THINKING ON MY OWN
Video: Thievin' Theo
Plot
(cliffhanger pattern of action and person-against-self conflict)

Evan enjoys reading all sorts of stories. While at the library yesterday, she picked up a short story called *A Chance to Cheat*. Evan was intrigued by the title and curious about what it was about. She knew that the plot of the story is where all the action and conflict take place, and this story wouldn't let her down!

Now it's **Your Turn!** Read **A Chance to Cheat**. Create your own *Think Aloud*.

Then compare your thinking with **Evan's Think Aloud.**

thinking ALOUD
Making Sense of Literacy

Before You Read:

Think about what you may already know about homework and what happens if you put off getting it done. Consider what you've learned about plot. Then, jot your ideas.

While You Read:

As you read this story, ask yourself, "What am I learning about the plot?" Think about the patterns of action and types conflict authors use to describe their plots. You may want to highlight the pattern of action in orange and the conflict in green. (You may use any color available to you – just remember your color scheme!)

After You Read:

- Now it's time to try Thinking Aloud on your own. Ask yourself this question, "What pattern of action and type of conflict are revealed in the story?"

- Use the information you've read in this story to determine the pattern of action and type of conflict. Explain how this helps you better remember the plot.

A Chance to Cheat

Tracy lugged her backpack into her house and dropped it on the kitchen floor. "Mr. Vanderwall gives way too much homework!" she complained. "Tonight I have spelling, social studies, my science fair project, and a book report for a book I haven't even read!"

Tracy's mom poured her a glass of lemonade and gave her a hug. "Weren't you supposed to work on these assignments over the weekend?" Tracy's mom asked.

Tracy groaned. "I had Kate's sleepover, and Alyssa's birthday party."

Tracy's mom pressed. "And you played your new video game, too, right?"

Tracy nodded. "I lost track of time, but now I'm really in trouble."

"Well, have a snack and then get started. I'll be here if you need something," Tracy's mom said.

Tracy walked up the stairs and into the room she shared with her older sister, Meg. "At least I have the room to myself since Meg's at play practice," she thought.

Tracy tackled her spelling and social studies assignments. After supper, she went to the hardware store with her dad for science fair supplies. Using plans she found on the Internet, she made a simple metal detector and a poster to show how it worked.

It was almost 10:00 PM by the time she was done. Rubbing her eyes, she glanced at the book she still needed to read. Then she remembered something.

"Meg had Mr. Vanderwall, too, and she read this book. I wonder if she did a book report on it?"

Tracy opened Meg's desk and began pulling out folders of old schoolwork and projects. Buried in the bottom of the drawer was Meg's report.

"She got an A on it, too," Tracy whispered.

Tracy bit her lip and stared at the report. "If I copied it in my own handwriting and changed a few words, Mr. Vanderwall would never know it was Meg's."

Tracy held the book in one hand and Meg's report in the other. "I've never cheated before, but the report is due tomorrow. Is it okay just this once?"

Tracy took a deep breath and made her decision, just as she heard Meg running up the stairs.

MakingSense ©2010 UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

thinking ALOUD
Making Sense of Literacy

Compare Your Think Aloud With Evan's Think Aloud:

Evan's Think Aloud: When I read that "Tracy lugged her backpack into her house" and her announcement that "Mr. Vanderwall gives way too much homework," I predict Tracy is the main character. Given the title of the story, *A Chance to Cheat*, I'm wondering if she might try to cheat on some of her homework? As I continue reading, I'll have to pay attention to the pattern of action and the types of conflict as I read this story to find out what happens.

When I read Tracy's mom question, "Weren't you supposed to work on these assignments over the weekend?" and Tracy's excuses, I'm thinking that Tracy is like many of my friends who do their homework at the last minute. Listing her excuses and the author's use of the word *pressed* alerts me to the fact that there may be tension and rising action. If that is the case, I'm thinking the pattern of action could be progressive or cliffhanger.

When I read that Tracy completes her spelling, social studies, and science in order, I'm thinking that there is rising action because she is getting closer to finishing her homework. Yet I know she is running out of time, when I read "It was almost 10:00 PM" and that she is "rubbing her eyes," when she notices the "book she still needed to read." I'm thinking that Tracy has an overwhelming feeling of stress. When Tracy recalls that her sister did a report on the same book and Tracy hasn't even read the book yet, I remember the title of the story and realize the high point of the story may be near. When she actually finds the book report and thinks about writing it in her own handwriting and turning it in as her own, I recognize that this is the high point of the story. When Tracy thinks cheating might be OK just this once, I definitely know that she is having a struggle within herself. The conflict is person-against-self.

When I read the end of the story I am left wondering what she will do. Since the story doesn't say, there is no resolution to the problem. I definitely know this story has a cliffhanger pattern of action. I hope Tracy makes the right decision!

A Chance to Cheat

Tracy lugged her backpack into her house and dropped it on the kitchen floor. "Mr. Vanderwall gives way too much homework!" she complained. "Tonight I have spelling, social studies, my science fair project, and a book report for a book I haven't even read!"

Tracy's mom poured her a glass of lemonade and gave her a hug. "Weren't you supposed to work on these assignments over the weekend?" Tracy's mom asked.

Tracy groaned. "I had Kate's sleepover, and Alyssa's birthday party."

Tracy's mom pressed. "And you played your new video game, too, right?"

Tracy nodded. "I lost track of time, but now I'm really in trouble."

"Well, have a snack and then get started. I'll be here if you need something," Tracy's mom said.

Tracy walked up the stairs and into the room she shared with her older sister, Meg. "At least I have the room to myself since Meg's at play practice," she thought.

Tracy tackled her spelling and social studies assignments. After supper, she went to the hardware store with her dad for science fair supplies. Using plans she found on the Internet, she made a simple metal detector and a poster to show how it worked.

It was almost 10:00 PM by the time she was done. Rubbing her eyes, she glanced at the book she still needed to read. Then she remembered something.

"Meg had Mr. Vanderwall, too, and she read this book. I wonder if she did a book report on it?"

Tracy opened Meg's desk and began pulling out folders of old schoolwork and projects. Buried in the bottom of the drawer was Meg's report.

"She got an A on it, too," Tracy whispered.

Tracy bit her lip and stared at the report. "If I copied it in my own handwriting and changed a few words, Mr. Vanderwall would never know it was Meg's."

Tracy held the book in one hand and Meg's report in the other. "I've never cheated before, but the report is due tomorrow. Is it okay just this once?"

Tracy took a deep breath and made her decision, just as she heard Meg running up the stairs.

Questions to Think About:

- How does Evan use the events of the story to determine the pattern of action?
- How did the high point of the story reveal the type of conflict found in this plot?
- Why might this process help you to understand plot?
- When might this process be useful?