



Strategies for Reading Comprehension

Three-Minute Pause

[as modeled by Jay McTighe]

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What Is a Three-Minute Pause?

At a wonderful workshop on the backwards design planning process (an idea traced back to Ralph Tyler and then further developed by Grant Wiggins), Jay McTighe incorporated a **Three-Minute Pause** as a break in large sections of content. The Three-Minute Pause provides a chance for students to stop, reflect on the concepts and ideas that have just been introduced, make connections to prior knowledge or experience, and seek clarification.

How Does It Work?

1) Summarize Key Ideas Thus Far. The teacher instructs students to get into groups (anywhere from three to five students, usually). Give them a total of three minutes for the ENTIRE process. First, they should focus in on the key points of the lesson up to this point. It's a way for them to stop to see if they are getting the main ideas.

2) Add Your Own Thoughts. Next, the students should consider prior knowledge connections they can make to the new information. Suggested questions: What connections can be made? What does this remind you of? What would round out your understanding of this? What can you add?

3) Pose Clarifying Questions. Are there things that are still not clear? Are there confusing parts? Are you having trouble making connections? Can you anticipate where we're headed? Can you probe for deeper insights?

Why Should I Take the Time for a 3-Minute Pause?

It depends on how much "stuff" you want students to be thinking about before they get a chance to process the new information. If you don't want to have to keep reteaching information, then you should give your students time to think about, make sense of, organize, and reflect on their learning. The Three-Minute Pause is a perfect bridge, a chance for students to consolidate and clarify their emerging understanding, before you move on to teach more new ideas or concepts. It's simple, straightforward, productive, efficient, and instantly useful.

*The Three-Minute Pause has been around for a while, and it's taken a lot of different forms. This version of it I wish to credit to Jay McTighe. He is the co-author, with Grant Wiggins, of the well-regarded *Understanding By Design*, published by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.*

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- [3-Minute Pause](#) (pdf)

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