

Reverse Prediction

□ Time Required	About 60–90 minutes
□ Key Skills	Reading and Writing
□ Type	After independent work, share predictions in pairs
□ Overview and Goals	
<p>The word “prediction” generally refers to the activity of predicting the future of a text, but what I propose here is the opposite: reading the end of a text and thinking about the events that led up to this ending. For example, there is a 1967 movie called <i>The Graduate</i> starring a young Dustin Hoffman (I’m sorry; the younger generation may be unfamiliar). In its last scene, a dirty-looking young man (Dustin Hoffman) interrupts a bride’s vows in a wedding ceremony in a church and takes her away. In reverse prediction, you would watch this final scene first and imagine how the two people met and struggled with each other to reach this shocking ending.</p> <p>However, it does not mean that you can just invent any kind of previous development at random. You have to read the concluding section carefully and extend the previous development from the clues hidden there. This is the “heart” of this activity. The first step is reading the final section carefully. For this reason, I recommend using the original version of the book, which does not omit detailed psychological descriptions and background explanations, rather than the retold version used for extensive reading. It is suitable as an intensive-reading activity to be worked in between extensive-reading activities.</p> <p>I used Raymond Carver’s story “A Small, Good Thing” for this activity. The last five paragraphs include the expressions “Ann was suddenly hungry,” “they were tired and in anguish,” and “what it was like to be childless all these years.” Attentive readers will feel the heartache of the characters in these sentences. I have been conducting this activity in my classes for years, and the students have a high rate of figuring out the cause of the deep sorrow of the protagonist couple. They were asked to fill in the blanks with what was not clearly stated in the text (in Carver’s story, the cause of the characters’ deep sorrow), and actively complete the text, which they did. This is “reading to fill in the blanks,” as proposed by Wolfgang Iser, a leading theorist of reader-response theory. Reverse prediction allows learners to practice it by having the students anticipate the events that precede the ending. They need to read English accurately to fill in the blanks. I think this is the best activity to develop intensive reading skills in English.</p> <p>However, learners should not be instructed to guess the author’s original development exactly as that might lead to cheating (e.g., searching the Internet for a synopsis of the entire work). The aim of the activity is to encourage students to read the concluding part of the story carefully, read between the lines, and use their imaginations. As long as this is accomplished, it is acceptable to expect different results from what the author wrote.</p>	

After reading the text, students write their predictions in English, or ask their partner to tell the story in English in pair work. Reading carefully, writing and speaking about one's predictions, and listening to what one's partner says in English, combine all four skills and can apply them to their full potential.

Reference: Iser, W. (1980). *Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

□Advance Preparation (Required Materials, Equipment, etc.)

I used Raymond Carver's story "A Small, Good Thing." Suitable books or movies for this activity are those whose endings contain crucial clues to the story and that offer interesting jumping-off points students can use to imagine the developments that might lead to such an ending. The movie mentioned above, *The Graduate*, is one such book.

□Procedure

1. Copy just the final section of the selected book or story, and have the students read it. If this is to be done as homework outside of class, be sure to withhold the title and author's name to prevent students from reading the previous part of the book by searching the Internet. Make it clear that cheating to find the actual story defeats the purpose; the goal is not to accurately guess the previous development but to image what that development might have been.
2. If necessary, make sure that the students understand the final section accurately.
3. Ask the participants to write down their predictions about the preceding events, using either Japanese or English depending on the participants' proficiency.
4. Have participants line up in rows (four rows of five in a class of 20; six rows of five in a class of 30). Have them pair up with people in the next row and share their predictions with each other.
5. After the first pair has shared, rotate the pairs: If rows 1–2 and 3–4 are in pairs, have those in rows 1 and 3 move forward one by one. The person at the front will move to the back of the line. Repeat this times until everyone has shared their predictions with five other participants.
6. If the participants have written their predictions in English, have them speak to their partners in English. The last two of the five discussions are a speaking exercise. Have them speak without looking at what they have written for speaking practice.
7. When they have finished sharing, ask them to write down the most memorable prediction they heard and from whom. This can be used to check the listening activity.

[Example Application]

Here is an example of how to use *Frankenstein* from Macmillan Readers 3, elementary level.

1. Ask the students to read up to Chapter 2.
2. Ask students to skip to Chapter 9 and the letter on the next page.
3. Have them guess how the story reached the part they skipped to. Ask them to read what is written in Chapter 9 carefully and infer what must have happened to bring about this ending. Have them think about it first and then discuss it in pairs or groups.
4. Finally, have students read the part they skipped.
5. Have students compare their inference with the actual story and write comments on it.

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