Transcript of Kate's Think-Aloud for “Eleven”

Kate's comments to class prior to reading aloud this story:

Today I'm going to read this story aloud to you and as I do, I'm going to stop some and think aloud what I'm wondering about as I read the story. In particular, I'm going to try to visualize, you know, see what's happening in my mind. And I'm going to try to clarify any part that's confusing. And I'm going to try to predict what might happen next. Okay. Follow along.

Text | Think-Aloud
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What they don't understand . . . | Well, here, right at the first sentence, I have to wonder who “they” is. This just seems to start right in. I'm not sure who the “you” or “they” is, but, since it's the first sentence, I can't have missed anything, so I'm going to presume that as I keep on reading, I'll figure this out.

And you are . . . | OK, I think I can clarify what was confusing me. The “you” is anybody, and the “they” is grown-ups. I figured that out because it says “when you wake up on your eleventh birthday,” so I know the author is talking about when anybody turned eleven. The “they” therefore would be grown-ups who had forgotten what it would be like to turn eleven. I figured this out by reading on.

. . . like my little wooden dolls . . . | When I read this I can picture or visualize exactly what the author is talking about. I've got a set of Santas that fit, one inside the other. Now that I can visualize that, I can see how you could compare that to growing older, where the younger age still exists inside the older age.

. . . like pennies in a tin Band-Aid box. | This slowed me down for a minute because I've certainly seen Band-Aid boxes, but they aren't tin. This makes me wonder if maybe this is the way they used to come? Maybe this story was written a while ago.
Text  |  Think-Aloud
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I think it belongs to Rachel... Mrs. Price takes the sweater and puts it right on my desk... | I'm going to stop here and reread that sentence. I'm rereading it because it's the first time I've seen the name Rachel and I'm a bit confused as to who Rachel is. But when I see the part that says "puts it right on my desk," then I have to connect "my" to Rachel and I see now that the narrator's name is Rachel. And Sylvia tells the teacher that the ratty sweater belongs to Rachel. Sylvia must not like Rachel.

"Of course it's yours," Mrs. Price says... | I need to pause here. This teacher, Mrs. Price, doesn't want to believe Rachel and that's awful. That reminds me of a time I was in a class at the university and I told the professor that I had forgotten to bring in my assignment and he didn't believe me at all. He thought I just hadn't done it and was looking for an excuse. I was both angry and embarrassed. I really understand exactly how Rachel feels.

I move the red sweater to the corner of my desk with my ruler. | Wow. When I read this part, I have to stop and ask why the moving it with a ruler. But then I get it. She hates it so much that she can't stand to even touch it. That inference is important to make. She's so upset that she doesn't want to even touch it. I bet that the teacher is going to get even angrier at her for not touching it.

... put that sweater on right now... | OK. I'm going to stop here because I had predicted this would happen. Not only does the teacher get angrier, but now she wants Rachel to put the sweater on. This part is really sad. I can just feel how awful Rachel must feel.

... only Mrs. Price pretends like everything's okay. | I really hate this teacher. She's so mean. She should apologize to Rachel. But she's not going to. She's just going to act like it's all okay. I wonder if Rachel's going to tell her parents and her mom call the teacher. Probably not.

... so tiny-tiny you have to close your eyes to see it... | Now that I'm finished, I want to reread that last paragraph again. I got a bit confused when it said "I wish I was one hundred and two" because the whole thing had been about being younger and now she wants to be older. [Kate rereads this final paragraph.] OK. Now I get it. She's so sad at everything that happened, that she wishes the day was gone far, far away. She wishes that she was like a helium balloon that just disappears in the sky. So, even though things sort of worked out, she's still very sad. I can understand that.