



# **Reading Instruction for Middle School Students**

**Lessons for Improving Comprehension  
Through “Any Small Goodness”**

**by Tony Johnston**

Adapted from intervention materials developed by  
the Texas Center for Learning Disabilities

## Preferred Citation

The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk. (2012). *Reading instruction for middle school students: Lessons for improving comprehension through “Any Small Goodness” by Tony Johnston*. Austin, TX: Author.



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# **Chapter 1 Teacher Guide and Student Log**

# Teacher Guide

## Chapter 1: American Names

pp. 7–21

### Suggested Time Frame: 2 Days

#### Day 1: 60 Minutes

##### Materials Needed

- Novel for each student
- Chapter 1 Student Log for each student
- Display of Chapter 1 Student Log (transparency, projected image, etc.)
- Get the Gist poster displayed in classroom
- Timer

##### Preparation

- Develop questions for accessing background knowledge and select active participation strategies.
- Find pictures for modeling Get the Gist.
- Note Spanish word meanings used throughout the chapter.
- Choose a reading format.

# Introduce Vocabulary

(10 minutes)

1.	barrio	<i>n.</i>	a neighborhood where mostly Spanish speakers live
2.	disfavor	<i>v.</i>	to not approve
3.	feisty	<i>adj.</i>	quick-tempered and energetic
4.	pulverize	<i>v.</i>	to make into a powder by crushing, grinding, or pounding
5.	pact	<i>n.</i>	an agreement or a sworn promise
6.	bravura	<i>n.</i>	a display of spirit or expertise

Display student log so students can follow along as you read. Explicitly state the purpose of the lesson by telling students that they will learn the meanings of important vocabulary words before reading the chapter and that learning the vocabulary words will help the students to understand what they read. After introducing each word, provide some examples and nonexamples, and, through discussion, connect the word to students’ prior knowledge as well as to the context of the passage.

1. *Before we read today’s chapter, let’s read the difficult words. The first word is BARRIO. What word? BARRIO. Now read the definition with me: “a neighborhood where mostly Spanish speakers live.”*
2. *The next word is DISFAVOR. What word? DISFAVOR. Read the definition with me: “to not approve.”*
3. *The next word is FEISTY. What word? FEISTY. Read the definition with me: “quick-tempered and energetic.”*
4. *The next word is PULVERIZE. What word? PULVERIZE. Read the definition with me: “to make into a powder by crushing, grinding, or pounding.”*
5. *The next word is PACT. What word? PACT. Read the definition with me: “an agreement or a sworn promise.”*
6. *The next word is BRAVURA. What word? BRAVURA. Read the definition with me: “a display of spirit or expertise.”*

# Prediction

**(2–3 minutes)**

1. *Before reading the chapter, we will make some predictions about what the chapter is about. We'll look back at what we predicted after reading, so keep your prediction in mind while you read.*
2. *Turn to page 7.*
3. *Let's read the title together: "American Names."*
4. *You also see a picture there.*
5. *I will give you 1 minute to write one sentence that tells what you think the chapter might be about.*

Point to the line on the transparency.

6. Set the timer for 1 minute. When the timer goes off, say:  
*Partner 1, turn to Partner 2 and tell him or her what you think the chapter will be about.*
7. Monitor discussion and share ideas with the entire class as appropriate.

# Access Background Knowledge

(3–5 minutes)

Before class, preread this chapter and write at least two questions to activate background knowledge.

Use an active participation strategy (see details below) to engage all students in answering questions. Avoid calling on individual students as your only means of soliciting response. List your questions and active participation strategies below.

Question	Active Participation Strategy
1.	
2.	
3.	

If students cannot answer the questions you pose, provide the missing background knowledge necessary for understanding the chapter.

## Example

- 1. This chapter is about a family who moves to a new place. Arturo finds himself in a new house and in a new school. Have you ever had to move to a new place? Take 30 seconds to think about a time when you had to move to a new place.*
- 2. Partner 2, turn to Partner 1 and tell him or her about a time when you moved to a new place.*

Walk around the room as partners talk and take notes on what students say.

- 3. Tell students some things you heard as you walked around the room.*

## Active Participation Ideas for Different Types of Questions

Type of Question	Active Participation Response
Yes/no	Thumbs-up or thumbs-down
Tell about a time...	Give 30 seconds to think, and then ask students to turn to their partner and tell about a time when... Have 2 groups share or you share what you heard as you walked around.
Why do you think this chapter is...	Discuss with a partner.
What character do you think will be...	Choral response

## Get the Gist: Introduce the Strategy

(8–10 minutes)

*(Klingner, Vaughn, Dimino, Schumm, & Bryant, 2001)*

The Get the Gist strategy helps students understand the concept of main idea. It teaches students to pay attention to the most relevant information in the text and guides them to developing a main idea statement based on the following information:

- Who or what the paragraph is about
- The most important information about the who or what

Get the Gist teaches students to combine the above elements into a main idea statement with 10 or fewer words.

Introduce this strategy by using pictures.

1. Explain to students that you will teach them a strategy called Get the Gist. Explain that if you “get the gist” of something, you get the idea. This strategy will help students monitor their own comprehension.
2. Project a transparency (or display a picture) of a dog catching a disk.
3. Direct students’ attention to the picture and say the following as you think aloud:

*When I use the Get the Gist strategy, the first thing I ask myself is: “Who or what is this picture about?” When I look at this picture, I see that lots of things are going on, but this picture is mainly about a dog.*

4. *Next, I ask myself: “What is the most important thing about the dog?” I can see that the most important thing about this dog is that he is catching a disk.*
5. Explain that lots of other things are going on in the picture: People are watching, the dog’s owner or coach is watching, the dog is wearing a shirt, etc. But the most important thing about the dog is that he is catching a disk.
6. *Now, I will count on my fingers to come up with a main idea statement that is 10 or fewer words.*

Count on your fingers as you say:

*The dog is jumping to catch a disk; that’s eight words.*

7. *Now it is your turn. Work with your partner to come up with a main idea statement that tells who or what this picture is about and the most important thing about the who or the what in 10 or fewer words.*

Walk around the room and monitor student responses and discussion.

8. Call on two or three students to share responses with the class. Other possible main idea statements include the following: The dog is about to catch the disk. The dog leaps in the air to catch the disk.

9. Project the transparency (or display a picture) of a boy running.

*Think to yourself: Who or what is the picture about?*

Provide 10–15 seconds of think time.

*2s, tell 1s who or what this picture is about.*

Monitor. Call on one pair to share with the group.

*That's right; this picture is mainly about a boy.*

10. Now, think to yourself: What is the most important thing about the boy?

Provide 10–15 seconds of think time.

*1s, tell 2s the most important thing about the boy.*

Monitor. Correct if necessary by using prompts such as the following:

*Are the cars the most important thing? Is the fence the most important thing?*

*Are his shoes the most important thing?*

11. Call on one pair (whom you have listened to and know have a correct answer) to share with the group.

*Raise your hand if you and your partner also think that his running is the most important thing about the boy.*

12. *We have identified that this picture is about a boy and that the most important thing about the boy is that he is running. With your partner, think of a main idea statement that includes the who and the most important thing about the who in 10 or fewer words.*

Walk around and monitor groups. Assist as necessary.

13. Call on three or four groups to share their main idea statement. Make sure that you have already monitored these groups and know that they have appropriate answers. Possible main idea statements include the following: The boy is running. The boy is running on a track. The boy is racing around a track. The boy is sprinting on the track.

14. Tell students that you are about to start the novel *Any Small Goodness* by Tony Johnston. Explain that good readers constantly check their understanding and make sure that they Get the Gist of what they read. Explain that as you read this book together, you will stop periodically to Get the Gist of particular paragraphs. Tell students to use this strategy with anything they read to improve their understanding.

# Reading the Chapter

(25–30 minutes)

As you preread the chapter, make a note of Spanish words in italics. Some words are defined in the text. Words that are not defined in the text are defined in the back of the book. If needed, look up the definition for any unknown word so you can quickly define the word for your students.

Choose a format for reading, based on the amount of text. Remember to choose a variety of reading formats. Please refer to the Reading Format Options section of the introductory materials for an explanation of each format. If you vary the formats within the chapter, make a plan before class. Circle the reading format you plan to use.

Reading Format Options	
Cloze read	Choral read (repeated)
Partner read	Choral read (alternating)

1. *Please turn to page 7.*
2. *Today, we will <<insert chosen reading format>>. Remember, when we <<insert chosen reading format>>, we...*
3. Begin reading the chapter with your students. You will need to complete Chapter 1 (pp. 7–21) by the end of class tomorrow.
4. As you read, stop at the following paragraphs to Get the Gist:
  - p. 7, paragraph 1
  - p. 9, paragraphs 2 and 3
  - p. 11, paragraphs 2 and 3
  - p. 13, paragraph 4
  - p. 15, paragraph 3 p. 17, paragraph 2 p. 18, paragraph 3
  - p. 21 (entire chapter)

**Note:** This activity will continue on Day 2.

## Sample Script for Stopping to Get the Gist

After the first paragraph on page 7, think aloud (and refer to the Get the Gist visual in your room).

*I ask myself who or what that paragraph was about. That paragraph was about Arturo. Now I ask myself: “What was the most important thing about Arturo?” I think the most important thing about Arturo in this paragraph is that he was named after his father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and so on. So, in 10 or fewer words, the main idea of this paragraph is: “Arturo is a family name that has lasted for generations.” Remember, there are many ways to state a gist, so there is no one right answer.*

*We will continue reading, but in a few minutes, I will stop and ask you to Get the Gist on your own.*

If students provided appropriate answers for the paragraph on page 7, Get the Gist for the remaining paragraphs as follows:

1. After reading the paragraph, stop and say:  
*Is, tell 2s who or what this paragraph is about.*  
Monitor. Guide as necessary.
2. Now, 2s, tell 1s the most important thing about the who or the what.  
Monitor. Guide as necessary.
3. With your partner, come up with a main idea statement that is 10 or fewer words.  
Monitor. Guide as necessary.
4. Ask one or two groups (whom you have monitored and know have an appropriate answer) to share their main idea statements.
5. Continue reading the chapter.

## Closure

**(30 seconds–1 minute)**

*Today, we started reading “American Names” and we learned how to do Get the Gist. Tomorrow, we will review our new vocabulary words, finish reading Chapter 1, and practice Get the Gist some more. Let’s quickly review the vocabulary words we learned in this chapter.*

# Chapter 1: American Names

pp. 7–21

## Day 2: 45 Minutes

### Materials Needed

- Novel for each student
- Chapter 1 Student Log for each student
- Display of Chapter 1 Student Log (transparency, projected image, etc.)
- Get the Gist poster
- Vocabulary review materials
- Timer

### Preparation

- Prepare for vocabulary review.
- Choose reading format.

# Review Vocabulary

(3–5 minutes)

1.	barrio	<i>n.</i>	a neighborhood where mostly Spanish speakers live
2.	disfavor	<i>v.</i>	to not approve
3.	feisty	<i>adj.</i>	quick-tempered and energetic
4.	pulverize	<i>v.</i>	to make into a powder by crushing, grinding, or pounding
5.	pact	<i>n.</i>	an agreement or a sworn promise
6.	bravura	<i>n.</i>	a display of spirit or expertise

Choose a vocabulary review procedure. (See the introductory materials for a full description of vocabulary review procedures.) Circle the option you plan on using today.

<b>Vocabulary Review Options</b>
Partner review
Sentence review
Examples and nonexamples

# Reading the Chapter: Modeling/Practice

## Get the Gist

(25–30 minutes)

*(Klingner et al., 2001)*

Choose a strategy for reading, based on the amount of text. Remember to choose a variety of reading strategies throughout the novel. Circle the reading format you plan to use.

Reading Format Options	
Cloze read	Choral read (repeated)
Partner read	Choral read (alternating)

1. Quickly review the reading from yesterday. For example:  
*What is the name of our main character?*
2. Finish reading the chapter with your students.
3. As you read, stop to Get the Gist. See the directions for Day 1 for guidance on where to stop and a sample script.

## **After Reading: Get the Gist of the Entire Chapter**

**(3–5 minutes)**

*(Klingner et al., 2001)*

1. *You have had a lot of practice with Get the Gist. Now, turn to your partner and come up with a sentence that tells what the entire chapter is about. Remember to use 10 or fewer words.*
2. Ask groups to share their sentences.

## **Verifying Predictions**

**(2–3 minutes)**

1. *Let's go back to our predictions to see whether we were correct. Partner 1, read your prediction to Partner 2. Were you correct? If not, how was the chapter different from your prediction?*
2. Repeat with Partner 2.

## **Closure**

**(30 seconds–1 minute)**

*Today, we finished reading “American Names” and we practiced Get the Gist. Next, we will begin reading the next chapter, called “Corn Fungus.”*

# Student Log

## Chapter 1: American Names

pp. 7–21

### Vocabulary

1.	barrio	<i>n.</i>	a neighborhood where mostly Spanish speakers live
2.	disfavor	<i>v.</i>	to not approve
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### Prediction

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## Get the Gist

Page 7


Page 9


Page 11


Page 13


Page 15


Page 17 \_\_\_\_\_  
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Page 18 \_\_\_\_\_  
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Page 21 (Entire Chapter)  
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