

VISUALIZATION

Visualization is a strong reading comprehension skill because it forces students to form an image in their minds of what they are reading. When students are reading for words, they get no images. For students, visualization is one of the most fun aspects of reading, once they get it. Tell them that frequently when their friends tell them stories, they visualize, they picture in their minds the events the friend is describing. This helps make the story come alive. The same is true for reading stories. Once they begin to picture what they are reading, the story comes alive.

Visualization, it's important to note, is key to both reading and writing. When reading, you get more out of the story if you visualize as you read or as you listen to someone else read. When you are writing, you normally have a fairly clear image of a character or setting, and your goal is to turn that image into language that conveys the same image to someone reading your story. You'll use both of these in class.

There are a thousand ways to teach visualization. One of the easiest ways to get students started visualizing is to explain that when you read, it is as though you are watching a movie in your head of the book or story you are reading. Have them close their eyes as you read a particularly vivid passage aloud. They should picture the people, the places, the sounds, the smells, the climate, and so on. You can choose a passage where a person's physical being is described in detail and have students, afterward, say who the description reminded them of, or choose one in which the character's personality is described in detail, then have the students describe what they thought he or she looked like. It's fun to have them say who should play this person in a movie.

When you do the monster myths in Unit 1, you'll do a visualization exercise that's fun for the students – and should be for you too!