



# NOW I UNDERSTAND!

**A Read-Aloud Play About  
Good Reading Strategies**

*As the scene opens, a young girl named Alice sits under a tree trying to read a book. Obviously frustrated, she repeatedly mutters "I don't understand!" as she falls asleep. A worried-looking Rabbit enters, carrying a large pocket watch and several library books.*

Rabbit: I'm late! I'm late!

Alice: *(waking up)* Hey, where are you going?

Rabbit: I have to get these books back to the library before it closes! It's my favorite place on the planet. I just love to read!

Alice: *(sighing loudly)* I don't.

Rabbit: What? You don't like reading? Are you feeling all right?

Alice: Yes, but reading makes me sick.

Rabbit: It can't be that bad! Why, you've even got a book in your hands now.

Alice: *(standing and opening the book, then walking over to Rabbit)* Oh, this? I'm reading the words, but I'm not really understanding them. Reading is so boring!

Rabbit: Oh dear, you must be under the spell of the wicked witch, Read-No-More! I must find you some help right away. Come with me!

*(Rabbit and Alice walk to the right of the stage.)*

Rabbit: You see, your problem is that you're reading the words without getting any meaning from them. You need to understand what you read.

Alice: Okay, but how?

*(Alice and Rabbit reach a stream.)*

Rabbit: *(speaking frantically)* Oh no! We've come to a stream, and I can't swim! How will I ever get across? What shall I do? I'm doomed, doomed, doomed! My library books won't be returned in time, and they'll take away my library card. I'll be forced to *(shuddering)* watch TV! *(starting to cry)*

Alice: *(thinking)* Relax, you can get across. All you have to do is step from one rock to the next one. Think of it as connecting each rock to the one beside it. Follow me.

Rabbit: You are so smart. *(thinking)* You know what? This is just like reading. A good reader will connect what she reads to what she already knows, what she's read before, or what is happening in the world around her.

Alice: Hmm...making connections. I'll have to remember that.

*(Rabbit and Alice continue walking and soon meet Owl.)*

Owl: Whoooo goes there?

Rabbit: It's just...

Owl: *(interrupting)* What are you two doing?

Rabbit: We were just going...

Owl: *(interrupting again)* Why?

Alice: *(starting to get exasperated)* Boy, you sure do ask a lot of questions!

Owl: Thank you. I'll take that as a compliment.

Alice: Why?

Owl: That's the spirit! Asking questions is very important—especially when you're reading. A reader without questions may just as well abandon the book!

Alice: How can you ask a book questions?

Owl: Good question! You see, you're not asking the book questions. You're asking yourself questions. By asking yourself questions about what you're reading, you're engaging with the text and making meaning of it! Engaged readers ask questions before, during, and after reading.

Rabbit: I have a question. How do I get to the library from here?

Owl: And why do you need to know?

Rabbit: *(getting angry)* Would you please stop with all the questions?

Owl: *(getting annoyed)* Head right through the trees.

Alice: Thank you, Mr. Owl. You are very wise.

Owl: You will be too if you remember to ask questions while you read!

Rabbit: Come on. The library must be around here somewhere.

*(Alice and Rabbit continue walking. They soon see an Artist who is painting with a paintbrush but no paper.)*

Alice: Hey, look at that fellow. What is he doing?

Rabbit: It looks as if he is painting.

Alice: But he's not painting on anything. Maybe I'd better ask him a question, just as Mr. Owl suggested. *(speaking to Artist)* Excuse me, what are you doing?

Artist: I am visualizing.

Alice: You're what?

Artist: Visualizing. Painting pictures in my head.

Rabbit and Alice: *(looking suspiciously at each other)* Oh?

Artist: It really isn't as silly as it looks. You see, I'm reading a book, and I want to really understand what's going on. So I'm making pictures of the story in my head.

Alice: What good does that do?

Artist: It helps me remember what is happening in the story. I picture what is going on. Then, when someone asks me what the story is about, I think of the pictures and remember the story in a snap!

Alice: *(smiling)* Cool. I'll have to try that! Let me make a picture of this moment so I'll remember it. *(closing her eyes and pausing)* There, I got it!

Rabbit: Let's go. I simply must get to the library!

Alice: *(waving to Artist)* See ya! Get it—see ya?

Artist: *(waving the paintbrush and laughing)* Here's looking at you!

*(Alice and Rabbit continue walking. They meet a Fortune Teller peering into a crystal ball. They look confusedly at the Fortune Teller.)*

Fortune Teller: *(looking into the crystal ball)* Ahh, I see you have questions. You are wondering what I am doing, right?

Alice: Wow! She is good!

Rabbit: *(appearing unimpressed)* I suppose.

Alice: *(speaking to the Fortune Teller)* What are you doing?

Fortune Teller: I am in the middle of reading this great story, and I'm stopping here so I can make some predictions about what's going to happen next. This helps me relate to the story. It also helps me check to see whether I'm really understanding what I read.

Alice: So, you just guess what's going to happen next?

Fortune Teller: No, it's not guessing. I look at clues in the story and think of things I already know. Then I try to figure out what is going to happen next. You see, my predictions are supported by text, illustrations, and my prior knowledge, not just wild guesses.

Rabbit: How about this example? I know that the library closes in five minutes. I also know that my library books are due today. By knowing these things and reading this notice that says my library card will be taken away if I have one more late book, I can predict that if I don't get to the library in a few minutes, I'll lose my library card and be unable to check out any more books!

Fortune Teller: Very good!

Rabbit: Can we go now?

Alice: Yes, thank you for your help. From now on, I'll make predictions when I read.

*(Rabbit and Alice continue when the witch, Read-No-More, jumps out at them from behind a tree.)*

Witch: *(speaking sweetly)* Hello, Rabbit. Who have we here?

Rabbit: Hello, Read-No-More. This girl is no concern of yours. We're on our way to the library. Excuse us, and we'll be on our way.

Witch: What does this girl need the library for? I happen to know she doesn't understand what she reads because she doesn't think while she reads. She doesn't need any books!

Alice: Not so fast, Miss Read-No-More! Yes, it's true that I didn't know how to comprehend what I read before, but now I do.

Witch: *(appearing puzzled)* Oh?

Alice: Yes. When I started on my journey with Rabbit, I learned that one way to understand what I read is by making connections. I also learned that when I read, I need to ask questions, make predictions, and visualize what I read. *(speaking excitedly)* You see, I know all these reading strategies now and I'm going to use them. So move aside! You have no power over me. Bring on the books!

Witch: One day I'll get you, Alice—and your little book too!

Alice: No, you won't. I understand what I read now. I'm a good reader. I'm a good reader....I'm a good reader.... *repeating to herself and yawning as she falls asleep*

*(The lights go out and then back on. Alice, sitting again under the tree with her book, wakes up and rubs her eyes.)*

Alice: Boy, that was a weird dream! *(looking at the book)* Wow, I'd better start reading this story for class tomorrow. "Once upon a time there was a young girl named Alice who fell asleep and met a rabbit." Hmmm...that reminds me of...

*(Music plays and then fades out.)*