Teaching Reading 7 Comprehension

Teacher Knowledge	Classroom Assessment	Evidence-Based Teaching Practices	Response to Intervention (RTI)
What Is Reading Comprehension?	Assessing Reading Comprehension	What Are the Most Effective Ways to Teach Reading Comprehension?	Response to Intervention: Meeting Diverse Needs for Tiers 1 and 2 in Comprehension Instruction

Chapter Questions

- What is reading comprehension, and what does research say about reading comprehension instruction?
- How is reading comprehension assessed effectively?
- What are evidence-based instructional practices or strategies for developing reading comprehension?
- How can Tier 1 and Tier 2 comprehension instruction be adapted to meet the needs of diverse learners including English learners (ELs)?
- How can literature circles play a role in improving motivation to learn comprehension skills?
- How are some ways that the Internet can be used to support comprehension instruction?
- How can families and communities support children's reading comprehension development?

Key Terms

Schema theory
Construction-integration theory
Multiple comprehension strategies
Benchmark standards
Metacognition
Story grammar
Unaided recall
Content approaches
Visualizing
Text features
Scaffolding
Input
Teaching modeling
Guided practice
Higher-order thinking
Question–Answer Relationships (QARs)
Questioning the author
Elaborative interrogation
Fix-up strategies
PARIS
Reciprocal teaching (RT)
Dialogic teaching
Reader response

Motivation and Engagement	Technology and New Literacies	Family and Community Connections
Motivation and Engagement Strategies for Teaching Reading Comprehension	Technology and New Literacies: Internet Reciprocal Teaching	Family and Community Connections That Enhance Students' Reading Comprehension

Breakthroughs to Comprehension

Since the beginning of the school year, Ms. Dewey has taught seven comprehension strategies to her students. She has taught these strategies one at a time, using clear explanations and think-aloud modeling, and has scaffolded her instruction so each student can use the strategies independently.

After the winter holiday break, Ms. Dewey decides to teach her second graders how to use the seven reading comprehension strategies in combination—as a "strategy family." To start this process, she produces seven posters, one for each strategy in the set of seven. She refers to these posters when she models for her students how to select comprehension strategies and use them during reading. Her posters are shown in the photo at the bottom of the page.

Ms. Dewey loves to read science books with her students, especially big books. And her students particularly enjoy reading science big books and participating in lessons using the "family" of seven comprehension strategies. For example, one day while videotaping a lesson for later review, Ms. Dewey records one little boy, Juan, saying enthusiastically, "I just love this stuff!" The class is reading a book about different frogs.

It has taken several years for Ms. Dewey to reshape comprehension instruction in her classroom and to see students achieve on much higher levels. In fact, she is always making adjustments to her teaching as she learns more about comprehension instruction and, most importantly, her students. As she listens to Juan's excited pronouncement, she echoes it, whispering to herself, "I love this stuff, too!" ■

Credit to come

Comprehension is the very heart and soul of reading. Although learning to translate letters into words is extremely important, understanding the author's message is what it's all about. From the very beginning, teachers help students construct meaning from print. But what is it that teachers like Ms. Dewey know that helps them develop good "comprehenders" in their classrooms?

Teacher Knowledge

What Is Reading Comprehension?

Early in the twenty-first century, reading comprehension research was summarized by two "blue ribbon" groups: the National Reading Panel (2000) and the RAND Reading Study Group (2002). The National Reading Panel (NRP) described reading comprehension thus:

> Comprehension is a complex process . . . often viewed as 'the essence of reading.' Reading comprehension is . . . *intentional thinking* during which meaning is constructed through interactions between text and reader. . . . The content of meaning is influenced by the text and by the reader's prior knowledge and experience that are brought to bear on it. (pp. 4–5)

Similarly, the RAND Reading Study Group (2002) noted that reading comprehension involves four components: (1) the reader, (2) the text, (3) the activity, and (4) the situational context (p. 1). The first three essential components—the reader, the text, and the task—occur within the fourth component of reading comprehension—the situational context. The *reader* is the one doing the comprehending, and the *text* is the reading material (e.g., stories, nonfiction selections, etc.). The *activity* refers to what kind of comprehension task, skill, strategy, or concept the reader is attempting to perform (e.g., discovering the author's main idea, understanding a sequence of events, thinking about a character's intent in a story, etc).

The *situational context* of reading comprehension can be thought of in at least two ways. First, the actual setting where reading occurs—at home, in a school classroom, the library, under a blanket at bedtime, and so on—affects how well one comprehends while reading. There is little doubt that children's reading comprehension is influenced by the setting in which they read. (Aren't you more focused and relaxed when reading alone at home than if called on to read during a college class?) Second, there is a social context associated with reading comprehension. In some cases, reading comprehension occurs individually, alone—a very limited social setting. In other cases, however, reading comprehension can be part of a vibrant social activity in which people—teachers, parents, and children—read a text together and jointly construct meaning through discussion. Lively interaction about a text in the company of others seems to be the optimal situational context to enhance students' reading comprehension (McKeown, Beck, & Blake, 2009).

IRA Standards for Reading Professionals: Standard 1, Elements 1.1, 1.2

Common Core Standards: Reading: K–5, Key Ideas and Details (items 1–3), Craft and Structure (items 4, 5), Integration of Knowledge and Ideas (items 7–9), Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity (item 10); Reading: Grades 6–12, Key Ideas and Details (items 1–3), Craft and Structure (items 4–6), Integration of Knowledge and Ideas (items 7–9), Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity (item 10)

Response to Intervention: Expertise

"Less Is More" in Comprehension Instruction

Dewitz, Jones, and Leahy (2009) found that commercial reading programs used by most school districts are not very effective in teaching reading comprehension. Such core reading programs must be used selectively and supplemented by a knowledgeable teacher if children are to reach their potential. For example, the National

Reading Panel (2000) recommends that teachers primarily focus on seven specific comprehension strategies supported by rigorous research (plus multiple-strategy instruction) whereas other researchers (e.g., Dymock & Nicholson, 2010) feel five is the magic number of strategies for intensive focus. But the curricula found in leading core reading programs today cover skills and strategies varying from 18 to 29 per program *per year!* Not only is this unnecessary and ineffective, but the large numbers of skills and strategies taught in core reading programs means all get superficial treatment, often at a rate of one skill a week (Dewitz et al., 2009). As Dewitz and colleagues state:

> Our analysis of comprehension instruction in core reading programs demonstrates several shortcomings that may undermine their efficacy. First, the comprehension skills and strategies curricula are wide but not terribly deep. The structure of the curricula is often incoherent so that students and teachers do not know how skills and strategies relate to one another or how acquiring these sets of skills leads to becoming a better reader. (p. 120)

Later in this chapter's Pillar Three section, we review ways you can take control and supplement your core reading program to produce effective comprehension instruction for your students.

How Do Children Develop Reading Comprehension?

Research over the past 30 years has contributed greatly to our understanding of the thinking processes involved in reading comprehension. Surprisingly, however, little research has focused on the development of *young* children's comprehension (Reutzel, Smith, & Fawson, 2005).

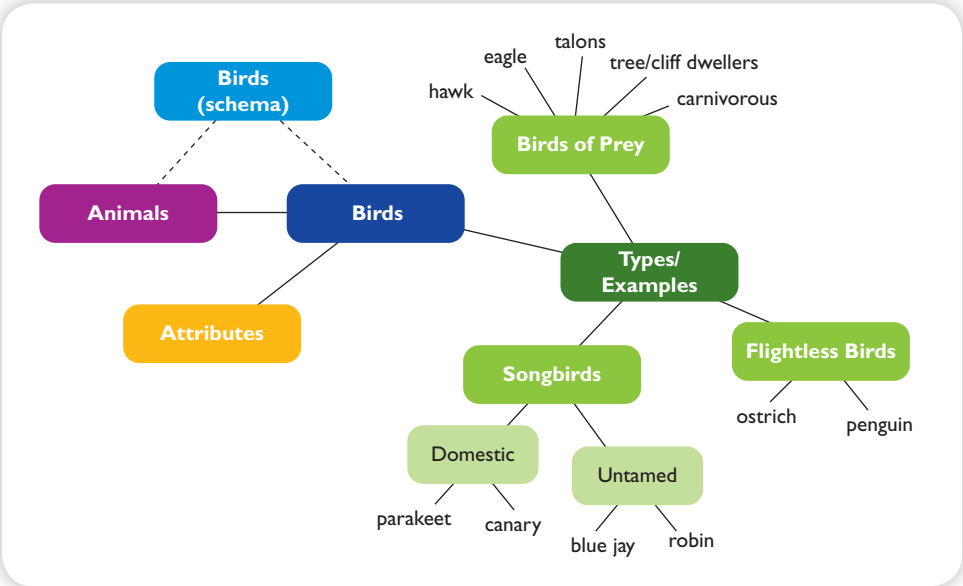
Pressley (2000) describes the development of reading comprehension as a two-stage process, beginning with "lower processes" focused at the word level—such as word recognition (phonics, sight words), fluency (rate, accuracy, and expression), and vocabulary (word meanings). The second stage of reading comprehension development focuses on higher-order thinking—relating prior knowledge to text content and consciously learning, selecting, and controlling the use of several cognitive strategies for remembering and learning from text.

Schema Theory.

Reading comprehension research over the years has been profoundly influenced by **schema theory,** a hypothesis that explains how information we have stored in our minds helps us gain new knowledge. The term *schema* (the plural is *schemata* or *schemas*) can be defined as a kind of storage cabinet in our brains with file folders containing different information about (1) concepts (chairs, birds, ships), (2) events (weddings, birthdays, school experiences), (3) emotions (anger, frustration, joy, pleasure), and (4) roles (parent, judge, teacher) drawn from our life experiences (Anderson & Pearson, 1984; Rumelhart, 1981). Researchers often think of our schemas as neural networks (i.e., "brain networks") of connected meanings (Collins & Quillian, 1969; Lindsay & Norman, 1977). Each schema is connected to other related schemas, forming a vast, interconnected network of knowledge and experiences. The size and content of an individual's schemas are influenced by personal experiences, both direct and vicarious. Therefore, younger children typically possess fewer, less well-developed schemas about a great many things than do mature adults. For example, Figure 7.1 represents a schema for birds that an elementary student might produce, showing it as a network of associated meanings.

Figure 7.1

Elementary Student's Schema

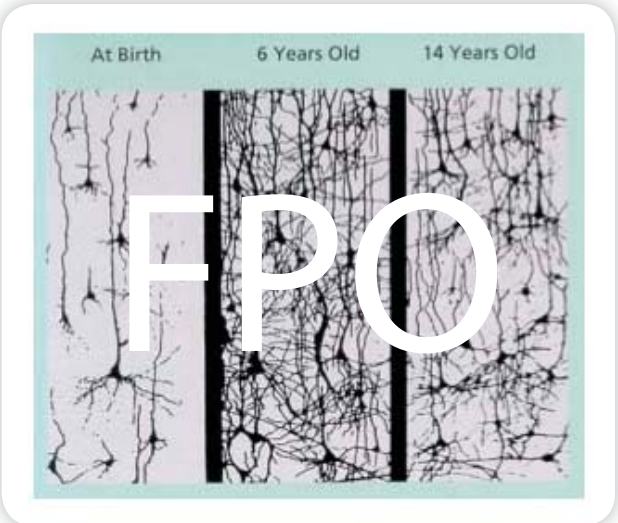


It turns out that representations of schemas as interconnected information networks in our brain are well documented in neuroscience (e.g., Christensen, 2010; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Wang & Morris, 2010). Figure 7.2 shows how neural networks develop in the brain at three points in time: birth, 6 years of age, and 14 years (Shore, 1997). It demonstrates how the brain adds neurons (i.e., cells that processes and transmit information by electrical and chemical signals) and connects new information to what is already known by way of synapses (shown as lines connecting neurons—the dark "spots"). In short, when new learning occurs the brain changes, adding neurons and synapses.

We now know that synapses are created with astounding speed during the first 3 years of life, and for the rest of the first decade of life children's brains have twice as many synapses as adults' brains (Shore, 1997). As you study Figure 7.2, do you notice anything interesting about the brain networks at age 6 versus age 14? The 6-year-old's brain actually has more memory structures (schemas) than does the 14-year-old's. The explanation (from our novice understanding) is akin to the saying, "Use it or lose it." The 6-year-old absorbs new information much like a sponge does water. But it seems that between the ages of about 10 and 14 there is a great "shedding" of unused memory structures, a bit like

Figure 7.2

A Brain Scan Showing "Schemas"



From Shore, R. (1997). *Rethinking the Brain: New Insights into Early Development.* New York: Families and Work Institute. Reprinted by permission. www.familiesandwork.org

a newly planted forest with many new saplings that gradually thin out, leaving only those trees getting sufficient sunlight to survive.

Neurologists used to think that this shedding process was not reversible—that you could add "branches" (synapses) to the existing trees (neurons) in the brain's forest, but that new trees could not be added. We now know this is not true. New learning structures (neurons and synapses) can be added, although it is more difficult the older one gets. That is why it seems to be much easier, for instance, to learn a second language when you are young than when you are in your 30s or 40s. It can be done with a lot of work, but it is not as easy as when you were, say, 5.

We believe that understanding schema theory, a fairly easy concept, and linking it to your teaching of comprehension are essential steps in providing high-quality instruction. Connecting new knowledge to what is already known provides the scaffolding students need to comprehend texts.

Construction-Integration Theory. What happens in our brains when the text or learning task becomes a bit more complicated? Kintsch (2004) developed the **construction-integration theory** to explain the complex thinking processes by which readers successfully understand a text. We briefly illustrate how this construction-integration process works using the story *The Carrot Seed* by Ruth Krauss (1945). We begin with a familiar series of statements from the text:

> A little boy planted a carrot seed.
> His mother said, "I'm afraid it won't come up."
> His father said, "I'm afraid it won't come up."
> His big brother said, "It won't come up."*

To understand these lines, we draw from our previous experiences with family members—parents and siblings. We also call up our memories of planting seeds or growing a garden. We read the next line:

> Every day the little boy pulled up the weeds around the seed and sprinkled the ground with water.

At this point, we focus in on the meaning of the actions taken by the little boy: pulling weeds and sprinkling the ground with water. This connects with our prior knowledge of planting seeds and growing things. We read the next two lines:

> But nothing came up.
> And nothing came up.

These two sentences lead us to make the prediction, in this case, that the outcome of planting a seed might be different than expected. Our motivation is to find out *why* the seed is not coming up—or to think, "Maybe it will."

According to Kintsch (2004), what the text is really all about—ideas, people, objects, or events—is remembered longest—for days, months, even years. In the case of *The Carrot Seed,* the process of planting, nurturing, and harvesting as well as persevering in the face of doubt are the information and messages that are stored for this story.

Processing of text by a reader occurs in cycles, usually clause by clause (just as we presented and discussed the story of *The Carrot Seed*), and it involves multiple and simultaneous thinking (cognitive) processes that eventually create memories. The cognitive processes are influenced by (1) the reader's knowledge about the text topic or message; (2) the reader's goals and motivations; (3) the reader's strategy

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selection and use; (4) the genre, type, and difficulty of the text; (5) the processing constraints of the reader's memory; and (6) the reader's ability to learn in and from a sociocultural context (group, classroom) if it is available when a text is processed (Kintsch, 2004; van Dijk, 1999).

Two phases of mental processing occur, then, for each clause the reader encounters in a text: (1) a construction phase and (2) an integration phase. The *construction phase* involves lower-level processes such as the following:

- Activating prior knowledge and experiences
- Retrieving words meanings
- Examining the surface and grammatical structure of the printed text
- Analyzing each clause into idea units called *propositions,* which include text elements, connecting inferences, and generalizations, that are formed into a coherent network of connected meanings (e.g., processing a sentence like "The student placed a tack on the teacher's chair" into the general memory that the student played a prank on his teacher) (Zwann, 1999)

During the second phase of processing meaning, the *integration phase,* ideas from the text are connected with what we already know, our prior knowledge, and new concepts that do not fit with the meaning of the text are deleted from our network knowledge.

What Does Research Say About Reading Comprehension Instruction?

In 1978, Dolores Durkin reported findings from her studies of reading comprehension instruction as taught by teachers using commercial reading programs (i.e., *basal* or *core* reading programs). After observing in both reading and social studies classrooms, Durkin concluded that the teachers spent very little time actually teaching children how to understand what they read. *In fact, less than 1-percent of total reading or social studies instructional time was devoted to the teaching of reading comprehension.* Unfortunately, researchers have concluded that the situation in today's schools has not improved appreciably over the past 30 years (Dewitz et al., 2009).

Research has shown that reading comprehension improves most when teachers provide explicit comprehension instruction to children (e.g., Dymock & Nicholson, 2010; Manyak & Bauer, 2008; McKeown et al., 2009; National Reading Panel, 2000). We support the following five research-supported strategies as the most critical keys for focused instruction:

1. Activating prior knowledge
2. Questioning
3. Analyzing text structure
4. Creating mental or visual images
5. Summarizing

The National Reading Panel, and other studies since, have also found that comprehension instruction is most effective when there is a great deal of text-focused dialogue among students (Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2007, in press; Mills, 2009; Pressley, 2006). Research also indicates that teaching children how to use combinations of comprehension strategies as they read, or **multiple comprehension strategies** (McKeown et al., 2009), yields particularly strong results for improving children's reading achievement. Other research evidence points clearly to the need for teachers

to help students apply comprehension strategies in a variety of text types (narrative and expository) and genres (fairy tales, realistic fiction, almanacs, encyclopedias, etc.) (Dymock & Nicholson, 2010). Thus, the key to successful instruction is delivering carefully structured learning activities that support children while they are developing the ability to use multiple comprehension strategies to understand what they read (McKeown et al., 2009; Pressley, 2006; Reutzel et al., 2005).

A Proposed Sequence for Reading Comprehension Instruction

It is important that teachers know and understand the minimum expected outcomes, or end-of-year **benchmark standards,** for comprehension development at each grade level, especially in the early years. This information becomes an essential roadmap for teachers to use in assessing each student's level of comprehension development. With this knowledge, you can plan instruction that best fits the needs of every child and that lays the groundwork for appropriate "next steps" in comprehension development. Of course, in the classroom you will discover students are at different places in their comprehension development, and you will need to plan small-group sessions each day for students having common needs. In this way, you can help all students continue learning in a systematic fashion. Figure 7.3 offers research-based end-of-year "benchmark" standards. Later in this chapter we provide specific assessment and teaching strategies related to these standards.

Figure 7.3

Benchmark Standards for Reading Comprension for Grades K Through 3

Kindergarten End-of-Year Benchmarks

- ✓ Uses new vocabulary and language in own speech
- ✓ Distinguishes whether simple sentences do or don't make sense
- ✓ Connects information and events in text to life experiences
- ✓ Uses graphic organizers to comprehend text with guidance
- ✓ Retells stories or parts of stories
- ✓ Understands and follows oral directions
- ✓ Distinguishes fantasy from realistic text
- ✓ Demonstrates familiarity with a number of books and selections
- ✓ Explains concepts from nonfiction text

First Grade End-of-Year Benchmarks

- ✓ Reads and comprehends fiction and nonfiction that is appropriate for the second half of grade 1
- ✓ Notices difficulties in understanding text
- ✓ Connects information and events in text to life experiences
- ✓ Reads and understands simple written directions
- ✓ Predicts and justifies what will happen next in stories
- ✓ Discusses how, why, and what-if questions in sharing nonfiction text
- ✓ Describes new information in own words
- ✓ Distinguishes whether simple sentences are incomplete or don't make sense
- ✓ Expands sentences in response to what, when, where, and how questions
- ✓ Uses new vocabulary and language in own speech and writing
- ✓ Demonstrates familiarity with a number of read-aloud and independent reading selections including nonfiction
- ✓ Demonstrates familiarity with a number of types or genres of text like storybooks, poems, newspapers, phonebooks, and everyday print such as signs, notices, and labels
- ✓ Summarizes the main points of a story

Second Grade End-of-Year Benchmarks

- ✓ Reads and comprehends both fiction and nonfiction that is appropriate for the second half of grade 2
- ✓ Rereads sentences when meaning is not clear
- ✓ Interprets information from diagrams, charts, and graphs
- ✓ Recalls facts and details of text
- ✓ Reads nonfiction materials for answers to specific questions
- ✓ Develops literary awareness of character traits, point of view, setting, problem, solution, and outcome
- ✓ Connects and compares information across nonfiction selections
- ✓ Poses possible answers to how, why, and what-if questions in interpreting nonfiction text
- ✓ Explains and describes new concepts and information in own words
- ✓ Identifies part of speech for concrete nouns, active verbs, adjectives, and adverbs
- ✓ Uses new vocabulary and language in own speech and writing
- ✓ Demonstrates familiarity with a number of read-aloud and independent reading selections including nonfiction
- ✓ Recognizes a variety of print resources and knows their contents (joke books, chapter books, dictionaries, atlases, weather reports, TV Guide, etc.)
- ✓ Connects a variety of texts to literature and life experiences (language to literacy)
- ✓ Summarizes a story including the stated main idea

Third Grade End-of-Year Benchmarks

- ✓ Reads and comprehends both fiction and nonfiction that is appropriate for grade 3
- ✓ Reads chapter books independently
- ✓ Identifies specific words or wordings that are causing comprehension difficulties
- ✓ Summarizes major points from fiction and nonfiction text
- ✓ Discusses similarities in characters and events across stories
- ✓ Discusses underlying theme or message when interpreting fiction
- ✓ Distinguishes between cause and effect, fact and opinion, and main idea and supporting details when interpreting nonfiction text
- ✓ Asks how, why, and what-if questions when interpreting nonfiction text
- ✓ Uses information and reasoning to examine bases of hypotheses and opinions
- ✓ Infers word meaning from roots, prefixes, and suffixes that have been taught
- ✓ Uses dictionary to determine meanings and usage of unknown words
- ✓ Uses new vocabulary and language in own speech and writing
- ✓ Uses parts of speech correctly in independent writing (nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs)
- ✓ Shows familiarity with a number of read-aloud and independent reading selections, including nonfiction
- ✓ Uses multiple sources to locate information (tables of contents, indexes, available technology)
- ✓ Connects a variety of literary texts with life experiences (language to literacy)

From Cooter, R. B. (2004). The Pillars of Urban Literacy Instruction: Prerequisites for Change. In R. C. Cooter (Ed.), *Perspectives on Rescuing Urban Literacy Education: Spies, Saboteurs, and Saints.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

IRA Standards for Reading Professionals: Standard 3, Elements 3.1, 3.2, 3.3

Common Core Standards: Reading: K–5, Key Ideas and Details (items 1–3), Craft and Structure (items 4–6), Integration of Knowledge and Ideas (items 7–9), Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity (item 10); Reading: Grades 6–12, Key Ideas and Details (items 1–3), Craft and Structure (items 4–6), Integration of Knowledge and Ideas (items 7–9), Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity (item 10)

Response to Intervention: Assessment

Classroom Assessment

Assessing Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension assessment is currently a topic of debate and some concern (Paris & Stahl, 2005). Reading comprehension, as we have already learned, is composed of several essential components: the reader, the text, the activity, and the social context. In this section we discuss comprehension assessments relating to two of these categories: assessing factors within the reader that affect comprehension and assessing students' knowledge of text features and structure.

Assessing Factors Within the Reader Affecting Comprehension

Teachers and researchers have known for many years that reading comprehension is positively affected when students are interested in the reading materials (Vlach & Burcie, 2010). Knowing how important student interest is in developing reading comprehension, many feel the first place to begin is assessing this factor. Figure 7.4 is an example of an interest inventory (Cooter, Flynt, & Cooter, 2007) for this purpose that we like to use as a game at the beginning of the school year, called "Twenty Questions." This assessment can be administered to the whole class at one time, in small groups, or individually.

Assessing Students' Use of Comprehension Strategies. **Metacognition** refers to two important concepts related to reading comprehension: (1) a reader's awareness of how well he or she is understanding the reading (such as when you have been

Figure 7.4

Twenty Questions: An Interest Inventory

Student's Name _____ Age _____

Date_____ Grade _____ Teacher/Examiner _____

Directions: *Ask the student the following questions to discover more about his or her interests that may be useful in selecting texts of interest during instruction. Record responses and observations that seem useful for instructional planning.*

Alternative Directions: *This inventory can also be group administered where students are capable of recording written responses. However, one-on-one interviews are preferable since nonverbal cues are often observed.*

1. If you were to win one million dollars in a contest, how might you use the money?
2. Do you like computer games? Which ones?
3. Do you use e-mail? Would you like me to send you an e-mail message sometime?
4. What are your favorite classes/subjects at school? Why?
5. What kinds of jobs do you think you might like to have when you are older?
6. Do you like to use computers? What do you like best?
7. Who are some famous people that you like? Why?
8. Name some of your favorite movies.
9. How much television do you watch each day? What are some of your favorite shows? Why?
10. What are some magazines that you like?
11. Name some of the best books you have read.
12. Do you ever read parts of the newspaper? Which parts? Do you like the comics section?
13. What kinds of books would you most like to read in the future?
14. What do you like best about your home?
15. What things in life bother you most?
16. Do you know how to use the Internet? If yes, what are some of your favorite websites?
17. Who is your favorite person in the world? Why?
18. Do you like sports? If so, which ones? Who are your favorite athletes?
19. What makes a person a good reader?
20. What causes a person to not be a good reader?

Examiner's Notes:

From Reutzel, D. R., & Cooter, R. B. (2010). *Teaching Children to Read,* 6th ed. Boston: Pearson Education.

'reading' and realize your mind has wandered) and (2) a reader's ability to control his or her own thinking, including the use of comprehension strategies to improve or repair failing comprehension while reading (such as rereading a passage after realizing your mind had wandered) (Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 1991). For many readers, problems in comprehension result from failures related to one or both of these two important concepts.

The purpose of metacognitive assessment is to gain insight into how students select strategies for comprehending text and how well they regulate the status of their own comprehension as they read. For your classroom use, we have modified a survey developed by Pereira-Laird and Deane (1997) and call it the Student Comprehension Strategy Use Survey, or SCSUS (Reutzel & Cooter, 2011). Administered to groups, SCSUS scores provide insights into how well students select, apply, and regulate their use of comprehension strategies.

The Student Comprehension Strategy Use Survey shown in Figure 7.5 is suitable for most text selections. When administering this survey, be sure to include the following steps:

- Tell students that the SCSUS is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers.
- Direct students to fill in the personal information at the top of the survey.
- Read the directions aloud and ask children if they have any questions about the nature of the responses sought for each statement.
- Once you feel sure that students understand, instruct them to read each item and circle the number under the response that best represents their behavior in relation to each statement.
- When children finish, ask them to remain seated and to quietly read, write, or draw so as not to disturb others who are still completing the scale.

Scoring is accomplished by summing the response numbers circled and dividing by 15, the number of items in the SCSUS (i.e., Sum of individual responses/15 items), to produce the mean score.

- A mean score near 3 suggests strong selection, use, and self-regulation of comprehension monitoring strategies.
- A mean score near 2 indicates occasional selection and use of comprehension monitoring strategies. The pattern of responses should be carefully studied to see which strategies are in use and which are not to inform instructional planning for the future.
- A mean score near 1 indicates poorly developed selection, use, and self-regulation of comprehension monitoring strategies. These students need explicit teacher explanation of (1) comprehension monitoring strategies; (2) how, when, and why to use them; (3) teacher modeling of comprehension monitoring strategy use; and (4) guided practice applying selected strategies during the reading and discussion of stories in the classroom.

Assessing Students' Knowledge of Text Features and Structure

One key to effective comprehension instruction lies in accurately identifying the genres or text structures students are able to read effectively as well as those that have more difficulty comprehending (Reutzel & Cooter, 2011). To help teachers plan effective instruction, we have identified informal text structure assessments for both narrative and expository text types (Stahl, 2009).

Figure 7.5

Student Comprehension Strategy Use Survey

Name: _____ Grade: _____

Teacher: _____ School: _____

Directions: Read each item and the number of the word that best describes how often you do what is stated. Let's do number 1 together to make sure you understand how you are to respond to each item.

1. I read quickly through the story to get the general idea before I read the story closely.

Always	Sometimes	Never
3	2	1

2. When I come to a part of the story that is hard to read, I slow my reading down.

Always	Sometimes	Never
3	2	1

3. I am able to tell the difference between important story parts and less important details.

Always	Sometimes	Never
3	2	1

4. When I read, I stop once in a while to go over in my head what I have been reading to see if it is making sense.

Always	Sometimes	Never
3	2	1

5. I adjust the speed of my reading by deciding how difficult the story is to read.

Always	Sometimes	Never
3	2	1

6. I stop once in a while and ask myself questions about the story to see how well I understand what I am reading.

Always	Sometimes	Never
3	2	1

7. After reading a story, I sit and think about it for a while to check my memory of the story parts and the order of the story parts.

Always	Sometimes	Never
3	2	1

8. When I get lost while reading, I go back to the place in the story where I first had trouble and reread.

Always	Sometimes	Never
3	2	1

9. When I find I do not understand something when reading, I read it again and try to figure it out.

Always	Sometimes	Never
3	2	1

10. When reading, I check how well I understand the meaning of the story by asking myself whether the ideas fit with the other information in the story.

Always	Sometimes	Never
3	2	1

11. I find it hard to pay attention when I read.

Always	Sometimes	Never
3	2	1

12. To help me remember what I read, I sometimes draw a map or outline the story.

Always	Sometimes	Never
3	2	1

13. To help me understand what I have read in a story, I try to retell it in my own words.

Always	Sometimes	Never
3	2	1

14. I learn new words by trying to make a picture of the words in my mind.

Always	Sometimes	Never
3	2	1

15. When reading about something, I try to relate it to my own experiences.

Always	Sometimes	Never
3	2	1

From Reutzel, D. R., & Cooter, R. B. (2011). *Strategies for Reading Assessment and Instruction: Helping Every Child Succeed,* 4th ed. Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon, p. 282.

Story Grammar Questioning. **Story grammar** is the rule system or necessary elements that make a story as well as the expected sequence for these elements. Researchers generally agree on the following elements and sequence in a story grammar: setting that includes the characters, problem, goal, events, and resolution. Research on story grammar questioning suggests that good readers have a well-developed understanding of story structure, whereas poor readers do not (Whaley, 1981). Therefore, using a story grammar to guide teacher questioning and self-questioning can help teachers and students to better assess understanding of story structure.

To prepare before conducting story grammar questioning, you will need a simple story to be read (aloud as a group or silently as individuals), a copy of a blank story grammar map (see Figure 7.6), a set of questions allowing you to deal with each element shown in the story map (see Figure 7.7) (*Hint:* It is best if questions are sequenced in the order of the story map.) In our example we use *Jack and the Beanstalk*. Construct a story grammar map for the story as shown in Figure 7.5.

Next, write one question for selected major elements in the story grammar map, as shown by the example questions in Figure 7.6. Students can be asked, depending on their level of writing development, to answer the questions orally or in written form. Answers to each question are evaluated for accuracy and completeness. Story elements missed in the story grammar questioning should be stressed in future story discussions and/or in future explicit story structure instruction.

Later in this chapter we offer other models of questioning that can be used by students for self-monitoring or by teachers as comprehension assessments.

Figure 7.6

Story Grammar Map of *Jack and the Beanstalk*

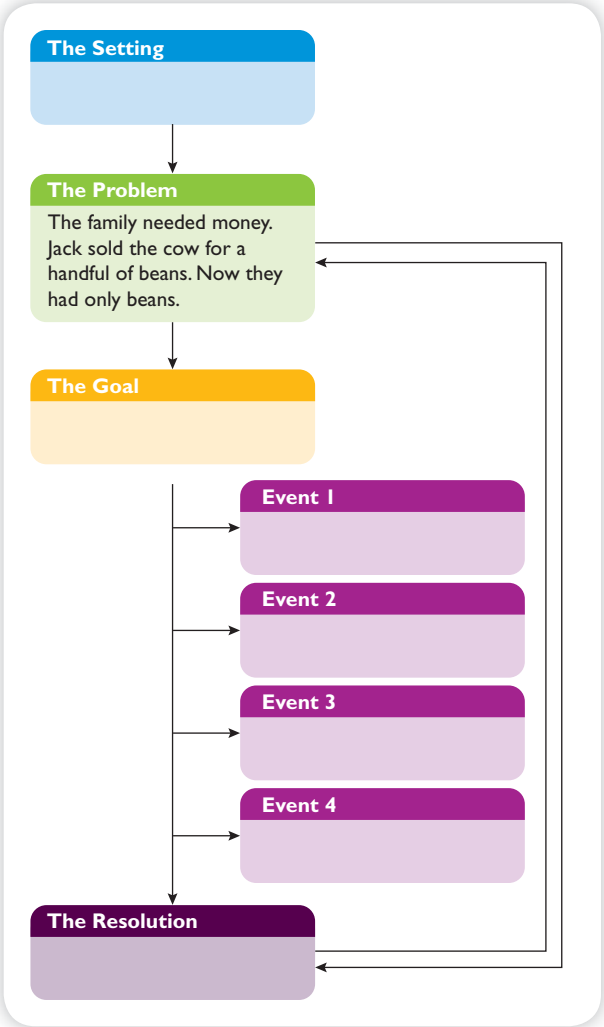

Figure 7.7

Story Grammar Questioning for *Jack and the Beanstalk*

Setting:	In the beginning of the story, why did Jack's mother want him to sell the cow?
Problem:	When Jack traded the cow for a handful of beans, what kind of a problem did this decision create for Jack and his mother?
Events:	When Jack climbed the beanstalk the first time, relate what happened to him.
	Why did Jack climb the beanstalk a second time?
Resolution:	At the end of the story, what had happened to Jack and his mother to solve the problem of trading the cow for a handful of beans?

Figure 7.8

Story Grammar Parsing of *The Carrot Seed*

Setting

A little boy planted a carrot seed.

Problem (getting the seed to grow)

His mother said, "I'm afraid it won't come up."
His father said, "I'm afraid it won't come up."
And his big brother said, "It won't come up."

Events

Every day the little boy pulled up the weeds around the seed and sprinkled the ground with water.

But nothing came up.

And nothing came up.

Everyone kept saying it wouldn't come up.

But he still pulled up the weeds around it every day and sprinkled the ground with water.

Resolution

And then, one day, a carrot came up just as the little boy had known it would.

Story Grammar Parsing. Type the text of the story onto a separate piece of paper for parsing. In this instance, parsing refers to dividing a story into four major and somewhat simplified story grammar categories: setting, problem, events, and resolution, as shown in Figure 7.8 about *The Carrot Seed* by Ruth Krauss (1945).

Oral Retellings: Assessing Narrative (Story) and Expository (Nonfiction) Text Structures. One of the most effective processes for finding out whether children understand what they read is to ask them to retell it (e.g., Brown & Cambourne, 1987; Gambrell, Pfeiffer, & Wilson, 1985; Lapp, Fisher, & Johnson, 2010; Morrow, 1985). To retell a story or information text, children must reconstruct the entire text, including the major elements, details, and sequence. In stories, children need to understand story structure, the story sequence, and important elements of the plot. In addition, they make inferences ("read between the lines") and note relevant details. Retelling an expository text involves reconstructing the content of the expository text into its main ideas and supporting details within the underlying organization of the text (compare/contrast, cause-effect, description, list, enumeration, etc.) Thus, oral expository text retellings help us assess students' comprehension of the content and text structure.

You will need the following supplies for capturing students' oral retellings of texts they have read:

- Blank audiotape (if you are using a cassette recorder)
- Portable audiocassette or digital recorder with an internal microphone
- Text selection (i.e., a brief story or information text selection)

Begin a text oral retelling by selecting a brief story or information selection for students to listen to (for grades K–1), to read aloud (grades 2 or 3) or to read silently (grades 4 and above).

Because the processes for obtaining and scoring oral retellings are different for narrative and expository text types, we will discuss each separately.

Obtaining and Scoring Narrative Oral Retellings. Oral story retellings may be elicited from children in a number of ways such as by pictures or verbal prompts related to the story. For example, as pictures of the story are flashed sequentially, the child is asked to retell the story as remembered from listening or reading. Or, as Morrow (1985, 2005) suggested, teachers prompt children to begin story retellings with a statement such as "A little while ago, we read a story called [name of story]. Retell the story as if you were telling it to a friend who has never heard it before." Other prompts for oral story retelling may be framed as questions:

- How does the story begin?
- What happens next?
- What happened to [the main character] when . . . ?
- Where did the story take place?
- When did the story take place?
- How did the main character solve the problem in the story?
- How did the story end?

Morrow (2005) recommends that teachers offer only general prompts such as those listed rather than ask about specific details, ideas, or a sequence of events from the story. Remember that when asking questions such as the prompts just listed, you are moving from free recall of text to a form of assisted recall. Incidentally, you should know that assisted recall of story text information is especially useful with struggling readers.

Another way to elicit oral story retellings from students is through **unaided recall,** in which students retell the story without picture or verbal prompts. As with a prompted retelling, ask the child to tell the story "as if she were telling it to someone who had never heard or read the story before." To record critical elements of the story structure included in the child's oral story retelling, use an audio recording and oral story retelling coding form like the one shown in Figure 7.9.

The information gleaned from an oral story retelling may be used to help you, the teacher, focus future instruction on enhancing students' understanding of narrative parts or story structure.

Obtaining and Scoring Expository Oral Retellings. Several researchers have found that children in the elementary grades are aware of and can be taught to recognize expository text structures like compare/contrast, cause-effect, description, and so forth (McGee, 1982; Williams, 2005). As with other text, retellings can show whether a child understands expository text (Duke & Bennett-Armistead, 2003; Lapp et al., 2010).

Expository text oral retellings may be obtained from children in the same ways as for narrative texts, such as pictures or verbal prompts from the text. Examples of verbal prompts during a retelling of expository text like *Is It a Fish?* (Cutting & Cutting, 2002) might include the following:

- Tell me more about . . .
- You said _____. Is there anything else you can tell me about . . .
- Tell me about gills.
- Tell me about fins.
- Tell me how fish move, look, or breathe.

Figure 7.9

Oral Story Retelling Coding Form

Student's name: _____ Grade: _____

Title of story: _____ Date: _____

General directions: Give 1 point for each element included, as well as for "gist." Give 1 point for each character named, as well as for such words as *boy, girl,* or *dog.* Credit plurals (*friends,* for instance) with 2 points under characters.

Setting

a. Begins with an introduction _____
b. Indicates main character _____
c. Names other characters _____
d. Includes statement about time or place _____

Objective

a. Refers to main character's goal or problem to be solved _____

Events

a. Number of events recalled _____
b. Number of events in story _____
c. Score for "events" (a/b) _____

Resolution

a. Tells how main character resolves the story problem _____

Sequence

Summarizes story in order: setting, objective, episodes, and resolution.
(Score 2 for correct order, 1 for partial order, 0 for no sequence.) _____

Possible score: _____ **Student's score:** _____

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As previously mentioned, these types of assisted recall may be especially useful with struggling readers. Teachers can obtain expository text oral retellings from students with unaided recall in the same was ay the narrative text, by asking the student to retell the information read "as if she were telling it to someone who had never heard or read the content of the book or text before." Once again, make an audio recording of the child's oral retelling to make it easier to double-check what you observe. Use an expository text retelling form similar to Figure 7.10, also based on *Is It a Fish?* (Cutting & Cutting, 2002). To score the quality of an unaided expository text oral retelling you might use a rating guide sheet like the one shown in Figure 7.11, which is based on the work of Moss (1997).

As you develop the ability to listen to expository text oral retellings, you may no longer need to use an audio recording and may simply make notes on the scoring sheet as to the features you hear included in the child's oral retelling.

Figure 7.10

Oral Expository Text Retelling Coding Form

Put a check mark by everything the child retells from his or her reading of the text.

_____ **Big Idea: A fish is an animal.**
_____ Detail: It has a backbone (skeleton inside).
_____ Detail: Most fish have scales.
_____ Detail: It is cold-blooded.

_____ **Big Idea: All fish live in water.**
_____ Detail: Some live in salt water.
_____ Detail: Some live in fresh water.
_____ Detail: Salmon and eels live in salt and fresh water.
_____ Detail: Salmon leave the sea to lay eggs in the river.

_____ **Big Idea: All fish breathe with gills.**
_____ Detail: All animals breathe oxygen.
_____ Detail: Some get oxygen from the air.
_____ Detail: Fish get oxygen from the water.
_____ Detail: A shark is a fish.
_____ Detail: Gills look like slits.
_____ Detail: A ray's gills are on the underside of its body.
_____ Detail: Rays breathe through holes on top of their head when they rest.

_____ **Big Idea: Most fish have fins to help them swim.**
_____ Detail: A sailfish has a huge fin that looks like a snail on its back.
_____ Detail: A (sting) ray waves its pectoral fin up and down.

Scoring:

Tally the marks for the big ideas and details. Place the total number in the blanks shown below.

Big Ideas _____ /4 Details:_____ /16 No. of Prompts _____

Sequentially Retold (Circle One): Yes No

Other ideas recalled including inferences: _____

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Figure 7.11

A Qualitative Assessment of Student Retellings of Expository Texts

Rating Level	Criteria for Establishing a Level
5	Student includes all main ideas and supporting details, sequences properly, infers beyond the text, relates text to own life, understands text organization, summarizes, gives opinion and justifies it, and may ask additional questions. The retelling is complete and cohesive.
4	Student includes most main ideas and supporting details, sequences properly, relates text to own life, understands text organization, summarizes, and gives opinion. The retelling is fairly complete.
3	Student includes some main ideas and details, sequences most material, understands text organization, and gives opinion. There telling is fairly complete.
2	Student includes a few main ideas and details, has some difficulty sequencing, may give irrelevant information, and gives opinion. The retelling is fairly incomplete.
1	Student gives details only, has poor sequencing, gives irrelevant information. The retelling is very incomplete.

From Moss, B. (1997). A Qualitative Assessment of First Graders' Retelling of Expository Text. *Reading Research and Instruction, 37*(1), pp. 1–13.

Evidence-Based Teaching Practices

What Are the Most Effective Ways to Teach Reading Comprehension?

IRA Standards for Reading Professionals: Standard 2, Elements 2.1, 2.2, 2.3; Standard 4, Elements 4.1, 4.2, 4.3; Standard 5, Elements 5.1, 5.2, 5.3

Common Core Standards: Reading: K–5, Key Ideas and Details (items 1–3), Craft and Structure (items 4–6), Integration of Knowledge and Ideas (items 7–9), Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity (item 10); Reading: Grades 6–12, Key Ideas and Details (items 1–3), Craft and Structure (items 4–6), Integration of Knowledge and Ideas (items 7–9), Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity (item 10)

Response to Intervention: Instruction, Responsive Teaching and Differentiation, Systemic and Comprehensive Approaches

The question as to the best ways of teaching reading comprehension is still somewhat open, but research points the way to methods found to be successful. However, our conclusions must remain tentative because new research is coming forward that challenges research findings of even just a few years ago.

Earlier in this chapter we shared four essential components of the RAND Reading Study Group's (2002) description of reading comprehension: (1) the *reader,* (2) the *text,* (3) the *activities or strategies,* and (4) the *situational context*. Because this and other research strongly supports these attributes, we use the RAND logic to present our discussion of effective strategies that help the reader prepare for and succeed in reading comprehension.

Recently, researchers McKeown, Beck, and Blake (2009) found support for methods they call **content approaches** as an important part of the instructional picture. They describe content approaches as focusing student attention on the content of the text through open, meaning-based questions about the text. This seems consistent with findings by the What Works Clearinghouse (Institute of Education Sciences [IES], 2010) supporting such practices as **dialogic reading** in which comprehension instruction focuses student attention on text content through similar types of questions about the text. In short, having structured, collaborative dialogue around the content and vocabulary found in assigned texts is a powerful tool for improving reading comprehension. We will integrate selected dialogic strategies in this section for a broad view of comprehension instruction.

The Reader

According to the RAND Study Group's (2002) landmark research, effective reading comprehension considers student factors in instruction. Activating background knowledge and fostering interest and motivation for reading a given text is critical, whether the student is a native English speaker or an English learner (EL).

Activating Student Background Knowledge: Theme or Topic?

Activating students' background knowledge (i.e., opening the relevant schema "file folders" in children's brains) in preparation for reading is critical for promoting reading comprehension. Many core reading program or basal reader teacher's guides contain a section titled "Building Background for the Story" or "Building Background Knowledge." Unfortunately, the guidance offered in many core reading program teacher's editions for building students' background knowledge is often misleading.

> Analyses of several basal teachers' manuals show instances of problems in the prereading component. Some manuals suggest that teachers focus on tangential concepts that are irrelevant to the upcoming selection; sometimes the suggestion for presenting the concepts would encourage far-ranging discussions that could distract children from what is important. Even under the best conditions, the teacher's manuals may suggest concepts inappropriate for a specific group of children. (Beck, 1986, p. 15)

Sadly, Beck's findings a quarter century ago have been reverified in more recent research (Dewitz et al., 2009), but teachers *can* improve on what the publishing com-

panies' core reading programs do not provide. For example, in presenting the story *The Ugly Duckling,* one teacher's manual focuses background knowledge activation on a discussion of the differences between ducks and swans. Although such a concept may be appropriate for an information text on these birds, it was not very helpful for *The Ugly Duckling.*

Background knowledge activation for stories should focus discussion on the message or theme rather than on a topic. For example, a teacher might ask students, "Have any of you ever experienced what it feels like to have someone not want to play with you? How did you feel when you were left out of a game?" These questions would be much more likely to help children remember the necessary background knowledge for interpreting the story of the ugly duckling than would examining the differences between ducks and swans. Thus, for fiction or narrative, background knowledge activation should focus on evoking knowledge related to the theme or message of the story (e.g., exclusion or being left out because you are different).

On the other hand, for informational text (nonfiction or expository), background knowledge activation should focus on evoking knowledge from the particular domain or topic associated with the content of the text (e.g., migratory waterfowl or land formations).

Activating Student Background Knowledge: Telling Tales. Stimulating "before reading" dialogue can help students draw on relevant past experience to improve all levels of comprehension. Telling Tales (Mills, 2009) is a prereading discussion activity in which students make predictions about the events in a text by drawing inferences from the visual elements. As ever, the teacher begins by modeling the strategy. Using a big book version or, if available, a document camera to project the pages, the teacher models how to make predictions about the content from the images found in the text. For example, the teacher might say, "The front cover has a large picture of a fishing boat, so I think that this is probably a nonfiction book." Next, students work in pairs to view images in the text. The first student might say, "I think this

Credit to come

article is about a way scientists tag killer whales so they can follow them around in the ocean." The second student listens and then makes a prediction based on the next image. Students continue in this way, building on each other's predictions in a consistent and logical way. Students confirm or correct their predictions when they read the article (Mills, 2009).

Visualizing: Three-Step Frames. **Visualizing** uses the mind's capacity to imagine what is being communicated within a text. For example, many who read the first *Harry Potter* books (before viewing the movies) no doubt formed vivid images in their "mind's eye" when learning about Harry and his new friends. Visualizing helps to anchor new ideas in a reader's mind by connecting unfamiliar ideas and concepts to past experiences. Thus, students need to be encouraged to recall ideas in a visual way in appropriate reading contexts (Pressley, 2000).

Three-Step Freeze Frames is a visualizing activity that can be conducted during and after reading (Mills, 2009). Students working in pairs or small groups create a series of three pictures to retell events in a text using dramatic movement (without words—almost like pantomime). The following example from Mills shows how a small group of students introduced visualizing to their class, followed by some tips for teachers:

> [A]fter reading Aesop's fable, "The Hare and Tortoise," one student uses expressive postures and facial expressions to reenact the Hare running, falling asleep, and waking. At the same time, a second student could play the Tortoise who plods consistently three times. Other students in the group might be animals cheering as the Tortoise crosses the finish line. The students should use a range of heights—low, medium, and high—to create interest and should remember to face the audience when performing. Divide the class members into groups to plan, rehearse, and present their freeze frames. When presenting each performance, the teacher and class signal for the group to change postures by clapping. Class members offer an interpretation of each freeze frame, and the performing group clarifies the depicted events. (p. 327)

The Text

The quality of the text examples children experience in the books or texts we use in teaching comprehension is a consideration of principal importance. Text that is well organized has been shown by many researchers to have a positive impact on all students' comprehension (Donovan & Smolkin, 2002; McKeown, Beck, & Worthy, 1993; Seidenberg, 1989). As a teacher, you must select texts that provide clear examples of the **text features** and structures you are intent on teaching children to recognize and use to improve their comprehension.

What Are the Text Features We Should Teach? In Figure 7.12 we display text features suggested by researchers Kelley and Clausen-Grace (in press) for explicit teaching.

Teaching Text Structure. The text feature walk (Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2010) is a dialogic activity wherein students working in small groups or pairs read and identify each feature and discuss what they think the text may be about. Students are asked to think about and have conversations about how the information relates to the main ideas of the text. This process helps students become familiar with the text's organization and recall relevant background knowledge related to the topic.

Discussing the text features helps students to frontload important vocabulary and concepts. This is especially helpful when the content has a good bit of new infor-

Figure 7.12

Common Text Features to Explicitly Teach Students

Name of Text Feature	Purpose of Text Feature
Title	Quickly tells the reader what information they will learn about.
Table of Contents	Shows students the different chapter or section titles and where they are located.
Index	Directs students where to go to find even more specific information on a topic, word, or person.
Glossary	Identifies important vocabulary words and their definitions.
Headings or Subtitles	Help the reader identify the main idea for that section of text.
Sidebar	Set apart from the main text, sidebars (usually located on the side or bottom of the page) elaborate on a detail (content) mentioned in the text.
Pictures or Captions	Show an important object or idea from the text.
Labeled Diagrams	Allow readers to see detailed depictions of an object from the text with labels that teach the important components.
Charts or Graphs	Represent and show data related to or to elaborate on something in the main body of text.
Maps	Help a reader locate a place in the world that is related to text.
Cutaways	Allow readers to see inside something by dissolving part of a wall or to see all the layers of an object by bisecting it for viewing.
Inset Photos	Can show both a far-away view of something or an up-close shot to show minute detail.

mation and concepts. As students make predictions and talk about various features they are better able to anticipate new information.

Kelley and Clausen-Grace (in press) suggest guidelines for what we would consider to be a kind of joint productive activity for a text feature walk.

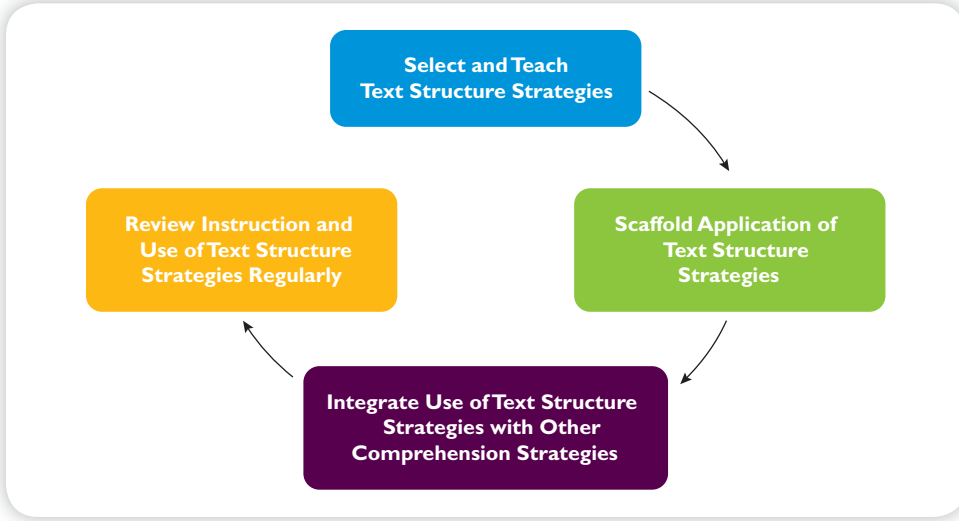
1. In your small group, choose one person to start by reading the first text feature.
2. That person names the text feature. (Is it a heading? Picture and caption? Map?)
3. That same person reads the text feature.
4. As a group, discuss any predictions, questions, and connections you have based on the text feature and discuss how you think it will relate to the main idea. Everyone should contribute.
5. Have a new person share the next text feature and repeat steps 2 through 4. Repeat until all text features have been discussed or the teacher calls time.

Finally, here are some tips for teachers offered by Kelley and Clausen-Grace (in pre for successful text feature walks:

- Select texts for which students have some background knowledge.
- Do not have students walk (read and discuss) through too much text at one time.
- Scaffold the pronunciation of new vocabulary words before students begin their discussion (sometimes multisyllabic words can intimidate students even though they may have schema for the word or concept).
- Have students determine how the text feature walk improved their comprehension of the content.

Figure 7.13

Model of Effective Comprehension Instruction: Identifying and Using Text Structure



Text Structure and Using Graphic Organizers. A model for teaching children to use text structure is found in Figure 7.13.

To begin, text structure instruction should focus on the physical features that help students understand the way that an author has organized a text.

Credit to come

- The table of contents
- Chapter headings and subheadings
- Paragraph organization such as topic sentence and signal words
- Visual insets or aids

Next, students can be helped to recognize the way the author has organized the text. For narrative texts, this means teaching explicitly the parts of a narrative or story grammar structure (National Reading Panel, 2000). For young children, this may begin with the concepts of story to include beginning, middle, and end. Older children should be taught that a story has prototypical parts organized in a predictable sequence, including the *setting, problem, goal, events,* and *resolution.*

Teaching the structure of expository texts means explicitly teaching different text structures of *time order, cause and effect, problem and solution, comparison, simple listing/enumeration,* and *descriptions.* It appears that time sequence structures like the following are the easiest for younger students to understand.

- Counting books
- Days of the week
- Months of the year
- Step-by-step instruction, seasons, and so on

Another kind of structure is the question–answer format. In these types of expository structures, authors typically ask a question and then proceed immediately to answer the question in the very next sentence, paragraph, or page. After this type of text structure, in a developmental progression of difficulty, come information books that describe single topics such as frogs, sand, or chocolate.

In an information book structured by enumeration, the author lists a category of related concepts or objects such as reptiles, dogs, or the Pueblo Indians. Listing different types, examples, and aspects of a category are described as a *collection.* Compare and contrast or cause-effect expository text structures are the most challenging for young readers.

Effective text structure instruction requires that teachers provide short, frequent review opportunities for application of the text structure strategies taught. We have listed the characteristics of effective text structure instruction in Figure 7.14 and have chosen two types of text structures, narrative and expository, as examples to illustrate the kind of effective text structure instruction we present in this figure. We begin by focusing on effective text structure instruction with a selected narrative text.

Effective Narrative Text Structure Instruction. Begin by selecting an excellent example of a narrative text. This means we want to find a story text that exemplifies the clear and traditional use of story structure. For a text to qualify for selection, it must possess the traditional elements and follow the traditional sequence of elements in a story grammar:

Figure 7.14

Characteristics of Effective Text Structure Instruction

Select exemplars of varying text types.

Focus initial instruction on physical features of text that help students understand organization:

- table of contents
- chapter headings
- subheadings
- paragraph organization
- main idea and topic sentence location
  - signal words
  - typographic features
  - spacing features
  - visual insets

Teach children how to determine the way the author has organized or structured the text.

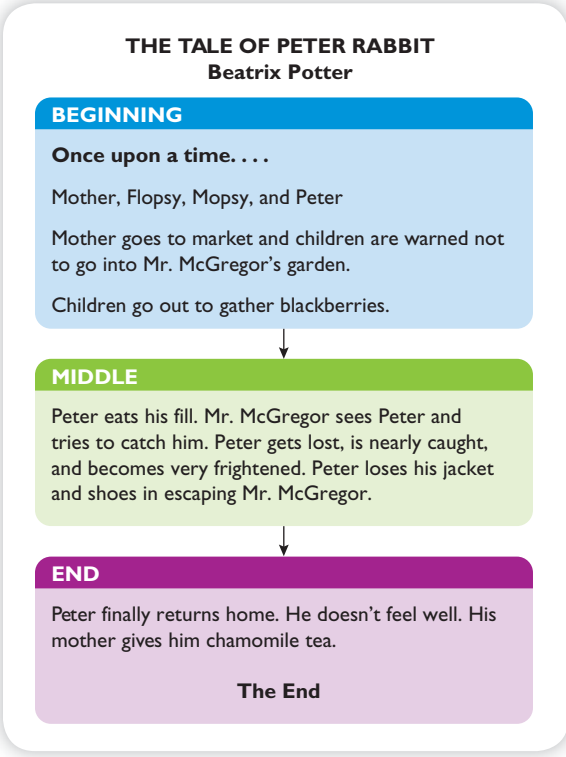
Teach children how to think about and visually represent the way the author has implicitly organized the text using graphic organizers.

Provide scaffolding or gradual release.

Activate and use text feature and text structure knowledge in regular review cycles.

Figure 7.15

Simple Story Structure Graphic Organizer



setting, characters, problem, goal, events, and resolution. The familiar story *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* by Beatrix Potter (1986) is well-suited to our purpose.

Next, we carefully examine the physical features of our text: the title, the author, the illustrator, the title page, and how many stories begins with "Once upon a time" and end with "The End." *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* is well-suited for teacher modeling because of its clear paragraph structure. For example, when Peter saw Mr. McGregor, he was very frightened and the details of the paragraph clearly relate to actions and events that would support this major idea—the character's rushing all over, forgetting his way out, losing something in the tussle, and so on. This storybook also makes use of a great many signal words: *first, after, after a time, presently, suddenly,* and *at last*.

This book also makes good use of spacing and print arrangements. On the first page, ONCE UPON A TIME is printed in all capitals, as is THE END. Also on the first page, the four little rabbits' names—Flopsy, Mopsy, Cottontail, and Peter—are printed one name to a line with an increasing paragraph indent as each name is added to the list, resulting in a four-stair, step-shaped list. This print arrangement is used several times throughout the book as a visual indicator of a list.

In *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* the setting is clearly stated, including mention of the characters of Flopsy, Mopsy, Cottontail, Peter, and Mother. The problem is described when Mother Rabbit tells the children to stay away from Mr. McGregor's garden because their father had been caught and ended up in Mr. McGregor's pie. Peter, of course, decides he will test fate by straying away from his siblings into Mr. McGregor's garden. The tale chronicles Peter's many close calls and his multiple attempts to escape Mr. McGregor. The resolution occurs when Peter escapes from Mr. McGregor and goes home to his waiting Mother.

For younger children, a simple graphic organizer with beginning, middle, and end components can be used to convey implicit story structure. Older students can be presented with a more complex graphic organizer that includes *setting, characters, location, time, problem, goals, events,* and *resolution*. Two examples of graphic organizers are shown in Figures 7.15 and 7.16. Figure 7.15 shows *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* graphic organizer for teaching younger children story structure. Figure 7.16 shows *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* graphic organizer using story grammar logic for teaching older students story structure.

Once story structure is explicitly and thoroughly explained and modeled by the teacher, we turn our attention to the issue of scaffolding narrative text structure instruction effectively in the classroom. **Scaffolding,** also called the *gradual release of responsibility,* refers to for students selecting and using strategies, beginning with high teacher control and involvement, moving to shared control and involvement between teachers and students, and finally to students' independent control over strategy selection and use (Dewitz et al., 2009). This process requires multiple lessons perhaps using a variety of storybooks.

Scaffolding Comprehension Instruction. The following sequence of lessons provides the steps that foment student learning.

- In the first lesson, the teacher does most of the explaining (***input***) as well as thinking aloud and representing the elements of story structure in a graphic organizer (**teacher modeling**).
- In the second and third lessons, the teacher might share the explaining of story structure, thinking aloud, and representing of the elements of story structure in the graphic organizer with students; the beginning of releasing responsibility to students, or **guided practice.**
- Finally, in remaining lessons, students do most of the explaining, thinking aloud, and representing of the elements of story structure in the graphic organizer with the expert guidance of the teacher.
- Later on, students are encouraged to make and use graphic organizers of story structure on their own (*independent practice*) to help them understand and remember the narrative texts with which they engage.

Effective Expository Text Structure Instruction. Here again, we begin by selecting an exemplary expository text, perhaps one within the information text genre. This means we want to find an expository text that makes clear and simple use of only *one* of the many expository text structures, such as problem–solution or question–answer. For a text to qualify for selection, it must utilize one and only one expository text structure throughout rather than a mix or variety of expository text structures, as many do.

A simple information text, *Sand* (Clyne & Griffiths, 2005), serves our purpose for teacher modeling. This book features an attractive appearance, clear layout, and interesting content for younger and even some older children.

To begin, we consider carefully the physical features of this expository text. We note several important physical features that we make a point of showing to and discussing with children, namely the title, the author, and postreading follow-up questions at the end of the book. Although not as rich in physical features as some expository books, *Sand* does evidence the use of a single text structure—question–answer—throughout. For example, the book begins with the question "What is sand?" The book also makes good use of spacing, print arrangements, and typographic features. "What is sand?" is printed on a single line at the top of the first page in bold typeface. The answer to the question is at the bottom of the page in regular typeface.

Every question in *Sand* appears at the top of the page in isolation in bold typeface. Answers are all placed on the bottom of the page in regular typeface and relate

Figure 7.16

Complex Story Structure Graphic Organizer

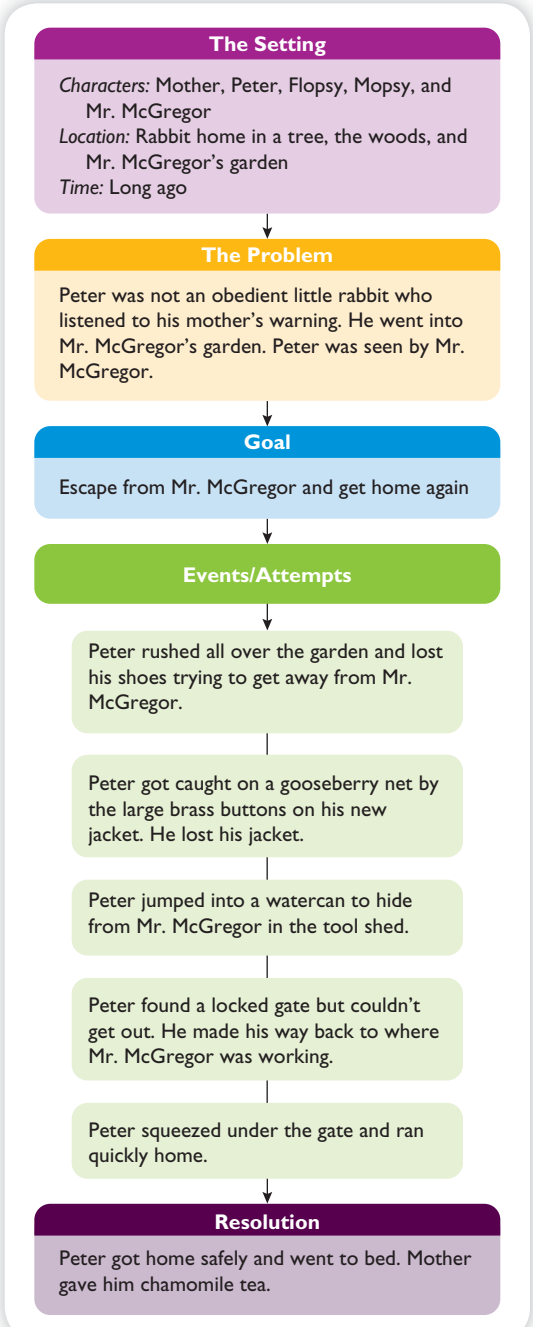


Figure 7.17

Graphic Organizer for Primary-Grade Readers (K–2)

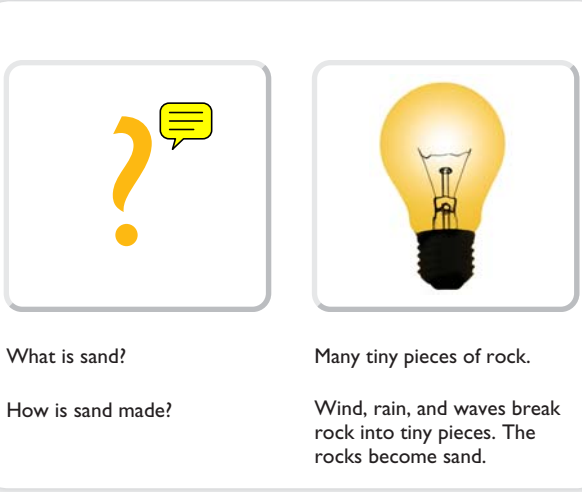


Figure 7.18

Graphic Organizer for Intermediate-Grade Readers (3–6)

to an illustrative photograph that helps answer the question. The book also uses black versus white type, depending on the background color of the page. This use of color leads readers' attention to the answers to the questions in physically obvious ways.

For younger children, a simple graphic organizer using icons along with print can be helpful. For older students, a more complex graphic organizer may include student-generated questions for which they will seek and retrieve answers through reading across a variety of other information texts on the topic of sand, rocks, and soil. Two examples of question–answer graphic organizers for the book *Sand* are shown in Figures 7.17 and 7.18. Figure 7.17 shows a *Sand* graphic organizer for teaching younger students this expository text structure. Figure 7.18 shows a *Sand* graphic organizer for teaching older students about question–answer expository text structure.

Similar to our narrative example, we turn our attention to the issue of scaffolding expository text structure instruction effectively in the classroom. This would require multiple lessons such as the one just described using a variety of expository books that implement question–answer text structure, such as *Bridges* (Ring, 2003), *How Do Spiders Live?* (Biddulph & Biddulph, 1992), and others.

The Activity

The third essential component in the RAND Reading Study Group's (2002) definition of reading comprehension is the activity. One of the chief comprehension activities for young readers is learning how to use comprehension strategies to improve their understanding and memory for text. We begin our discussion of comprehension strategies by focusing on one strategy that has long been a mainstay in elementary school classrooms: question asking and answering.

Questions are an integral part of life both in and out of school. In school, teachers ask questions to guide and motivate children's reading comprehension and to assess the quality of their reading comprehension after reading. We begin with some basic information about the levels of thought required by different kinds of questions.

Asking Questions at Differing Levels of Thinking. During the past several decades, a variety of questioning taxonomies—ordered lists of questions that tap different levels of human thought, such as Bloom's (1956), Barrett's (1972), and Taba's (1975) taxonomies—were published along with impassioned appeals for teachers to ask students more higher-order questions. Figure 7.19 illustrates Bloom's taxonomy which

Figure 7.19

Bloom's Taxonomy

LITERAL (LOW LEVEL)

KNOWLEDGE—Identification and recall of information

Who, what, when, where, how?
Describe . . .

COMPREHENSION—Organization and selection of facts and ideas.

Retell _____ in your own words.
What is the main idea of _____?

INFERENTIAL LEVEL (HIGHER-ORDER THINKING)

APPLICATION—Use of facts, rules, principles

How is _____ an example of _____?
How is _____ related to _____?
Why is _____ significant?

ANALYSIS—Separation of a whole into component parts

What are the parts or features of _____?
Classify _____ according to _____
Outline/diagram/web _____.
How does _____ compare/contrast with _____?
What evidence can you list for _____?

SYNTHESIS—Combinations of ideas to form a new whole

What would you predict/infer from _____?
How would you create/design a new _____?
What might happen if you combined _____ with _____?
What solutions would you suggest for _____?

EVALUATIVE LEVEL (HIGHER-ORDER THINKING)

EVALUATION—Development of opinions, judgments, or decisions

Do you agree _____?
What do you think about _____?
What is the most important _____?
How would you prioritize _____?
How would you decide about _____?
What criteria would you use to assess _____?

is an easy-to-use format wherein teachers simply fill in the blanks with key words/concepts from an assigned text selection. The inferential and evaluative levels are considered **higher-order thinking** questions.

Much can be and will be argued about asking higher-order questions for some time into the future, but the fact is that students will need to answer a great many questions throughout their school life and beyond. Unfortunately, many students are not helped to develop effective strategies for answering or asking their own questions. Raphael and Pearson (1985) developed a strategy for teaching students how to answer questions asked of them called **Question–Answer Relationships** (QARs) (Raphael, 1982).

Question–Answer Relationships. Raphael (1982, 1986) and Raphael and Au (2005) describe four question–answer relationships that help children identify the connection

between the type of question asked and the information sources necessary and available for answering it: (1) right there, (2) think and search, (3) author and you, and (4) on my own. Instruction using QARs begins by explaining that there are basically two places they can look for information: *in the book* and *in their head*. This concept should be practiced with students by reading aloud a text, asking questions, and having students explain or show where they would look to find their answers. Once students understand the two-category approach, expand the in the book category to include *right there* and *think and search*. The distinction between these two categories should be practiced under the guidance of the teacher using several texts and gradually releasing responsibility to students. Raphael (1986) suggests that older students be shown specific strategies for locating the answers to right there questions. These include looking in a single sentence or looking in two sentences connected by a pronoun. For think and search questions, students can be asked to focus their attention on the structure of the text (cause–effect, problem–solution, listing–example, comparison–contrast, and explanation).

Next, instruction is directed toward two subcategories in the in my head category: *author and me* and *on my own*. Here again, these categories can be practiced as a group by reading a text aloud, answering the questions, and discussing the sources of information. To expand this training, students can be asked to identify the types of questions asked in their basal readers, workbooks, content area texts, and tests as well as to determine the sources of information needed to answer these questions.

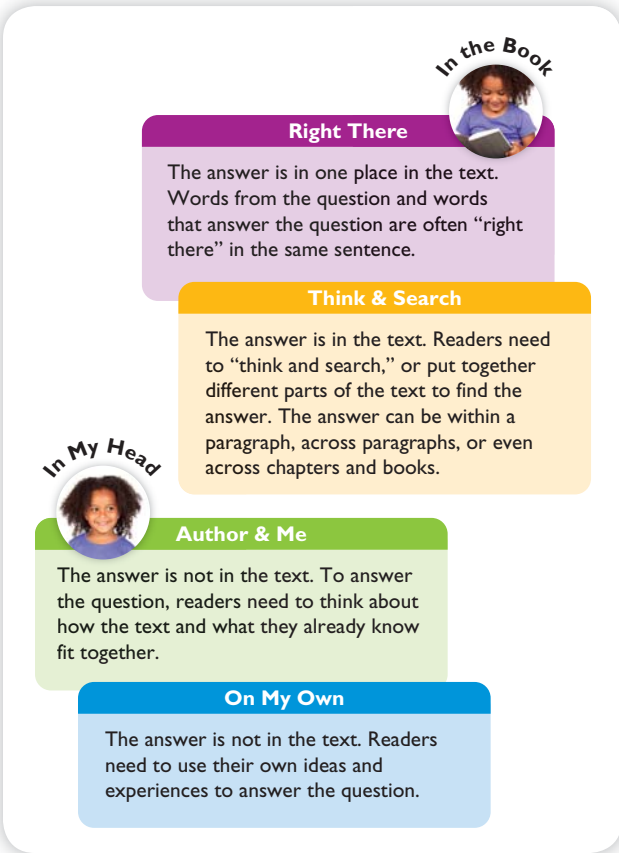
Students may be informed that certain types of questions are asked before and after reading a text. For example, questions asked before reading typically requires that students activate their own prior knowledge. Therefore, questions asked before reading will usually be on my own questions. However, questions asked after reading will make use of information found in the text. Therefore, questions asked after reading will typically focus on the think and search and author and me types of questions.

Using the QAR question–answering training strategy is useful for at least two other purposes. First, it can help teachers examine their own questioning with respect to the types of questions and the information sources students need to use to answer their questions. Second, some teachers may find that by using QARs to monitor their own questioning behaviors, they are asking only right there types of questions (i.e., literal/low level questions in Bloom's taxonomy). This discovery should lead teachers to ask questions that require the use of more in my head questions.

Students can use QARs for self-questioning before and after reading. They may be asked to write questions for each of the QAR categories and answer these questions. Finally, posters displaying the information in Figure 7.20 can heighten children's

Figure 7.20

Core Question–Answer Relationships



From Raphael, T. E., & Au, K. H. (2005). QAR Enhancing comprehension and Test Taking Across Grades and Content Areas. *The Reading Teachers, 59*(3), pp. 206–221. Used by permission of the publisher, McGraw-Hill/Wright Group.

and teachers' awareness of the types of questions asked and the information sources available for answering those questions.

Questioning the Author. **Questioning the author** lessons attempt, in a sense, to engage students in a "conversation" with the author (McKeown, Beck, & Worthy, 1993). To begin, students are shown examples in information books and textbooks in which someone's ideas may not be written as well or as clearly as they might be. Next, the teacher prompts students as they read a book or textbook using a series of questions like the following:

- What is the author trying to tell you?
- Why is the author telling you that?
- Is it said so that you can understand it?

Asking children to search out answers to these questions in the text, or even supplemental online resources, encourages them to actively engage with the ideas in the text. As children encounter difficulties in understanding the text they are encouraged, again through teacher questioning, to recast the author's ideas in clearer language. Questions used for this purpose might include the following:

- How could the author have said the ideas to make them easier to understand?
- What would you say instead?

Asking children to restate the author's ideas causes them to grapple with the ideas and problems in a text. In this way, children engage with text in ways that successful readers use to make sense of complex ideas presented in texts.

Elaborative Interrogation. **Elaborative interrogation** is well-suited to helping students generate and answer questions in information texts (National Reading Panel, 2000; Mills, 2009). By asking and answering their own questions, students link information together into a network of relationships (schemas) improving both understanding and memory for text information.

It is important that "why" questions be asked so as to orient students to search their prior knowledge for supporting the facts they need to learn—otherwise such questions will not enhance comprehension and memory for text. We apply the elaborative interrogation student-generated questioning strategy to a trade book titled *Ways of Measuring: Then and Now* (Shulman, 2001) in the model lesson shown in Figure 7.21.

The elaborative interrogation strategy has been shown to improve readers' comprehension of factual material ranging from elementary school ages to adult. It is recommended that teachers use elaborative interrogation to train students to begin asking their own questions to guide their search for meaning from information texts.

Comprehension Monitoring and Fix-Up Strategies

The National Reading Panel (2000) found that teaching students to monitor the status of their own ongoing comprehension to determine when it breaks down is one of a handful of scientifically supported, evidence-based comprehension instructional strategies. The act of monitoring one's unfolding comprehension of text is called *metacognition,* or sometimes *metacomprehension*. The ability to plan, check, monitor, revise, and evaluate one's unfolding comprehension is of particular importance in reading. If a reader fails to detect comprehension breakdowns, then she or he

Figure 7.21

Example of an Elaborative Interrogation Lesson

Purpose for Learning the Strategy: This strategy will help students relate their own experiences and knowledge to what they read in information texts. By using this strategy, they will improve their understanding of and memory for text information.

Objective: To learn to respond to statements in text as if they were stated as "why" questions.

Teacher Explanation and Modeling: This strategy is begun by the teacher reading a section of text aloud and modeling. The teacher reads the title of the book: *Ways of Measuring: Then and Now.* She asks herself:" Why are ways of measuring today different than in the past?" Her answer might include ideas about in the past people not having scales, rulers, and measuring cups. Next, she reads the sentence:" Long ago, people used their bodies to measure the length of things." She asks herself the "why" question: "Why did people use their bodies to measure things instead of something else?" She reads on: *"Arms and hands were always around when you needed them, and they couldn't get lost. But you can't weigh flour with a hand span, or measure oil with a cubit. For thousands of years, people used stones to weigh things. They used hollow gourds and shells to measure out amounts."* She asks herself: "Why did people in the old days use stones and gourds to measure?"

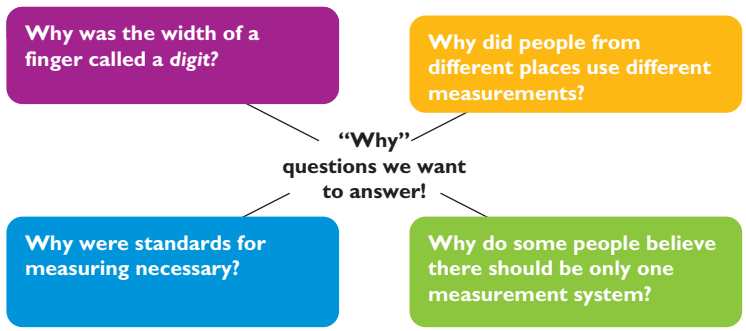
Guided Application: The teacher says: "Now let's use this strategy together. Manny, please read this statement aloud for the class." Manny reads: "'The old ways of measuring had some problems."' The teacher forms a "why" question based on the statement. Then she says, "Mariann, please read this statement." Mariann reads: "'The metric system is used almost everywhere in the world except in the United States."' The teacher generates a "why" question based on the statement: "Why doesn't the United States use the metric system?" She then invites students to use their background knowledge to respond to her question. The teacher says: "Now let's reverse roles." She reads aloud the next statement from the text. "'Using these measurement systems solves a lot of problems."' Who can put together a good "why" question based on this statement?" Benji raises his hand. He asks, "Why do measurement systems solve problems?" Discussion ensues.

Individual Application: The teacher says: "I want you to read the rest of this book. When you get to the end of each page, pick one statement and write a "why" question about it in your notebooks. See if you can answer the question from your own knowledge or experiences. If not, try using the book to answer your question. If neither source can answer your question, save it for our discussion of the book when we are all finished reading. Now, go ahead and read. If you forget what I want you to do, look at this poster for step-by-step directions." The teacher points to the poster at the front on the room on the board.

Using the Elaborative Interrogation Strategy

- Read each page carefully.
- Stop at the end of each page and pick a statement.
- Write a "why" question for the statement you pick in your reading notebooks.
- Think about an answer to the "why" question using your own knowledge and experiences.
- If you can, write an answer to your "why" question.
- Read the pages again looking for an answer. Read on to another page to look for the answer.
- If you can, write an answer to your "why" question.
- If you can't write an answer to your "why" question, save it for our group discussion after reading.

Assessment: After students read, the teacher asks them to share their "why" questions and answers. She has them hand in their reading notebooks with their "why" questions and answers. She examines these notebooks to determine students' success with this strategy. She places unanswered "why" questions in a "question web" for further reading and research. This web is illustrated below.



Trade books, reference books, and textbooks may be used to answer the questions in this "why" question web.

Planned Review: In about one week, the teacher will review the use of the elaborative interrogation strategy by using trade books or textbooks in other curriculum areas such as health, social studies, or math.

From Reutzel, D. R., Camperell, K., & Smith, J. A. (2002). Hitting the Wall: Helping Struggling Readers Comprehend. In C. Collins-Block, L. B. Gambrell, & M. Pressley (Eds.), *Improving Comprehension Instruction: Advances in Research, Theory, and Classroom Practice* (pp. 321–353). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

will take no action to correct misinterpretations of the text. However, if a reader expects that text should make sense and has the ability to strategically self-correct comprehension problems, then reading can progress as it should. To teach an explicit comprehension strategy lesson, one can use a framework lesson plan, such as shown in Figure 7.22.

Click or Clunk. To help students develop the ability to monitor their own comprehension processes, Carr (1985) suggested a strategy called "click or clunk." This strategy urges readers to reflect at the end of each paragraph or section of reading by stopping and asking themselves if the meaning or message "clicks" for them or goes "clunk." If it clunks, the reader asks what is wrong and what can be done to correct the problem.

Fix-Ups. Although the ability to detect when comprehension breaks down is important, it is equally important to know which strategies to select in repairing broken comprehension and when to use them. Children should be introduced to the options available to them for repairing broken comprehension. Collins and Smith (1980)

Figure 7.22

Explicit Comprehension Monitoring Strategy Lesson Plan Template

Objective Children will monitor their own comprehension processes and use fix-up strategies to repair broken comprehension processes when necessary.

Supplies

- Exemplary story or information text

Explain

What

- Today, boys and girls, we are going to be learning about how to monitor or check our understanding or comprehension as we read. The first step in learning to monitor our understanding or comprehension as we read is to learn to stop periodically and ask ourselves a few simple questions like "Is this making sense? Am I getting it? Do I understand what this is about?"

Why

- We need to monitor our comprehension or understanding when we read because what we read should make sense to us. If it doesn't make sense, there is no point in continuing to read. Monitoring our comprehension while reading helps us to be aware of whether or not we understand or are making sense of what we read. We can just keep on reading if we understand, or stop and do something to help us understand if the text is not making sense to us.

When/Where

- Whenever we read, we should monitor or think about whether or not we are understanding or comprehending what we are reading.

Model

- I am going to read aloud the first two pages of our book *Volcano!* (Jewell Hunt, 2004). After reading the first two pages, I am going to stop and monitor my comprehension. I will think out loud about the questions I should ask when I stop to monitor my comprehension: "Is this making sense? Am I getting it? Do I understand what this is about?" I've written these monitoring steps (stop and question) on a poster to help me remember. I have also written the three comprehension-monitoring questions on the poster to help me remember. After thinking about these questions for a minute, I will answer the question with a yes or no. If my answer is yes, I will continue to read. If my answer is no, I will have to stop for now because I don't yet know what I should do when it doesn't make sense to me. Notice that I have also put YES and NO on our poster to help me know what to do when I answer yes or no to the three comprehension-monitoring questions. Okay. Here I go.

Volcano!*
There are many volcanoes in the world.
About 1,500 of them are active.
That means that they are erupting, or they might erupt someday.
An erupting volcano is quite a sight!
Rocks and ash shoot up.
Lava races down.
Smelly gases fill the air.
(STOP!)

"Am I getting it? Is it making sense? Do I understand what this is about?" Yes, I think I do. There are loads of volcanoes all over. Some of them are active, meaning they might erupt. An example of an active volcano is Mt. Etna. When volcanoes erupt they send rocks, ash, lava, and gases into the air. So, if what I have read makes sense and I answer yes, I just keep on reading. After I read a few more pages, I should STOP to monitor my comprehension again.

(Repeat this cycle with a few more pages and one or two more stopping points for modeling.)

Scaffolding (ME, YOU & ME, YOU)

Whole Group (Me & You)

- Now that I have shown you how I STOP and monitor my comprehension, I want to share this task with you. Let's read three more pages. At the end of the three pages, I want you to call out, "STOP!" After I stop, I want you to ask me the three monitoring questions on our poster: "Is this making sense? Am I getting it? Do I understand what this is about?" I will answer YES or NO. If I answer yes, tell me what to do. If I answer no, then tell me I will have to quit reading until we learn what to do tomorrow. Okay. Here we go.

Volcanoes come in different sizes and shapes. Some volcanoes have steep sides.
They rise high above the land around them.
Other volcanoes are very wide.
Their sides are not so steep.
This type of volcano may look like a regular mountain. But it isn't!
(STOP!)

Small Group/Partners/Teams (Me & You)

- Now that we have shared the process of STOPPING and monitoring our comprehension as a group when we read, I want you to share this monitoring process with a partner. I am going to give you either the number 1 or the number 2. Remember your number. (Count heads by 1 and 2.) We are going to read three more pages in our story. At the end of the three pages, I want partner 1 to call out, "STOP!" Then I want partner 2 to ask partner 1 the three monitoring questions on our poster: "Is this making sense? Am I getting it? Do I understand what this is about?" Then partner 1 will answer the questions asked by partner 2 with a yes or no. If partner 1 answers yes, partner 2 says to keep on reading. If partner 1 answers no, then partner 2 says to quit reading until we learn what to do tomorrow. Okay, ready.

Volcanoes can change the land quickly.
In 1980, a volcano in the state of Washington erupted. Its top blew off with a roar.
Mud raced down its sides.
Trees crashed, and animals fled.
But the land was not bare for long.
The ash from volcanoes helps things grow.
Today, Mount St. Helens is full of new life.
(STOP!)

Individual (You)

- Today we have learned that when we read we should STOP every few pages and monitor our comprehension or understanding by asking ourselves three questions. Today, during small-group reading or in paired reading, I would like for you to practice monitoring comprehension with a friend or by yourself as you read. STOP every few pages and ask yourself the three questions on our poster. Then decide if you should keep on reading or quit reading and wait until tomorrow, when we will learn about what to do when what you read isn't making sense.

Assess

- Pass out a bookmark that reminds students to stop every few pages while reading and ask the three questions. List the three questions on the bookmark to remind students about them.

Reflect

- What went well in the lesson?
- How would you change the lesson?

*Excerpted with permission from *Volcano!* from Reading Power Works by Sundance/Newbridge Educational Publishers, L.L.C.

suggest the following **fix-up strategies** for use by readers who experience comprehension failure:

- Ignore the problem and continue reading.
- Suspend judgment for now and continue reading.
- Form a tentative hypothesis, using text information, and continue reading.
- Look back or reread the previous sentence.
- Stop and think about the previously read context; reread if necessary.
- Seek help from the environment, reference materials, or other knowledgeable individuals.

To help students develop a sense for when to select these strategies, teachers may consider using a think-aloud modeling procedure. The teacher begins by reading part of a text aloud, and as she proceeds, comments aloud on her thinking. By revealing to students her thinking, the hypotheses she has formed for the text, and anything that strikes her as difficult or unclear, the teacher demonstrates for students the processes successful readers use to comprehend a text (Duffy, 2003). Next, the teacher reminds students of the click or clunk strategy. Gradually, she releases the responsibility for modeling metacognitive strategies to students during follow-up lessons on metacognitive monitoring. She displays the fix-up or repair strategies listed above along with the click-or-clunk strategy on a wall chart or poster in a prominent place in the classroom and draws students' attention to these strategies throughout the year.

Summarizing. The purpose of summarizing is to extract and succinctly organize the "gist" of a text. Summarizing is important because it helps readers select and store relevant main ideas and details from their reading to form memory structures for text. Many readers do not spontaneously summarize their reading and, as a result, have poor understanding and recall of what they read (Brown, Day, & Jones, 1983).

To begin a lesson on summarizing, we recommend using an information trade book, a storybook, or content area textbook along with a chart displaying the steps for producing a summary based on the work of Hare and Borchordt (1984) featured in Figure 7.23. Distribute sufficient numbers of copies of the text to be read by the group. Have the students silently read the first few passages. Next, on an overhead transparency, model for students how you would use the five summary rules in Figure 7.23 to produce a summary. After modeling, direct students to finish reading the entire text. Divide the chalkboard into four sections. For example, if you are learning about an animal (say, alligators), your subcategories might be "Description," "Food," "Home," and "Interesting Facts." As the groups read, have students write facts on the chalkboard in each of the four sections.

Next, organize students into groups of five to work on summarizing together. Each student in the group is assigned to take charge of one of the five summary-writing rules shown in Figure 7.23. Circulate around the classroom to assist groups as needed. After reading the selection and working in their groups, students responsible for the topic statement rule in each group should read their topic statement aloud to the other students in the group. After that, have students discuss the facts they have listed at the board, erase duplicates, and restate the remaining main ideas and detail facts in complete sentences. You may want to have students use different colored transparency pens for each of the five summary rules to record their work in the groups. For example, green may be used for lists, red for eliminating unnecessary details, and so on. Share each group's summarizing processes and their summary statement(s) with the entire class on the overhead projector. Be sure to provide addi-

Figure 7.23

Steps for Producing a Summary

1. *Collapse lists.* If there is a list of things, supply a word or phrase for the whole list. F or example, if you saw *swimming, sailing, fishing,* and *surfing,* you could substitute *water sports.*
2. *Use topic sentences.* Sometimes authors write a sentence that summarizes the whole paragraph: If so, use that sentence in your summary. If not, you'll have to make up your own topic sentences.
3. *Get rid of unnecessary detail.* Sometimes information is repeated or is stated in several different ways. Some information may be trivial and unnecessary. Get rid of repetitive or trivial information. Summaries should be short.
4. *Collapse paragraphs.* Often, paragraphs are related to each other. For example, some paragraphs simply explain or expand on other paragraphs in a selection. Some paragraphs are more important than others. Join the paragraphs that are related. Important paragraphs should stand alone.
5. *Polish the summary.* When you collapse a lot of information from many paragraphs into one or two paragraphs, the resulting summary sometimes sounds awkward and unnatural. There are several ways to remedy this: add connecting words such as *like* or *because,* or write introductory or closing statements. Another method is to paraphrase the material, this will improve your ability to remember what you read and enable you to avoid plagiarism—using the exact words of the author.

From Marc, V. C., & Borchordt, K. M. (1984). Direct Instruction of Summarization Skills. *Reading Research Quarterly 20*(1), pp. 62–78. Copyright 1984 by the International Reading Association.

tional practice on summarizing throughout the year with other books and gradually release the task of summarizing using all five rules to students for independent use.

If students encounter difficulties initially using the five rules in Figure 7.23, we have found the following procedure by Noyce and Christie (1989) to be helpful. The teacher will need to model this process and then guide students as they apply it in their work. Noyce and Christie (1989) use the four easy steps listed here.

Step 1. Write a topic sentence, that is, one that summarizes the content in general terms. You need to either select one that the author has written or write your own.

Step 2. Delete all unnecessary or irrelevant sentences, words, and other information from the entire passage.

Step 3. After sorting all terms into categories, think of a collective term(s) for those things that fall into the same category.

Step 4. Collapse paragraphs on the same subject down to one when they are largely redundant.

The Situational Context

As we learned earlier in the first section of this chapter, the situational context of reading comprehension can be thought of in at least two ways. There is little doubt that children's reading comprehension is influenced by the *setting* in which one reads. Second, there is a *social context* associated with reading comprehension. In most classroom instruction, reading comprehension is best developed as a vibrant social activity in which people—teachers, parents, and children—read a text together and jointly construct meaning through discussion, what we have termed *dialogic* instruction. Lively discussion about a text in the company of others seems to be the optimal situational context to enhance students' reading comprehension (McKeown et al., 2009). In this section we add to our knowledge of dialogic instruction to maximize the social context of classrooms.

Cooperative/Interactive Comprehension Discussions. Research reported by the National Reading Panel (2000) found that cooperative, collaborative, and highly interactive discussions in which readers work together to learn comprehension strategies while interacting with each other and the teacher around a variety of texts is highly effective. There are multiple ways to create and sustain a cooperative and interactive classroom conducive to discussing texts. One effective approach for carrying on cooperative, collaborative, and highly interactive discussions of text to support reading comprehension instruction is called *text talk*.

Text Talk. Effective reading comprehension instruction, at least in the primary grades, is dependent on developing younger children's oral language vocabularies and language structures. Beck and McKeown (2001) have adapted their questioning-the-author strategy for intermediate grades for use in the early grades. They refer to this adaptation for simultaneously developing younger children's reading comprehension and oral language as text talk. Beck and McKeown (2001) recommend that teachers of younger students read aloud books that have stimulating and intellectually challenging content. Doing so allows younger students to grapple with difficult and complex ideas, situations, and concepts in text even when their word recognition abilities are quite limited.

Talk around texts should give students a chance to reflect, think, and respond beyond simple answers to simple questions. Talk should be analytic, requiring that students think deeply about the content of the text and the language (Dickinson & Smith, 1994). When they observed children talking about texts read aloud to them, Beck and McKeown (2001) found that children often talked about the pictures or related something from their background knowledge rather than focusing their attention and talk on the content of the text or the language in the text. Similarly, teachers' talk during read-aloud experiences in the classroom often focused on clarifying unfamiliar vocabulary by asking a question such as "Does anyone know what a tsunami is?" The other practice among teachers talking with children about text was to ask a question directly from the language, such as "When the little red hen asked the goose, the dog, and the cat for help, what did they say?" These types of interactions constrain children's construction of meaning for the whole text to local issues of understanding. Text talk was developed to help teachers further students' comprehension as well as to promote greater use of oral language in elaborated responses to text during discussion.

Text talk has six components: (1) selection of texts, (2) initial questions, (3) follow-up questions, (4) pictures, (5) background knowledge, and (6) vocabulary. For our discussion here, we will use the book *White Socks Only* by Evelyn Coleman (1996). This book has a challenging storyline that centers on the theme of racial discrimination. When reading this book, we can focus on several important text-related concepts, including fairness, equality, and social justice. To begin our text talk, we will construct a series of open-ended questions that we can use to initiate discussion with students at several points in the story:

- When Grandma was telling her story, she said, "I had two eggs hid in my pockets. Not to eat, mind you. But to see if what folk said was true." What do you think she was going to do with those eggs in her pocket?
- When Grandma got to the courthouse, she broke the egg against the horse's leg. Why do you think she did this?
- What do you think "frying an egg on cement" means?
- There was a sign on the water fountain that read "Whites only." What do you think Grandma thought this sign meant?

Next, we need to think of a few follow-up questions that will help children elaborate on their answers to our initial open-ended questions:

- Grandma couldn't understand why the white man pushed her away from the water fountain and asked her if she couldn't read. After all, she was wearing her white socks when she stepped up to the fountain to get a drink. Why was the white man mad at Grandma?
- Why did people move aside when the chicken man came into town?
- What was the fight about between the white man and the black people in the town?

After reading each page in the book displaying the drinking fountain with the sign "Whites Only," we would draw students' attention to the picture on these pages, asking them to explain what the sign means. We might ask questions: Why were the black people in this story ignoring the sign and stepping up to the drinking fountain to take a drink? What happened to Grandma when the chicken man showed up? Why did they take the sign "Whites Only" down?

Remember that rich, text-related discussions occur *before* showing pictures in text talks. Seeing the pictures after reading and discussing the text will take some getting used to for younger children, but they will soon come to expect it and pay greater attention to the linguistic and meaning content of the text. When children bring up their background knowledge in response to questions, teachers have found it best to acknowledge their comments by repeating back or rephrasing what the child has said and then moving discussion back to the text content.

An integral part of an effective text talk lesson is developing children's oral language vocabulary. Beck and McKeown (2001) recommend that vocabulary words be selected from the text that seem likely to be unfamiliar to young readers but that represent concepts they can identify with and use in normal conversation (p. 18). Words from our story, *White Socks Only,* that meet these criteria include *slinking, prancing, bandanna, fumbled,* and *snorted*. What seems to work best for vocabulary instruction is to create a chart of the words from the story along with their meanings, examples, and attributes. Then the teacher can keep track of the times during the day students read, say, or hear the words on the chart. Points can be awarded to individual students or teams for finding, saying, or hearing the words on the chart to create motivation for learning and using new vocabulary.

PARIS. The comprehension skills of retelling and summarizing information provide fertile ground for a virtual sea of talk in the classroom. Retelling involves selecting the most important information, making personal connections, and representing the information in a logical sequence. Summarizing requires choosing between significant and unimportant ideas. **PARIS** is a speaking activity used to combine five essential self-monitoring comprehension strategies: Predict, Ask questions, Retell, Infer, and Summarize (Mills, 2009).

As with all strategies, we want to provide scaffolding for gradual release of responsibility. The teacher begins by explaining and modeling each PARIS strategy with a text that is read aloud or viewed by the class using a document camera. Mills (2009) offers example questions and responses (see Table 7.1). Be sure to provide students with a sheet listing the PARIS strategies so they can record their shared responses when working in small groups.

Explain that before reading a text, students should begin with the first two strategies—*predict* and *ask questions*. Model using the book's cover, author's name, illustrations, headings, and other textual features for these first two steps. Next,

Table 7.1

PARIS Examples (Mills, 2009)

Strategy	Example Question and Answer
Predict	Q: What do you think this text is about when you look at the cover? A: "I think that the article is about a ferocious marsupial."
Ask questions	Q: What questions do you have when you look at the pictures? A: Why does the Tasmanian Devil have sharp teeth?"
Retail	Q: What were the most important events (fiction) or information presented (nonfiction) in the text? A: "It describes the appearance, habitat, breeding, and diet of the Tasmanian Devil."
Infer	Q: What can you infer from the information that is not directly stated in the text? A: "Tasmanian Devils are nocturnal because the text states that they are awake during the night."
Summarize	Q: What was the main point of the text? A: "The article gives information about an endangered native marsupial, the Tasmanian Devil."

From Mills, K. A. (2009). Floating on a Sea of Talk: Reading Comprehension Through Speaking and Listening. *The Reading Teacher, 63*(4), pp. 325–329.

model using the last three strategies—*retell* the events, *draw inferences* from the information, and *summarize* the text, during and after reading the text. Mills (2009) likes to have students in her classroom summarize text selections in 66 words or less as a goal.

Multiple-Strategies Reading Comprehension Instruction

Although teaching comprehension strategies one at a time is an effective practice (Duffy, 2003; National Reading Panel, 2000), students also need to learn how to use several comprehension strategies at the same time when reading a variety of texts (e.g., Pressley, 2002; Reutzel et al., 2005).

Descriptive research by El-Dinary (2002) and Pressley, Gaskin, Wile, Cunicelli, and Sheridan, (1991) showed that it can take up to 3 years of practice for student to effectively use multiple comprehension strategies. Research suggests there are three important conditions that need to be in place when teaching students to use multiple comprehension strategies during reading (El-Dinary, 2002; Palincsar, 2003).

First, teaching for self-regulation requires teachers to gradually scaffold the responsibility for determining what is worth knowing in a text or how the text might be interpreted. Second, multiple comprehension strategies instruction focuses on how one goes about making decisions about what is worth knowing in a text or how a text might be interpreted. It is important for teachers to understand and convey to students that learning reading comprehension strategies is a means to an end and not an end in and of itself. In summary, teaching multiple reading comprehension strategies requires a highly interactive, collaborative social setting for discussing text. Teachers need to promote independence through explicitly showing students how to select and apply each and every reading comprehension strategy in the set of multiple strategies. This means starting by teaching each strategy explicitly and then quickly moving to combine the use of the entire set of strategies when reading a text. Teachers need to explicitly and interactively model how to strategically coordinate multiple

strategies while interacting around texts over time. And finally, teachers gradually release the responsibility and authority for using multiple strategies in collaborative settings to the students themselves while interacting over texts (El-Dinary, 2002; Palincsar, 2003). Reciprocal teaching is one strategy used by teachers as a way of helping children use multiple comprehension strategies.

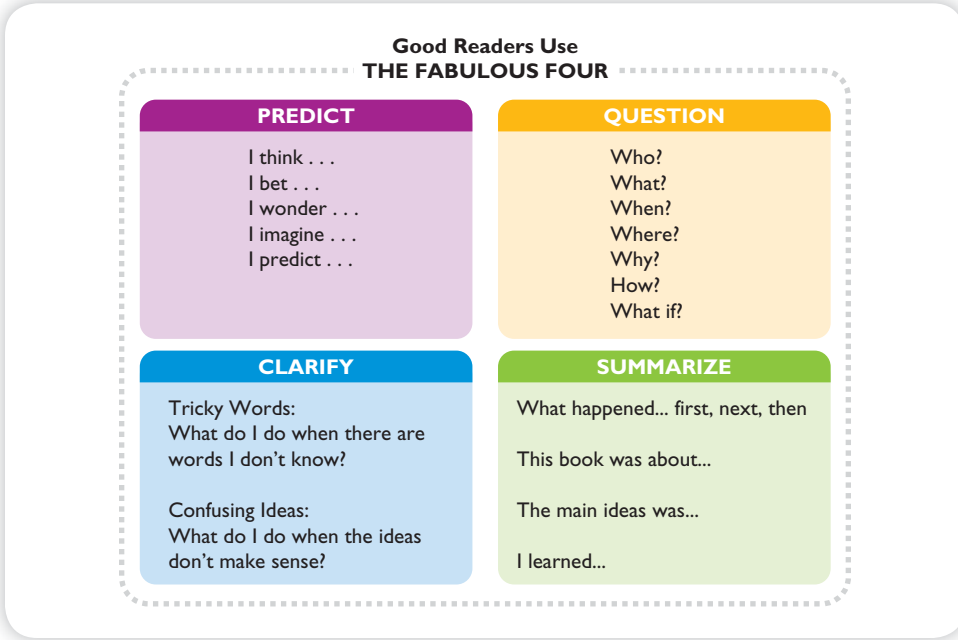
Reciprocal Teaching. In 1984, Palincsar and Brown designed an instructional procedure called **reciprocal teaching** (RT) for students who struggled with comprehending text. RT makes use of a set of four reading comprehension strategies to enhance students' reading comprehension. The RT instructional process typically involves teachers and students in a discussion or dialogue about text. The purpose of the discussion is for teachers and students to work together to co-construct the meaning of the text (Palincsar, 2003). Any discussion between teachers and students is supported by the consistent application of the four RT comprehension strategies: (1) predicting, (2) question generating, (3) clarifying, and (4) summarizing.

When first using RT in the classroom, teachers explain and model the application of the four RT comprehension strategies while reading and thinking aloud over small text segments, usually paragraphs. Over time, however, teachers gradually progress to larger units of text and release the responsibility for using the four RT strategies independently to students. Prior to providing a classroom example of reciprocal teaching, we describe in a bit more detail the four RT strategies.

- *Predicting* requires that students make a "best guess" based on their background knowledge of the topic available to them from previewing a text. As we saw earlier, this information includes such variables as reading headings, chapter titles, pictures or illustrations, boxed items, and so on. When predicting, students usually anticipate what might happen next, the order that events may take, or even the knowledge or information they expect to be able to learn from reading a text. Using a graphic organizer to facilitate predictions has also been shown to have positive effects on students' predictions and comprehension of text (Meyers, 2006; Oczkus, 2003, Reutzel & Fawson, 1989, 1991).
- *Question generating* reinforces the summarizing strategy, according to one of RT's authors (Palincsar, 2003). Formulating appropriate questions is difficult, as we have previously discussed.
- *Clarifying,* according to Palincsar (2003), is a particularly important strategy for working with children who have come to believe that reading is all about saying the words correctly and who do not monitor their understanding of text. When children are taught to clarify the meaning of text, their attention is directed toward unknown vocabulary words, unclear referent terms, and unfamiliar concepts or text organizations. When they encounter difficulty understanding a text or term, they are taught to identify what is causing the problem and take affirmative steps to "fix up" their comprehension difficulties.
- *Summarizing* involves students in identifying, in proper sequence, the important ideas found within a text. They are asked to sort through many details and come up with the most important ideas through paraphrasing and integrating important ideas in sentences, paragraphs, and across the entire text. For example, if students have read a narrative text, they may summarize it by using story structure—setting, problem, events, and resolution. On the other hand, if students have read an expository text, they may summarize the important ideas by using headings, subheadings, and important related details in the proper sequence. Students need to pay attention to the most important ideas in the text as well as the order in which those ideas are

Figure 7.24

Wall Poster Display of the Four RT Comprehension Strategies



From Oczkus, L. D. (2003). The Four Reciprocal Teaching Strategies. In *Reciprocal Teaching at Work* (pp. 13–28). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

IRA Standards for Reading Professionals: Standard 5, Elements 5.1, 5.2, 5.3

Common Core Standards: Reading: K–5, Key Ideas and Details (items 1–3), Craft and Structure (items 4–6), Integration of Knowledge and Ideas (items 7–9), Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity (item 10); Reading: Grades 6–12, Key Ideas and Details (items 1–3), Craft and Structure (items 4–6), Integration of Knowledge and Ideas (items 7–9), Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity (item 10)

Response to Intervention: Responsive Teaching and Differentiation, Systemic and Comprehensive Approaches

presented. Research by Rinehart, Stahl, and Erickson (1986) has shown that summarizing improves students' reading comprehension of fiction and nonfiction texts.

We recommend that a poster or wall chart be produced and displayed showing the four RT comprehension strategies (see Figure 7.24).

Research on the effects of using reciprocal teaching found that using RT produced generally superior outcomes when compared to the other comprehension or reading instructional conditions (Rosenshine & Meister, 1994). And finally, Palincsar and Brown (1984) found that the collection of four strategies improved students' comprehension more than the use of any single strategy selected and used in isolation from among the four RT strategies.

Response to Intervention (RTI)

Response to Intervention: Meeting Diverse Needs for Tiers 1 and 2 in Comprehension Instruction

Many times it is necessary to adjust the reading comprehension strategies discussed in this chapter to meet the varied needs of students in your classroom. Here we are thinking about struggling readers, English learners (EL), and some who may have

learning disorders. Sometimes these adaptations are done in small-group sessions as part of your Tier 1 instruction and at other times a more intensive Tier 2 approach is required with three extra supplemental sessions of 20 to 30 minutes each with weekly progress assessments. We urge you to consider the following recommendations for working with students who need extra help in reading comprehension:

- Ensure that students can decode your texts fluently to allow sufficient cognitive processing needed for comprehension. If the text is too difficult the student will spend too much time trying to sound out words and comprehension will be compromised.
- Use dialogic instruction and text features liberally to supplement understanding of text materials and strategy applications.
- Arrange flexible, cooperative grouping to allow all children to learn from and with others. Joint productive activities (JPA) are strongly encouraged.
- Focus on developing deep vocabulary and concept knowledge.
- Capitalize on students' interests and abilities (i.e., use their strengths to help overcome weaknesses).
- Provide increased teacher modeling and scaffolding and extended instructional time for struggling students. As one literacy coach says, "You have to *marinate* students in using new comprehension skills!"
- Remember that struggling readers need to have *more* encounters and experiences with informational text (Brozo, 2010).

Alternative Strategy Instruction for Tier 1 and 2: Comprehension Under Construction

Researchers Dewitz and colleagues (2009) observed that strategy instruction outlined in core reading programs is wide but not deep, expansive but not unified. It is not surprising that many students struggle in reading comprehension and often require additional developmental instruction at the Tier 1 level, not to mention struggling readers who may require Tier 2 instructional support. In these situations it is always best that teachers offer concrete instruction so that students can better understand the comprehension strategies being taught.

Comprehension Under Construction (CUC) (Marcell, DeCleene, & Juettner, 2010) is small-group activity well-suited to teaching students to use reading comprehension strategy combinations in a concrete way. Lessons begin with the teacher adopting the role of foreman. The foreman's task is to survey the job site (i.e., activate students' background knowledge) and introduce the four workers who will help their group *build* shared comprehension. These workers—and their comprehension strategies—are described with job titles:

- The architect, who draws up the blueprint to *predict* what the building will look like
- The job inspector, who wears his "get-it goggles" to *clarify* better the meanings of words and ideas
- The electrician, who keeps the group "wired" with *questions* that provoke both big and little sparks
- The bricklayer, who cements understanding by connecting main ideas, brick by brick, into a cohesive *summary*

Props such as pictures, construction hats (with names attached, and tools add to student motivation and task commitment.

Implementation of Comprehension Under Construction (CUC) is done over several days and phases (Marcell, DeCleene, & Juettner, 2010). In the initial phase the teacher *models* the strategies using authentic literature. During the second stage, *collaboration,* hats are given to students along with personal "four-square blueprints" of the strategies. This is actually guided practice during which students become comprehension construction workers and improve their specialties. After students reach proficiency the foreman announces a "strategy switcheroo," and hats are exchanged so that students have many opportunities to practice the four strategies with teacher guidance until independence is reached.

The third phase is termed *reciprocal* and the group begins to function more independently. During this stage, hats are initially rotated on a lesson-to-lesson basis, as in a literature circle (discussed in the next section of this chapter). The four-square blueprint is now replaced by a "CUC sticky note" to be completed by students. The sticky notes serve as a running record of strategy implementation—artifacts that can be adhered to student folders. Over time, RTI-oriented data develops appropriate for problem-solving team discussions.

The final stage in the CUC, called *metacognition,* has students becoming independent contractors who carry their own comprehension toolboxes. Each CUC lesson ends with the query, "Who helped you most today? Was it the electrician? Why was this strategy helpful?"

Adapting Comprehension Instruction for English Learners

Over the last decade, a number of studies that have carefully examined young English learners' early reading in English have found convergence on a number of key points (Manyak & Bauer, 2008). For example, ELs from a variety of first languages can successfully develop beginning literacy skills in English regardless of limitations in English proficiency. Second, the early stages of ELs' reading development looks a lot like that of native speakers (NS) of English, with the same basic underlying factors of phonological awareness, letter identification, and decoding skills. Third, it appears that the same percentages of NS and ELs have difficulties learning to read in English. Finally, explicit instruction has proven to be beneficial for the early English reading development of ELs. Taken together, we need to hold high expectations for ELs' learning of reading and writing skills in English.

At this point there seem to be few existing studies on comprehension instruction for ELs that offer examples of sound instructional practices (Shanahan & Beck, 2006). Nevertheless, it seems clear that comprehension instruction is critical to the long-term achievement of ELs.

Manyak and Bauer (2008) offer several principles to guide instruction for ELs summarized from extant research. First, research has demonstrated that ELs may comprehend more than they are able to communicate verbally in English. Thus we must not underestimate ELs' ability to read difficult texts and participate in higher-order comprehension activities and discussions. Second, learning new vocabulary through language-rich instruction is key in ELs' comprehension. Third, it has been established that using ELs' background knowledge (i.e., culturally familiar content) as a means for scaffolding to new text content learning boosts their comprehension.

Teachers should provide children with culturally familiar texts whenever possible. However, ELs will always face many texts with unfamiliar content, so it critical

that teachers implement prereading activities that build ELs' relevant background knowledge. An activity called synopsis text (Manyak & Bauer, 2008) is recommended for building background knowledge for ELs. First, identify key ideas from an upcoming text into a brief one- to two-paragraph synopsis. Students are asked to read the synopsis twice and then, working in pairs or small groups, identify three key points, one idea they find difficult to understand, and any unfamiliar words. Next, the groups write a question they have that relates to the upcoming reading. This familiarizes students with the content of the text and prompts them to anticipate new information (a schema-building activity).

Finally, approaches such as Beck and McKeown's (2006) Questioning the Author (discussed earlier) help ELs break down texts into small sections for discussions about meanings or to use fix-up strategies, providing them with opportunities for rich discussion.

Motivation and Engagement

Motivation and Engagement Strategies for Teaching Reading Comprehension

As discussed in Chapter 1, Turner and Paris (1995) propose six "Cs" of motivation that promote student engagement in the act of reading and comprehending a text: (1) choice, (2) challenge, (3) control, (4) collaboration, (5) constructing meaning, and (6) consequences.

IRA Standards for Reading Professionals: Standard 5, Element 5.2

Response to Intervention: Instruction

1. *Choice* does not mean that students are free to select any text or to make up what they have read when asked about it. Choices are always bounded or limited. To offer choice may mean choosing to read from two different information books on rocks and rock formations. However, when children have the sense that they can make some choices about what to read and for which purposes, they are more willing to persist and remain intellectually engaged while reading.

2. *Challenge* is the second way in which we can encourage increased reading motivation and engagement to improve reading comprehension. Turner and Paris (1995) dispute the common notion that children prefer "easy" reading texts and tasks to more difficult or challenging material, noting that research supports the opposite conclusion—that students enjoy challenge. Of course, children are also motivated by success, so the text challenge must not become excessive to the point of frustration.

3. Sharing the *control* of texts and tasks in the classroom with the teacher through choice is associated with greater reading engagement. Students need to feel that they have an integral role to play while reading a text in order to take sufficient control of their own thinking processes.

4. *Collaboration* has been shown to be another strategy for which there is sufficient scientific evidence of benefit. Collaboration requires that students discuss, interact, and work together with each other and their teachers to construct the meanings of texts, what we have termed **dialogic teaching.** Collaborative discussions and interactions also elaborate the outcomes of the reading comprehension process by combining memories triggered from the reading of a text.

5. *Constructing meaning* is the very essence of reading comprehension instruction. This process requires the conscious selection, control, and use of various cognitive comprehension strategies while engaged in reading text.

6. *Consequences* are the final factor that leads students to increased motivation and reading comprehension. This concept refers to the nature of the outcomes expected within a specified amount of time. If the outcome expected is an open-ended rather than a closed-ended task, such as contributing to a discussion rather than getting the "right" answers to questions on a worksheet, students interpret their failures in comprehension differently. When seeking correct or "right" answers, they often feel that they just do not have enough ability (Turner & Paris, 1995). On the other hand, if through discussion they detect that they failed to pick up on some element in the text, they often view this failure as the result of insufficiently or improperly selecting or applying effective comprehension strategies.

Affective Responses: Interpreting and Elaborating Meaning

Discussion and dialogue are critical aspects of effective comprehension instruction (Gambrell & Almasi, 1996). One widely recognized and recommended approach to inspiring discussions about text is called **reader response,** which invites students to take a much more active role (Bleich, 1978; Rosenblatt, 1978, 1989, 2004).

Discussion about texts in small groups often takes place in literature circles or book clubs that lead students into grand conversations about books (Daniels, 1994; McMahon & Raphael, 1997; Peterson & Eeds, 1990; Tompkins, 2006). Grand conversations about books motivate students to extend, clarify, and elaborate their own interpretations of the text as well as to consider alternative interpretations offered by peers. It's a simple procedure to initiate a literature circle.

- Begin by selecting four or five books that will engender interest and discussion among students.
- Next, give a book talk on each of the four or five titles selected, enthusiastically presenting and describing each book to the students.
- Ask students to individually select their top three book choices for reading.
- Give students their first choices to the extent possible. If too many students want the same title, offer some second choices as you compile the assignment list.

This system works well, because students always know that they get to read a book of their own choosing. After books are distributed the next day, give the students a large block of uninterrupted time in class to read. At the beginning of the year, students can read about 20 minutes without undue restlessness. However, later in the year children can often sustain free reading for up to a full hour.

As students complete several hours of independent reading, each literature circle meets on a rotating basis for about 20 minutes with the teacher. Group members discuss and share their initial reactions to the book. We have found that meeting with one to two literature circles per day—with a maximum of 2 days independent reading between meetings—works quite well.

Based on the group discussion, an assignment is given to the group to extend the discussion of the book into their interpretive media (i.e., writing, art, drama, and so

on). Each member of the literature circle works on this assignment before returning to the group for a second meeting. This sequence of reading and working on an extension response assignment repeats until the entire book is completed. We recommend that the first extension assignment focus on personal responses and connections with the book. Subsequent assignments can concentrate on understanding literary elements (i.e., characterization, point of view, story elements, role of the narrator, and so on). At the conclusion of the book, the literature circle meets to determine a culminating project (Reutzel & Cooter, 2000; Zarillo, 1989). This project captures the group's interpretation and feelings about the entire book as demonstrated in a mural, story map, diorama, character wanted poster, and so on.

There are many ways to invite students to respond to texts they read. One of the most common is to ask children to write in a response journal (Parsons, 1990). We have developed a listing of affective responses to text that represent concepts described by Rosenblatt (1978) in Figure 7.25.

Figure 7.25

Alternative Affective Responses to Books

1. Prepare a condensed or simplified version of the text to read aloud to younger readers.
2. Draw a map of the journey of characters in a story.
3. Talk to your teacher or a peer about the book.
4. Make a "Wanted" poster for a character in the text.
5. Make a poster based on an information book.
6. Select a part of the book to read aloud to others.
7. Send a letter to your parents, a friend, or your teacher telling about a book and why they should read it.
8. Write a classified newspaper ad for a book.
9. Rewrite a story or part of a story as a readers' theatre.
10. Make overhead transparencies about the story to use on the overhead projector.
11. Make a PowerPoint slide computer presentation about an information book.
12. Make a character report card on your favorite character.
13. Make a passport application as your favorite character.
14. Write a "Dear Abby" column as your favorite character.
15. Write a missing persons report about a story character.
16. Draw a part of the book and ask others to tell about what part of the story is illustrated.
17. Write a newspaper headline for a book or story.
18. Write a newspaper report for a story character or about information you have learned in an information book.
19. Write to the author to describe your responses to a book.
20. Illustrate a book using a variety of art media or techniques.
21. Write a letter to the librarian suggesting why he or she should or should not recommend a book to someone.
22. Study about the author and write a brief biography.
23. Compose a telegram about the book to tell someone why he or she must read this book.
24. Write a TV commercial and videotape it.
25. Plan a storytelling session for kindergarten children.
26. Interview a story character and write the interview.
27. Compare and contrast characters, settings, or facts in a book using a Venn diagram.
28. Construct a game of Trivial Pursuit using facts in an information book.
29. Construct a game of Password using clues about characters or events in a story.
30. Compose an imaginary diary that might be kept by a book character.

Technology and New Literacies

Technology and New Literacies: Internet Reciprocal Teaching

IRA Standards for Reading Professionals: Standard 5, Element 5.1

Response to Intervention: Instruction

Based on the well-established research on reciprocal teaching (Palincsar, 1986; Palincsar & Brown, 1984), Internet reciprocal teaching (Reinking & Castek, 2007; Leu et al., 2008) was developed around the use of wireless laptop carts in the classroom. IRT is a very rich model of instruction that involves online informational texts; the reading, processing, and construction of students' own texts (using hypertext links, wikis, etc.) using varied online texts as sources; instruction offered by teachers many times in whole-class settings; student modeling of online comprehension strategies; a focus on questioning, locating, critically evaluating, synthesizing, and communicating strategies; a gradual release of responsibilities (scaffolding); and student collaboration and discussion.

Leu and colleagues (2008) developed through their research a three-phase model for Internet reciprocal teaching as a means for improving online reading comprehension.

- *Phase 1: Teacher-led instruction.* Students take part in teacher-led sessions to establish basic routines and Internet/computer skills (e.g., handling laptops or PCs, opening and closing programs, how to manage multiple windows, etc.). The teacher models online reading strategies as well as procedures to follow for group discussions.
- *Phase 2: Collaborative modeling of online reading comprehension strategies.* Teachers and students begin to share strategies for online reading comprehension. Small groups of students having a common problem often take the lead in sharing strategies for finding information they have discovered. These may relate to key curriculum standards or goals. One example offered by Leu and colleagues (2008) has the student groups being given three problems/questions to solve on the Internet:

  How high is Mt. Fuji in Japan?

  Find a different answer to the same question

  Which answer do you think is most accurate and how did you determine that it was?

  Students in each group are guided to discuss their solutions, exchanging reading comprehension strategies for locating information and critically evaluating information. Lessons are designed to minimize teacher talk and to maximize the time students are engaged with the task. An essential part of planning is setting aside time at the end of each lesson for students to debrief and to exchange strategies with the entire class after having already done so in their small groups. (p. 9)

  Phase 2 lessons move from highly structured to less structured over time as student competence and ability to work independently increases. Early lessons focus on the rudiments of locating and critically evaluating online information. Later, the emphasis shifts to using a variety of online tools (e.g., email, wikis, blogs, Google docs, instant messaging).
- *Phase 3: Inquiry.* In this phase, students begin to move more into independent online inquiry linked to the curriculum standards. Much of the work by students is done independently and in small groups. Students also have the opportunity to decide on the most effective ways to share what they have learned. The teacher shifts to a role of helping individual students and groups find new ways of solving problems. This may involve working with students in other classrooms as well as their own homeroom.

Family and Community Connections

Family and Community Connections That Enhance Students' Reading Comprehension

Although families usually do not have the expertise to provide explicit reading comprehension strategies instruction and guided practice, they can do a great deal to facilitate children's reading comprehension. For years now, Allington (2006) has insisted that children need to read a lot to get good at reading. Families are in an ideal position to facilitate wide reading and discussion of text. As teachers, we can provide families with both access to reading materials and structure for facilitating discussion and interaction around texts.

Richgels and Wold (1998) have designed the Three for the Road program to involve parents in choosing one or more books to read and discuss with their children at home from among three "leveled" books. These leveled books are placed in a backpack that is sent home to parents with their children. The three books selected in each backpack represent a variety of themes, including fantasy, comedy, math mania, adventure, ABCs, and sing-along. The three levels of books included in each backpack are at the "easiest," "in-between," and "most challenging" levels for the student's grade level. The backpack includes a letter to parents as shown in Figure 7.26. This letter may be easily adapted to suit the needs of parents and children in other grades.

IRA Standards for Reading Professionals: Standard 4, Elements 4.1, 4.2, 4.3

Common Core Standards: Reading: K–5, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas (item 7); Reading: Grades 6–12, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas (item 7)

Response to Intervention: Collaboration

Figure 7.26

Parent Letter from Three for the Road

Dear First Grade Parents,

Beginning next week, the first graders will be taking home our "Three for the Road" backpacks. The packs are designed to foster enjoyment of children's literature and to nurture lifelong reading habits. We encourage your partnership in reading by sharing these stories and your responses together.

During the year, the A-B-C Pack, Adventure Pack, Comedy Pack, Fantasy Pack, Math Mania Pack, and Sing-Along Pack will rotate in the first grades. Your child will take a pack home once in the next 4 to 5 weeks. Please return the pack to school the next morning after you have helped your child recheck all of the contents on the inside pocket list. In this way, every child will have a chance to take home a class pack once each month.

Since your child may choose to read all or only some of the books included, please try to set aside a special reading time. First graders love to make choices about their reading and may ask a parent to read aloud, to read along with them, or to listen to them read alone. A black journal is also included for students' and parents' written comments and illustrations about meaningful characters or preferred story parts. Check the inside cover of the journal for parent and child response ideas. You may also choose how you would like to respond. Sock puppets are furnished to support language and literacy development. To encourage story responses, you may consider asking, "Which character seems most like the purple puppet?" Or your child may want to "role play" a favorite person or animal by making the puppet "talk" like the story character.

Whatever activities you choose, make this a relaxed and enjoyable experience in reading, from parent read-alouds to rereading children's favorite parts.

We thank you for your support and hope you enjoy our Three for the Road packs!

Your Partners in Reading at _____ School.

From Richgels, D. J., & Wold, L. S. (1998). Literacy on the Road: Back Packing Partnerships Between School and Home. *The Reading Teacher, 52*(1), pp. 18–29. Printed with permission.

Parents are given several ways to respond to and discuss the books with their children within each themed backpack. Child responses can include writing or drawing about (1) whatever they want in relation to the book, (2) their favorite part, (3) how the book reminded them of something else, or (4) how these three books were alike or different. Parents can also respond by writing and drawing about something of interest to them in the books or something they learned with their child from this activity.

Summary

Comprehension is intentional thinking during which meaning is constructed through interactions between texts and readers. Comprehending a text involves two phases—construction and integration. In phase one of this process, the reader constructs meaning from text and in the second phase integrates this newly constructed knowledge into the existing prior knowledge network.

Monitoring and assessing children's development of comprehension is an important activity to help you, the teacher, select appropriate comprehension strategy instruction and other supports.

Reading comprehension is developed through activating and adding to students' background knowledge, offering explicit teacher-led comprehension strategy instruction, and by helping students coordinate a set or family of comprehension strategies to construct meaning through rich discussions and interactions around a variety of text structures and genres. Struggling readers and, in fact, all young readers benefit from increased scaffolding to support comprehension development, including demonstrations, pictures, diagrams, charts, collaboration with other students, instruction to deepen students' breadth and depth of conceptual knowledge, and connections that capitalize on students' interests and motivations. Finally, families and communities can read and discuss appropriately challenging themed books of interest as found in the Three for the Road program to add to children's background knowledge and develop their abilities to think and talk about a variety of texts.

Field and Classroom Applications

- Make a poster showing steps students can take to produce a text summary.
- Select a popular children's story. Parse the story into its story structure parts: setting, characters, problem, goal, events, and resolution. Make a story map like the one shown in this chapter.
- Summarize the *Report of the National Reading Panel* (2000) describing their findings on text comprehension. Make a poster displaying these major findings.
- In small groups, examine several narrative and expository texts. With your peers, discuss how to activate or build students' background knowledge before reading these texts.
- Organize into literature circle groups. Examine a set of children's books to read as a group. Use reciprocal teaching strategies to discuss one chapter of the book during class.

Recommended Resources

Print

Beck, I., & McKeown, M. (2006). *Improving comprehension with questioning the author: A fresh and expanded view of a powerful approach*. New York: Scholastic.

Dewitz, P., Leahy, S. B., Jones, J., & Sullivan, P. M. (2010). *The essential guide to selecting and using core reading programs*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Essley, R. (2010). *Visual tools for differentiating content area instruction*. New York: Scholastic.
International Reading Association. (2010). *Standards for the assessment of reading and writing revised*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association/ National Council of Teachers of English.
Kelley, M. J., & Clausen-Grace, N. (2007). *Comprehension shouldn't be silent: From strategy instruction to student independence*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
Malloy, J. A., Marinak, B. A., & Gambrell, L. B. (Eds.). (2010). *Essential readings on motivation*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
Ogle, D. (2011). *Partnering for content literacy: PRC2 in action*. Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.

Web Resources

Backflip (http://www.backflip.com/login.ihtml) helps students discover how to take information from a web site and organize this information on your own home page.
The Literacy Web (http://www.literacy.uconn.edu/compre.htm) has myriad resources for teaching reading comprehension provided by the University of Connecticut.
Reading Comprehension Connection (http://www.readingcomprehensionconnection.com/reading_lesson.php) provides tips for assisting English learners.
RHL School (http://www.rhlschool.com/reading.htm provides free comprehension worksheets.

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STANDARDS
for Reading Professionals and Guiding Principles for Educators

What Is Reading Comprehension?

IRA Standards for Reading Professionals

Standard 1: Foundational Knowledge

Element 1.1

Candidates understand major theories and empirical research that describe the cognitive, linguistic, motivational, and sociocultural foundations of reading and writing development, processes, and components, including word recognition, language comprehension, strategic knowledge, and reading–writing connections.

Element 1.2

Candidates understand the historically shared knowledge of the profession and changes over time in the perceptions of reading and writing development, processes, and components.

Common Core Standards

Teachers should be familiar with the following standards.

Reading: K–5

Key Ideas and Details

1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Craft and Structure

4. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

5. Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

8. Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

Reading: Grades 6–12

Key Ideas and Details

1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Craft and Structure

4. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

5. Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

8. Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

Response to Intervention

6. Expertise

- Success for culturally and linguistically diverse students depends on teachers and support personnel who are well prepared to teach in a variety of settings. Deep knowledge of cultural and linguistic differences is especially critical for the prevention of language and literacy problems in diverse student populations.

Assessing Reading Comprehension

IRA Standards for Reading Professionals

Standard 3: Assessment and Evaluation

Element 3.1

Candidates understand types of assessments and their purposes, strengths, and limitations.

Element 3.2

Candidates select, develop, administer, and interpret assessments, both traditional print and electronic, for specific purposes.

Element 3.3

Candidates use assessment information to plan and evaluate instruction

Common Core Standards

Teachers must be able to assess students' ability to do the following.

Reading: K–5

Key Ideas and Details

1. (See previous)
2. (See previous)
3. (See previous)

Craft and Structure

4. (See previous)
5. (See previous)
6. (See previous)

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. (See previous)
8. (See previous)
9. (See previous)

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

10. (See previous)

Reading: Grades 6–12

Key Ideas and Details

1. (See previous)
2. (See previous)
3. (See previous)

Craft and Structure

4. (See previous)
5. (See previous)
6. (See previous)

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. (See previous)
8. (See previous)
9. (See previous)

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

10. (See previous)

Response to Intervention

3. Assessment

An RTI approach demands assessment that can inform language and literacy instruction meaningfully.

- Assessment should reflect the multidimensional nature of language and literacy learning and the diversity among students being assessed. The utility of an assessment is dependent on the extent to which it provides valid information on the essential aspects of language and literacy that can be used to plan appropriate instruction.
- Assessments, tools, and techniques should provide useful and timely information about desired language and literacy goals. They should reflect authentic language and literacy activities as opposed to contrived texts or tasks generated specifically

for assessment purposes. The quality of assessment information should not be sacrificed for the efficiency of an assessment procedure.

- Multiple purposes for assessment should be clearly identified and appropriate tools and techniques employed . . . Particular care should be taken in selecting assessments for ELLs and for students who speak an English dialect that differs from mainstream dialects.
- Efficient assessment systems involve a layered approach in which screening techniques are used both to identify which students require further (diagnostic) assessment and to provide aggregate data about the nature of student achievement overall.

What Are the Most Effective Ways to Teach Reading Comprehension

IRA Standards for Reading Professionals

Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction

Element 2.1

Candidates use foundational knowledge to design or implement an integrated, comprehensive, and balanced curriculum.

Element 2.2

Candidates use appropriate and varied instructional approaches, including those that develop word recognition, language comprehension, strategic knowledge, and reading–writing connections.

Element 2.3

Candidates use a wide range of texts (e.g., narrative, expository, and poetry) from traditional print, digital, and online resources.

Standard 4: Diversity

Element 4.1

Candidates recognize, understand, and value the forms of diversity that exist in society and their importance in learning to read and write.

Element 4.2

Candidates use a literacy curriculum and engage in instructional practices that positively impact students' knowledge, beliefs, and engagement with the features of diversity.

Element 4.3

Candidates develop and implement strategies to advocate for equity.

Standard 5: Literate Environment

Element 5.1

Candidates design the physical environment to optimize students' use of traditional print, digital, and online resources in reading and writing instruction.

Element 5.2

Candidates design a social environment that is low risk and includes choice, motivation, and scaffolded support to optimize students' opportunities for learning to read and write.

Element 5.3

Candidates use routines to support reading and writing instruction (e.g., time allocation, transitions from one activity to another, discussions, and peer feedback).

Common Core Standards

Reading: K–5

Key Ideas and Details

1. (See previous)
2. (See previous)
3. (See previous)

Craft and Structure

4. (See previous)
5. (See previous)
6. (See previous)

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. (See previous)
8. (See previous)
9. (See previous)

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

10. (See previous)

Reading: Grades 6–12

Key Ideas and Details

1. (See previous)
2. (See previous)
3. (See previous)

Craft and Structure

4. (See previous)
5. (See previous)
6. (See previous)

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. (See previous)
8. (See previous)
9. (See previous)

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

10. (See previous)

Response to Intervention

1. Instruction

- Whatever approach is taken to RTI, it should ensure optimal instruction for every student at all levels of schooling. It should prevent serious language and literacy problems through increasingly differentiated and intensified assessment and instruction and reduce the disproportionate number of minority youth and ELLs identified as learning disabled.
- Instruction and assessment conducted by the classroom teacher are central to the success of RTI and must address the needs of all students, including those from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
- The success of RTI depends on the classroom teacher's use of research-based practices.
- Research on instructional practices must provide not only information about what works, but also what works with whom, by whom, in what contexts, and on which outcomes.
- When core language and literacy instruction is not effective for a particular student, it should be modified to address more closely the needs and abilities of that student.

2. Responsive Teaching and Differentiation

- RTI is centrally about optimizing language and literacy instruction for particular students. This means that differentiated instruction, based on instructionally relevant assessment, is essential.

5. Systemic and Comprehensive Approaches

- RTI needs to be integrated within the context of a coherent and consistent language and literacy curriculum that guides comprehensive instruction for all students.

Response to Intervention: Meeting Diverse Needs for Tiers 1 and 2 in Comprehension Instruction

IRA Standards for Reading Professionals

Standard 5: Literate Environment

Elements 5.1, 5.2, 5.3 (See previous)

Element 5.2 (See previous)

Element 5.3 (See previous)

Common Core Standards

Reading: K–5

Key Ideas and Details

1. (See previous)
2. (See previous)
3. (See previous)

Craft and Structure

4. (See previous)
5. (See previous)
6. (See previous)

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. (See previous)
8. (See previous)
9. (See previous)

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

10. (See previous)

Reading: Grades 6–12

Key Ideas and Details

1. (See previous)
2. (See previous)
3. (See previous)

Craft and Structure

4. (See previous)
5. (See previous)
6. (See previous)

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. (See previous)

8. (See previous)

9. (See previous)

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

10. (See previous)

Response to Intervention

2. Responsive Teaching and Differentiation

- RTI is centrally about optimizing language and literacy instruction for particular students.
- Instruction and materials selection must derive from specific student–teacher interactions and not be constrained by packaged programs. Students have different language and literacy needs, so they may not respond similarly to instruction—even when research-based practices are used.

5. Systemic and Comprehensive Approaches

- Approaches to RTI must be sensitive to developmental differences in language and literacy among students at different ages and grades. Although many prevailing approaches to RTI focus on the early elementary grades, it is essential for teachers and support personnel at middle and secondary levels to provide their students with the language and literacy instruction they need to succeed in school and beyond.

Motivation and Engagement Strategies for Teaching Reading Comprehension

IRA Standards for Reading Professionals

Standard 5: Literate Environment

Element 5.2 (See previous)

Response to Intervention

1. Instruction

- Instruction and assessment conducted by the classroom teacher are central to the success of RTI and must address the needs of all students, including those from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
- The success of RTI depends on the classroom teacher's use of research-based practices.
- Research on instructional practices must provide not only information about what works, but also what works with whom, by whom, in what contexts, and on which outcomes.
- Pillar 6: Technology and New Literacies: Internet Reciprocal Teaching

Technology and New Literacies: Internet Reciprocal Teaching

IRA Standards for Reading Professionals

Standard 5: Literate Environment

Element 5.1 (See previous)

Common Core Standards

Reading: K–5

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. (See previous)

Reading: Grades 6–12

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. (See previous)

Response to Intervention

1. Instruction

- Whatever approach is taken to RTI, it should ensure optimal instruction for every student at all levels of schoo++ling. It should prevent serious language and literacy problems through increasingly differentiated and intensified assessment and instruction and reduce the disproportionate number of minority youth and ELLs identified as learning disabled.
- Research on instructional practices must provide not only information about what works, but also what works with whom, by whom, in what contexts, and on which outcomes.

IRA Standards for Reading Professionals

Standard 4: Diversity

Elements 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 (See previous)

Response to Intervention

4. Collaboration

- Involving parents and students and engaging them in a collaborative manner is critical to successful implementation. Initiating and strengthening collaborations among school, home, and communities, particularly in urban and rural areas, provides the basis for support and reinforcement of students' learning.