

Table of Contents

Reading with <i>Just Imagine!</i>	v
Nonfiction Reading Strategies	vi
Book 1: <i>Escape!</i>	1
Introduction	1
Story 1: The Master of Escape	2
Story 2: Danger in the Sky	4
Story 3: The Good Person	6
Story 4: Escape from Hill 488	8
Story 5: Freedom by Freight Train	10
Story 6: The Tower of Fear	12
Critical Thinking	14
Book 2: <i>Survivors</i>	15
Introduction	15
Story 1: Susanna Dickinson, Alamo Survivor	16
Story 2: Race Against Fire	18
Story 3: The Shackleton Expedition	20
Story 4: Cancer at the Bottom of the World	22
Story 5: Flood Underground: The Quecreek Miners	24
Story 6: Trapped in a Canyon: Aron Ralston	26
Critical Thinking	28
Book 3: <i>Close Calls</i>	29
Introduction	29
Story 1: The Race of Her Life	30
Story 2: Trapped in a Shipwreck	32
Story 3: Hanging by a Thread	34
Story 4: Down in Flames	36
Story 5: A Flare for Danger	38
Story 6: Father's Day	40
Critical Thinking	42
Book 4: <i>Nature's Wrath</i>	43
Introduction	43
Story 1: Mount Vesuvius	44
Story 2: The Blizzard of 1888	46



Story 3: The Johnstown Flood	48
Story 4: The 1906 San Francisco Earthquake	50
Story 5: The Wellington Avalanche	52
Story 6: The Tri-State Tornado	54
Critical Thinking	56

Book 5: Disasters 57

Introduction	57
Story 1: The Sinking of the <i>Sultana</i>	58
Story 2: The Great Molasses Flood	60
Story 3: The Last Flight of the <i>Hindenburg</i>	62
Story 4: The Tragedy of the U.S.S. <i>Indianapolis</i>	64
Story 5: Out of the Fog	66
Story 6: The Photographer and the Fire	68
Critical Thinking	70

Graphic Organizers 71

Answer Key 75

Reading with *Just Imagine!*

Children's earliest literacy experiences often involve fiction stories. As children learn to read on their own, narrative stories continue to make up a large part of their reading material. (This is changing; many nonfiction reading series have been introduced to allow more variety and choice in reading material for early readers.) The switch from learning to read to reading to learn remains a hurdle for many readers. Nonfiction makes up the bulk of what people need to read every day, yet many students, even proficient readers, often lack the skills necessary to understand and retain what they have read. Struggling readers face an even greater challenge.

Just Imagine! can help. This program was designed for the struggling upper-middle and high-school reader. It bridges the gap between narrative fictional tales and nonfiction articles and texts. The paperback books are chock-full of articles that interest young adolescents. The stories read like narratives, with the familiar pattern of beginning-middle-end. But the content is often nonfiction or based on actual events. Students gain concrete knowledge, garner reading success, and practice critical-thinking skills.

The format is handy and fun—the books look almost like comic books, not reading primers. Dynamic illustrations add to the comic book feel and appeal to visual learners. The combination of low reading level and high-interest topics encourages reading—and reading success. The short line length and slightly

enlarged type make it easy for the eye to follow the lines of print. The brevity of the stories allows students to feel a sense of accomplishment when they finish reading a complete story in a short time.

The *Just Imagine!* books contain many nonfiction stories. Others are fictionalized historical accounts. Some stories are identified as urban legends or ghost stories. Whatever the genre of a particular story, readers are encouraged to think about what they are reading. The activities that accompany the books build and reinforce vocabulary, practice reading-comprehension skills, and challenge students to think critically. Do students find a particular explanation of a strange event believable? Why or why not? What connections do they see between two stories? How would they react if they were a character facing a fantastic event? Such questions engage readers in the stories and invest them in the reading process. They also teach students that all readers, even those with reading fluency problems, bring something to reading; their ideas count. Giving students the sense that they are entitled to be readers is a great gift, one that *Just Imagine!* can help offer.

Nonfiction Reading Strategies

These reading strategies are useful for any kind of reading material. For able, fluent readers, some of these skills may be second nature. For others, the skills need to be broken down and introduced or retaught. With practice, the skills will become a natural, integral part of the reading process.

• **Activate background knowledge**

Making an initial connection to a text can mean the difference between reading and not reading. If you know nothing about a topic and have no interest in it, why would you want to read about it? The key to this prereading step lies in helping students see that they have some background knowledge about many things. For example, even a difficult science article about DNA can seem accessible if students realize that they have watched television shows about crime scenes and DNA evidence. Tapping into students' investment in a reading motivates them to read.

One way to activate background knowledge is to scan tables of contents of books and magazines. A key phrase may hook a student. A chapter title might remind a student of an earlier class. Any back-cover or jacket blurbs can also draw students in and spark a connection. In books such as *Just Imagine!* an introduction gives a brief overview of the content. Students may find something there that strikes a chord. A class discussion in which other students share background knowledge can empower a less confident reader to recognize what she or he brings to the reading.

• **Visualize**

Picturing scenes of a story is like watching a movie—something teens love to do. Visualizing what you read is not just pleasurable, it is also useful. It gives your brain another way, in addition to decoding and analyzing printed text, to capture an idea.

Teaching students to visualize using fiction is not difficult. You may read aloud a passage that has plenty of sensory imagery, and ask a student to draw or describe the scene he or she sees in the mind's eye.

Visualizing nonfiction texts is more challenging, depending on the type of text. For nonfiction narratives, the process is like that for fiction. If there are illustrations, as in *Just Imagine!* these help keep an image in front of the reader, not just in his or her head.

For nonnarrative texts, visual aids can help. If such graphics exist in the text, students can be reminded to look at them first, before reading the passage, again while reading, and once more after reading. Students may want to make a graph, a pie chart, a Venn diagram, or chart of their choice to organize what they are reading. This is not just a mental process, of course, but also a physical one.

• **Ask questions**

Confident readers ask themselves questions, make predictions, and revise ideas as they read. Struggling readers can learn to do this by practicing. Guided reading questions can help at the start, training students to recognize the kinds of things they need to notice in the reading.

Nonfiction Reading Strategies, continued

Asking students to jot questions that arise at specified points in the reading is another step. Asking students to keep a journal of questions, predictions, and answers while reading can help them see how active reading works. Eventually, students will learn to ask the questions themselves, mentally, while reading.

• Monitor comprehension

Some struggling readers may not recognize reading as a process. They may believe that proficient readers just sit down, open a book, read it through once in a smooth progression, and understand what they have read. Giving readers the freedom to stop and think, and to reread when necessary, develops the idea of reading as a process and increases the likelihood that they will understand and retain what they have read.

Teaching students to monitor comprehension means allowing them to think. At first, asking them to stop and regroup at a certain point in the reading can be helpful. If there is anything that does not make sense to them, they should feel free to reread a section.

• Review

Readers retain more information when they write about it. Writing notes, writing a summary, making an outline, or using another graphic organizer can help students analyze, synthesize, and think critically about the meaning of what they have read. Blank graphic organizers are included for use with any writing assignment.

• Think critically

Students sometimes believe that anything in print is true or good or worthwhile. Of course, this is not the case. Students can be encouraged to think about any text by asking questions about what lies behind the text, such as

Why did the author write about this topic?

Why did the author choose this word over another?

What opinion does the author have of this topic?

What is fact in the reading, and what is opinion?

What devices does the author use to make her or his point, and why?

Students can make their own connections to the text by asking themselves questions such as

What would I do in that situation?

What do I think of the choice/decision a character made? Why?

How am I similar to or different from a person in the text?

How did the setting—the time and place—of the text affect the people in it?

Has anything like what happened in the text ever happened to me?

Have I read or heard anything about the topic that does not agree with what this text says?

Escape!

Suppose you fell out of an airplane. What would you do? Or suppose you were hanging from a rooftop by your ankles. Would you panic? What if you were trapped by an entire army that wanted you dead? Would you give up?

This book is about six people who did not give up. They got into some tight spots—really tight spots. They got into situations that seemed to have no way out. Most people would have said, “It’s over. There is no escaping this one. Why even try?”

These six people did not stop trying. All six lived to tell the tales of their escapes.

As you read about these amazing men and women, imagine yourself in their shoes. Figure out what you would do—if you can think of a plan at all. See if that’s the plan they followed. What did it take to make each escape a success? Did luck play a part? Did courage come into it? What about staying cool?

The next time you feel trapped, think about these six people. Are you any more trapped than they seemed to be? Perhaps, like them, you are not really trapped. Perhaps you are just in a tight spot and escape is possible—if you stay cool, believe in yourself, and keep trying.

Can you find these words in the story? Use the context of the story to figure out their meanings. Then write a sentence of your own using each vocabulary word.

1. slender
2. stir
3. canvas
4. braced
5. boasted
6. wriggle
7. gasped
8. beam
9. dangling
10. muttered



There was a big buildup to Houdini's famous straitjacket escape. Answer the following.

1. List the five steps involved in getting Houdini into the straitjacket.
2. It took three steps to hang Houdini from the beam. List them.
3. People saw four things happen as Houdini got out of the straitjacket. List them.

Just Imagine!

How do *you* think Harry Houdini managed to get out of the straitjacket? Why do you think this?