

Talking to the Text (T4):

A Brief Explanation

Purpose: Text talk is a reading strategy used to help you comprehend (understand and remember) what you read. Good readers learn to talk to the text in their head as they read. By communicating on paper what you think in your head, you can help sort out and make sense of anything confusing or blocking your ability to understand (a reading "roadblock").

Follow these simple steps:

1. In the white spaces and margins surrounding the text or between the lines, if there is room, write what the words and sentences make you think about as you read. These might be notes, questions, comments, predictions, etc. Use lines to connect your thoughts to the location in the text (see example on back).
2. Highlight any words or phrases that seem important or that you can identify with and write why you identify with them.
3. Circle unfamiliar words so you can deal with them later, if you need to.
4. Please note: Simply **highlighting** or underlining words or phrases is NOT talking to the text and will not be counted as such.

You will be scored on the thoughtfulness and critical reflection of your notations. There is no correct or incorrect answer, but there should be a progression of sophistication that you move toward as a goal.

The following are suggested notations you should be making on the text (you will find an example on the back):

- what the title might indicate about the text
- identify the genre/text features (fonts, italics, bold, etc.)
- identify the author and source
- connections and background knowledge
- a prediction based on the title, first sentence, author, etc.
- questions that surface as you read
- what it reminds you of (personal experiences, other texts, movies/TV/songs, etc.)
- ideas you have as you read
- interesting words, phrases, or sentences
- additional information that you wonder about, wish you had, or need to continue
- inconsistencies that you notice about the author's writing
- what confuses you (roadblocks)
- big ideas that seem important to the text as a whole (themes)
- pictures that pop into your head
- summaries that capture the whole idea of a paragraph, page, or whole story/article/passage
- Inferences you can make about what is NOT in the text
- identify the main idea or gist
- use synonyms for unfamiliar words using context clues
- paraphrase (put into your own words) confusing sentences
- your thoughts, comments, judgments, opinions, observations, clarifications...

Talking to the Text Example

Words By Heart

They dream every

the girl story on she was afraid

she was afraid don't be afraid

yes don't be afraid

Lena's mother then, and his life had taken off in other directions, and all that was left of his dream were the words he said softly to himself in the evenings.

That was when she began memorizing verses, -back in Scatter Creek, as if that were something she could do to make it up to Papa. She would say them shyly after supper, watching Papa's eyes go away into a secret place while Claude moved around the kitchen pretending she wasn't listening but correcting a word sharply if Lena said it wrong. On cold days, on the woodbox behind the stove she would read and memorize, warm with the rich taste of the words, and at night in cotton-picking time, when she lay rigid with fatigue, she would say them over with her lips like Papa old—the pretty ones and the Don't-be-afraid-Lena God-is-near ones, that made her taut muscles loosen their grip and lower her into sleep.

Winslow was picking from the sermon on the Mount. She followed him, verse after verse, through the Gospels and the letters, and on, skipping to Consider the lilies.

Finally he began to pause before each verse, and his hesitations made her more nervous than if they had been her own. Once, just as she started to speak, Mr. Doan's big slab of a cat jumped up into the window and looked in at her with a white beard of milk under its chin. It was twice the size of their cat—fat as she was with a litter coming—and it scared every last word out of her mind. For just a second she was sure she saw the little hungry face of Sammy Hanes slide through the light and she wondered why he hadn't come inside. But she felt (Laybird Kelsey) waiting hopefully with his pencil, raised, and she stammered out, "For many are called, but few are chosen," and she braced herself.

Suddenly Laybird Kelsey rose up just as Winslow finished a verse, and said, "Brothers and sisters, that was fifty verses for Winslow Starnes. Let's give him a big hand."

Everybody clapped encouragingly while Lena, flushed with anger, waiting to say her fiftieth verse, Mr. Kelsey couldn't be faulted for appreciating a pyrrhic victory, but he

could save his breath because she meant to say more verses than Winslow Starnes if he said five hundred.

In the silence that followed, she said distinctly, "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot." Somebody burst out laughing. There were stifled letters all over the room, and the applause pattered again for Lena's fiftieth verse, and Laybird Kelsey ducked his head, embarrassed. But he laughed too.

They went five more rounds. Winslow stopped in the middle of a verse, strained to remember, and changed to another one.

Everybody looked at Mr. Kelsey, their eyes asking, "Is that all?" He looked at the preacher. The preacher got up slowly, adjusted his cuffs, and said, "Winslow, Lena, you've said fifty-five verses. You are beautifully matched—no one could call it anything but a perfect tie, if you would like to stop. It has been a fine and inspiring evening for every one of us. Now if you'd like—"

"I want to go on!" Lena said. She hadn't come this far to be half of a perfect tie. Winslow's eyes darted at her respectfully, and slid away.

"All right," the preacher faced his cuffs again. "May the best one win."

who's never heard it

the other person

the father

the teacher

now it is a tie

Did she win?