A River Runs Through It
GUIDED IMAGERY

PURPOSE: The ability to visualize as one reads is an important part of comprehending a text. Guided imagery can be used before or during reading a novel. This technique will build a structural base for exploring the novel individually, as a group, and as a class, it will stretch students’ concepts and will encourage problem solving and creativity.

DIRECTIONS:
STEP ONE (ten minutes): Ask the students to participate by clearing their desks, putting away other distractions, and getting comfortable. Tell them to relax, close their eyes, and listen. Explain to them that you (as a class) are going to be taking a journey. As you read the following passage, speak slowly and softly, allowing students to visualize the desired world that you are creating. Soft music playing in the background and dimming the lights in the classroom can be used to heighten the mood.

Close your eyes. Let all of your muscles relax. You are walking down a path to a river. It is early morning; the sun has just come up. Look around you. What season is it? What does the sky look like? Is it cloudy, or clear? What color is it? You can feel the morning air in your lungs. Is it cool outside? Is there a breeze? You hear soft noises around you as you continue walking to the river. Are you walking quickly, or are you sauntering? Listen to the sound your feet make on the ground— is there gravel beneath your feet, or is it sand, or dirt, or concrete? Listen to the sound your feet make against it. What other sounds can you hear? Are there birds? Or leaves rustling? Can you hear any other people? You continue walking—the river is getting closer and closer. Have you brought anyone with you? Can you see anyone? Who is it? Do you talk to each other? You’ve finally reached the edge of the water. Look around. What do the banks look like? Are there trees? Are there animals? Listen to the sound of the water. Is it lapping gently on the shore, or is it flowing in white rapids down the river bed? You see a dock, so you walk out to the end of it. You sit down and take off your shoes. Put your feet in the water. What does it feel like? Is it cold, icy? Is it warm? How quickly is it flowing. You sit for quite a while, breathing deeply, enjoying the nature around you. You look up to the sky. Look at how beautiful it is. What are you thinking about? How do you feel? You decide it’s time to head back, so you gently take your feet out of the water and put your shoes back on. You begin walking back to the shoreline, and when you get there, you take one last look around you. Breathe deeply. You’re ready now to start returning to where you started. Tell your muscles to begin to move. Slowly move your fingers, then your hands and your feet…and when you’re ready, you can open your eyes.

STEP TWO (ten or more minutes): Invite students to write down their experience. Tell them to use as many sensory details as possible. If they’d like, they may draw a picture.

STEP THREE (ten or more minutes): As a class, discuss the experience. What did they feel? What did they envision? Discuss with students how this activity is beneficial to the reading of A River Runs through It. Be sure to point out that much of the novel will describe similar scenes, with Norman Maclean in the river, alone with his thoughts and feelings.

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