

TEACHING

IDEAS

WHAT YOU'RE GOING FOR

- * Awareness of details
- * Ability to see what others miss
- * Knowing what's most important or interesting
- * A good sense of the "main point" or "main storyline"

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. BE OBSERVERS

Ask students to be observers of their surroundings. See how much they notice. Record their observations. You can do this on a nature hike, for instance, or by observing a classroom pet, such as a chameleon, hamster, rabbit, or fish. Don't stop too soon, either. Make them dig a little. Keep them working on it till they really cannot come up with more. Then say, 'OK, of all the things we noticed, which are most interesting? Most important? Most unusual? Which details would you like to read about?'

2. USE PICTURES

to draw out summary lists of details. Greeting cards and postcards are good sources for unusual, colorful, and interesting pictures. Collect them. If students are old enough to write their own lists, let them work in groups. A more advanced version of this is to have students describe a picture, then see if others can recognize it from the description.

3. WRITE A SHORT PIECE

yourself about a friend, pet, experience, etc. Before you write, invite students to make a list of questions they would like to ask and have you answer in the paper. Record all their questions, then read them back. Then tell students, “I will only answer five of your questions in my writing, so choose carefully.” Let them talk in groups or pairs for a couple minutes to choose favorites, then make a class list. If they cannot agree, you might try writing two different paragraphs, answering two different sets of questions, then talk about the differences. Which one is better? Which holds your interest more? Why?

4. ASK FOR QUESTIONS

As you share longer written pieces orally, ask, “What questions do you hope this writer will answer? What do you want him (or her) to tell next?”

5. DRAW WHAT YOU SEE & FEEL

Ask students to draw as they listen to literature. Draw what they feel and what they see. Then give them time to share: What did you feel? What did you see in your mind? Why do you think you saw it that way?

