



# Predicting

Many students begin to read a selection without identifying or thinking about the topic beforehand. This means that they are probably not aware that what they already know is an essential factor in understanding the reading material. Students cannot understand reading material if they have little or no personal knowledge of the topic.

Effective readers continuously and automatically anticipate what they read just before they get to it. Their background or prior knowledge helps them to make these ongoing predictions. Skilled readers think ahead by anticipating upcoming words and thoughts by drawing upon what they know about the structure of the language, the topic of the passage and the context of the reading situation.

Prior knowledge enables a person to read between and beyond the lines. Since what is actually printed on the page is never fully explicit, readers use personal knowledge to fill in gaps and to integrate different pieces of information in the message.

Making predictions is an integral part of the reading process. Whether consciously stated or not, readers are continuously anticipating what comes next.

Predicting helps students hypothesize what will occur in the text. In order to do this successfully, students use relevant background knowledge that they already possess regarding the topic. The students' purpose for reading is to confirm or disprove their prediction for the text.

When predicting before reading, students rely on their background knowledge to make global predictions. When used as a strategy during reading, they combine their background knowledge with the textual information provided to assess those global predictions and revise those which are inappropriate.

## Key Questions to Focus Student Predictions

- ▶ What do you know about this subject that can help you predict what will come next?
- ▶ Look at the guides (e.g., subheading, picture, graph). What do they lead you to believe will be presented next?
- ▶ Why do you think the author wrote this?
- ▶ What information do you think will be presented next?