



What Can A Parent Do To Promote Thinking?

"Children grow into the intellectual life around them."

Lev Vygotsky

The skill of schema means: Students will activate their background knowledge to gain understanding. You may hear your child say, "I'm using my schema" or "I've made a connection". These phrases demonstrate that your child is using their schema to comprehend. In the area of reading schema is "all that you as a reader bring to a book: your personal history, all you've read or seen, your adventures, the experiences of your day-to-day life, your relationships...all of this becomes your background knowledge." (Zimmerman & Hutchins 2003) Using your schema is a foundational skill. Students use their schema to perform most comprehension strategies, such as to: visualize, infer, and make predictions.

Some classrooms break down schema into three areas: text to self connections, text to text connections, and text to world connections. Text to self connections refer to the link between the reader and something read in the text. A reader may say, "I've felt the way the main character is feeling". Text to text connections refer to the link a reader makes between two books. A reader may say, "This character is feeling left out, just like Cinderella did." Text to world connection refers to the link a reader makes between the text and the broader world. A reader may say, "This story is about not having a home. It makes me think of the families I saw on the news and how hard it can be to find shelter."

Ideas and tips for parents for the skill of Schema:

Talk about books before reading. Skim the cover or the back of the book, and then activate your child's schema by discussing what the book may be about. Have you had any experiences that might help you understand this book better?

Talk about the book while reading. Share your schema with your child. Stop for a moment and share your thinking. "I remember when..." or "Something like this has happened to me..." Even while reading non-fiction books you may say "I've read about this before or seen it on the news."

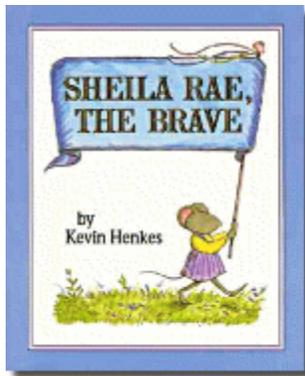
Talk about the book after reading. You may ask each other, "What did this book remind you of?" "Have you ever felt the way the character did?" "Was the book

hard to understand because you don't have schema for the events or topic?"

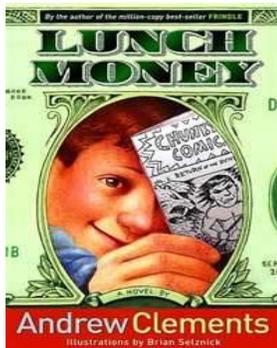
- Sometimes you may need to help build your child's background knowledge or schema around an unfamiliar topic. For example, if the book you're reading has a subway in it and your child has never been on one, you may want to do a little research together. Look online at photographs or maps of city subway routes. This will help your child visualize the story.

Books that support the application of this skill:

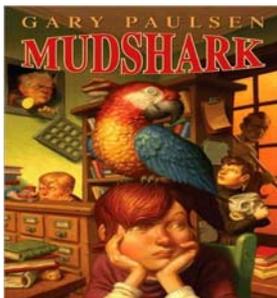
Any book requires you to use your schema to understand it. Here are a few favorites:



Picture books by Kevin Henkes are about topics that early readers can make connections to.



Chapter books by Andrew Clements are about topics that elementary readers can make connections to.



Chapter books by Gary Paulsen are about topics that readers in grades 4 - 8 can make connections to.