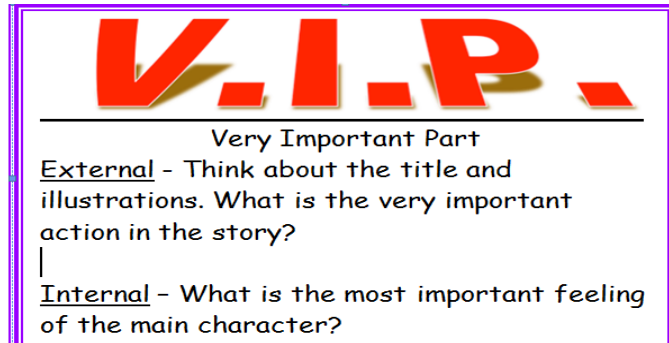Jan Richardson: How to Use *VIP strategies* to identify Very Important Parts in Fiction & Non-Fiction Text

"Students must learn to distinguish between important ideas…and information that is interesting but not critical to understand the overall meaning…teach it first with fiction, then non-fiction." Jan Richardson, pg. 215, *The Next Step in Guided Reading.*

Determining Importance in Fiction

Step 1: Literal Level

- Have students use sticky notes or flags to mark the most important sentence after reading one or two pages.

- Model, explaining an important part in the text. Usually, a VIP involves a character taking action. Accept different responses, as long as students can support their reasoning in the text.

Step 2:

- Expand from one or two pages to include a short chapter. Students flag the VIP sentence in each chapter, then paraphrase (STP) the action or idea in their notebooks.

- If using short chapter books for Guided Reading, prompt students to consider using the title of the chapter and illustrations to determine the VIP

- During conferences clarify student choice with the prompts, "Why did you pick that part as the VIP? What were you thinking?"   Analyze responses, and support if necessary.

Step 1: Interpretive Level

- Students read the chapter, deciding the VIP of the *internal* story. They must infer the feelings and relationships of characters to determine the internal VIP. Prompt, "What is the VIP of the character's feelings in the chapter? What are you thinking?"

Step 2:

- Students identify a VIP for both the internal and external story. Students ask themselves, "What is the most important action (external) and the most important relationship or feeling (internal) in this chapter?" Students must be able to explain their reasoning.

Step 1: Evaluative Level – Evaluate both internal and external stories

- Once students complete the story, they consider the VIP's they identified for each chapter. Then, they select one *external* and one *internal* for the whole book. They must explain their reasoning.
(See other *fiction scaffolds* for Determining Importance in fiction, pgs. 216-217)

Determining Importance in Non-Fiction

Step 1: VIP (Literal)

- Choose books with headings. Model using heading to determine VIP. Distribute flags, students mark most important sentence in section, prompt them to find sentence using heading, repeated words or boldface type.

Step 2: Main Idea Question/Details (Literal)

- Use book with headings. Model how to turn heading into a question. Write "main idea" question on left side of T-Chart. As they read each sentence, reread question, decide if it added info, then write detail in bullet form on right side of T-Chart. Example:

Main-Idea Question	Details
How can students find the main idea in NF?	- Turn a heading into a question - Create a T-Chart, add details

Step 3: Main Idea Question/Details (Interpretive)

- To encourage deeper thinking, use texts without headings or cover headings with sticky note tape. Students write their own main idea questions using clues such as bold and repeated words. Then they add details in bullet form that answer the main-idea question.

Step 4: Evaluative Level Discussion

- Students use sticky note flags as they read to mark important sentences. After, they share using the sentence stem, "I think this is the most important part because…." to explain their thinking with evidence from the text.

Step 5: Advanced Readers

- Use three-column notes to combine this strategy with others, prompting deeper thinking.

Main Idea	Details	Question
Main Idea	Details	Summary
Main Idea	Details	Connection

Created by Ellen Lewis, Reading Teacher, Westlawn ES, VA