A read-aloud for kids, parents and teachers

Read It Together

Whose Thinking Is It?

When a tool helped, did you write it?

You know the machine guesses words. You know it can be sure and wrong. You know it is not a source.

So now a question about your own work. If a tool helped you write it, did you write it?

Forty minutes. Nobody has to confess anything. Everyone gets to think.

Step 1 · The starter · 5 min

Who wrote your homework?

Ask it. Everyone says "me!"

If a friend fixed your spelling, is it still yours? Most say yes.

If a friend told you what to write, sentence by sentence? Most go quiet.

If a friend wrote it and you copied it out in your own handwriting? No.

Here is the point. The question was never who typed it. It is whose thinking is in it.

Step 2 · Two pieces of writing · 8 min

Which one has a person in it?

The grown-up shows two short pieces on the same topic. No labels.

One was written by a child, who then used a tool to fix spelling. One was made by a chat machine from a one-line request and lightly reworded.

In pairs, decide which one has an author in it, and write one sentence saying how you can tell.

The tell is usually a detail. The child's piece has something only a person who did the work would know. The machine's piece is smooth and general.

Do this together

Reveal which is which. Then ask what the tool did in each case. Spelling in one. Everything in the other.

Step 3 · Your own work · 12 min

Two honest questions

Take a piece of your own recent work. Answer two questions, in writing, honestly and exactly.

One: what did I do?

Two: what did the tool do? If no tool was used, write that. It is a complete answer.

Then one more line. The sentence you would put at the bottom of the work to tell the whole truth. "I used a spelling tool." "I asked an AI tool to explain fractions before I did these." "No tool."

Watch your words

Saying exactly what the tool did

"It helped a bit" is a way of not answering. Try the exact version.

> Someone might say: It helped a bit.
>
> **It fixed six spellings and flagged one sentence that was unclear.**

> Someone might say: I changed enough words so it is mine now.
>
> **Changing words hides where it came from. It does not add my thinking.**

> Someone might say: I did not use anything.
>
> **No tool. That is a full answer, and a good one.**

The plenary · 10 min

Could you say it to a teacher's face?

Read a few of the bottom lines aloud. Which ones would be comfortable to say out loud to a teacher? Which would not?

The uncomfortable feeling is the lesson. The reason a sentence is hard to say is the reason the use was not fair.

If there is a machine at the front, ask it whether a piece it wrote becomes yours if you change enough words. It will usually say yes, with a percentage. Ask the room what is wrong with that.

Next time · Plate 5

What was it collecting?

While the tool helped, it was also writing things down. Next time: what, and why.

The same habit, turned the other way. Not what did it do for me, but what did I give it?

For the grown-up

Why this plate matters

This is the plate teachers ask for first, and it works better fourth. With the first three plates, a child can say what the machine did to their essay. Without them, it becomes a rule about cheating.

The failure to guard against is the percentage rule: the idea that enough editing transfers authorship. Children will propose numbers. Do not negotiate.

The second failure is treating all tool use as forbidden. Spelling, flagging unclear sentences, explaining a term before writing about it are fair, and should be named as fair. A child who believes any use is cheating will hide their use rather than disclose it.

Keep the tone away from accusation. The task is about their own work, in private. Nobody is asked to confess anything aloud.