

READING ACTIVITY

Visualization* (Comprehension and retention strategy)

Dr. K. Elango, National Secretary, ELTAI & (Formerly) Professor of English,
Anna University. elangoela@rediffmail.com

Objective : Facilitating students to convert words into mental pictures leading to richer comprehension and retention.

Participation : Individual.

Material : Any text.(My Greatest Olympic Prize - Jesse Owens)

Preparation : Reading a text with a conscious focus on the strategy of visualization until it becomes an integral part of one's reading habit.

Procedure :

- The moment you look at the title initiate the process of picturing it in mind and continue doing so during and after reading. The title, "My Greatest Olympic Prize", lends itself to imagine the Olympic prizes – gold, silver and bronze.
- In the story when Jesse Owens describes the German long jumper, Luz Long, as, "An inch taller than I, he had a lean muscular frame, clear blue eyes, fair hair and a strikingly handsome face." It is not difficult to picturize him in our mind's eye.
- The crux of the narration is the Luz's advice to Jesse Owens: "... why don't you draw a line a few inches behind the board and aim at making your take-off from there? You'll be sure not to foul, and you certainly ought to jump far enough to qualify." Following his advice he drew a line a full foot behind the board and jumped from there and qualified himself for the final. Interestingly, even the not so imaginative ones also can form picture of this scene.
- The scene of Luz genuinely congratulating Jesse Owens on winning the long jump is easy to imagine even by young children. Similarly, the warmth that Owens felt for Luz, "the 24 carat friendship" can also be picturized by anyone.
- The whole narration can be visualized in the form of four tableaux: a) Jesse Owens with the features of a "negro" and Luz Long, a German, b) they taking part in the qualifying round and Jesse Owens failing to do so in the first two rounds, c) Luz's advice to him and d) the friendship between them. These pictures will not easily vanish from one's memory.
- Any kind of task based on the text can be tackled by students with great ease if they cultivate a reading habit of this sort.

Learning outcomes:

- 1) Learners realize that creating mental images engages them actively with the text and rarely do they get distracted.
- 2) Learners (but not all) recognize that more than the other learning strategies visualization enables them to retain the information longer.

Further activity: Reading all kinds of texts employing visualization technique repeatedly until it becomes an unconscious reading strategy.

***Visualization:** In brief, a mental picture or a "movie in the mind". It is also referred as sensory imaging or imaging. Visualizing is a process of creating images based on the words found on the pages and the images are shaped drawing from all the five senses and the emotions they evoke.

"If I can't picture it, I can't understand it." – Albert Einstein