



READ WITH MEANING

Choose a Page. Find the Meaning. Use Your Voice.

Turn understanding into a thoughtful, expressive reading.

For libraries, schools, homeschool groups, and community programs

READ

Choose and understand

CREATE

Shape meaning with voice

REFLECT

Explain your choices

SHARE

Read for a listener

AT A GLANCE

AGES
8–17**TIME**
45–60 min**FORMAT**
Individual practice + sharing**SETTING**
Flexible partner program

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

Children explore how pace, pauses, emphasis, tone, volume, and personal understanding can bring a literary passage to life. They choose or receive a short excerpt, consider its meaning, practice intentional vocal choices, explain why the passage matters, and may read it to a partner or small group. Recording is not required.

LEARNING GOALS

- Read a literary passage attentively and identify its central feeling, idea, or meaningful moment.
- Use pace, pauses, emphasis, tone, and volume to support meaning and clarity.
- Make purposeful vocal choices rather than simply reading faster, louder, or more dramatically.
- Explain why a passage matters and connect it with a feeling, virtue, question, or idea.
- Listen respectfully and respond to another reader with specific, supportive observations.

MATERIALS

Required

- Short, age-appropriate literary excerpts that may be used legally in the setting
- Printed or digital copies; pencils and erasers
- Highlighters, colored pencils, or another simple way to mark the text

Optional

- Sticky notes, index cards, dictionaries, or pronunciation guides
- Large-print copies, line guides, reading windows, or text-to-speech preview
- A timer, quiet practice space, or simple reflection sheet

FACILITATOR PREPARATION

- Select and preview several brief, age-appropriate excerpts and confirm that their use is permitted.
- Choose a passage length that children can understand, mark, practice, and share within the session.
- Prepare one short model excerpt and read it twice using contrasting vocal choices.
- Identify unfamiliar vocabulary or pronunciation needs, while leaving room for different interpretations.
- Plan independent, partner, paired, choral, or small-group practice and a voluntary sharing alternative.
- Review accessibility, copyright, child-safety, privacy, recording, media, and publication policies. Recording is not required.

SUGGESTED SESSION MAP

WELCOME
4–5 min**READ**
10–12 min**CREATE**
15–18 min**REFLECT**
7–10 min**SHARE**
8–10 min*Adapt the timing to your group. The activity may use one common passage or a choice of several short excerpts.*

FACILITATOR NOTES

READ

CREATE

REFLECT

SHARE

STEP-BY-STEP ACTIVITY

1 WELCOME 4–5 min	Hear the Difference Explain that expressive reading is not about acting perfectly. It is about helping a listener understand the words. Read the same one- or two-sentence excerpt twice, changing pace, pauses, emphasis, tone, or volume. Invite children to notice what changed and how the meaning felt different. Facilitator prompt: “What did my voice make you notice?”
2 READ 10–12 min	Choose and Understand a Passage Offer a short excerpt or allow children to choose from several options. Give time to read silently, with a partner, or with support. Clarify unfamiliar words, identify who is speaking and what is happening, and ask each child to mark one line or moment that feels important. For this local activity, any suitable, legally available passage may be used; the official list is required only for optional program participation. Need a passage? Explore the official Voices from the Heart Reading List. Facilitator prompt: “Which line stayed with you, and why?”
3 CREATE 15–18 min	Create Meaning with Voice Invite children to mark their text: a slash for a pause, an underline for emphasis, and brief notes for pace, tone, or volume. Practice the passage at least twice. Encourage children to change a choice when it does not support the meaning. Vocal choices should serve the words, not turn the reading into a performance contest. Facilitator prompt: “What do you want the listener to feel or understand?”
4 REFLECT 7–10 min	Reflect on the Page Ask children to explain why they chose the passage, what feeling, virtue, question, or idea they notice, and one vocal choice they made intentionally. Responses may be spoken, written, dictated, or shared privately with the facilitator. Facilitator prompt: “Which word or moment carries the most meaning for you?”
5 SHARE 8–10 min	Read for a Listener Offer a voluntary partner reading, small-group reading, paired reading, or quiet reading with the facilitator. Listeners may respond with “I noticed...” or “Your reading helped me understand...”. Children may always pass, share only their reflection, or choose a nonpublic option. The activity does not need to include recording. Facilitator prompt: “What did the listener hear because of your choices?”

DISCUSSION & REFLECTION

ADAPT & INCLUDE

- How did a pause, change of pace, or emphasized word affect the meaning?
- Which word or sentence carries the greatest emotional or intellectual weight?
- What feeling, virtue, question, or idea do you discover in the passage?
- How might another character, narrator, or reader interpret the same words differently?
- Which vocal choice helped the passage sound clearer rather than simply more dramatic?
- Did your understanding change after practicing or hearing another reader? How?

Ages 8–10: Use two to four sentences, echo or paired reading, one marked pause, one emphasized word, and an oral or dictated reflection.

Ages 11–13: Use a short paragraph, invite two or three purposeful vocal choices, and add a two-sentence explanation of meaning.

Ages 14–17: Explore subtext, narrator, audience, contrast, irony, or shifts in mood, followed by a brief interpretive statement.

Additional options: Offer choral reading, role-sharing, large print, audio preview, extra rehearsal time, speech or language supports, private sharing, or a nonverbal reflection.

Respect language differences: Do not treat accent as an error. Support pronunciation and clarity privately and respectfully without requiring children to imitate one “correct” voice.

30-minute version: Welcome 3 min; READ 7 min; CREATE 9 min; REFLECT 5 min; SHARE 6 min.

FACILITATOR TIPS

Model curiosity rather than one “correct” interpretation. Ask why a reader made a choice before offering advice. Praise clarity, thought, courage, revision, and attentive listening. Avoid ranking voices, comparing fluency, or requiring dramatic performance. Help with pronunciation discreetly and allow a child to rehearse without an audience.

COPYRIGHT, PRIVACY & RECORDING

Use age-appropriate excerpts that may be copied, displayed, or read in the setting, and do not reproduce or distribute more than permitted. Sharing is voluntary. This activity does not require recording. Do not photograph, record, publish, livestream, or submit a child’s name, image, voice, reading, or reflection without required parent, guardian, and organizational authorization. Never ask children to state private identifying information.

OPTIONAL 365 FOR KIDS CONNECTION

This activity is complete on its own. Participation in a 365 for Kids annual program is entirely optional and is not required to use this Activity Card.

The local session does not need to include recording. Eligible children and teens may separately explore [Voices from the Heart — 2026 Edition: A Page That Touched Me](#). A parent or legal guardian must complete the official submission. The reading must come from the official list, and the recording must follow the current eligibility, consent, privacy, language, length, and file requirements. Facilitators may share the opportunity but should not record or submit a child without required authorization.

RESOURCES: [Voices from the Heart & Reading List](#) | [Learning Model](#) | [Activity Guides](#) | [Partner Access](#)



VOICES



MODEL