

Author Says/I Say

Hmmm.... Jet lag.... The author of this article says that sleep cycles are not the only body system disrupted by jet lag. Traveling across several time zones also impacts the body's digestive system, temperature, and hormone secretions. I certainly noticed this phenomenon personally. I not only felt sleep deprived, but I had an unsettled stomach for several days after that first flight to England. I was fatigued and generally "under the weather" until I was able to adjust to London time. This information underscores that jet lag is more than merely not getting enough sleep one evening. Jet lag disrupts the way your body is used to functioning. The author goes on to criticize a jet lag diet for being nutritionally problematic as well as highly inconvenient. But I tried such a diet the second time I flew to England and it seemed to work remarkably well.

Imagine eavesdropping into the thinking of a reader immersed in the flow of comprehension of a newspaper article offering advice on jet lag. On one level, the reader attends to the words of the author, who dedicated time to compose this message. But invariably, as readers, we can't help but personalize what an author tells us. We find ourselves talking through an author's message, interjecting our own thoughts and experiences, as we customize our understanding of what a text means.

We recognize these internal dialogues with ourselves as a familiar daily mental routine. Reading is, in many respects, a conversation with another person. Although the author is not physically present, this individual is definitely talking to us—the reader—to tell a story, to inform and enlighten, or even to influence. As we track what an author has to say to us, we can't help but talk back. We remind ourselves of how our lives connect to the author's words. We factor in something from our personal knowledge banks. In some cases we may even want to argue or disagree. And as this exchange between author and reader unfolds, we periodically take stock of our thinking. We register what we understand, we sum up key thoughts and ideas, and we periodically draw conclusions and make judgments.

Using the Strategies

The Author Says/I Say strategy is a variation of a strategy developed by Beers (2003), which uses a chart to guide students in constructing meaning from a written text. The Say Something Read-Aloud, a related strategy, is also presented here.

Using the Author Says/I Say strategy involves the following steps:

1 Introduce the Author Says/I Say Chart (see the Appendix for a reproducible version of the Author Says/I Say chart). The chart is devised so that readers connect what the text makes them wonder about with what an author says. In addition, readers are prompted to "weigh in" with what they are thinking. The final column returns students to what they were wondering, as they sum up what they now understand. In effect, five key comprehension processes are elicited: questioning ("I Wonder"), determining importance ("The Author Says"), making connections to prior knowledge and inferring ("I Say"), and finally, synthesizing new understandings ("And So").

2 Model this strategy with a think-aloud. For example, an article on food safety (Shute, 2007) provides an excellent opportunity to demonstrate all these phases of thinking using the Author Says/I Say strategy (see Author Says/I Say Chart example).

This article focuses on what people can do to avoid becoming ill from the food they eat. I wonder how serious a problem this is. The author says that 76 million Americans become sick from food related illnesses each year, and 5000 die. I had no idea "bad" food was this extensive, although I remember reading about deaths from spinach and pet food that

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