The Ins and Outs of Independent Reading

Helping your child read thoughtfully
“Books are tools to think with.”

- Alan Purves,
  Director of the Center for Writing and Literacy, and Professor of English and Humanities at the State University of New York at Albany.

Things to think about

- Plot and setting
- Character
- Figurative language/vocabulary
- Theme
• **Guiding questions**
  
  – What kinds of things does the main character do?
  
  – Retell what happened in the chapter.
  
  – What are the most important events in this chapter?

**Encourage children to talk about how the setting (time & place) effects the events of the story.**
• Guiding questions
  – What kind of person is the main character?
  – Describe what the main character is feeling.
  – What new things are you thinking about the main character?
  – How is the main character changing?
Be on the look out for figures of speech in conversations and other media and point them out to your child. Collect new & interesting words in a notebook or on cards.
• **Guiding Questions**
  
  – What lesson does your main character learn?
  
  – What lesson did you learn?
  
  – What have you learned from this story about ____? (Insert appropriate social issue, e.g. war, gender, race, environment etc...)

Also look for symbolism – something in the story used to represent something else.
Choosing Books

- Because of the need for deeper thinking, choose slightly easier books.
- Watch out for content as well as readability.
- Should be reading about a page a minute & be able to talk about it.
- Read the same book at home & at school.
- Set up a routine for reading log completion.
• If you liked that...then try this.
  – Library bulletin board
  – Scholastic book wizard
  – Peer recommendations
  – Teacher recommendations
  – Public Library
  – Goodreads website
“Reading is nothing more or less than thinking, guided by print.”

-Lucy Calkins