



Assessing Comprehension Thinking Strategies

by Ellin Keene



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Foreword

by *Ellin Keene*

I can almost predict what the teacher's question will be when I see her hand go up at the end of my workshop. I can see the quizzical look on her face while she glances back over the notes to see if I've addressed her query so far. When she states the question, it usually comes out something like, "I completely agree that we ought to spend more time teaching kids how to comprehend, and I understand that the comprehension strategies are part of that instruction. I'm just not sure how to assess comprehension." Or, it might sound like, "My district has just written new report cards, and I have a hard time seeing how I can report a student's progress in comprehension using them." Sometimes, a teacher will ask, "We've been talking all day about teaching kids to think. But, how do you assess thinking? It's pretty tough to get in their heads, isn't it?"

Indeed, it is pretty tough to get in our students' heads, but that is exactly what comprehension assessment is all about. Short of taking them to the local medical center for an MRI, how do you "get into their heads" to know whether students are advancing their comprehension and thinking skills? This is exactly the dilemma many teachers face when they make fundamental changes in their approach to teaching reading comprehension—that is, when they begin to emphasize thinking throughout their curriculum.

I wish that we could all take the time to listen for hours as children talk about their insights and reactions to the books they read and the concepts they're struggling to understand. I've been trying (but only for 25 years!) to refine my own ability to truly "hear" a student's thinking based on what he or she says. I've found that, with very few exceptions, there is something meaningful in everything that a student shares, no matter how disconnected it may seem. There is something he or she is trying to communicate in those words, something that gives us insight into the depth of his or her understanding. If only we had the time to listen as much as we would like.

My colleagues at the Public Education & Business Coalition (PEBC) in Denver and I faced the same dilemmas when we began to explore the research in reading comprehension, particularly research which suggests that students' use of comprehension strategies deepens understanding in a wide variety of texts (Pearson, Roehler, Dole, & Duffy, 1992). How does one determine if they are using those strategies in order to comprehend more effectively?

We searched for assessments that addressed the use of comprehension strategies and found nothing. Individualized reading inventories that essentially ask students to recall, retell, and answer comprehension questions were not addressing our needs. I wanted a tool that actually tapped into kids' thinking during reading, not before or after, and I wanted an assessment that asked kids to report on their thinking at a much deeper level than simply retelling or answering questions. Nothing was out there, so we designed one ourselves. Sometimes, particularly in education, you just have to invent the wheel yourself! The *Comprehension Thinking Assessment* is the result. It was first published as an appendix in

Mosaic of Thought as the *Major Point Interview for Readers*, but it has been revised several times and is published here in several updated forms.

The *Comprehension Thinking Assessment* assesses students' thinking about a text by asking them to pause during reading to think aloud. I've found that this approach provides a much more accurate picture of student comprehension. When students learn to articulate their thinking about a text, either in oral or written form, they are able to go far beyond simply reporting on a particular text; they are reporting on their *thinking* about that text. That allows us not only to tell if they're "getting it," but also how deeply they are thinking about it—a far more sophisticated task.

My hope is that the *Comprehension Thinking Assessment* is, first and foremost, a flexible assessment tool. It is meant to be useful for classroom teachers who have anything but time on their hands. It can be used as a pre-/post-assessment on all the strategies, or it can be used before and after instruction on a particular comprehension strategy. The instrument is designed to be broken apart, providing a strategy-by-strategy assessment that can be administered (and scored) quickly, even in the context of a one-on-one conference with a child. For students who are more skilled at articulating their thinking in writing, the written form can be administered simultaneously to the entire class and scored later. The "Thinking Aloud" portions give teachers a general idea about how students comprehend a particular piece of text without asking them to retell and answer comprehension questions which are, in my view, less than valid ways to assess understanding. The rubrics can be used to chart progress—each point of growth (1–5) represents a 20% increase of points over the previous score. If you are assessing students with the same text level from pre- to post-assessment it is possible to talk about a 20%, 40%, or even 60 % growth over the pre-test. Those numbers can be communicated to parents or translated into grades for a report card.

It is important to remember that the *Comprehension Thinking Assessment* is just one tool among many that teachers can use in order to better understand their students' comprehension. I have found that I can learn every bit as much through conferring—listening intently and regularly—with students. Conferring is one of our most potent teaching tactics, and one that is indispensable when it comes to assessing a child's understanding. Conferring also promotes new learning and encourages students to reach even deeper levels of understanding. Even the best assessment instruments cannot reveal what a student truly understands as he or she reads. In order to gain accurate insights into a student's thinking, we must engage in conversation with him or her.

Finally, I'd like to emphasize that my goal is not merely to have students use reading comprehension strategies. Rather, I hope that your students can learn to use comprehension strategies to better understand the texts they read and the concepts they encounter in all content areas. I'm always delighted to hear students talk about connections they make between the texts and their lives, but I must remember that using the strategies does not necessarily mean they comprehend more deeply. We need to go the next step to teach (and later, to assess) how using those strategies helps them comprehend more deeply or more effectively. This tool is designed to help teachers find out if kids, in fact, understand better than they did without using a comprehension strategy. However, teachers not only have to teach comprehension strategies, but also have to discuss *how* that

strategy works to deepen comprehension. If our students can say, “I made a text-to-text connection *and* here’s how it helped me better understand the character’s emotions in this book,” that is true comprehension.

Introduction

The assessments and rubrics in this book, developed by Ellin Keene with significant help from Anne Goudvis, co-author of *Strategies that Work* and with input from teachers and other staff developers, comprise an extensive reading comprehension assessment tool that examines how students think when they read. Teachers finally have a way to document a student's thinking process and score it, using procedures and methods that monitor growth in understanding.

How to Use This Book

Teachers can use the assessments in this book in a variety of ways. The “Thinking Aloud” assessment should always be given before using any of the other assessments, as it was designed to be an introduction to the others. Teachers may choose one of the options below to use the assessments in this book:

- ➡ Working with students one-on-one and having students read silently and complete each strategy assessment orally or in writing
- ➡ Working with students one-on-one and having students listen to or read aloud the text and then responding orally or in writing
- ➡ Working with students one-on-one and giving each strategy assessment as a pre- or post-strategy study assessment
- ➡ Working with small or large groups and having students complete a written assessment for all strategies using the provided leveled text or self-selected text
- ➡ Working with small or large groups and having students complete a written assessment as for one strategy as a pre- or post-strategy study assessment
- ➡ Working with small groups of students, reading a high-level text aloud to them, and having students complete a written assessment

Depending on the age of the student, administering the complete assessment takes between 20–45 minutes. Of course, choosing to use just one or a few strategies will take less time. The above scenarios can be divided into two categories of assessment—to inform instruction (formative assessment or screening assessment) or to assess learning (summative assessment).

The first step is for a teacher to decide why he or she wants to assess student thinking. Once the purpose for assessment is determined, explore how to assess students. Keep in mind that the assessments in this book focus more on how students think about texts rather than how they retell or summarize a text.



To use this book to inform instruction: (What thinking strategies do students need to know?)

1. Decide which strategies you would like to assess. You may also complete the entire assessment (either in oral or written form).
2. Score the assessment using the rubric provided.
3. Design instruction based on the results of the assessment. For example, create small groups to focus more intensively on a given strategy, such as inferring.



Or, to use this book to assess learning: (What thinking strategies do students know well?)

1. Give the assessment as a pre-assessment.
2. Teach a unit of study on a strategy.
3. Give a second assessment as a post-assessment.

For a list of reading comprehension products and programs that focus on the strategies assessed in this book, see page 84. Here you will also find a list of books on the topic of reading comprehension recommended by the author.

Strategies Assessed in This Book

➡ Thinking Aloud

Readers need to monitor their own thinking while reading. Ultimately, they should be able to clearly articulate their thinking orally and in writing.

➡ Using Schema

Readers use schema (prior knowledge) purposefully to understand more thoroughly what they read. Prior knowledge includes information and experiences that contribute to and enhance what a reader already knows.

➡ Inferring

Readers infer by using both background knowledge and information learned from the text to draw conclusions, interpret, form opinions, and predict.

➡ **Asking Questions**

Readers purposefully generate questions before, during, and after reading to comprehend more completely what they are reading.

➡ **Determining Importance in Text**

Readers decide on the most important elements and themes in text content at the word, sentence, and whole-text level. A summary is a short and concise description of the main ideas in a text. A summary includes the key ideas and the main points that are most important for a student to note and remember.

➡ **Setting a Purpose for Reading**

Readers set purposes in order to make reading more meaningful. When readers understand the purpose for reading a particular text, they can select the appropriate reading strategies that help meet the reading goal.

➡ **Monitoring Comprehension**

Readers know when they are not comprehending, know what they need to understand, and have options for improving comprehension when a reading problem is encountered.

➡ **Visualizing (Using Sensory and Emotional Images)**

Readers create detailed images that contribute to comprehension. They can use these images to draw conclusions, make inferences, fill in missing information, and recall important details.

➡ **Synthesizing (and Retelling)**

Readers keep track of the meaning of text and their interpretations during reading and pull together information from a variety of sources after they read. They identify the underlying meaning of a text and extend their comprehension beyond the basic elements of a passage including forming opinions and reading critically. Retelling is describing what happened in a story or text after hearing it read or reading it.

➡ **Text Structure/Structural Patterns**

Authors structure texts in different ways to easily convey information to readers as they read. The elements of fiction story structure, or the “skeleton” of the story, are characters, plot, and setting. Readers understand the structure of a text in order to analyze how stories are organized and gain greater meaning.

What's Included in This Book



Passages

This book includes four reading passages for each grade level—two fiction and two nonfiction selections. The passages are coded with a letter to represent each grade. A = first grade, B = second grade, C = third grade, D = fourth grade, E = fifth grade, F = sixth grade, G = seventh grade, and H = eighth grade. Teachers may choose to use these passages as a beginning-of-year and end-of-year assessment, or they may use them as necessary throughout the year. This assessment does not measure the accuracy or fluency of a student's reading; instead, it assesses how well a student uses reading comprehension strategies to think about text. Teachers may also choose to use other grade-level appropriate passages from an Informal Reading Inventory's (IRI) additional assessment sources contained in the district's reading program, or other grade-level appropriate texts that students are currently reading. The first section of the book contains the reading passages which have been leveled using Flesch-Kincaid. These passages may be reproduced for classroom use.

Assessments: Oral and Written

All of the assessments in this book can be given either in oral or written form. Choose the assessment format that best suits the students. To administer the assessment as a listening comprehension tool or as an interview where the student reads the passage and the teacher asks the questions, choose the first assessment of each strategy, titled "Oral Assessment." To administer the assessment in written form, choose the second assessment of each strategy, titled "Written Assessment." The assessments in this book may be reproduced for classroom use.



Oral Assessment

The oral assessment form is designed for one-on-one assessment of a student using a text from a leveled passage included in this book. The teacher can read the passage, making it a listening comprehension assessment, or the student can read the passage aloud and the teacher can ask the questions and record the student's responses. If you prefer, use an IRI or other text the student is reading at the time of the assessment. This form may be most useful with young students, students who are learning English as their second language, and/or students who are not yet able to fully articulate their thinking in writing. After conducting a unit of study on a strategy, a post-assessment should be given using this same form, but with a different text that is at the same reading level as the pre-assessment. Post-assessment passages are also included in this book.



Written Assessment

Use the written assessment form to administer an assessment to a whole class or to a small group of students who are able to write responses to the questions after they are read aloud. Administer the assessment in two or three 30-minute blocks. If you are assessing only one or two strategies, give them at the same time. Use the grade-level appropriate text provided in this book (choose fiction or nonfiction) or use a graded passage from an IRI or other text that the student is currently reading. After conducting a unit of study on a strategy, a post-assessment should be administered in the same manner but using a different text at the same reading grade level. Post-assessment passages are also included in this book.



Rubrics

The rubric provided for each assessment is used for oral and written forms of assessment and follows the oral and written assessment for each strategy. The rubrics may be reproduced for classroom use. Use the rubric to record a student's scores on each set of questions. Circle the number corresponding to the statement that best reflects the student's response.

Some points to remember:

- ✓ If using all the assessments with a student, you will repeat the "Thinking Aloud" assessment before assessing the "Determining Importance in Text" strategy to refresh the student's memory about the passage.
- ✓ Consider all of the questions when assigning one score for each strategy.
- ✓ When students go beyond explaining their thinking and begin to articulate how using a strategy increases comprehension, the response should be scored at least a "four."



CD-ROM

All of the reading passages, assessments, and rubrics in this book are included on the CD-ROM located on the back inside cover of the book. You may alter and print them for classroom use.

Correlation to Standards

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation mandates that all states adopt academic standards that identify the skills students will learn in kindergarten through grade 12. While many states had already adopted academic standards prior to NCLB, the legislation set requirements to ensure the standards were detailed and comprehensive.

Standards are designed to focus instruction and guide adoption of curricula. Standards are statements that describe the criteria necessary for students to meet specific academic goals. They define the knowledge, skills, and content students should acquire at each level. Standards are also used to develop standardized tests to evaluate students' academic progress.

In many states today, teachers are required to demonstrate how their lessons meet state standards. State standards are used in the development of all of our products, so educators can be assured that they meet the academic requirements of each state.

How to Find Your State Correlations

Shell Education Publishing (SEP) is committed to producing educational materials that are research and standards based. In this effort, all products are correlated to the academic standards of all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Department of Defense Dependent Schools. A correlation report customized for your state can be printed directly from the following website:

<http://www.shelleducation.com>. If you require assistance in printing correlation reports, please contact Customer Service at 1-877-777-3450.

McREL Compendium

SEP uses the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) Compendium to create standards correlations. Each year, McREL analyzes state standards and revises the compendium. By following this procedure, McREL is able to produce a general compilation of national standards.

Each reading comprehension strategy assessed in this book is based on one or more McREL content standards. The chart on the following page shows the McREL standards that correlate to each reading comprehension strategy and the assessments used in the book. To see a state-specific correlation, visit the SEP website at <http://www.shelleducation.com>.

Objective	Comprehension Strategy	Pages
Uses strategies to convey a clear main point when speaking (e.g., expresses ideas in a logical manner, uses specific vocabulary to establish tone and present information)	Thinking Aloud	52–54
Reflects on what has been learned after reading and formulates ideas, opinions, and personal responses to texts	Thinking Aloud	52–54
Makes connections between characters or simple events in a literary work or nonfiction text, and people or events in his or her own life	Using Schema	55–57
Uses prior knowledge and experience to understand and respond to new information	Using Schema	55–57
Makes, confirms, and revises simple predictions	Inferring	58–60

about what will be found in a text (e.g., uses prior knowledge and ideas presented in text)		
Makes, confirms, and revises simple predictions about what will be found in a text (e.g., uses prior knowledge and ideas presented in text, illustrations, titles, topic sentences, keywords, and foreshadowing clues)	Inferring	58–60
Generates questions about topics of personal interest	Asking Questions	61–63
Asks questions to obtain information, seek elaboration, and clarification of ideas as well as to seek other’s opinions and comments	Asking Questions	61–63
Previews text (e.g., skims material, uses pictures, textual clues, and text format)	Determining Importance	64–66
Summarizes and paraphrases information in texts (e.g., includes the main idea and significant supporting details of a reading selection)	Determining Importance	64–66
Establishes a purpose for reading (e.g., for information, for pleasure, to understand a specific viewpoint)	Setting a Purpose for Reading	67–69
Establishes and adjusts purposes for reading (e.g., to understand, interpret, enjoy, solve problems, predict outcomes, answer a specific question, form an opinion, skim for facts; to discover models for own writing)	Setting a Purpose for Reading	67–69
Uses specific strategies to clear up confusing parts of a text (e.g., pauses, rereads the text, consults another source, represents abstract information as mental pictures, draws upon background knowledge, asks for help, questions whether the text makes sense)	Monitoring Comprehension	70–72
Uses meaning clues (e.g., picture captions, title, cover, headings, story structure, story topic) to aid comprehension and make predictions about content (e.g., action, events, character’s behavior)	Monitoring Comprehension	70–72
Uses mental images based on pictures and print to aid in comprehension of text	Visualizing	73–75

Uses new information to adjust and extend personal knowledge base	Synthesizing and Retelling	76–79
Uses text organizers (e.g., headings, topic and summary sentences, graphic features, typeface, chapter titles) to determine the main ideas and to locate information in a text	Text Structure/Structural Patterns	80–82
Understands structural patterns or organization in informational texts (e.g., chronological, logical, or sequential order; compare-and-contrast; cause-and-effect; proposition and support)	Text Structure/Structural Patterns	80–82
Knows setting, main characters, main events, theme, sequence, and problems in stories or texts	Text Structure/Structural Patterns	80–82

The Research

Comprehension Matters

“The message is clear—the most important thing about reading is comprehension” (Block, Gambrell, & Pressley, 2002). Real comprehension is more than just retelling and answering questions about the story. Meaningful comprehension involves thinking, learning, and expanding a reader’s knowledge (Keene & Zimmerman, 1997). Students are taught how to use comprehension strategies effectively so that they can learn to use these strategies independently to increase understanding of what they read. Knowing just one technique can improve comprehension, but knowing multiple strategies helps students become truly solid readers who can understand many kinds of texts (Duke & Pearson, 2002).

Comprehension instruction should be balanced—it needs to provide both explicit instruction (i.e., thinking aloud, modeling, etc.) in comprehension strategies and a great deal of time spent reading, writing, and discussing text (Duke & Pearson, 2002). Students need to read and understand a variety of texts; it is important to provide many opportunities for reading and to practice comprehension strategies daily.

Strategic Reading

Strategic reading involves a reader’s conscious application of specific cognitive strategies (Honig, Diamond, Gutlohn, & Mahler, 2000). Teachers need to show students how to use these strategies so they can monitor and enhance their own comprehension, becoming increasingly independent in their use of strategies over time (Duke & Pearson, 2002). Reading comprehension is a complex process involving interaction between the reader and the text, requiring the reader to use multiple skills. This process begins before a student

starts to read, when he or she activates background knowledge and sets a purpose for reading. A teacher can provide the purpose, or the student can create his or her own purpose for reading. Strategic reading occurs when the reader tests prior knowledge with new information, questions, infers, and creates mental images.

The reader brings background knowledge, or schema, to the text. Students need a variety of background knowledge and experience to be successful readers. They need to understand the way words are printed on the page, the purpose of printed material, and the relationship between printed and spoken language. Personal experience or knowledge about the topic is also helpful. If such knowledge is lacking, the teacher should provide necessary background information and help students revise such knowledge as they continue through a text.

Understanding Text Structures

There are features of a text that affect comprehension. Sometimes readers find complicated sentences difficult to understand; they need to think about the context of the text to aid in discovering its meaning. Information within a text can be arranged in various ways; students must understand that arrangement and how it contributes to the meaning of the selection. Two examples of text organized in specific ways to produce meaning are chronologically ordered paragraphs, and cause-and-effect paragraphs. Students can be taught to recognize these various features of the text through systematic instruction and repeated exposure to a wide variety of reading material. When students understand why and how a text is arranged in a particular way, they gain an enhanced understanding of the material they are reading.

Activities to Enhance Comprehension

Pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading strategies can increase comprehension. Some pre-reading strategies include purpose questions, predicting, previews, anticipation guides, semantic mapping, writing before reading, and creative drama. Pre-reading strategies can activate prior knowledge and give students a purpose for reading. These activities motivate students to want to read and understand the text. During-reading strategies promote comprehension as a student reads, and they include guided questions, cloze procedure, and metacognitive strategies. Post-reading activities help students expand on the learning gained from the text and combine new information with prior knowledge. Post-reading strategies include questions, visual representations, reader's theater, retelling, and applications. Some strategies—like discussions, semantic webbing, mapping, and writing activities—can be used at more than one stage of the reading process.

Types of Readers

It is critical for students to think and be aware of their thinking as they read. When students develop an awareness of their thinking process, they can consciously choose to use strategies that will aid their comprehension. Readers can be categorized into four main types of thinking while reading (Perkins & Swartz, 1992, as cited in Harvey & Goudvis, 2000).

1. The first type of reader lacks an awareness of his or her thinking process when reading.
2. The second type of reader realizes when the comprehension process breaks down, but does not have sufficient strategies to use to overcome the problem of lack of comprehension.
3. The third type of reader uses thinking and comprehension strategies to improve understanding and learn new information. This reader can monitor and solve problems encountered while reading.
4. The fourth type of reader is highly strategic about thinking and comprehension. This reader is flexible, is able to select a variety of strategies to use for better comprehension, and is aware of the specific goals and purposes for reading.

Comprehension is an interactive process involving many factors, including the reader's background information, the information from the text, the interaction of the reader's schema with the text, the reading situation, and the purpose for reading. Students need to be taught how to increase their comprehension using various reading and thinking strategies; they need to be guided through this process with teacher modeling and support. When all of these factors work together, students achieve higher levels of comprehension when reading.

Why Assessment Is Important

Assessment is an integral part of good instruction and should be conducted regularly. "Assessment is the collection of data, such as test scores and informal records, to measure student achievement, and evaluation is the interpretation and analysis of this data. Evaluating student progress is important because it enables the teacher to discover each student's strengths and weaknesses, to plan instruction accordingly, to communicate student progress to parents, and to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching strategies" (Burns, Roe, & Ross, 1999). Many different types of assessment tools are available for teachers, including, but not limited to: standardized tests, reading records, anecdotal records, informal reading inventories, portfolios, diagnostic assessments, and formative and summative assessments. These different types of assessments serve different purposes, but few are truly effective at measuring and documenting comprehension in reading. In this book, the assessment tools provided can be used as both formative/screening assessments and summative assessments for understanding reading comprehension strategies. Teachers use formative assessment to help them make good decisions about the kind of instruction their students need (Honig et al., 2000).

Formative assessment is usually an ongoing process. Summative assessment shows teachers what students have (or have not) learned from their instruction. This type of assessment shows growth over time and also helps to determine what to teach next or what needs to be re-taught.

When students comprehend what they are reading, they are learning new information and creating meaning in the text or story. A growing body of evidence reveals the importance of knowing what students are thinking as they read and finding out the reasons that they are able to understand and connect with their reading. Stephanie Harvey and Anne

Goudvis (2000) state, “The only way we can confidently assess our students’ comprehension is when they share their thinking with us.” It is important to keep track of students’ thinking about reading and, more importantly, students need to know about their thinking as well so they can work to improve comprehension. The assessments in this book both stimulate students to think about their comprehension skills and reading strategies, and show the teacher what needs to be taught or what has been learned. Comprehension is complex. Simple checklists often are not enough to show what students really understand; making notes (or having students write their thoughts) about students’ thinking provides a deeper understanding (Cunningham & Allington, 2003).



The Loose Tooth

Thomas has a loose tooth. Thomas uses his tongue to wiggle the loose tooth. The tooth does not fall out.

Thomas uses his finger to wiggle the loose tooth. The tooth still does not fall out.

Thomas is sad. He is sad because the loose tooth will not fall out. Mom gives Thomas a big, shiny, fat, red apple. Thomas takes a big, big, bite. Out comes Thomas's loose tooth. Only it is not loose anymore. Now it is lost! He smiles, and there is a big gap where his tooth used to be—out at last!



Down by the Pond

Anna and Jeffrey took a walk by the pond. They saw an egg in the mud. The egg was big and white. They could see that the egg was cracking.

“Look!” said Anna. “There is an egg, and it is cracking!”

“I see it too,” said Jeffrey. “What kind of egg is it?”

“I don’t know,” said Anna.

Anna and Jeffrey stood and watched the egg. Soon they saw a leg come out.

“Look!” said Anna. “I see a leg!”

Soon they saw a head come out of the egg.

“Look!” said Jeffrey. “I see the head!”

When the baby came out of the egg, Anna and Jeffrey saw it was a baby turtle. The baby turtle looked just like its mom and dad. It had a shell just like them. The shell was hard and green. It had a head, four legs, and a little tail, exactly like its mom and dad!

“Look!” said Anna. “It’s a baby turtle!”

“I see the baby turtle too,” said Jeffrey.

The baby turtle slowly left the egg and walked to the water. The baby turtle dove into the water and swam away. Anna and Jeffrey couldn’t believe what they just saw! They couldn’t wait to share it with their friends.



Bird Talk

Birds live all over the world. Birds are the only animals with feathers. Some birds have colorful feathers and some birds have dull feathers.

All birds have two legs. Some birds can walk on their legs, and some birds hop on their legs. Some birds can stand on one leg!

All birds have wings. Some birds can fly with their wings. Some birds cannot fly with their wings, but they sure look pretty!

All birds have beaks. They can use their beaks to pick up food. Some birds can use their beaks to open nuts or seeds, and some birds can use their beaks to go fishing! Birds can also use their beaks to carry things.

All birds lay eggs. Birds use sticks, rocks, or string to make a nest. The birds lay their eggs in the nest. The mom or dad bird sits on the eggs to keep them warm.

The smallest bird is the hummingbird. The largest bird is the ostrich. Which bird do you think lays the bigger egg?



Helpful Bugs

Do you like bugs? Some people are scared of bugs. Some people think bugs are creepy! But some bugs are very helpful.

Ladybugs are helpful bugs. Ladybugs are red and black. They can also be orange and black. Ladybugs eat aphids. Aphids are bad bugs. Aphids eat the leaves and stems on plants. This is not good. When ladybugs eat aphids, they help keep plants looking nice.

Bees are other helpful bugs. Bees are yellow and black. Bees can be big. Bees can be small. Bees sip nectar from plants. Bees make honey from the nectar. This is helpful because people like honey for food. But watch out! Bees can sting!

Do you know any other bugs that are helpful?

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