

The Magic Pen

A fun, fanciful, artsy tale!



Virtual Reading Coach Challenges



Hi! My name is Ms. Stinson. I'm your virtual reading coach. I'm considered "virtual" because, while I will be coaching you to become a critical reader, which means to read a text more closely, I am not actually present, I'm only virtually present. Your tutor is standing in for me.

Nevertheless, my job is to help you learn the kinds of skills you need for your reading classes in school, or if you are homeschooled, the skills you may need to pass regional assessments.

The reading skills and techniques we'll be covering fall under the category of "close reading," which means to pay close attention to what you are reading, not just to the story but also, to particular words used by the writer, the purpose for the text, the way it is organized, the characters, setting, and plot.

You will also learn to make predictions based on the book's title and cover art, and to make inferences about what's going on in the text using details from the text as clues.

Other reading skills include ways to analyze the theme, or better yet, the big picture. Identifying the author's point of view is also on the list.

Here's how it works. At the end of each chapter you will complete the Virtual Reading Coach Challenge for that chapter. These are lessons in which you will practice some of the skills I just outlined. When the challenge pages for each chapter are complete, you will move to reading the next chapter in the book.

Go to the next page to begin your First Reading Coach Challenge. After you complete this first challenge, you will read Chapter 1 of the book.

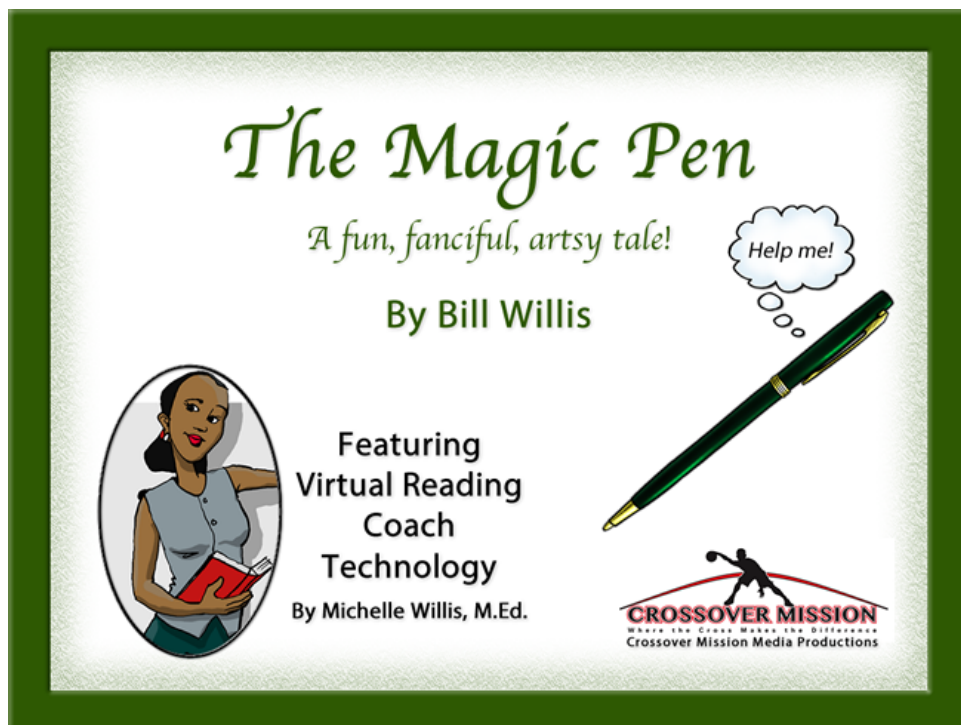
First Virtual Reading Coach Challenge

Making Predictions



Ms. Stinson here. I bet you have made predictions about a book without even knowing you were doing it and without calling it “making predictions.” If you have ever examined a book on a library shelf or at your school’s book fair, looking carefully at the title and the picture on the cover to decide if you want to read it, you have made a prediction. In that case you were predicting whether you would like the book. Something about the title and the picture may have caused you to think so. Maybe you read the information on the back cover, and that also helped.

Look at the title and cover art of the book below. What can you predict from this beyond whether you think you will like the story? Take a moment to study the cover’s contents. Notice the title and subtitle: *The Magic Pen – A fun, fanciful, artsy tale.* Then look at the picture of the pen and the caption “Help me.” Think this through for a few moments. **Write three predictions about the book on page 2 of your Program Worksheets Packet.**



First Virtual Reading Coach Challenge

Making Predictions



The thing about making predictions is that you don't always know if your predictions are correct until you actually get into the story. Based on the title and subtitle, you can probably predict that the story has some kind of magical element and it's definitely about a pen. It's probably fun to read, or at least the author believes it is. The words "fanciful" and "tale" indicate that it's most likely fiction, not based on history or facts, and since it's an "artsy" tale, art or drawing must be involved in some way. Looking at the caption help me, it's easy to predict that the pen needs some kind of help, but at this point you can't really predict what that help will be. Keep your predictions in your head and pay attention as you read the first chapter. Once you have read it, decide if your predictions were correct.



To continue, go to the book and read Chapter 1, pages 1-8.

Chapter 1 Virtual Reading Coach Challenge

Determining an Author's Purpose



One of the first things a close reader does after making predictions about a text is to determine the author's purpose for writing it. There are three general purposes for a text: to entertain, to persuade, and to inform. A text typically employs one or more of these purposes. Fictional stories are meant to entertain the reader, providing an enjoyable experience. Other texts may seek to influence the reader to agree with the author's viewpoint on a subject, while others may provide information about a particular subject.

Review the three purposes for a text.

- **To Entertain:** To provide an enjoyable reading experience.
- **To Persuade:** To influence a reader to agree with the author's viewpoint on a subject.
- **To Inform:** To provide information about a particular subject.

What is the author's purpose for writing *The Magic Pen*? Place a checkmark in the correct box.

To entertain

To persuade

To inform

Go to the next page to continue the Chapter 1 Virtual Reading Coach Challenge.

Chapter 1 Virtual Reading Coach Challenge

The Author's Word Choices



An author's use of particular words is important for understanding a text. Descriptive words can convey what a character is feeling, thinking, or experiencing. Sometimes a reader may not know the exact meaning of a word, but he or she can figure out its meaning by looking closely at the information surrounding the word. Let's try this with an example from the text.

Read this excerpt from the story:

Tommy sat there with his mouth wide open, totally shocked. He didn't know what to say.

"I need your help," repeated the pen.

"What kind of help?" Tommy asked. He couldn't believe he was actually talking to a pen.

"I don't want to spend my whole life in that glass," lamented the pen. "I have things I want to do." He paused and took a deep breath. "By the way, you can call me Peter."

"What do you want me to do, Peter?" Tommy asked **incredulously**.

Based on what is happening in the story and how Tommy is feeling, what is the most likely meaning of the word "incredulously?"

- Sure of himself
- Unable to believe
- Clearly understanding

Go to the next
page to
continue the
Chapter 1 Virtual
Reading Coach
Challenge.



Chapter 1 Virtual Reading Coach Challenge

Characters and Literary Devices

Personification



A character in a story is usually a person or animal. Sometimes, however, an author uses a technique called a literary device to create an unlikely character by applying human qualities to an idea, animal, or thing. This literary device is called “personification.” A non-human object is portrayed in such a way that the reader feels it has the ability to think, act, or speak like a person.

When this is done, the object or character is “*person-i-fied*,” made to act like a person, thus we get the term personification.

In this story, to which character has the author applied the literary device of personification?

- Tommy
- Peter
- Carrie

Setting - Part 1

Another literary device an author uses is called setting. The setting of a story provides important background information for the reader, such as the place, time, mood, or circumstances of the events in the story. The setting can be an actual location or a work of imagination dreamed up by the writer. Sometimes, however, a reader has to make “inferences,” or “logical guesses,” about the setting of a story, because an author doesn’t always tell the reader everything.

First, we will identify the setting for Chapter 1. Next, we’ll consider if there are any “inferences” the reader can make about the setting of this story.

Go to the next page for more on setting.

Setting Categories



There are four categories for the setting of a story: place, time, mood, and circumstances. Study each category so you know its meaning.

1. **Place:** Gives an indication of the location of a character in the story or the location where the story takes place.
2. **Time:** Provides an indication of the time of day, week, month, year, or season.
3. **Mood:** Suggests a particular feeling or state of mind of a character.
4. **Circumstances:** Gives an indication of the setting place, time, or mood through the actions, feelings, or attitude of the character.

Directions: Look at this list of story elements. Each one provides some type of information about the place, time, mood, or circumstances of Chapter 1. On the right you have the four categories listed above. Decide in which category each element listed on the left belongs and place a checkmark in the correct column. The elements marked with an asterisk (*) fit into more than one category.

Story Elements	Place	Time	Mood	Circumstances
*Tommy is sitting in a chair.				
*Tommy just finished his homework.				
Tommy is curious about the fat round glass.				
*Tommy jumps up hastily.				
Tommy spills the contents of the glass.				
*Tommy is shocked that the pen can talk.				

Setting - Part 2



As you learned earlier, sometimes a reader makes inferences, or logical guesses, about the setting of a story. Sometimes a reader also makes inferences, or logical guesses, about the story’s characters. Let’s see if there are some logical guesses we can make about the setting and characters in Chapter 1.

The story opens with Tommy having finished his homework. The author does not tell the reader that Tommy is sitting at a desk, only that he is in a chair. The reader gets the impression of a desk from the illustration, so it is logical to conclude that he’s sitting at a desk. The author doesn’t tell the reader Tommy’s exact location. Is he in his bedroom or is he somewhere else? Is he alone or is someone with him? As the story unfolds, some of these questions get answered and some must be inferred, or guessed at, based on information in the story. Keep in mind that an inference is not a complete guess. Inferences must be based on something in the text.

Below you see some possible inferences or logical guesses about the setting and the characters in Chapter 1. Read each possible inference and decide if the reader can infer it based on information in the first chapter. Check “yes” if it can be inferred and “no” if it can’t.

Inference	Yes	No
1. Tommy is sitting at a desk.		
2. Tommy is in his room. His room is upstairs.		
3. Tommy is alone.		
4. Although Tommy is curious, he doesn’t expect anything strange is about to happen.		
5. Peter has an adventurous personality.		
6. Tommy is pretty good at keeping a secret.		

Go to the next page to check for correct answers and the reason for each.

Setting - Part 2 Answers

1. Yes. Tommy is sitting at a desk. The author doesn't tell the reader this directly, however, it can be inferred: First from the illustration on the opening page of Chapter 1, and later, because the text states that Tommy sat back down at his desk. This suggests that he was sitting at his desk earlier, probably when the story began. This is an informed guess, an inference.
2. Yes. Tommy must be in his room because the author tells the reader that after dinner, "as he returned to his room, his imagination was running wild." And the reader can figure out that Tommy's room is upstairs because earlier he told Peter he had to go "downstairs" for dinner.
3. Yes. There is no mention of any other person being with Tommy in his room. Peter, after all, is not a person. He is an object which the author has "personified."
4. Yes. On the first page the author states: "Curious, he jumped up hastily and grabbed the glass." Next, Tommy examines the glass, looking for usable school supplies. It's obvious he is not expecting one of the pens to talk, since he is so shocked when it does.
5. Yes. When Tommy announces that he has to go downstairs for dinner, Peter says, "Awesome! Let the **adventures** begin."
6. Yes, Tommy makes it all the way through dinner without telling his family about Peter. That makes him pretty good at keeping a secret.

This is the end of the Chapter 1 Virtual Reading Coach Challenge. In Lesson 2, you will read Chapter 2 of *The Magic Pen* (pages 9-16) and then complete the Chapter 2 Virtual Reading Coach Challenge.

Chapter 2 Virtual Reading Coach Challenge

The Five Elements of a Plot



In the first set of challenges, you learned about the literary device of “setting.” In this Chapter 2 challenge, you will learn about another very important literary device called “plot.” The “plot” is the series of events that take place in a story. The “plot” is one of the most important parts of a story and has five main elements.

Below you see descriptions for each of the five elements of a story’s plot. Study the list. You will need to recite from memory the five elements of a plot, as well as give a short description of each element.

1. **Introduction:** This is the beginning of the story where characters and setting are established. In the Introduction, the author will also establish the conflict or main problem encountered by the characters.
2. **Rising Action:** This occurs when a series of events builds up to the conflict. By this time the reader is already familiar with the main characters. Now, events begin to get complicated. It is during this part of a story that excitement, tension, or crisis is encountered.
3. **The Climax:** This is the turning point of the story and is meant to be the moment of highest interest and emotion. The reader wonders what is going to happen next. The conflict or problem of the story is about to be resolved or worked out. The Climax leads to the next element of the plot, the Falling Action.
4. **The Falling Action:** This is the part of the story in which events and complications begin to be resolved, usually as a result of the actions of the main characters or because of circumstances beyond the control of the main characters.
5. **The Resolution or Conclusion:** This is the end of a story. A story ends with either a happy or a sad ending. If there is a moral or lesson to the story, this is where the author typically brings it to the readers attention.

To finish the Chapter 2 Virtual Reading Coach Challenge: Complete the “Five Elements of a Plot” Quiz on the next page.

Chapter 2 Virtual Reading Coach Challenge

The Five Elements of a Plot Quiz

Resolution/Conclusion

Climax

Falling Action

Introduction

Rising Action

Personification

Directions: Choose from the terms in the Word Box above to match each term to its meaning. Write the correct term on the line.

1. _____: This is the turning point of the story and is meant to be the moment of highest interest and emotion.
2. _____: This occurs when a series of events build up to the conflict. Now events begin to get complicated.
3. _____: This is the end of a story, either happy or sad. If there is a lesson or moral to the story, this is where the author typically brings it to the reader's attention.
4. _____: This is the part of a story in which events and complications begin to be resolved, usually as a result of the actions of the main characters or because of circumstances beyond the control of the main characters.
5. _____: This is the beginning of the story where characters and setting are established. Here the author also establishes the conflict or main problem encountered by the characters.

Bonus Question

In your own words, explain how an author uses the literary device known as "personification." Continue on the back of the page if you need more space.

This is the end of the Chapter 2 Virtual Reading Coach Challenge. Read Chapter 3 of *The Magic Pen*, pages 17-20, then complete the Chapter 3 Virtual Reading Coach Challenge.

Chapter 3 Virtual Reading Coach Challenge

Rising Action



Chapter 3 is a good example of the plot element called “rising action.” An author uses rising action to keep a reader interested in the story by creating conflict and tension. In Chapter 3, conflict is created for Tommy when his parents discover his drawings and he is forced to reveal his friend Peter to them. Further conflict arises when Tommy realizes his parents are worried that he is not of sound mind and may only be imagining that Peter is real.

Are Characters Responsible for Rising Action?

Rising action’s conflict and tension are very often due to the actions of one or more of the characters. In other words, a character can bring the conflict upon himself, either by something he does or something he should do, but doesn’t. However, a character’s action or lack of action may not be explained directly in the story. The reader may have to make an inference about what the character did or didn’t do that created the conflict and tension.

Why do you think Tommy’s parents found out about the drawings? Was it something Tommy did, or was it something Tommy should have done but didn’t do? Choose the statement you agree with most strongly.

Tommy did something that let his mother discover his drawings.

Tommy failed to do something he should have done to protect his secret.

Did you choose correctly? Go to the next page to find out.

Chapter 3 Virtual Reading Coach Challenge

Rising Action



Actually, both answers on the previous page are correct, because the answer depends a great deal on a reader's perspective.

If you chose the first statement, "Tommy did something that let his mother discover his drawings," you're right. Tommy did do something. He left his folder with the drawings out in plain sight where it could be discovered.

On the other hand, if you chose the second statement, "Tommy failed to do something he should have done to protect his secret," you are also right. If Tommy wanted to protect his secret, he should have been careful to keep the folder of drawings in a place it couldn't be discovered.

But there is more to this challenge.

We have already concluded that either Tommy's action or lack of proper action made it possible for his mother to discover the folder with his drawings, thus conflict and tension started building. However, the reader doesn't receive this information directly. He or she must make an "inference" about what happened.

Earlier you learned about making inferences. Look at the statements below and check the statement which best describes the meaning of "inference."

An inference is a guess the reader makes without any evidence from the text.

An inference is an informed guess the reader makes based on evidence from the text.

Go to the next page to continue the challenge on Rising Action.

Chapter 3 Virtual Reading Coach Challenge

Rising Action



Read the three text excerpts below. Which excerpt provides evidence from the story that gives the reader a clue about why Tommy’s mother found the folder of pictures?

Explain the reason for your choice to your tutor. Does your tutor agree with you? Discuss your reasons.

- “What are all these pictures?” asked Tommy’s mother the next morning at breakfast.
- “I went up to get your laundry and saw this folder of pictures lying open on your desk,” she said, holding up the red folder.
- “These are incredible, Tommy,” exclaimed his mother.

This is the end of the Chapter 3 Virtual Reading Coach Challenge. You are ready to read Chapter 4.

Chapter 4 Virtual Reading Coach Challenge

More About Rising Action, How Stories End, Lessons and Morals



Chapter 4 continues the “rising action” as Tommy’s teacher Ms. James discovers his drawings. The tension increases when Mrs. Hall, the art teacher, marches Tommy to the Principal’s office and the whole school finds out about Peter and the drawings.

You should recall that the rising action is meant to bring the reader to the “climax” of the story, the point of highest conflict or emotion.

1. Read the statement in red below.

The climax of the story comes when Peter makes it clear to Tommy that he has only enough ink for one more picture. After drawing this last picture together, Tommy will have to draw the pictures himself, using the talent within him. This greatly troubles Tommy. Will Tommy be able to do it?

Is this an accurate description of the story’s climax, the moment of greatest tension or suspense? Circle yes or no.

Yes No

2. In Chapter 4, Tommy also discovers that his encounter with Peter and his wonderful drawing ability has been a dream, not a real event. Circle yes or no to the following questions. These are opinion questions, so there are no right or wrong answers.

a. Did you see this coming? Did you ever suspect it was a dream and not real?

Yes No

b. Was there a point during the story that you asked yourself how Peter could be real? Did you wonder how he could think and talk the way he did?

Yes No

Take Note!

Asking questions about elements in a story that you don't understand or wonder about is an important part of "close reading." So, if you asked yourself about the two questions above, or even others, congratulations. You're becoming a close reader.

How Stories End



Stories have either a happy or sad ending. Some readers have a distinct preference for happy endings. Others are more willing to tolerate sad endings. What's your preference?

As a reader, you may be asked to consider two other aspects of a story's ending: an alternate ending and an open ending.

Alternate Endings: One of the tasks you may be asked to perform by your reading teacher is to write an alternate ending to a story. An alternate ending must take into consideration what is known about the characters, the series of events that create the rising action, and the climax or highest point of the story. An alternate ending cannot change events in the story that take place before the climax, only the falling action and conclusion. **Consider writing your own ending for *The Magic Pen*. What other ending possibilities can you think of for this story?**

Open Endings: Sometimes an author leaves the ending open. In other words, the story ends without giving the reader an exact outcome. *The Magic Pen* is a good example of this type of story. The reader does not know if Tommy turns out to be a truly talented artist or not. One hopes things turn out that way, but one cannot be certain. **How do you think things turned out for Tommy? Once he discovered his "spark," which for him is drawing, was he able to draw as**

good in real life as he did in the dream with Peter’s help? What do you think?

The Moral or Lesson of the Story



Chapter 4 also contains the conclusion. It is during the conclusion of a story that an author typically brings out the moral or lesson. Before Tommy wakes from his dream, Peter says:

“What I suspected about you is true. Drawing is your inner ‘spark.’ Drawing makes you feel alive and energized. It motivates you. It helps you express who you truly are as a person. It gives your life meaning.”

Read the statement below. Decide if you agree, disagree, or are uncertain if it expresses the moral or lesson of *The Magic Pen*. In other words, does the statement below make clear what moral or lesson the author wanted you — the reader — to learn from his story.

Tommy has a talent for drawing, but he doesn’t discover it until the dream makes him aware of his hidden ability. The author wants you, the reader, to give some thought to your own “spark,” to think about your own hidden talent or ability, to figure out what makes you feel alive and energized, to uncover what helps you express who you truly are.

Do you agree, disagree, or are you uncertain that the statement in *italics* above is the moral or lesson of this story? Circle one.

Agree

Disagree

Uncertain

This is the end of the Chapter 4 Virtual Reading Coach Challenge.
You are ready to Discover Your Spark! Go to the Discover Your Spark program
on the Crossover Training Portal.