## ACTIVITY 2: Meaning and Memory

Janet Simmons and Don Irwin have developed a classroom exercise that powerfully demonstrates the benefits of visual imagery. The top half of Handout below contains instructions for the control group; the bottom half has the imagery group’s instructions. Make half as many copies of the handout as you have students and cut the handouts in half. Distribute the top halves to one side of the class and the bottom halves to the other. It is important that people in each group only be aware of their own instructions. (Handing sheets off the top of the stack to one side and sheets off the bottom to the other side subtly accomplish this.)

After students have read their instructions, read aloud the following sentences, pausing long enough between each for students to record their ratings.

1. The noisy fan blew the papers off the table.
2. The green frog jumped into the swimming pool.
3. The silly snake slithered down a steep sliding board.
4. The crafty surgeon won the daily double.
5. The skiing trumpeter started a gigantic avalanche.
6. The plump chef liked to jump rope.
7. The captured crook liked to do difficult crossword puzzles.
8. The small child sat under the lilac bush.
9. The medieval minstrel strolled along the babbling brook.
10. The distressed teacher ate a wormy apple.
11. The chocolate choo-choo train chugged down the licorice tracks.
12. The marching soldier lit a cigarette.
13. The longhaired woman had a phobia about scissors.
14. The cheerful choirboy sang off-key.
15. The toothless bathing beauty hardly ever smiled.
16. The sweaty gardener was wearing a scarf and mittens.
17. The spotted dog was sleeping in the sun.
18. The lanky leprechaun wore lavender leotards.
19. The bearded plumber was flushed with success.
20. The novice camper got lost in the woods.

Next have students turn the form over, number 1 to 20, and attempt to answer the following 20 questions, which you read to them. (Answers follow the questions, but don’t give the answers until all 20 have been read.)

1. Who won the daily double? (the crafty surgeon)
2. What chugged down the licorice tracks? (the chocolate choo-choo

train)

1. Who liked to do difficult crossword puzzles? (the captured crook)
2. Who sang off-key? (the cheerful choirboy)
3. What blew the papers off the table? (the noisy fan)
4. Who hardly ever smiled? (the toothless bathing beauty)
5. Who slithered down a steep sliding board? (the silly snake)
6. What was sleeping in the sun? (the spotted dog)
7. Who strolled along the babbling brook? (the medieval minstrel)
8. Who was flushed with success? (the bearded plumber)
9. What jumped into the swimming pool? (the green frog)
10. Who lit a cigarette? (the marching soldier)
11. Who got lost in the woods? (the novice camper)
12. Who started a gigantic avalanche? (the skiing trumpeter)
13. Who wore lavender leotards? (the lanky leprechaun)
14. Who liked to jump rope? (the plump chef)
15. Who had a phobia about scissors? (the long-haired woman)
16. Who sat under a lilac bush? (the small child)
17. Who ate a wormy apple? (the distressed teacher)
18. Who wore a scarf and mittens? (the sweaty gardener)

Then, have students score themselves as you read the correct answers (anything close counts as correct). Reveal the different instructional sets. Finally, after reassuring the students that memory does not equal intelligence; write the scores for each group separately on the chalkboard as students call them out. The differences between the groups’ scores will be highly significant with virtually no overlap. The control group typically gets from 2 to 14 correct and the imagery group from 12 to 20 correct.

**HANDOUT PART 1**

Please rate the sentences I will read aloud on how easily you can pronounce them. Repeat the sentences silently to yourself. Use the following scale.

1 2 3 4 5

Very difficult to pronounce Very easy to pronounce

1. 6. 11. 16.

2. 7. 12. 17.

3. 8. 13. 18.

4. 9. 14. 19.

5. 10. 15. 20.

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# HANDOUT PART 2

Please rate the sentences I will read aloud on how well you can form a vivid mental picture or image of the action of the sentence. Use the following scale.

1 2 3 4 5

Impossible to image Very easy to image

1. 6. 11. 16.

2. 7. 12. 17.

3. 8. 13. 18.

4. 9. 14. 19.

5. 10. 15. 20.

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