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# Self-Determination Readers Teacher's Guide

## Introduction

**Self-Determination Readers** is a collection of short stories that teach reading skills, comprehension, vocabulary, and (surprisingly) math skills.

The stories also lend themselves to group discussions about the story topics. Students build reading skills and learn strategies to improve themselves.

In the former case—the serious side—the stories tackle self-determination issues that are typical for students their age. There are four self-determination topics included, with four stories under each topic. The four topics are: (1) **Take Control**, (2) **Choose Wisely**, (3) **Handle Problems**, and (4) **Aim High**.

Story topics included under the first section, **Take Control**, involve community trips, appropriate behavior, and using self-control. The second section, **Choose Wisely** stories, are about making good decisions, spending money wisely, and following directions. Section three, **Handle Problems**, has story themes such as time management, seeking help when needed, and working out problems in a mature way. The fourth and final section is entitled **Aim High**. These stories encompass such topics as goal setting, self-advocacy, and leadership.

In addition, if your students have social issues that arise during the course of the school year, you can talk about those problems in group discussions and create specific stories together with your students to help them deal with those issues. (Note: At the end of this introduction, on page 20, instructions are given for

This book is divided into four self-determination topics, with four stories under each topic. Included in each are:

1. **Self-Determination Stories**  
(Reading the Story Together)
2. **Worksheets** followed by answers
  - A. Comprehension Questions
  - B. Let's Think About It
  - C. You Do the Math  
(in selected stories)
  - D. Dictionary Words

developing your own stories specific to your students and their environment. On page 21, there is a blank reproducible form for writing your own stories.)

**Self-Determination Readers** continues with the same approach as **Getting Real with Reading** and **Social Story Readers** in that it provides teachers more tools to teach reading, social development, behavior, and self-worth. Best of all, here is a chance for students and teachers alike to have some fun!

— Debbie and Shelia

## Teaching Suggestions

This section contains some of the ideas and teaching suggestions we have accumulated from reading these social stories with our students. In fact, the answer sheets consist of scripted words spoken in response to questions asked in actual group situations.

There are no given set of correct answers to some of the questions. Some students will have different answers concerning problems they would like to discuss that are not on the answer sheets. Keep the communication lines open, and you'll find

you're teaching more than reading with **Self-Determination Readers**.



### Group Story Time

**Group Story Time consists of these six steps:**

1. Reading the Story Together
2. Comprehension Questions
3. Let's Think About It
4. You Do the Math
5. Dictionary Words/Magic Stick Time

# Reading the Story Together

Make enough copies of the *Story*, *Comprehension Questions*, *Let's Think About It*, *You Do the Math*, and *Dictionary Words* pages for every student to have a copy of each page.

Ask students to sit together in a comfortable place around a table, or arrange their desks in whatever way best fits the classroom setting.

Not all students are able to read at the level of these stories, but ask them to come to group to enjoy the stories and learn from the situations discussed.

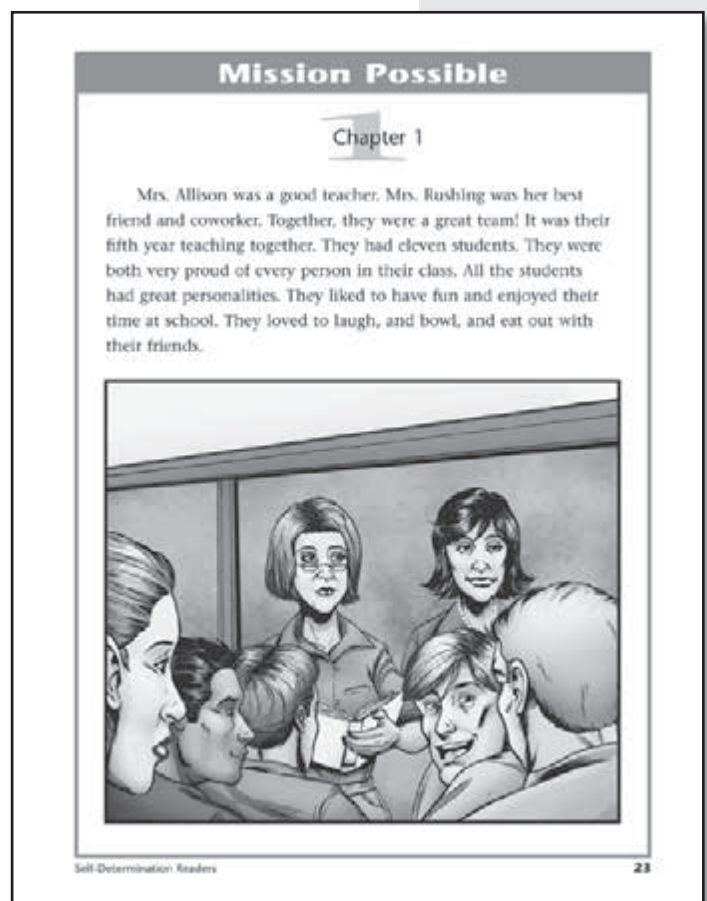
Pair a student who has higher-level reading abilities with a student who has more difficulty reading. Reading “partners” can help each other and have a peer-tutoring effect.

Some teachers might be more comfortable with a smaller group setting or teaching one-on-one with a student.

Ask one of the students to start the story by reading the first sentence. Explain exactly what a sentence entails.

Students tend to stop reading at the end of the line instead of continuing on to finish the thought. Teach them how periods function like a stop sign. Ask students to make a popping or clicking noise by putting their tongues at the top of their mouths and making a sound. This reminds them it is time to stop and that the sentence is over.

This is also a good time to remind students that all sentences start with a capital or big letter and end with a punctuation mark.



*A sample page from Self-Determination Readers, student edition.*

Teach them to say “Huh?” when they see a question mark, and “Whee!” when there is an exclamation point. This reminds them of sentence structure and is also fun! (A comma is like a yield sign, and they must slow down and look both ways very quickly.)



As the student reads the first sentence, give him assistance when necessary with unknown words. After the student finishes reading the sentence, reread it out loud to the whole group. Then stop and explain anything that is important in that sentence. Tell students they are playing the “listening game” and after every sentence, there will be questions.

Make sure everyone is involved in the story and no one takes a quick nap! Make the story fun in the retelling of each sentence. For example, the teacher reads:

“Jason was so embarrassed even his ears turned red.”

The teacher says, “How did Jason feel?” When a student gives the appropriate answer, ask more questions until everyone is involved.

“What does it mean to be embarrassed?”

“Were his ears really red?”

“Have you ever blushed when you were embarrassed?”

As the group progresses through each sentence, go back and reiterate some of the main points in the story as you continue onward.

“Okay, so far in our story we read about what?”

“What were the instructions given to Jason?”

“Did Jason ‘Take Control’ in a good way, or did he make the wrong choice?”

“Did Jason follow the directions to complete his Mission Possible task?”

In order to involve all students in the reading process, ask those with lesser reading skills to read at least one of the sentences during the story time with help from their “partner” and the teacher. The teacher and students may also want to use role plays to act out different parts of the story.

All the different steps of reading together in group are designed to increase listening skills as well as reading.

Teachers should have the students come back to them at another time and read the story one-on-one for extra practice.

## Comprehension Questions

While still in the group setting, give each student a turn to read a question from the *Comprehension Questions* worksheet. Next, that student and her partner can go back to the story pages to try to find the correct answer.

If they can’t find the correct answer, they may ask for help from other people in the group and, ultimately, the teacher if needed. When the correct answer is found, everyone will circle it in the story and write the number of the question to signify it as the answer to that question. For example:

1. What was the name of the teacher who helped Mrs. Allison?

Text in the story reads:

*Mrs. Allison was a good teacher.*

- ① **Mrs. Rushing was her best friend and coworker.**

The students will use their pencils to put a ① by the sentence and circle the whole sentence.

**Comprehension Questions** Answer these questions orally in group and then complete the worksheet on your own. You may copy the answer sheet if you need extra help.

1. What was the name of the teacher who helped Mrs. Allison?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. When Mrs. Allison took her class into the community, what did she call the bus trips?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. How much money did Mrs. Allison give to Gina and Jason to spend in the grocery store?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. What checkout counter did Gina use to pay for her drink?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. How did Jason feel when the lady at the checkout counter told him he didn't have enough money?

\_\_\_\_\_

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*Tests student comprehension. See page 25.*

Later, when the students are filling in the *Comprehension Questions* worksheets on their own, they can use the story sheets with the circled answers as help sheets.

After all the questions are answered in group and circled in the story text, move on to the *Let's Think About It* worksheet.

The *Let's Think About It* worksheet is the most important part of the reading group. This sheet gives students the opportunity to open up and give their ideas and views on the various topics being discussed. It's also a learning situation where students can become aware of specific social skills needed to be independent, such as responsibility, work ethic, grooming, and good behavior.

## Let's Think About It

**Let's Think About It** Answer these questions orally in group and complete the worksheet on your own. You may copy the answer sheet if you need help.

1. Why is it important to follow directions?

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2. What is the Express Checkout counter?

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3. What is sales tax?

---

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4. How could Jason have used self-control on his mission?

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As mentioned before in this teacher's guide, there's not always a set of correct answers to *Let's Think About It* questions. The answers given in this text have actually been taken from group settings with students. Students in your reading groups may have different ideas, which should not be dismissed as incorrect if they are relevant to that student.

First, allow the students to open up the conversation, and then lead them in the direction that is appropriate to that situation.

The teacher makes a blank copy of the worksheet and has it ready to use during the discussion. As the students give their opinions, the teacher writes them down on the blank worksheet. Later, as an individual task, this answer sheet developed in group

can be used by students as a help sheet, and they can copy the answers to their own papers.

*Allows students to write their view of the story.  
See page 27.*



The *You Do the Math* worksheets encompass areas of math needed to enable students to take control, make good choices, solve problems, and attain goals.

Some of these areas are figuring sales tax on purchases, adding costs of items, gaining income through good job behavior, ordering items in a restaurant, deciding if you have enough money to pay for your order, figuring change, calculating percent off, and so on.

## You Do the Math

Even though it may seem unusual to have math pages in a reading book, the *You Do the Math* worksheets will help you introduce your students to functional math concepts they will need for independent living.

Don't miss the opportunity to involve your students in math learning experiences as they read these stories. Students will watch the characters work through difficult situations with self-determination and see how they may use these same math skills in their own lives.


Every story does not include a *You Do the Math* worksheet, but some stories contain instances where the teacher can emphasize or touch on math skills needed for a particular student.


*It's About Time*, a story about being late and using a plan to manage time, could be a catalyst for discussions concerning time concepts, such as counting by fives around a clock, telling-time skills, calculating hourly wages, and so forth.


Consider the *Is It Worth the Risk?* story. During group story time, discuss how Rob knocked 1,759 fishing lures off the shelf in the sports aisle. This will lead to lessons on place value and how to say large numbers correctly.

**You Do the Math!** Use a calculator to find the total with tax Jason would need for these items. Do your work in the boxes.

|                         |                      |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Price \$ _____          | ← <b>Get a Clue!</b> |
| X .10 = \$ _____        |                      |
| + Price \$ _____        |                      |
| Total with Tax \$ _____ |                      |

 \$49.99 →

← \$25.49 

 \$33.89 →

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*You Do the Math* worksheet. See page 29.

In the *Camp Wanna-Up-Chuck* story, the characters talk about being accountable. Counting can be introduced as a fun group activity.

Teach measurement equivalencies when reading *Caught From Behind* and *Cooking Up a Storm*.

Another teaching suggestion is to show how to make a budget when reading the *Check, Please* story. You can also talk about housecleaning checklists and grooming checklists.

Engage your students in all aspects of learning while using the **Self-Determination Readers**.

## Dictionary Words

The *Dictionary Words* worksheet features several words chosen from the story to discuss in group. They are chosen because they are the primary words used to express the situation developing in the story.

There may be other words students need to talk about in reference to their reading. If the teacher notices that students stumble consistently over certain words in the group reading of the story, talk about these words as well as the ones we have previously listed. (Please note: If students are having trouble reading certain words during group story time, make a list and use those words to have Magic Stick Time. Magic Stick Time is a method used in our previous book, **Getting Real with Reading**. This method can be used with the words from **Self-Determination Readers** as well.)

Talk about the words listed on the *Dictionary Words* sheet with the students. Ask for their input as to the meaning of each word. Sometimes students give a more appropriate meaning than the dictionary, one that is more relevant to their lives and understanding.

**Dictionary Words** Use the dictionary to look up the meaning of these words.

1. choose  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. express  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. missions  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. personalities  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. self-control  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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*Emphasizes dictionary use. See page 31.*

There is an answer sheet provided for the teacher with an easier-to-understand meaning than would ordinarily be found in the dictionary. We have compiled a *Self-Determination Dictionary* at the back of this book, which can be used for students who are able to look up the words independently. The students who need a help sheet can copy directly from the answer sheet.

The *Dictionary* is found beginning on page 167.



## Magic Stick Time

Use the *Dictionary* (page 167) and any other words from the story that are appropriate for extra study to have **Magic Stick Time**. You will need:

1. One 3-foot-long wooden dowel or similar pointing device to be used as the “Magic Stick.”
2. A large chalkboard or whiteboard and chalk or dry-erase markers.
3. Word cards. To make your own word cards for each story’s *Dictionary Words*, mount the words on brightly colored card stock and laminate. To keep the words from each story organized, write the story name on the back of the cards before laminating them. A different colored card for each story’s words is also helpful. They can be kept in sets and sorted by name or color for easy reference.
4. Copies of the story and worksheets for every student for each day.
5. Plastic storage boxes and folders or similar storage options to keep the worksheets and word cards organized.

Optional materials:

1. Magazines, paper, scissors, glue or tape.
2. Computer workstations.

Write the *Dictionary Words* to be used on the board. They can be written in any order, but make sure the words are large enough for all students to see.

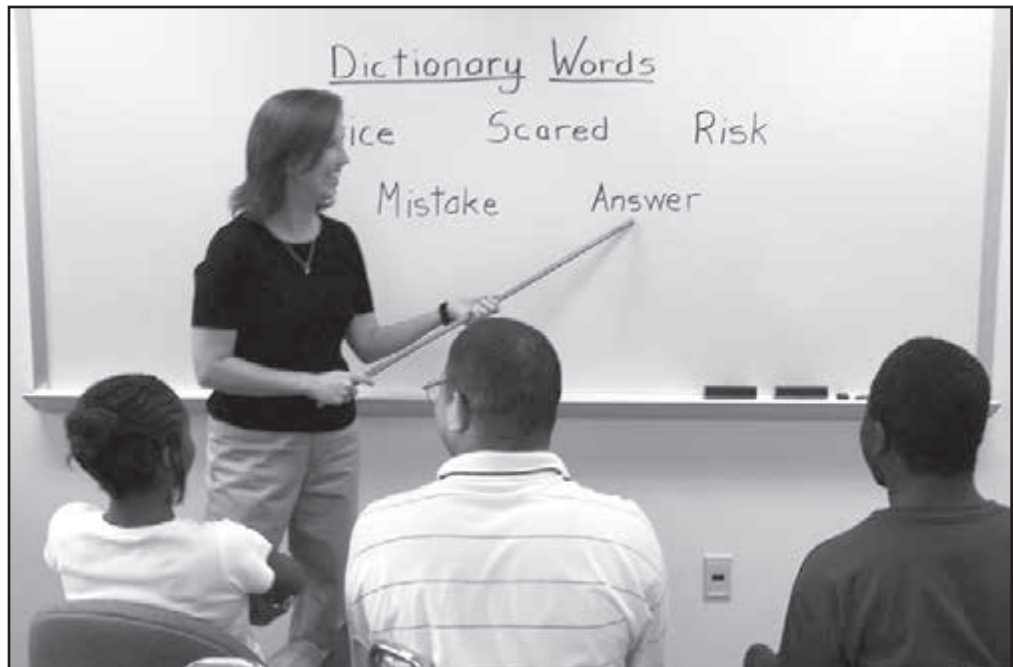
Use the 3-foot dowel rod as your pointer. Tell the students, “This is my Magic Stick! It is going to turn you into great readers!” Tell them, “The trick is this! You can’t take your eyes off the stick!”

Introduce the first word by saying the word and at the same time tapping it loudly with the magic stick. This helps the students keep their attention on that particular word. Have the students repeat the word after you.

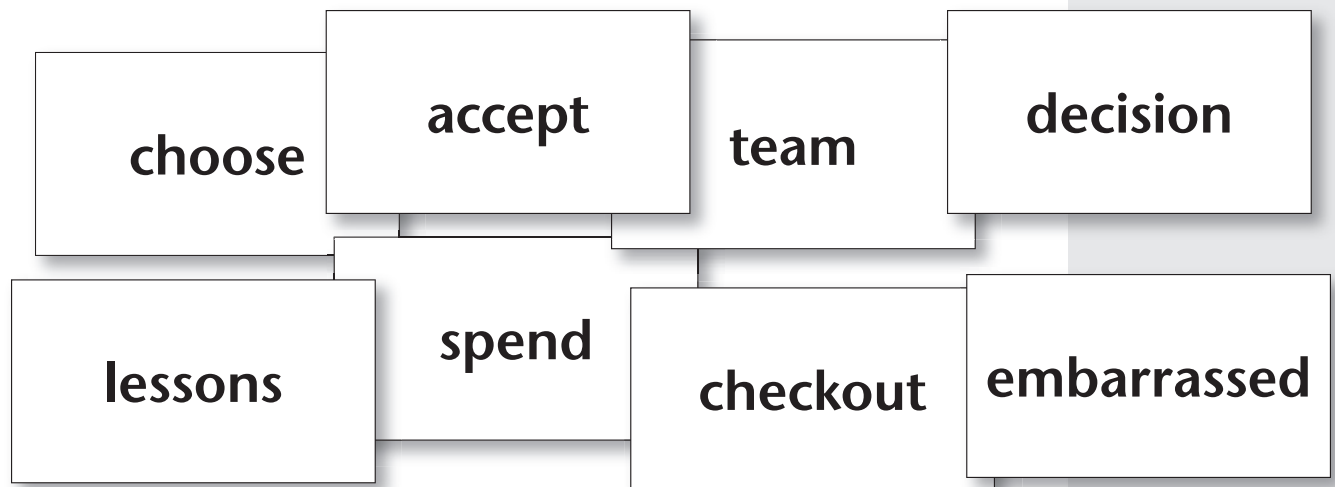
Next, tap the second word with the stick and say it, and have the students repeat that word.

Then, tap and say the first two words together. Continuing on, tap and say the third word, then repeat the first three words together . . . and so on.

Continue the process for all *Dictionary Words*. Always point to a new word, say it, and go back to words already introduced. When all of the words are introduced, use your Magic Stick and have them read the words in reverse order.



*Board work with the Magic Stick encourages student participation.*



*Sample word cards from the first story, **Mission Possible**. Make your own word cards by mounting the printed words on brightly colored card stock and laminating. Keep the words from each story organized by writing the story name on the back of the cards before laminating them. Use different colored cards for each story, and keep them in sets sorted by name or color.*

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The next step would be to have individual students read them in random order. This requires greater concentration on their part. Encourage students to say the words loudly and with confidence. Teach them it's okay to make mistakes as long as they try their best.

Use word cards to reinforce what has been taught in group.

- **“Flash” Cards** — The teacher holds the stack of cards. “Flash” one card at a time, and have the students read them as quickly as possible.
- **Choose a Word** — Place cards faceup on the table. The teacher reads one of the words and the student attempts to choose that particular word from the set.
- **Flip-it** — Turn cards facedown on the table. Have students take turns flipping over a card. If they can read the card, they get to keep it. The player with the most cards at the end of the game wins.
- **Quick Draw** — The teacher holds the cards like you would a hand in a card game. She says to the students, “Pick a card, any card.” A student chooses a card and attempts to read it. Students who read the cards successfully get to keep their cards until the end of the game. The student with the most cards wins.

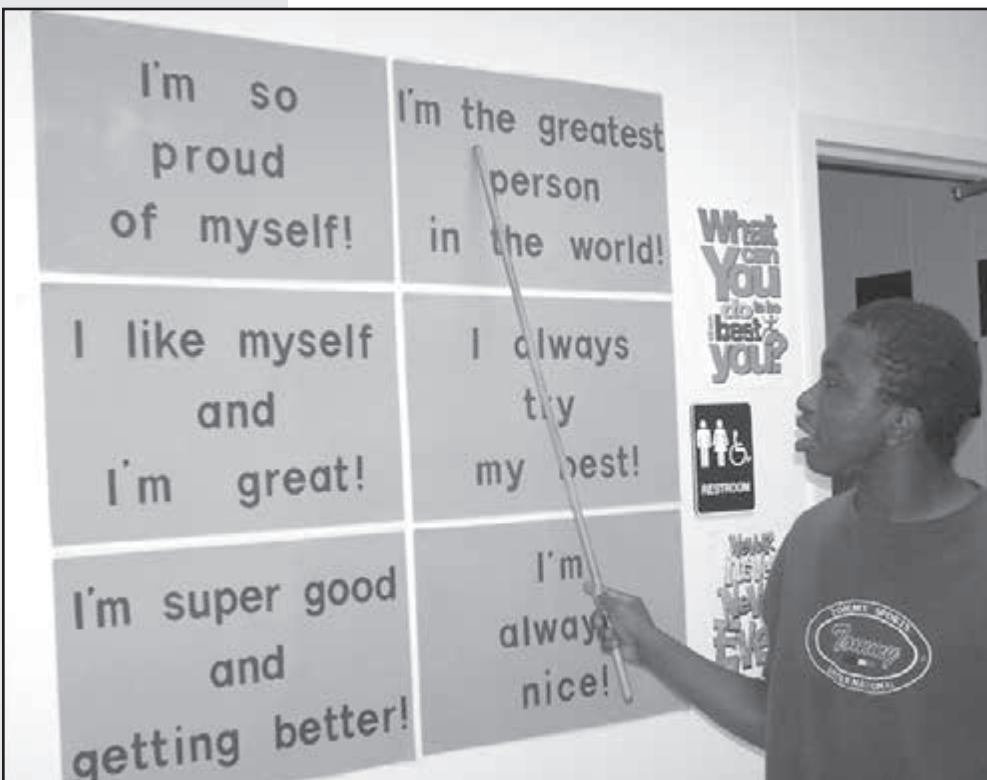
- **Keyboarding** — Students can take a stack of word cards and type them on the computer for extra practice.
- **Make a Sentence** — Higher-functioning students can choose word cards to make sentences. They can practice handwriting and punctuation skills by writing the sentence they created on the board for others to see. They can also type these sentences on the computer for extra practice. Large wipe-off sentence strips can be used with dry-erase markers for another sentence writing activity.
- **Magazine Letters** — Have individual students read the *Dictionary Words* they are working on to the teacher. If they miss any words, have them cut out letters from magazines and paste them on a sheet of paper in the correct order to spell the words they need to review.

As the year progresses, you'll want to use several sets of word cards at a time for these activities. The cards should be stored in a convenient place for easy access.

For higher-functioning students, add *Dictionary Words* to their spelling lists each week. These students will not only be able to

read the words, but will also be challenged to improve their writing skills.

A final suggestion — send home a list of the words being taught each week to keep parents informed. Parental support is important, and they will be proud of their children's reading progress.



Consider individualizing the **Self-Determination Readers** approach to reflect your students' personalities, needs, and environmental specifics. You can design your own stories and teach vocabulary that's appropriate for their lives.

**Here's how:**

1. Start by having weekly, biweekly, or even daily group discussions about social situations that come up in the course of a school day, like controlling your temper, dealing with friendships, respect for others, self-confidence and self-esteem, and other scenarios students experience at school and in life.
2. Choose a story topic or point of view from those group discussions held with your students.
3. Write a short story for the students about the chosen topic, or use the students' thoughts to help them write a personal story book about the group discussion. For higher-level students, have them write their own short stories. (Copy and use the form provided on page 21. It is similar to the format of the pages used in this book. There are lines at the top of the page for the text and a box at the bottom to provide a space for a picture. Students will enjoy drawing pictures to illustrate the text on each page. Make as many copies as needed to create personal story books for your students.)
4. If desired, you can also make worksheets of your own similar to those used in this book, with *Comprehension Questions*, *Let's Think About It*, *You Do The Math*, and *Dictionary Words*.

We held regular discussions with our students for years before we actually developed the **Self-Determination Readers** program. Because of the success of these group discussions, adapting real-life situations to daily reading exercises seemed natural. The content of our reading exercises became relevant and interesting to our students.

Since they were based on everyday experiences, the subject areas covered in the stories made reading take on a new meaning for the students. They were more successful than they had ever been at remembering words.

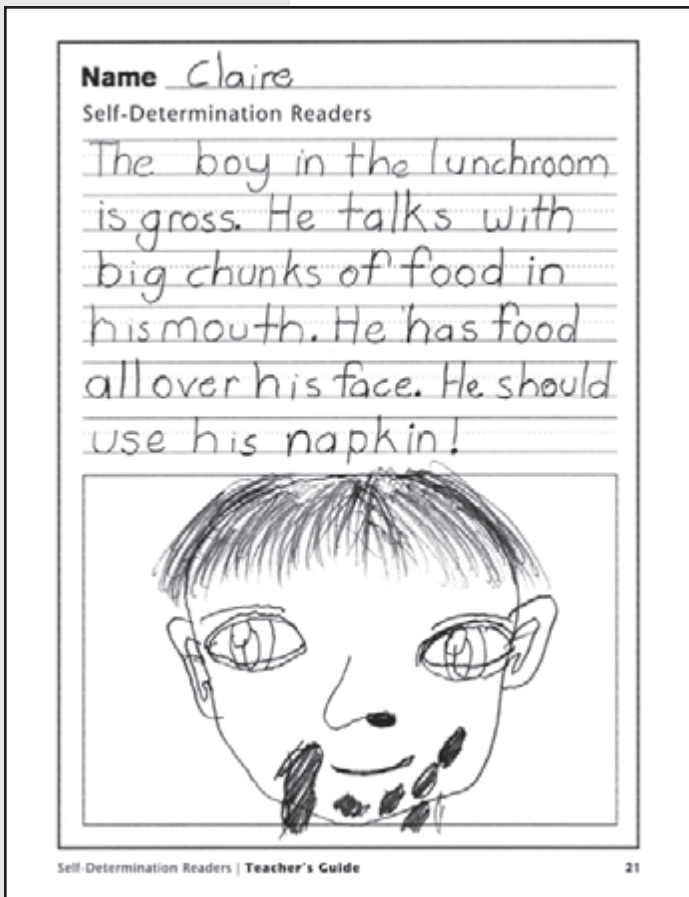
# How to Write Your Own Stories

When we first developed the program, we took it a week at a time and made worksheets to go with the discussion stories we had written for the week. When we read the stories as a class and followed with group work and peer tutoring on the worksheets, students felt a sense of accomplishment and pride.

We made word cards using *Dictionary Words* from the stories, and these helped make daily discussions more fun and interesting.

We had many students who couldn't read at all when they started this program, and they now read most or all of the words. Some have gone on to read many more words than the ones included in this program.

The worksheet on the following page is designed so you can use our approach to develop your own reading stories and/or help your students write their own stories. Make multiple copies of the worksheet, and use it to create stories in your classroom. Use these blank worksheets over and over to develop personal story readers tailored to individual students.



*This short story about manners was written by a student after a bad experience in the lunchroom. Make copies of the blank worksheet on the following page to make your own short stories.*



# Comprehension Questions

Answer these questions orally in group and then complete the worksheet on your own. You may copy the answer sheet if you need extra help.

1. What was the name of the teacher who helped Mrs. Allison?

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2. When Mrs. Allison took her class into the community, what did she call the bus trips?

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---

3. How much money did Mrs. Allison give to Gina and Jason to spend in the grocery store?

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4. What checkout counter did Gina use to pay for her drink?

---

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5. How did Jason feel when the lady at the checkout counter told him he didn't have enough money?

---

---

**Comprehension Questions** Answer these questions orally in group and then complete the worksheet on your own. You may copy the answer sheet if you need extra help.

1. What was the name of the teacher who helped Mrs. Allison?

*Mrs. Rushing was her best friend and coworker.*

---

2. When Mrs. Allison took her class into the community, what did she call the bus trips?

*She called each trip a Mission Possible.*

---

3. How much money did Mrs. Allison give to Gina and Jason to spend in the grocery store?

*Mrs. Allison gave each of them one dollar (\$1.00) to spend in the grocery store.*

---

4. What checkout counter did Gina use to pay for her drink?

*She went to the Express Lane checkout counter to pay for her drink.*

---

5. How did Jason feel when the lady at the checkout counter told him he didn't have enough money?

*Jason was so embarrassed even his ears turned red.*

---

**Let's Think About It** Answer these questions orally in group and complete the worksheet on your own. You may copy the answer sheet if you need help.

1. Why is it important to follow directions?

---

---

2. What is the *Express Lane* checkout counter?

---

---

3. What is sales tax?

---

---

4. How could Jason have used self-control on his mission?

---

---

**Let's Think About It** Answer these questions orally in group and complete the worksheet on your own. You may copy the answer sheet if you need help.

1. Why is it important to follow directions?

*You could become embarrassed. You could lose a job.*

---

*You could get hurt.*

---

2. What is the *Express Lane* checkout counter?

*The Express Lane is the checkout to use when buying a small number*

---

*of things, usually 20 or less.*

---

3. What is sales tax?

*Sales tax is a certain amount of money that goes to the government.*

---

*If you buy something, a small amount of money is added on to each*

---

*dollar you spend.*

---

4. How could Jason have used self-control on his mission?

*He could have followed Mrs. Allison's directions. He could have listened*

---

*to Gina when she was trying to help him.*

---