- The schools suffer from high absenteeism.
- The students come from print-poor home environments; they have limited access to books, magazines, the Internet, and other forms of print.
- Some of these students live in print-poor communities; they have limited access to bookstores and libraries.
- Many of these students do not have a quiet place to study at home.
The education level of the students' parents is low.
The classrooms are overcrowded and underfunded.
These schools may have a higher percentage of teachers who are inexperienced or who are teaching with preliminary teaching credentials.
This table does not tell the reader the API scoring range. If these are poor scores, what do good scores look like? Without context, how do we really know these scores are low?
Though these scores are low, how do they stack up with scores in previous years? Are the scores rising?

(For those teachers working at one of these "bottom"-ranking schools, let me add a little rant: I have visited a number of schools in the past three years, from the highest-ranking school in the county to some of the lowest-ranking, and I have found that some of the finest teaching is in the lower-ranked schools. Rather than blame these teachers and threaten school takeovers, we should be saying "thank you" and offering financial rewards for experienced teachers who choose to teach under such adverse conditions. Memo to Fox television executives: Instead of making national heroes out of singing waitresses and truck drivers, maybe the next American Idol series could focus solely on heroic urban educators.)

Clearly, in the case of the information shown in Figure 5.2, there is more than meets the eye. In this case, what is not said is as important as what is said. When my students are first shown this table, they do not consider the unsaid. They have to be taught how to read between the lines—to uncover the deeper meaning they might initially gloss over. Those who simply take this table at face value do not see the real picture. Sharpening students' inference skills with exercises like the ones presented in this chapter is sure to help them realize that Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is not simply about a bird.

Three Key Questions

Sheridan Blau says that there are really only three questions we need to ask students after they have read something, and that these three questions encompass three different levels of thinking. The three questions are:

1. What does it say?
2. What does it mean?
3. What does it matter?

What Does It Say? What Does It Mean?
The first question—"What does it say?"—is asking for literal-level comprehension. Students must be able to answer this level of question before moving on to the other two. A literal understanding is a prerequisite for uncovering deeper meaning in the text—foundational to answering the second question, "What does it mean?"

Take Chapter 1 of William Golding's Lord of the Flies, for example. The first line of the novel reads: "The boy with fair hair lowered himself down the last few feet of rock and began to pick his way toward the lagoon" (p. 5). This is our introduction to Ralph, one of many boys stranded on an island after a plane crash. At first, Ralph appears to be much like the other boys stranded on the island. It isn't until we reread the first two pages that we notice hints that Ralph will eventually come to represent fairness. Not only is "fair" used to describe his hair in the opening line, but Golding also uses "fair" nine times in the first two pages to describe Ralph. Not once in my fifteen years of teaching this book has a student pointed this out after an initial reading. However, when I ask my students to revisit the first two pages and look carefully at Golding's diction, they are always surprised to "discover" the word "fair" nine times—a clue they had initially missed. Recognizing Golding's overuse of the word "fair" leads to some natural questions: Why does Golding do this? What is he trying to achieve in the readers' minds? When students start asking these kinds of questions, they begin getting down into the "What does it mean?" level of thinking.

To further illustrate the difference between the thinking required in Blau's three questions (What does it say? What does it mean? What does it matter?), read the following passage from Chapter 24 of To Kill a Mockingbird. In this excerpt, Tom Robinson, wrongly accused of rape, has been killed while attempting to escape from prison. Atticus, Tom's attorney, comes home and breaks up the meeting of the Missionary Society with the bad news:

The front door slammed and I heard Atticus's footsteps in the hall. Automatically I wondered what time it was. Not nearly time for him to be home, and on Missionary Society days he usually stayed down town until black dark.

He stepped in the doorway. His hat was in his hand, and his face was white.

"Excuse me, ladies," he said. "Go right ahead with your meeting, don't let me disturb you. Alexandra, could you come to the kitchen a minute? I want to borrow Calpurnia for a while."

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He didn’t go through the diningroom, but went down the back hallway and entered the kitchen from the rear door. Aunt Alexandra and I met him. The diningroom door was opened again and Miss Maudie joined us. Calpurnia had half risen from her chair.

“Cal,” Atticus said. “I want you to go out with me to Helen Robinson’s house—.”

“What’s the matter?” Aunt Alexandra asked, alarmed by the look on my father’s face.

“Tom’s dead.”

Aunt Alexandra put her hands to her face.

“They shot him,” said Atticus. “He was running. It was during their exercise period. They say he just broke into a blind raving charge at the fence and started climbing over. Right in front of them—”

“Did they try to stop him? Didn’t they give him any warning?” Aunt Alexandra’s voice shook.

“Oh yes, the guards called for him to stop. They fired a few shots in the air, then to kill. They got him just as he went over the fence. They said if he’d had two good arms he’d of made it, he was moving that fast. Seventeen bullet holes in him. They didn’t have to shoot him that much. Cal, I want you to come out with me and help tell Helen.” (p. 238)

Consider this passage with Blau’s first question in mind: What does it say? A student summary might look like this:

Tom Robinson, an African-American man, tries to escape from prison. He is shot seventeen times and killed. Atticus breaks the news to his family and to Calpurnia, the caretaker of his children.

Most of my students are able to produce a similar answer to the question “What does it say?” The problem occurs when they don’t read beyond their initial interpretation. To help students dig deeper, I ask them to read the passage again with the following question in mind: “What does it mean?” This is the point of the lesson in which they look at me like I have three heads. They usually respond by asking me something along the lines of, “What do you mean, ‘What does it mean’?”

I prod them a bit: “You told me that Tom tried to escape. He ran, was shot, and died. Why do you think he did that? He still had an appeal pending in court. Why do you think he tried to escape before his appeal was heard? Why did he take what appears to be a foolish risk before exhausting his last chance at possible freedom? Didn’t he still have a chance of being given a new trial?” I have asked students this year after year, and the responses are the same:

“He gave up hope!”

“He wasn’t going to get a fair trial and he knew it!”

“Tom knew the system was rigged against African-Americans!”

“The unfairness of his trial finally made Tom snap!”

“How can you know this to be true?” I ask. “It doesn’t say anywhere in that passage that Tom gave up hope or that he knew he wouldn’t have a chance of having a fair trial. How can you come up with that conclusion if it’s not actually written into that passage?”

Students are not allowed to get away with the typical answers I receive: “It’s obvious that’s why he ran.”

“I just know that’s why he did it!”

“Wouldn’t you try to escape as well, Mr. Gallagher?”

Instead, I ask students to support their statements by returning to the text and providing strong textual evidence. In this case, they would be required to cite passages in the book that illustrate the depth of racism in Maycomb, Alabama—specific examples that would reasonably lead the reader to believe that Tom had indeed abandoned hope.

Reading at the “What does it mean?” level certainly promotes a higher-level interaction with the text, but if I have my students stop there, I am still shortchanging them. It is not enough that my students have read and enjoyed To Kill a Mockingbird (or any other novel), nor is it enough that they can walk away from the novel able to discuss the plot points, or recognize the themes, or identify the author’s use of foreshadowing. While I certainly want my students to be able to do these things, if that’s all I require of them, then in essence they haven’t done more than read and appreciate a great story. That’s a start, but I want more than that.

What Does It Matter?

We have our students read great works of literature to give them an opportunity to think deeply about the issues that will affect their lives. After students are able to answer the two questions “What does it say?” and “What does it mean?” they are ready to get to the heart of why they read the book: What does it matter? Why, in 2004, are we still reading To Kill a Mockingbird forty-four years after it was written? If I am a student living in California, why should I read Toni Morrison’s Jazz, which takes place in Chicago sixty years ago? Why read The Scarlet Letter when the Salem witch trials occurred in 1692? What do we say when a student asks, “Why are we reading this book?”

We teach these great works because we want our students to do more than appreciate a good story. We want to provide them with what Kenneth Burke calls “imaginative rehearsals” for the world they will soon inherit.
Reading great literature provides young people with a practice ground to explore these issues, and by asking them "What does it matter?" we help students see the relevance of the great themes found in classic literature. Though the world has changed drastically since many of these works were written, there is much about the human condition that has remained unchanged, and recognizing these universals enables students to carefully consider their place in society. Asking "What does it matter?" is an excellent way to get students to think beyond the story and consider its themes in a contemporary light.

One could argue that asking "What does it matter?" becomes the reason we read great books in the first place. For example, in the To Kill a Mockingbird passage where Tom Robinson gives up hope and recklessly tries to escape from prison, I ask the students if African-American men today still feel that same sense of hopelessness. I give them some of the following statistics (from the Human Rights Watch organization):

- Blacks today comprise 13 percent of the national population, but account for 49 percent of those in prison.
- Nine percent of all black men are under some form of correctional supervision (in jail or prison, on probation or parole). This compares with only 2 percent of white adults.
- One in three black men between the ages of twenty and twenty-nine was in jail or prison, or on parole or probation in 1995.
- One in ten black men in their twenties and early thirties is in prison or in jail.
- Thirteen percent of the black adult male population has lost the right to vote because of felony disenfranchisement laws.
- Nationwide, black men are 8.2 times more likely to be incarcerated than white men.

Today, in Alabama, which serves as the setting for To Kill a Mockingbird, black men comprise 26 percent of the state's population, but account for 65 percent of the state's prison population. According to U.S. Census data, for every 100,000 white adults living in Alabama, 236 are in prison; for every 100,000 blacks living in Alabama, 1,271 are in prison.

While I want my students to appreciate Harper Lee's classic and to feel close to its many memorable characters, I believe it is most important to use their reading of To Kill a Mockingbird as a springboard for them to consider some of the critical issues in their own lives. To that end, I ask students questions such as these:

- Why is the incarceration rate for blacks so much higher in our country than for whites?
- Why is it that in every single state in our country the percentage of black prisoners exceeds the percentage of black citizens?
- Do black Americans today feel the same sense of hopelessness that Tom Robinson felt? If so, are these feelings justified?
- Have we achieved racial equality in our society?
- If Martin Luther King Jr. were alive today, would he believe his dream has been fulfilled?

Reading To Kill a Mockingbird with the "What does it matter?" question in mind prods students to think about injustice, to argue about these issues, to defend their points of view. To get students to this point, we must push them to read beyond the classic at hand, and to read outside the traditional English canon. To augment To Kill a Mockingbird, for example, my students will read passages from Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man, Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God, and Richard Wright's Black Boy. They will analyze the speeches and writings of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Gandhi. They will read the poetry of Langston Hughes and Jimmy Santiago Baca. They will read current newspaper and magazine articles. Taken together, these pieces help my students move beyond the core work being read in class by adding relevancy and significance to the unit. "What does it matter?" is a question I always ask my students after reading To Kill a Mockingbird, but not until they have had the opportunity to examine a number of more contemporary viewpoints. Multiple viewpoints give our students those "imaginative rehearsals" they need before they leave the shelter of our schools and are confronted with issues in the real world.

Strategies to Achieve Deeper Comprehension

Once our students have completed an initial reading of the text, how do we structure lessons to encourage them to return to the text to deepen their comprehension? How do we move students beyond the "I read it—I'm done" mentality? How do we get them to revisit the text to consider "What does it mean?"

In this section are effective ways to help students deepen their understanding by encouraging them to move beyond the surface "What does it say?" question and to consider the deeper "What does it mean?"
question. (Chapter 8 contains strategies to help students generate “What does it matter?” thinking.)

Say/Mean Chart

A simple t-chart is an effective tool to prompt students to higher-level reading. On the left side of the chart, students are asked to write what the passage says (literal comprehension); on the right side, they record what they think the passage means (inferential comprehension).

A nice way to introduce this chart is by sharing some of the quirky statistics found in “Harper’s Index,” a monthly compilation of interesting statements found in Harper’s magazine (available online at Harpers.com). Here, for example, are some of the statements from the May 2003 index:

- Last calendar year in which the Dow Jones Industrial Average gained in value: 1999.
- Last period in which the Dow declined for four consecutive years: 1929–1932.
- Percentage change since 1968 in the real value of the U.S. federal minimum wage: -37.
- Number of words the New York Times has devoted to the shuttle disaster per resulting death: 28,500.
- Number of words the Times devoted to 1998’s U.S. Embassy bombings in Africa per resulting death: 163.
- Percentage of employed U.S. mothers who think full-time mothers look down on them: 66.
- Percentage of full-time mothers who think employed mothers look down on them: 73.
- Number of U.S. doctors per pharmaceutical sales representative in 1995 and 2002, respectively: 19 and 9.

Students choose one of these statements and together we put together our t-chart. Figure 5.3 presents the results of a recent class brainstorm.

This t-chart activity can be used with any type of challenging text, including magazine articles, poems, short stories, novels, and plays. I use it to help students deepen their comprehension of political cartoons, a type of reading with which they often struggle. When reading a political cartoon, “What does it say?” takes on a new light because what is “said” is often done so pictorially. I ask students to list every image and all the words they see in the cartoon.

Multi-Layered Time Lines

When students are reading a difficult work for the first time, it can be helpful to have them develop a time line of events. This activity is especially useful for a novel or play that has an intricate plot or many characters to keep track of. For example, Figure 5.4 shows a time line for Act 1, Scene 1, of Hamlet.

First, I simply ask students to tell what happened in the story. Once students have the basic characters and plot points down, I encourage them to revisit the text by adding layers to the time line. For example, in the next
layer they might note the questions that have arisen from their initial reading (see Figure 5.5). A third layer could have them make predictions, with these predictions supported by passages from the play (see Figure
5.6).

A number of other layered time lines can be devised to help students move beyond the literal meaning of the text. Here are two other suggestions:

- **A what/why time line.** In this time line, the first layer chronicles what happened; the second layer explains why it happened.
- **Character time lines.** Following a specific character, students chart a triple-layer timeline: (1) what the character does; (2) why the character behaved that way; (3) what the character feels about the chain of events.

**Literary Dominoes**

Have you ever lined up dominoes in elaborate formations and then knocked them all down by pushing the first domino? The first one falls and knocks the second one down, which falls and knocks the third one down—starting a chain reaction that winds its way all the way through the dominoes until none is left standing. As a child I would build elaborate formations that would fork into different directions, climb up and down stairs (made from other dominoes), and bend around corners. If I set them up properly, I could set off a chain reaction that would not stop until the last domino fell.

In a way, the plots of novels, plays, and stories are like dominoes. A happens, which causes B to happen, which in turn causes C to happen—a process that continues until the reader reaches the resolution. To illustrate this domino effect in literature to my students, I begin by reading the Dr. Seuss Cat in the Hat classic, *Because a Bug Went Ka-Choo!* In this story, an incredible chain of events begins when a bug sneezes, causing a seed to fall out of a tree. The seed hits a worm on the head, who in his anger then kicks a tree. The tree drops a coconut and bops a turtle in the head. The turtle falls in the lake and splashes a hen, and before you know it, things quickly spin out of control. The chain of events culminates with an entire city in an uproar. And all because a bug, the first domino in the series, went ka-choo.

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*Figure 5.6*
It's interesting to have students consider challenging literature from a domino point of view. When I introduce this concept, I often start from the last domino and begin working backward. At the end of the novel or play, a resolution has been reached, and I want my students to consider the events that led to that resolution. For an example, see Figure 5.7 for what the last three dominoes in *Romeo and Juliet* might look like. Instead of supplying students with dominoes A, B, and C, this example begins with dominoes X, Y, and Z. The last domino indicates that the long-lasting feud between the rival Montagues and Capulets has finally ended. Why? Because the death of their beloved children has jolted the families to their senses. And why did their children die? Juliet committed suicide after waking to find her lover, Romeo, dead. Why did Romeo die? Because he drank poison after erroneously thinking Juliet was dead. Much like dominoes knocking one another over, Romeo's death led to Juliet's death, and Juliet's death led to a truce between the families. One event led to the other.

After providing students with the last three dominoes in the chain, I ask them to back up and consider what the dominoes might look like throughout that led to the ending of the play. We know it ends in tragedy, but what specific actions lead to this conclusion? Much like the bug whose *ka-choo* set of a chain of events that led to havoc in the city, students are asked to identify all the key events in the chain that led to the deaths of Romeo and Juliet.

Figure 5.8 shows Pedro's *Romeo and Juliet* dominoes. What is interesting about Pedro's dominoes is that they are not lined up in a straight line. His dominoes are nonlinear—much like the chain of events in the play.

This domino activity is an excellent way to prompt students to review the plot points of any major work. It requires students to:

- comprehend (understand the plot)
- analyze (properly order and connect events)
- synthesize (modify by answering "What if...?")
- evaluate (rank importance of plot points)

Students will not have identical sets of plot points on their dominoes, and this leads to interesting discussions about what was important and what was not in the plot. Setting up these literary dominoes is an excellent way to help students answer the question "What does it say?"

To move their thinking to the "What does it mean?" level, I ask students to write their "dominoes" in order on index cards. This allows me to ask a number of questions that require below-the-surface thinking:
- If you were to line up your dominoes of plot events, would they be in a straight line, or would there be curves and offshoots? What does your domino trail look like? How sophisticated is the plot structure?
- Of all the dominoes leading to the tragedy, which single domino do you think was the key? Which domino carried the most weight in leading to the tragedy? Explain your answer and cite text references to support your response.
- Flip to domino number seven (or choose any other random number). If you were to remove this domino from the chain—if this specific event did not happen—how would the outcome of the play have been different? Explain your answer and cite text references to support your response.

**Flip Side Chart**

Someone once said that everything is a problem. If you win the lottery, you pay higher taxes and become saddled with long-lost relatives looking for gifts. If you are awarded first prize in a poetry contest, some of your colleagues will envy you. If you drive a beautiful new car, you will pay higher insurance. Every positive has a negative. Everything has a flip side.

Though this may be a rather pessimistic way of looking at the world, it can help students become critical readers, particularly when they are reading nonfiction. In this morning’s newspaper, for example, there are a number of stories that have a flip side:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Flip Side</th>
<th>Story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American soldiers continue to be ambushed. Anarchy reigns in the cities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortgage rates for homebuyers are at a thirty-year low. Can buy a new camcorder with no payments for a year.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing prices are at an all-time high. An interest rate of 19.6 percent is calculated from the beginning of the loan if you do not pay in full within the first twelve months.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They lost the series in seven games to the New Jersey Devils.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some innocent people are held indefinitely against their will.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unfortunately, many of my students read at face value only. Teaching them to consider the flip side of what they read allows them to sharpen their ability to dig under the surface of text.

**Positive-Negative Chart**

A positive-negative chart is an excellent way to have students track specific literary elements in a novel or play. Figure 5.9 is an example of such a chart, created by Humberto, a freshman, for a character in *The Bean Trees* by Barbara Kingsolver. There are a number of ways to create such a chart:

- **Positive versus negative behavior by the character.** Have students chart a character’s behavior, both positive and negative. For example: When Pip steals food for the convict in *Great Expectations*, is that positive or negative behavior? How positive or how negative is it? How does this compare to his other behaviors?
- **Positive or negative influence other characters have on the main character.** Students pay attention to the influence other characters have on a given character. Example: In Rudolfo Anaya’s *Bless Me, Ultima*, how much influence does each character have on Antonio? Who has the most positive influence? Who has the most negative influence? Rank the degree of positive and negative influence the following characters have on Antonio: Ultima, his father, his mother, Tenorio, Cico, and Narciso.

Chapter 5: Deepening Comprehension Through Second-Draft Reading
• Highest or lowest point in the story. Using this strategy, students mark the high and low points of the story for a given character. Example: In Barbara Kingsolver’s The Bean Trees, students chart the travails of Taylor Greer as she makes her cross-country journey. As they read, students make judgments as to which events mark Taylor’s high and low points. This is not always as easy as it seems. For example, is it a high point or low point in Taylor’s life when Turtle, a three-year-old Native American girl, is thrust into her arms?

Positive-negative charting activities work best when students are able to share, discuss, and argue about them.

Paragraph Plug-Ins

Robin Turner, a colleague of mine, developed this strategy to help students make sense of difficult reading. After an initial reading, students are asked to complete a “paragraph plug-in.” Here is an example of a plug-in that students are given after reading Chapter 1 of The Grapes of Wrath:

The novel begins with an atmosphere of ________. The men and women are feeling several emotions, including ________ and ________. We’re also introduced to ________, who has just been released from ________. As he hitchs a ride back to his childhood home, he becomes upset at a truck driver’s ________. We find out that he was in prison for ________ years because of his crime, ________. Steinbeck’s use of diction in this passage can best be described as ________.

Notice that some of the plug-ins require students to consider surface-level, “What does it say?” questions (“We find out that he was in prison for ________ years”), while other plug-ins require deeper reading (“The novel begins with an atmosphere of ________”).

This activity, which can be done individually or in small groups, helps students by providing a partial outline to direct them through challenging text. Though it has a fill-in-the-blank feel to it, Paragraph Plug-Ins prompt students to reread and, in doing so, enables them to begin thinking at different levels. Giving students this activity has resulted in higher-level discussion in my classroom; my students have been able to clear up confusion.

As students proceed in the text, the paragraphs can be gradually withdrawn, then eventually eliminated, as students become able to achieve deeper reading on their own.

Reading Symbols

Students can also write their reflection in logs as they work their way through a book. To encourage students to move beyond simply summarizing, Robin Turner asks his students to do the following as they read:

• Make predictions. Students predict what will happen next, supporting their predictions with specific references to the text.
• Recognize when the author uses literary devices. Students analyze the techniques used by the author.
• Make connections. Students make connections from either real life or from other books, films, poems, and stories.
• Make judgments. Students judge the characteristics and behavior of the characters.
• Challenge the text. As they read, students challenge the author or any of the characters.

After writing their reflections, students trade logs and look for evidence of the elements. To assist them, Turner has developed a symbol for each of these elements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Symbol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prediction</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literary terms</td>
<td>UT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judgments</td>
<td>J</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As students read their partners’ logs, they draw the appropriate symbol in the margin whenever one of these elements is encountered. For example, Maria is reading Eric’s reflection and she notices that he has made a connection to another literary work. She writes “C” in the margin to let Eric know that she has recognized his deeper reading. The goal of each student is to receive his or her reflection log back with many such symbols written in the margins—evidence that their reflections were thoughtful. (Turner also encourages his students to use an “S” when the reflection consists of too much summarizing.)

This strategy works on two levels: (1) it motivates the reader to move beyond surface-level understanding when writing a reflection, and (2) it teaches the peer-responder to actively search for deeper-level reading in the reflection. When students trade logs, they get a double dose of deeper reading reinforcement.
realize that he needed a lot of help to murder millions of people. As a class, we brainstormed all the people and groups who played a role in the Holocaust; students then created pie charts to visually represent culpability. In Figure 5.10, Edith has assigned percentages of responsibility to various individuals and groups. The real value in this assignment comes when students are asked to defend their charts.

Responsibility pie charts can work with any book that carries a strong ending: Who shared responsibility for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet? For the fall of Hamlet? For the treatment of Hester Prynne? For the demise of Piggy? Who was most to blame? Who was indirectly responsible? Having students consider these questions prompts them to revisit the text and to consider the consequences of the actions (or inaction) of others.

The eight activities described in this chapter demonstrate to students the value of revisiting text. Deeper meaning emerges when difficult text is reread, and these strategies, through repeated modeling, help to break students from their "I read it one time and I don't get it" mentality.

Responsibility Pie Charts

Another way to help prompt deeper thinking is to ask students to consider which characters or people are most responsible for the book's outcome. My freshmen just completed Elie Wiesel's Night, a nonfictional account of the Holocaust. At the end of the unit, they were asked to brainstorm the various people and groups who played a role in the genocide of World War II. It is easy for students to simply blame Hitler, but I want them to