

MONITOR COMPREHENSION

Have you ever read a text and thought, *I don't get it*? At that moment, you were monitoring your comprehension. **Monitoring comprehension** is a reading strategy that can help you stay focused on the parts of the text you do understand, and then help you build on that understanding.

1. ESTABLISH CHECKPOINTS

To help you monitor comprehension, use text breaks (paragraph, page, chapter, section breaks) subheadings, and images as **checkpoints**. Pause at each of these points and ask yourself: Did I understand this section? If not, when did I lose track?

2. IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM

Skim the text to where you last understood it.

- Identify any vocabulary or sentence you didn't understand.
- If you're reading dialogue, check that you know who is speaking.
- Check to see if the organization of the text caused the problem. For example, is the author using a flashback?

3. REPAIR COMPREHENSION

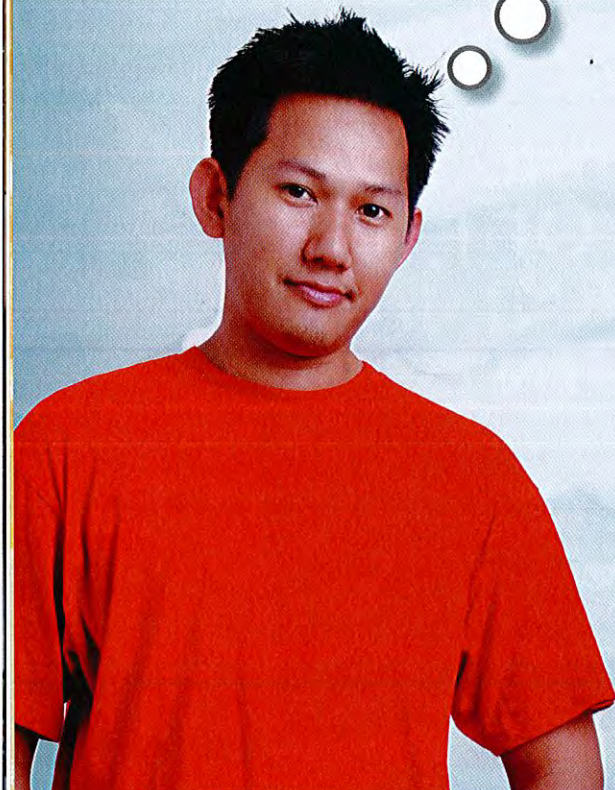
Depending on the problem, try one or more of these strategies:

- Use context to help you work out the meaning of the vocabulary.
- Reread the text or keep reading. Your confusion may clear up as you read.
- Check to see if there is a glossary.
- Try to create a picture in your mind of the scene or events. Look for images that may help you visualize the text.
- Use text features, such as headings, charts, or images.

Establish
Checkpoints

Identify the
Problem

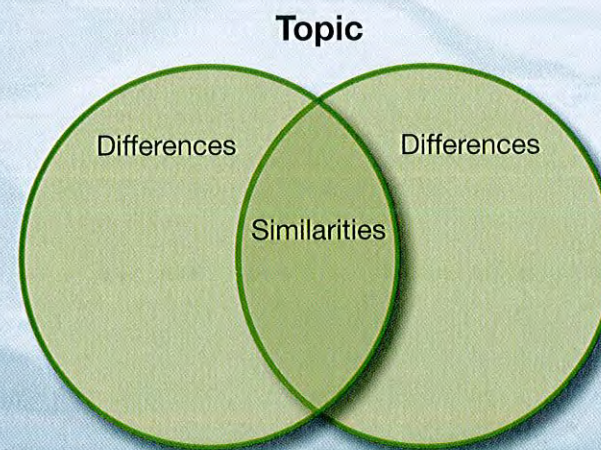
Repair
Comprehension



SUMMARIZE

A good method for checking that you understand a text is to summarize it. A **summary** is a shorter version of a longer piece of writing, capturing the most important points. When you're reading longer and more difficult texts, summarizing can help you organize your thoughts and focus on the important details in the text.

1. First, **read the entire text**. As you prepare a summary, reread or scan the text again. Or you can summarize after reading a paragraph or section. This is a good way to monitor your comprehension.
2. **Identify the main idea** or the author's message. Text features, such as the title, topic sentence, and photos, can help you.
3. Think about how details **connect with the main idea**. Keep a point-form list of important details while you read or reread.
4. **Look for the major sections** of the text. They are often indicated by paragraphs, headings, and subheadings. Summarize each section in one sentence using your own words.
5. **Use an appropriate graphic organizer** to help you summarize. For example, if the text you're reading is organized using a compare-and-contrast text pattern, you might use a Venn diagram like the one below.
6. For a **written summary**, make sure you
 - include all the important ideas
 - include any important conclusions
 - are concise—eliminate unnecessary words and repetition



Things to Remember

- ❌ Don't add your own opinion.
- ❌ Don't add information not in the original text.
- ❌ Don't include irrelevant information or background details.

Transfer Your Learning

Connect to ...

Math: When you're reading a math problem, summarizing can help you focus on the important details. How else could summarizing help you during math class?

Oral Communication: Do you find it easier to summarize while you're reading or while you're listening? How could you use one skill to help the other?

**UNDERSTANDING
READING
STRATEGIES**

- ▶ Monitoring Comprehension
- ▶ Summarizing

Monitoring Comprehension

To monitor your comprehension, establish checkpoints. Skim this article and identify four checkpoints where you will stop to monitor your comprehension.

VOCABULARY

biochemical response: the chemical reactions of a living thing, for example, the release of hormones

consciousness: the state of being aware of your surroundings

phenomenon: a fact, event, or circumstance that can be observed, especially in cases where the cause can be questioned

transatlantic: to do with crossing the Atlantic Ocean

Vocabulary Tip

Breaking down a word into parts can help you understand it. For example, the word *transatlantic* uses a prefix meaning “across” and the word *Atlantic*.

What do you think?

Surviving a near-death experience is a significant turning point.

Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	

THIRD MAN THEORY

Newspaper Article by Nancy J. White

LINDBERGH RISKS LIFE TO BE FIRST TO CROSS ATLANTIC SOLO BY PLANE IN NON-STOP FLIGHT

Charles Lindbergh felt it.

During his first solo, non-stop transatlantic flight in 1927, Charles was flying just above the ocean, desperately struggling to stay awake. Twenty-two hours into the trip, he became aware of vague forms aboard the *Spirit of St. Louis*. They offered reassurance and discussed any problems. They stayed with Charles until he spotted the Irish coast and Paris was within reach.



Charles Lindbergh felt a presence guide him on his 1927 flight across the Atlantic. It first appeared after he had been in the air for 22 hours.

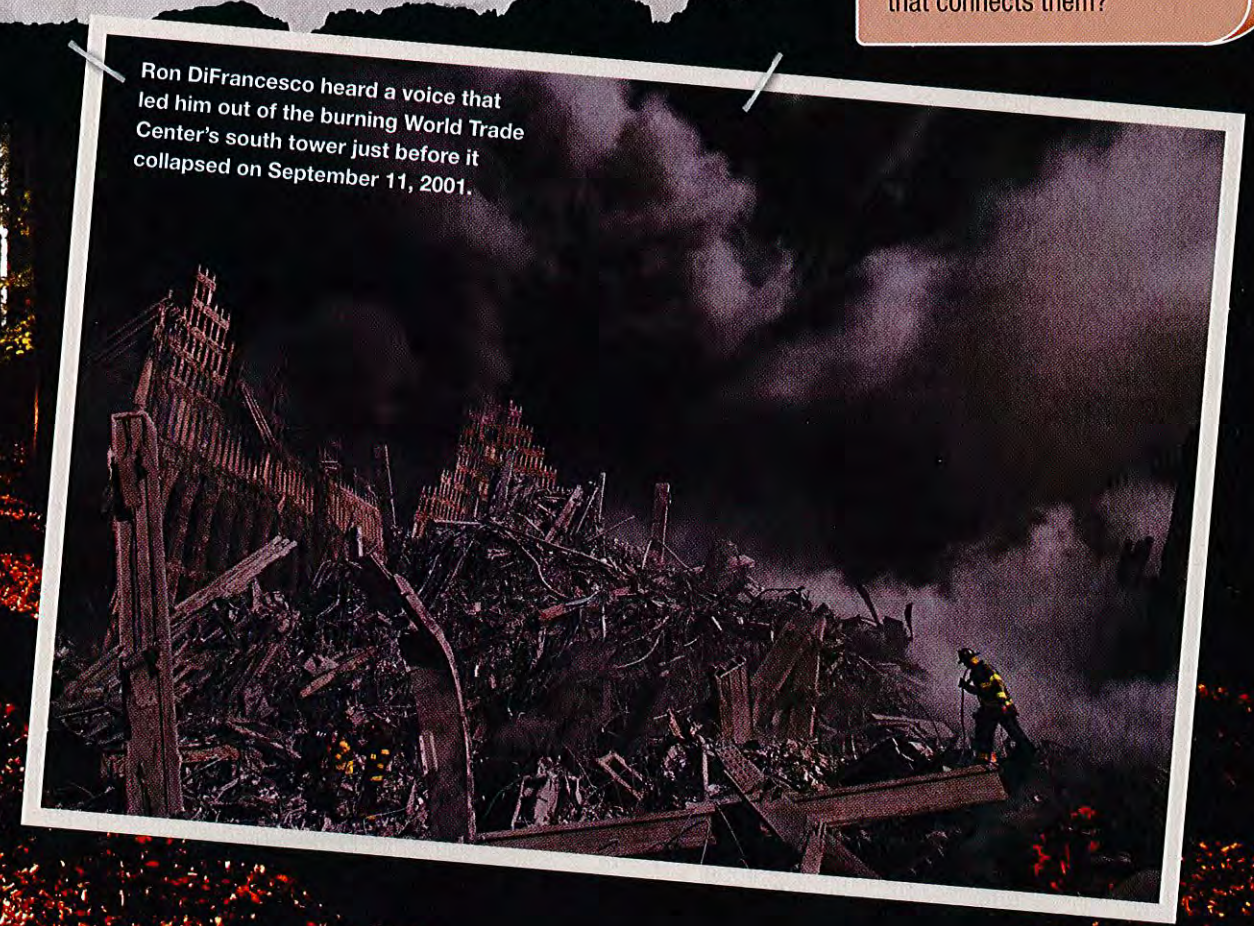
CLIMBER FACES DEATH, ENCOURAGED TO FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL

An avalanche in the Canadian Rockies swept climber James Seigny 600 m, breaking his back, scapula, arm, nose, and teeth, and tearing ligaments in both his knees. When he regained consciousness, he saw his climbing companion was dead. James lay down next to his friend, ready to die. At that moment, an invisible being urged James to survive, telling him what to do. The presence stayed with him while he painfully made his way to camp, where skiers found him.

MIRACULOUS SURVIVAL CHANGES MAN'S LIFE

On September 11, 2001, overcome by smoke in a stairwell of the World Trade Center's south tower, money market broker Ron DiFrancesco joined others lying on the concrete floor, some slipping into unconsciousness.

“Get up!” a voice ordered Ron, who sensed a physical presence encouraging him. Descending the stairs again, he was blocked by fire. The being led him to dash through the flames. He raced down to the plaza; then the tower collapsed. But he survived, one of only four people to escape from above the 81st floor.



Ron DiFrancesco heard a voice that led him out of the burning World Trade Center's south tower just before it collapsed on September 11, 2001.

Monitoring Comprehension

If you haven't understood a section of text, identify the problem: the vocabulary, a new idea, the topic, or the organization. For example, this newspaper article may be hard to follow because it's jumping from one situation to another. Think about what connects the situations.

Summarizing

As you summarize, include only the important ideas. Think about how details connect with the main idea. What do the three stories included in this article have in common? How could you summarize the important idea that connects them?

Summarizing

To help you summarize, identify the major sections of the text. How has Nancy White organized this article? Use these ideas to help you summarize the text.

→ GUARDIAN ANGEL OR SURVIVAL MECHANISM?

Some people believe this presence is a guardian angel. Others say it's the brain's way of coping under great stress. Whichever, the experiences are eerily similar: the sense of a presence that encourages, advises, and even leads a person out of peril.

John Geiger, author of *The Third Man Factor*, published in 2009, says that in every case he found, this sense of a presence was a good, helpful companion, not evil or bad. John found more than 100 cases, including the accounts described earlier. "They're people in a life-and-death struggle, often but not always in nature," John explains.

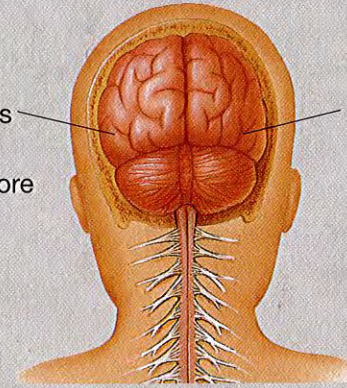
John Geiger has written several books about exploration. He became fascinated by the idea of an otherworldly guardian after reading Sir Ernest Shackleton's accounts of his crew's horrific 1916 crossing of a south polar island, aided by an invisible being. The phenomenon became known as the Third Man, because that's how T.S. Eliot referred to such a presence in his poem "The Waste Land."

Spiritual or religious people, no matter their faith, say they were helped by a divine companion, while *atheists* (people who don't believe in a god) see it as a brain function, the author says. Scientific researchers have studied how the human mind might conjure the Third Man.

"Opinion is divided," says John Geiger. "There's not a definitive explanation."

Some psychologists believe the phenomenon is a product of *bicameralism* (the theory that the left and the right sides of the brain perform different functions). Under stress, the usually dominant left side of the brain loses some hold over the mind, and logical thinking declines. The right side of the brain, involved in imaginative thinking, intrudes.

The left side of the brain controls logical thinking and is usually more powerful.



The right side of the brain controls creative thinking.

Another theory suggests the Third Man is a coping mechanism, a mental process for calming and separating the person from a horrible experience. "Just as we have a biochemical response to stress through adrenalin, this is a mental process that helps us survive."

Whether the Third Man is an *angel or a survival mechanism* is for people to decide for themselves, says John Geiger. "I can't solve that riddle. But it is very powerful and raises some profound questions."

← Monitoring Comprehension

Once you've identified your comprehension problem, choose an appropriate strategy. What helps you figure out the meaning of the word *bicameralism*?

← Summarizing

In your summary, include all the important ideas and any important conclusions. Remember to be concise. In the shortest way possible, how could you summarize the two explanations for the Third Man?

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Responding

What Do You Think Now? "Surviving a near-death experience is a significant turning point." How do you respond to this statement after reading this selection? Aside from this selection, what have you read or heard about that helps you respond to this statement?

Monitoring Comprehension: If you had difficulty while you were reading, identify a place in the article where your understanding broke down. What strategies helped you understand this newspaper article?

Summarizing: Summarize the main idea of this newspaper article in 15 words. When might a really short summary be useful?

Reading for Detail: What were the common characteristics of the experiences Nancy White describes?

Critical Literacy: Guardian angel or survival mechanism: which side of this argument is supported by the article's photos and design? How could you redesign the pages to better support the other side of the argument?

Critical Thinking: This newspaper article describes the life-or-death experiences of three people. Choose one person and speculate on how that experience changed his life.

Metacognition: How does summarizing a text in your own words increase your understanding of it? Explain.

THE THIRD MAN FACTOR

THE SECRET TO SURVIVAL IN EXTREME ENVIRONMENTS

JOHN GEIGER

FOREWORD BY VINCENT LAM
Giller Award-winning author of *Bloodletting & Miraculous Cures*

This book explores what's become known as the Third Man.

APPLYING READING STRATEGIES

- ▶ Monitoring Comprehension
- ▶ Summarizing

VOCABULARY

osmosis: the process of learning something without being taught, just by seeing or hearing it often

tangible: something you can touch

Vocabulary Tip

The literal meaning of *osmosis* is “to absorb something through the skin.” In this passage, the word *osmosis* is used figuratively. The explanation following the use of the word in the selection shows that the students “absorbed” much of the language by talking with people in the community rather than by studying Chinese through books.

What do you think?

How can travelling to other countries lead to an important turning point?

EAST

How a Month in China Changed My Life

Personal Anecdote by Erika Kwee

My trip to China is a secret. Not a complete secret, because my parents had to arrange for my going on the program in the first place. But it's a secret in the way that no one outside of our small group knows what we really got out of it. We went for the worthy purposes of language immersion, cultural exchange, and community service, in preparation for being volunteers for the 2008 Olympics in Beijing. But I think we all learned something a little less tangible, a little more real-life that July.

Although we had three hours of Chinese class most days, in the span of 24 hours it was barely anything. We learned mostly by osmosis—making nervous conversation with the Hong Kong hairdresser as he did who-knows-what to my hair was probably more valuable than an hour of vocabulary exercises.

The big stuff (otherwise known as *teenage life happening*) took place in our free time. There was backstabbing, betrayal, hysterical sobbing and hysterical embarrassment, broken hearts, rejection, jealousy, 24-hour bffs (best friends, not so forever), pettiness, gossip—all within a ring of about eight campers. Actually, it was all very educational. I learned that even though we were in China, North American teenage drama was alive and well.

I learned that the most sweet-faced, sweet-voiced, seemingly most sweet person you could ever hope to meet can be a totally different person around boys. And you just can't keep forgiving her for that.

I learned that surprising talents lie under somewhat deceptive exteriors, and that you should definitely get an autograph when you come across people with these qualities, because one day they will surely be famous.

I learned that everyone loves a person who never gets upset, but that very, very, *very* few members of the human population possess this genetic makeup.

I learned that you can seriously injure yourself from laughing.

I learned that you can also get seriously injured by an irate merchant who is completely offended by your low offer for her obviously high-quality products, and that when she starts yelling at you in Chinese (which, even though you're supposed to be learning, you don't understand a word of), you should just walk away rather quickly.



I learned that in the grand scheme of things, a month is insignificant. It is also everything. The memories have become fuzzy around the edges, as all of them do, glorified in my mind in a process that began the moment we stepped onto the plane home, away from the messy success of finding ourselves.

When my parents asked, “How was the trip?” I only mumbled, “Good.” It's hard to put a month's worth of experiences into an honest answer. All that I could not convey to them is the secret that everyone who went on that first trip holds, what we really learned.

eBookExtra

Responding

What Do You Think Now? “How can travelling to other countries lead to an important turning point?” How do you respond now that you've read the selection? How do you think Erika Kwee would respond to the question?

Monitoring Comprehension: Before reading, what checkpoints did you identify to monitor your comprehension? Did doing so help you understand the selection? Explain.

Summarizing: Should a summary of this text focus on the narrator's personality, the selection's plot, or its setting? Why? What would be the most effective graphic organizer for summarizing this selection?

Making Inferences: Erika writes about her reaction to events, but she doesn't always describe the events she is reacting to. What are some of the things that you could infer happened to her?

Reading Like a Writer: Identify the parts of this selection that give it the voice of a teenager. How would the voice change if the author were older?

Critical Literacy: What might Erika's parents have to say about the impact of this experience on their daughter?

Metacognition: What made this selection easy or difficult to understand? What strategies helped you understand it?

**APPLYING
READING
STRATEGIES**

- ▶ Monitoring Comprehension
- ▶ Summarizing

What do you think?

When have you experienced something that changed the way you saw the world?

Take Only What You Need

VOCABULARY

blind: a cover or shelter a hunter uses for concealment

foliage: the leaves of a plant

tranquility: stillness or calm

Vocabulary Tip

Words often have several meanings. The first definition in a dictionary entry may not be the one you are looking for. In the case of *blind*, for example, the hunting term will likely be later in the entry, after the more common meanings of the word.

Personal Essay by Xavier Kataquapit

I try to spend as much time in the woods as I can. The feeling of being surrounded by the familiar sights and sounds of the forest brings back my childhood on the James Bay coast. Every memory I have of being in the wilderness with my family, friends, or just by myself is a quiet recollection.

Most of the time we never ran into all that many animals or birds out on the land. When we did get an opportunity to see something, it was special and considered a sign of good luck. To some people this meant a friendly gesture from the animal world. Any wild animal will quickly shy away at your approach for fear of being trapped, killed, or chased. To us, whenever you came upon any kind of animal that allowed us to watch it was a gift.

On a recent walk through the woods, I came upon a group of partridge socializing in the forest. It was an odd sight, and I was surprised by my luck. Camouflaged in the brown and soft colours of the fall leaves and dead vegetation, a male was quietly puffing up his breast feathers in a mating show to attract two females. He seemed angry at my appearance and turned toward me while beating his wings.

At first the sound confused me, but I quickly understood I was upsetting his chances at making a new friend. I took a step back and had a better look at the display and communication of feathers and beating sounds in this partridge love triangle.

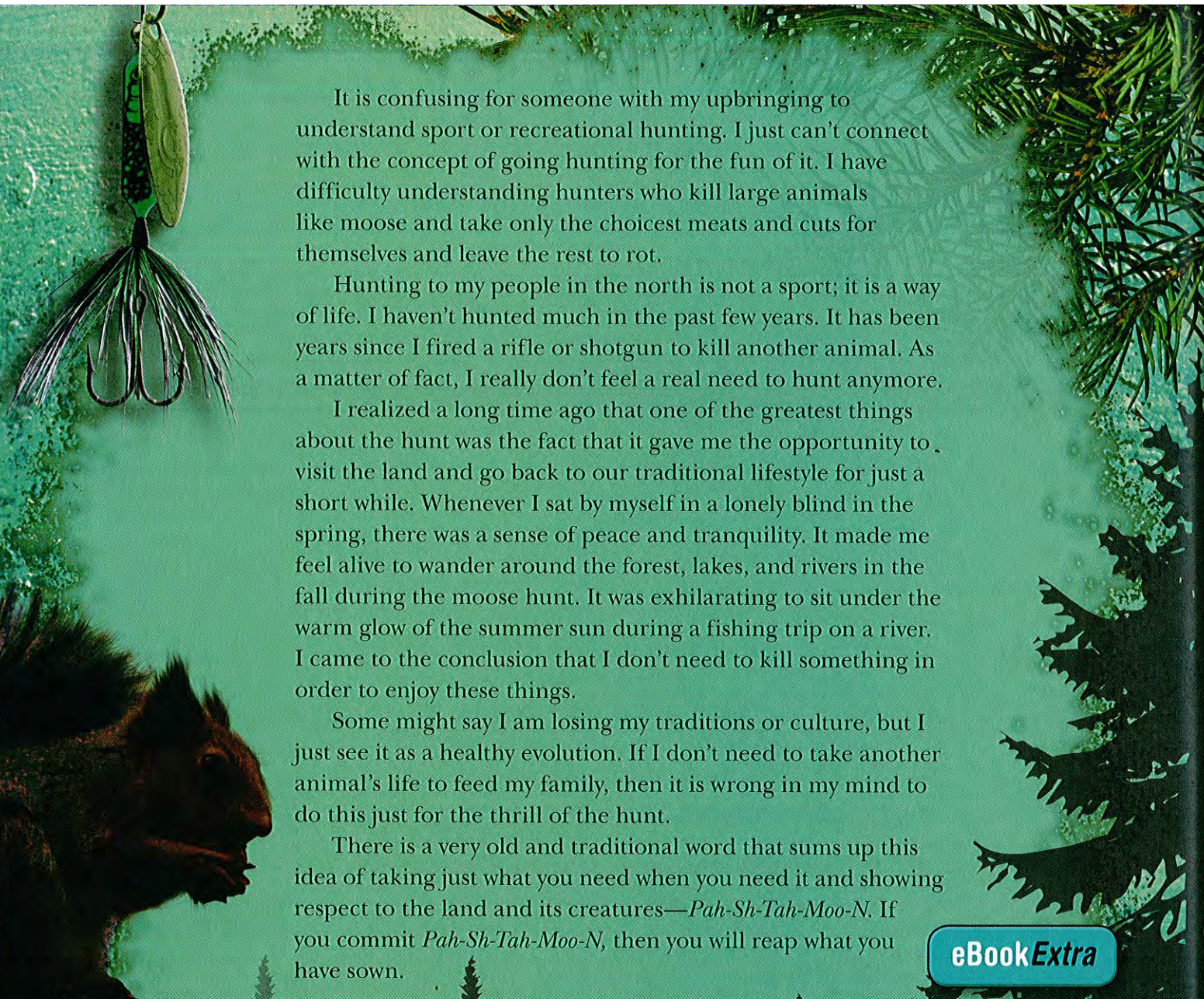
As the birds strutted around the forest floor, a squirrel noisily chirped away from a distance at the commotion of beating feathers and a human observer venturing near his tree. The sun shone down on this scene like a stage light in a theatre.

After a few minutes, the squirrel gave up his protest and darted from branch to branch in search of a safer vantage point. Like a group of actors exiting the stage, the partridges slipped away behind the curtain of brown foliage. I was alone again on the trail.

When I lived up North in Attawapiskat, I encountered wildlife on a regular basis. My brothers and I were taught how to hunt and gather food at a very young age. At the same time, we also learned how to respect the land and the animals that live there.

The first lesson was to hunt and gather only what we really needed. There is an ancient belief among Cree hunters that if you gather more than what you could use, or if you killed anything you didn't need, then you were committing a serious offence against nature. Any kind of offence meant you brought bad luck to yourself and your future chances for good hunting.

Xavier Kataquapit



It is confusing for someone with my upbringing to understand sport or recreational hunting. I just can't connect with the concept of going hunting for the fun of it. I have difficulty understanding hunters who kill large animals like moose and take only the choicest meats and cuts for themselves and leave the rest to rot.

Hunting to my people in the north is not a sport; it is a way of life. I haven't hunted much in the past few years. It has been years since I fired a rifle or shotgun to kill another animal. As a matter of fact, I really don't feel a real need to hunt anymore.

I realized a long time ago that one of the greatest things about the hunt was the fact that it gave me the opportunity to visit the land and go back to our traditional lifestyle for just a short while. Whenever I sat by myself in a lonely blind in the spring, there was a sense of peace and tranquility. It made me feel alive to wander around the forest, lakes, and rivers in the fall during the moose hunt. It was exhilarating to sit under the warm glow of the summer sun during a fishing trip on a river. I came to the conclusion that I don't need to kill something in order to enjoy these things.

Some might say I am losing my traditions or culture, but I just see it as a healthy evolution. If I don't need to take another animal's life to feed my family, then it is wrong in my mind to do this just for the thrill of the hunt.

There is a very old and traditional word that sums up this idea of taking just what you need when you need it and showing respect to the land and its creatures—*Pah-Sh-Tah-Moo-N*. If you commit *Pah-Sh-Tah-Moo-N*, then you will reap what you have sown.

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Responding

What Do You Think Now? Have you ever experienced something that changed the way you saw the world? Explain. What personal connections can you make to this selection?

Monitoring Comprehension: Was there a point in the essay where you needed to pause and reread a section? What reading strategy did you use when you needed to repair your comprehension?

Summarizing: Identify two details in the essay that you would include in your summary. Identify two details that are irrelevant and not necessary to include.

Finding the Main Idea: Identify the turning point in Xavier's life. How does that turning point change his attitudes toward hunting?

Critical Literacy: How might a hunter respond to Xavier's criticism of hunting? What key points might that hunter include?

Literary Devices: The author uses the simile "the sun shone down on this scene like a stage light in a theatre." How does that simile help you visualize the setting? How else might he have said it?

Evaluating: What adjective would you use to describe the voice Xavier has adopted for this text? Is it an effective voice? Explain.

Metacognition: What reading strategies helped you understand this selection?

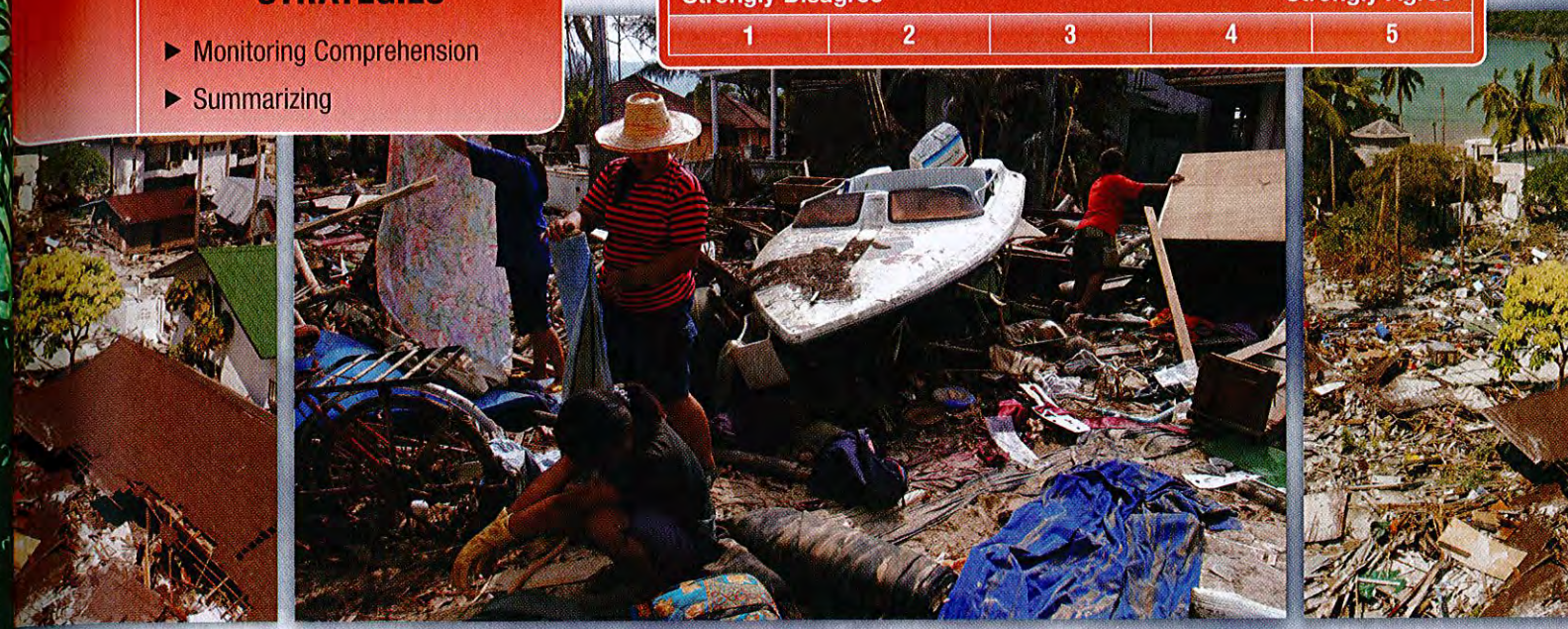
APPLYING READING STRATEGIES

- ▶ Monitoring Comprehension
- ▶ Summarizing

What do you think?

We can control the turning points in our lives.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5



In the Land of Smiles

Magazine Article by Tara Henley from *Hello! Canada* magazine

In December 2004, supermodel Petra Nemcova and British fashion photographer Simon Atlee were vacationing on a beach in southern Thailand when the Boxing Day tsunami hit, killing Simon and leaving Petra clinging to a palm tree. Out of her devastating experience has come a renewed desire to help others and a new sense of joy.

JOY AND SORROW

For Petra Nemcova, Thailand is home to both her greatest joy and her greatest sorrow. It was there—in her favourite country, the Land of Smiles—that Petra enjoyed a blissful Christmas holiday with her soulmate, fashion photographer Simon Atlee. It was there that she lost him.

The couple was vacationing at the Khaolak Orchid Beach Resort in southern Thailand on December 26, 2004, when the tsunami struck. Petra watched as the love of her life was swept away by the violent waves, which subsequently shattered her pelvis and left her clinging to a palm tree for eight hours before she was finally rescued.

Yet it was also in Thailand that the Czech-born beauty found healing. After recovering from her extensive injuries, she immersed herself in work and aid for disaster survivors. She launched the **Happy Hearts Fund (HHF)**, a charity whose mission is to improve children's lives through educational and sustainable programs in disaster areas. Since its inception in July 2005, HHF has supported over 39 programs, including the building of kindergarten classes, schools, and computer labs around the world. Through the experience of starting the charity, Petra has discovered a renewed desire to devote her life to helping others.

“HOW CAN I HELP?”

“When you face something that painful, you have to make a decision,” she says. “You can move toward the darkness, or you can move toward the light. I knew if I let myself focus on the negative, it would be a downward spiral. I chose to focus on the positive.” For Petra, the positive was the tremendous kindness she witnessed during the darkest hours of her life. “[The disaster] brought people together ... families together, countries together, the whole world together. Everybody was asking, ‘How can I help?’ It created so much unconditional love,” she says.

“I saw this when I was hanging onto the palm tree. There were people coming and looking for others, completely risking their lives for strangers. That was such an incredible act of love.” Petra was flown to the Czech Republic where her family helped nurse her back to health. Her pelvis was fractured in four places and her stomach distended from internal bleeding. It took four months for her to recuperate, but as soon as she was able to walk without crutches, Petra returned to Thailand with her sister and several friends.

“We wanted to see what we could do,” she explains. “[Many kids] had been orphaned. They were sleeping on bare floors without anyone taking care of them. They were looking not at you, but through you. They had no hope. That was something that will stay with me forever. It was very moving. After this, you cannot sit on your butt and do nothing.”

DEVELOPING THE HAPPY HEARTS FUND

The supermodel returned to New York City, where she lives. After researching charities, Petra decided to start her own charity. With board members and angel donors underwriting administration costs, every penny donated reaches youth.

Petra personally visits many Happy Hearts projects, which include schools and medical centres in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean. “We opened up a school in Thailand in February,” she says. “The children were so excited. About 50 kids were trying to grab my hands. They were taking me from one classroom to the other. And every time we arrived, they were jumping up and down out of happiness. We were all jumping together. There was so much joy. I didn’t do this to be a healing process, but I think definitely it’s helped,” she continues. “When you help others, you may make them happy, but you make yourself happy too...”

“It would be great if we didn’t need these bad experiences, these reminders, to have this unconditional love in our lives every day.”

2004 BOXING DAY TSUNAMI

Date: December 26, 2004

Cause: undersea earthquake

Countries/Regions Hardest Hit: Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Thailand, Maldives

Casualties: 229 866 in 11 countries

Global Response: internationally, over \$7 billion was raised to help affected areas

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Responding

What Do You Think Now? Can we control the turning points in our lives? How do you respond now that you’ve read the selection? How did Petra Nemcova take control of the turning point in her life that the tsunami forced upon her?

Monitoring Comprehension: What checkpoints in the magazine article did you use to stop and monitor your comprehension? How did the sidebar, headings, or photos help you monitor your comprehension?

Summarizing: How would you summarize this article in one sentence for the table of contents of a magazine? How might you summarize the text if you were describing it for a friend?

Making Inferences: In the last paragraph, what does Petra Nemcova mean by “unconditional love”?

Media Literacy: If this article was turned into a TV news report, how might the producer tell the story? What elements or conventions would the producer use (for example, voice-over narration, graphics, interviews, music, maps)?

Metacognition: How does skimming an article before you read support monitoring your comprehension?

Following the tsunami, Petra founded a children’s charity, Happy Hearts Fund, which has projects in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean.

Photograph credit: Robert Curran & Happy Hearts Fund