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4.17 Read with Emphasis: Infer from Context

Strategy If there is no special text treatment to tell you which word(s) in a sentence to emphasize, think about the context. Does it suggest emphasis? If it does, think about how where you place emphasis impacts the meaning. If your inferred emphasis doesn't match the meaning, reread emphasizing a different word (or words).

Lesson Language *The word or words you do or don't emphasize can impact the meaning of a sentence. For example, consider a short sentence like "This is my house." Depending on how you read it, it can mean different things.*

"This is my house." (A simple declarative statement with no emphasis)

*"**This** is my house." (It's this one, not that one)*

*"This is **my** house." (It's mine, not yours or someone else's)*

*"This is my **house**." (I'm not talking about any other place)*

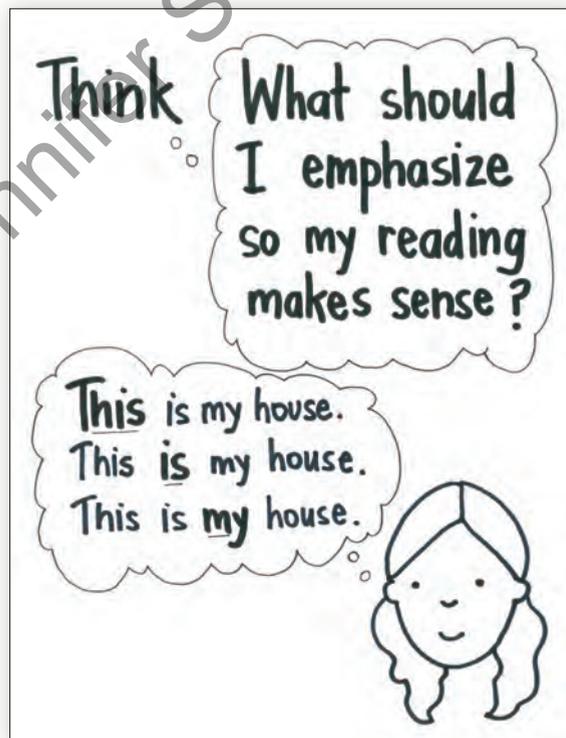
Sometimes, based on context, it makes sense to emphasize a word even if there is no special text treatment to guide you. How do you know when you need to add emphasis? You look for the meaning to suggest it. For example, if you found this sentence in this context:

As we walked down the street, I told my new best friend that I couldn't wait until I could show her my room. "This is it! This is my house."

How would you read it? Would you add emphasis? If so, on which word? If the way you read it the first time doesn't match what you're understanding in the text so far, try emphasizing a different word.

Prompts

- Do you think any words in this sentence need emphasis?
- When you emphasize that word in the sentence, how does it impact the meaning?
- Based on the context, which word should you emphasize in this sentence?
- When you stress that word, it means _____. Do you think that fits with the context?



Skills

- expression
- emphasis
- self-monitoring
- inferring

Progression

Reads in longer phrases, informed by midsentence and ending punctuation and is ready to consider meaningful context to influence expression and place emphasis on appropriate words.



Research Link

As a number of scholars have highlighted, written text does not contain many prosodic cues, so readers need to rely on context and comprehension to decide on appropriate pitch, stress, emphasis, and pauses (Miller & Schwanenflugel, 2008; Schreiber, 1991).