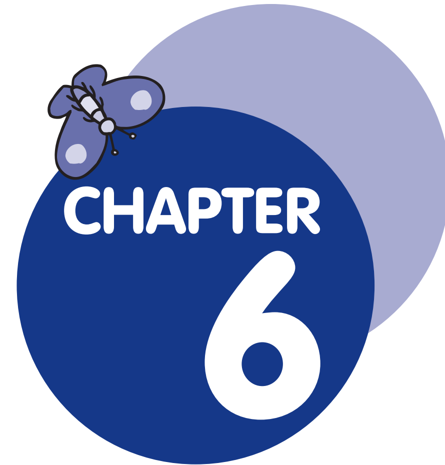
Reading

Principles, Approaches, Comprehension, and Fluency



Learning to read involves two processes: First, the child must become able to decode or decipher unfamiliar words and gradually develop a sizable vocabulary. Second, the child must be able to comprehend or attach meaning to those words in sentences, paragraphs, pages, and entire books.

The first process has already been discussed in the previous chapter. The second is explored in this chapter because comprehension permeates directly or indirectly all areas of reading, including its principles, emergent reading, and major instructional approaches and models.

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Anticipation Statements

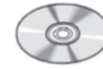
Complete this exercise before reading Chapter 6.

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Circle your answer. Be prepared to discuss questions in blue.

	Statement		
1.	Learning to read involves two processes: decoding and comprehension.	Agree	Disagree
2.	Reading series books in the intermediate grades does not promote fluency.	Agree	Disagree
3.	Some children are more successful than others at reading because of biological factors.	Agree	Disagree
4.	Two emergent literacy skills that are highly predictive of reading ability are knowledge about books and recognition of the alphabet.	Agree	Disagree
5.	While there is no method guaranteed to teach reading successfully in the elementary school, a classic study found that it was the books selected that were most important in achieving excellence in reading.	Agree	Disagree
6.	The basal reader is the most widely used approach in the United States.	Agree	Disagree
7.	The language experience approach is only recommended for beginning readers in kindergarten and the lower grades.	Agree	Disagree
8.	The balanced approach to reading instruction is the model most teachers use today.	Agree	Disagree
9.	One factor affecting comprehension is the quality of literacy instruction.	Agree	Disagree
10.	If students are consistently asked only literal or recall kinds of questions, they will focus their attention on remembering details and not on analyzing or evaluating the information.	Agree	Disagree

Principles of Teaching Reading

The following generalizations about the teaching of reading, drawn from both research and classroom observation of actual practices, have been compiled in an effort to guide all individuals in planning an effective reading program in the elementary grades (Roe et al., 2005). The first and second principles stress that reading is a complex act involving numerous factors and that reading involves constructing the meaning of a passage represented by printed symbols. All the varied aspects of the reading process should be understood by the teacher, who must also realize that reading does not occur without comprehension of the written passage, no matter how well the child reads orally.



For material related to this concept, go to Video Clip 6.1 on the Student Resource CD bound into the back of your textbook.

Principles three and four emphasize that there is no one correct way to teach reading and that learning to read is a continuous process. Not only do children learn to read over a period of several years as more sophisticated skills are introduced to them gradually but adolescents and adults also continue to improve their reading ability even after their formal education stops; improvements in reading ability continue to occur primarily because of demands in the workplace. Such continuity serves to illustrate the need for teachers to be acquainted with a variety of reading methods so they may help each classroom learner at assigned reading tasks. The student, whether a native English speaker or an English language learner (ELL), must be given instruction at his or her own level of accomplishment and maturity.

The fifth and sixth principles stress that students should be taught word recognition skills that will allow them to independently unlock the meanings and pronunciations of unfamiliar words and that the teacher should diagnose each student's reading ability and use that diagnosis as the basis for planning instruction. No one can memorize all the English words that appear in print. Children must therefore be instructed in skills such as phonic and structural analyses so they can figure out new words for themselves when helpful peers or adults are not available. Still, they acquire these strategies, as well as those related to comprehension, at individual rates so the teacher must be continually aware of each student's performance while preparing lesson plans.

The seventh and eighth principles state that reading and the other five language arts are closely interrelated and that reading is an integral part of all content area instruction. Since there is an exceptionally strong relationship between reading and writing, most educators now advocate teaching reading through a combined reading and writing approach.

The ninth and tenth generalizations emphasize that the student needs to see that reading is an enjoyable pursuit; therefore, the teacher should understand the importance of using complete literature selections in the reading program. Young readers will become convinced of the many

Applicable IRA/NCTE Standards

Standard 1 Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

Standard 2 Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.

Standard 7 Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

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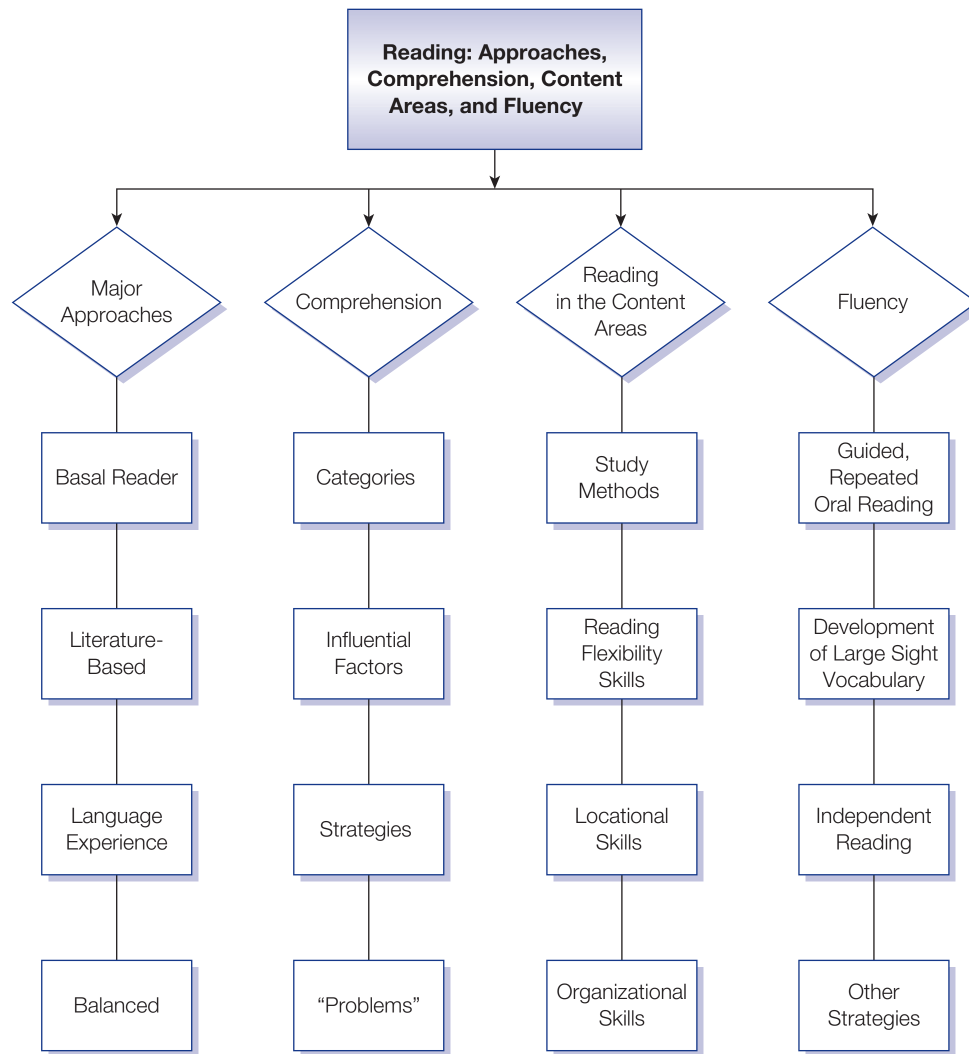

A Graphic Summary of the Contents of This Chapter

benefits of reading by encountering a variety of appropriate materials that meet numerous interest and ability levels; for example, some children like books with repetitive phrases such as Wood's *The Napping House* (2004), whereas others like books with humor such as Dr. Seuss's *The Cat in the Hat Comes Back* (2006). Intermediate grade children discover series books such as Cole's *The Magic School Bus: Lost in The Solar System* (1992) and the other Magic School Bus adventures; their teachers realize that the process of reading books in most series is usually rereading of a sort (because the books only vary slightly one from another in their character or characters) and rereading promotes **fluency**. An essential component of reading instruction, fluency is the ability to read with accuracy and speed in contrast to word-by-word reading. Incidentally, readers as young as second grade are enjoying Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, which not only has reemphasized the importance of motivation but also has proven that reading can indeed be an enjoyable activity for students.

The final two principles point out that reading should be taught in a way that allows every child to become a successful reader and that encouragement of self-monitoring and self-direction of reading is important. Success promotes success and good readers eventually direct their own reading.

Emergent Reading

Some girls and boys who enter school and begin formal reading instruction are considerably more successful than other children who attempt the same task. The difference sometimes lies in biological factors, according to Wolfe and Nevills (2004), but more likely the reasons for the difference are based in the children's literacy development before they ever started kindergarten.

Sometimes termed prereading skills, **emergent literacy** skills are those skills acquired in early childhood that help children benefit the most from formal reading instruction on school entry. These skills have also been proven to have a high correlation with later reading ability (Scarborough, 1989). Furthermore, the National Research Council believes that reading is generally acquired in a relatively predictable manner by students who have normal or above-average language skills and have had experiences during their early childhood years that promote motivation to read and provide exposure to literacy in use (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).

Two emergent literacy skills appear to be highly predictive of reading ability and cannot be ignored by teachers eager to develop fluent readers. The first is *knowledge about books:* In English, a book is read from left to right and from top to bottom, and it is print that is read and not the pictures, regardless of their color or size. Some school beginners do not always know what a book is or how it must be used (Adams, 1990).

The second critical emergent skill is *recognition of the alphabet.* English is an alphabetic language of 26 letters from which thousands of words can be derived. The skill of naming and recognizing those letters is one of the best predictors of first-grade reading ability (Adams, 1990). Mere recitation of the alphabet, however, is not sufficient. Instead, children must be able to recognize the letters in varied contexts—whether handwritten or typed in different fonts, within words on the chalkboard or book page, or on the television screen or billboard. Students must recognize the letters accurately and quickly because the names of most letters are closely related to their sounds. Consequently as children learn to name the letters, they are starting to learn the sounds they represent. This in turn leads to an understanding of the **alphabetic principle**, which Adams considers to be the single most important concept that students must know when learning to read. That principle is *the understanding that there is generally a predictable relationship between the sounds of spoken language (or phonemes) and the letters and spellings that represent those sounds in written language (or graphemes).* Most students do not make the connection between phonemes and graphemes naturally, but must learn it through careful instruction in phonic analysis, which is discussed in Chapter 5.

Through careful instruction, young children are able to develop an understanding of the alphabetic principle, including the following components of letter knowledge: the name of the letter, the formation of the letter (using both lowercase and uppercase print or manuscript handwriting), the features of the letter (and the direction it must be turned) to distinguish it from other letters (e.g., *b/d, g/q*), the use of the letter in known words (e.g., *book, street, store*), the sound the letter represents in the context of a word (e.g., *string*) and in combination with other letters (e.g., *th, ch*), and the sound the letter represents in isolation (Pinnell & Fountas, 1998). As they read, students use their letter knowledge to decode unfamiliar words.

Almost all children in a literate society develop competencies that are fundamental to their emerging literacy. They learn to read and write early in life; some learn as early as age one. They are aware of environmental print (e.g., on billboards and street signs) and informational print

(e.g., on maps and in recipes). They develop concepts of book print and how it differs from other kinds of print. They have a story sense, recognizing the structure of a story and internalizing its elements, especially after numerous read-alouds by parents or preschool teachers. They experience oral language development, which is involved in beginning reading and writing since the language arts are so closely interrelated. They understand how written language works and that anything written down (e.g., scribbles) contains a message. Finally, they learn literacy by experiencing reading and writing as purposeful daily activities (Searfoss, Readence, & Mallette, 2001).

Since children in today's diverse society come to school with a variety of background experiences, teachers may wish to use the following survey questionnaire for emergent reading evaluation soon after the start of the school year; these items represent the essentials of learning to read (adapted from Farris, 2005):

1. Is the child interested in books and can listen attentively to a five-minute story?
2. Can the child tell a story in sequence or remember the main parts of a story?
3. Can the child play independently for short periods of time?
4. Does the child ask for word meanings and recognize that letters make up words?
5. Can the child identify the letters of the alphabet?
6. Does the child attempt to write or draw pictures to illustrate an idea?
7. Does the child enter into a group or class discussion freely?
8. Does the child know the directionality of books?

If the majority of answers to this informal observational survey are positive, it suggests that the child is an emergent reader. However, if the answers are primarily negative, the child should be given many opportunities to develop oral language skills, to listen to literature read-alouds, and to use crayons and pencils for drawing and writing.

Shared Reading

Students in kindergarten and first grade who are emergent readers can participate in **shared reading**, in which they follow along as the teacher reads the selection aloud (Fisher & Medvic, 2000). Considered by some as a natural outgrowth of the lap method or home bedtime story of reading aloud to young children, shared reading re-creates the natural ways that young children learn to speak and that many learn to read (Holdaway, 1979).

While shared reading may involve enlarging the text of favorite rhymes, poems, or songs on chart paper or on sentence strips used in a pocket chart, the most common method is using big books—enlarged versions of the selections chosen by the teacher. These oversized books have pictures and print large enough for students to see and read 12 to 15 feet away as they sit in a semicircle around the teacher. Children become actively engaged in the meaning of the text and the details of the print as the group reads the story together. Teachers should choose texts carefully as emergent readers need stories with rich language, repetitive patterns, a strong storyline, and high-quality illustrations. The teacher and children can reread big books several times over the semester—much like bedtime stories—as emergent readers enjoy familiar stories and increase their control over the reading.

Holdaway (1979) lists three criteria for successful shared reading experiences: The books chosen must be those that students love to hear, the children must be able to see the print themselves, and the teacher must be genuinely enthusiastic while reading the books aloud.

The teacher planning a shared reading lesson should follow these six steps (Tompkins, 2006):

1. Introduce the text by activating prior knowledge (or developing knowledge) on topics discussed in the book and by reading aloud the title of the book and the name of the author.
2. Read the book aloud, using a pointer or ruler to track the text. If the story is repetitive, invite the students to join in the reading.
3. Discuss the book by inviting students to talk about the story and share their reactions.
4. Reread the story, as students take turns turning pages and using the pointer or ruler to track the reading. Invite them to join in reading familiar words and teach them letter–sound relationships and reading strategies during the rereading.
5. Repeat the process and reread the book with the students several more times over a week or more, again having them take turns turning pages and tracking the text. Invite students who can read the text to read along.
6. Have children read independently by distributing individual copies of the book or another text of similar difficulty. Plan follow-up activities.

Shared reading represents a step between reading to children and reading independently by children and can be used with both young children and older readers (Parkes, 2000). Instead of big books, however, intermediate teachers usually distribute copies of chapter books or content area textbooks and then students and teacher (or another fluent reader) read together: One reads aloud and the others read to themselves, following along in the text.

Picture Books That Celebrate Reading

Teachers may wish to share one or more of the following dozen recent picture books that convey to emergent readers the pleasure of reading in the school, the library, or in the home (Crawford, 2007):

Bloom's *Wolf!* (1999)

Browne's *I Like Books* (2004)

Bruss's *Book! Book! Book!* (2001)

Child's *But Excuse Me! That Is My Book* (2006)

Donaldson's *Charlie Cook's Favorite Book* (2006)

Ernst's *Stella Louella's Runaway Book* (1998)

Lehman's *The Red Book* (2004)

McPhail's *Edward and the Pirates* (1997)

McQuinn's *Lola at the Library* (2006)

Pinkney's *Read and Rise* (2006)

Sierra's *Wild About Books* (2004)

Spanyol's *Carlos and the Really Nice Librarian* (2004)

Major Instructional Approaches

While there is as yet no method guaranteed to teach reading successfully in the elementary school, a classic study in reading instruction found that it was the *teacher* who was more important in achieving excellence in reading than any method used (Bond & Dysktra, 1967/1997). Four major approaches are presently employed to guide learners to mature reading. Teachers preferring to borrow a few features from each of them, however, are supported by the International Reading Association (1999), which has stressed that *no single method can teach all children to read*.

Basal Reader Approach

This is the most widely used approach in the United States, with estimates indicating that 75 to 85% of elementary classrooms use it daily (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2004). While in previous decades as many as 15 publishers offered basal reading series, today the number has been reduced to 4—Harcourt, Houghton, Open Court, and Scott Foresman—because the costs of producing a complete basal reading program range between $20–50 million (Ruddell, 2006). This reduction in the number of publishers' series means that the responsibility for teachers of examining/piloting basals for district acceptance has also been reduced.

Also known as the bottom-up approach or skills-based approach, the **basal reader approach** tends to help students move from the part to the whole by prescribing the acquisition of competencies in a systematic order. The reading process is divided into a series of smaller to larger subskills that must be taught in a rigid order. The major component of this approach is a collection of graded texts for children in Grades K–8 that comprise the chief source for instruction. These texts contain both narrative and expository selections, organized in unit themes (e.g., American Inventors) with a broad variety of genres that include children's literature. The teacher's manual contains lesson plans and developmentally appropriate suggestions and activities involving visual representations. It also often includes reduced-size facsimiles of pages from the student text.

Skills are developed through specific instructional strands (e.g., phonics) that are promoted through assignments in the student practice book or workbook. Sometimes facsimiles of these assignments appear in the teacher's manual in reduced size, with the correct answers. End-of-unit tests assess skills introduced or reviewed in that particular unit.

Reading levels have replaced grade designations in the basal series in an effort to place students at the reading level most appropriate for them, especially for ELLs and at-risk students. The predominant group reading strategy is the directed reading activity (DRA), which is discussed later in this chapter. *In the early grades* word analysis skills and vocabulary items are precisely controlled to present a decodable text. Other aids include big books (enlarged copies of some narrative selections) as well as picture and word cards.

Basal readers have been a tradition in the elementary classroom for several decades and also the subject of considerable controversy. Older series stressed skill development and a controlled vocabulary at the price of comprehension and reading enjoyment. Series published since 2000, however, support language arts instruction in varied ways (e.g., including multiple versions of one story or various excerpts from a full-length book and thus permitting students and teachers to share selections in children's literature). When only a part of the story is included, students are often motivated to read the entire book. Basal readers provide a foundation for reading instruction that is particularly appealing to beginning teachers because their organization is both horizontal (coordination of materials) and vertical (comprehension, word analysis skills, and vocabulary). Obviously, experienced teachers tend to rely on more than the basal series—even with its numerous components—to teach language arts.

The typical procedure for teaching a lesson in the basal reader is the directed reading activity (DRA), which generally follows these steps: (1) preparation *by the teacher* for reading, involving motivation and the introduction of new vocabulary and/or concepts; (2) guided silent reading *by*

students as the teacher provides questions and statements to direct them; (3) comprehension development *by the teacher* and discussion *by students* that facilitate increased understanding of the plot, characters, or concepts; (4) oral reading *by students* after they have read the material silently (step 2) and can read the answers to questions asked by the teacher (Ruddell [2006] terms this step "purposeful rereading"); and (5) follow-up practice or activities *by students* in workbooks that review vocabulary and comprehension. Enrichment activities that involve relating the story or selection to art, music, drama, or writing may also occur after certain selections.

A viable alternative to the DRA is the directed reading-thinking activity (DR-TA) approach. Developed by Stauffer (1975) and designed for group comprehension instruction, its primary goal is to develop critical readers. It demands that children become actively involved in the reading process by asking questions about the story, by processing the information as they read the story, and by receiving feedback about their original questions. There are two key phases to the DR-TA approach. The first is directing students' thinking processes throughout the story; the second is promoting skills development based on students' needs (as revealed in the first phase) as well as follow-up or extension activities (Ruddell, 2006). There are four major differences between the DRA and the DR-TA approaches:

1. The DRA approach is "materials oriented" and "teacher-manual oriented" with specific guidelines, questions, and instructional materials. The DR-TA approach has few explicit guidelines, giving the teacher considerable flexibility as well as sole responsibility for lesson development. It can be used in teaching other curricular areas that require reading, unlike the DRA approach, which is primarily concerned with basal reader programs.
2. The teacher's role in the DRA approach is to ask the students to supply answers to questions found in the manual; most of those queries are at the literal level of comprehension, which requires convergent thinking. In the DR-TA approach, however, the teacher asks questions that require a higher level of thinking known as divergent thinking. By so doing, he or she promotes comprehension skills that make reading a dynamic activity that goes far beyond responding to factual questions.
3. In the DRA approach, new vocabulary is introduced before the children open their books. In the DR-TA approach there is no preteaching of vocabulary. Instead, each student must make use of decoding skills to unlock new words as these appear in the story selection, just as she or he would do during similar situations outside the classroom.
4. In the DRA approach, the manual details which comprehension skills will be taught and when they will be presented. In the DR-TA approach, however, there is no such prescription, and therefore, the teacher must develop the art of good questioning as well as the ability to accept alternative answers to certain questions.

Literature-Based Approach

The **literature-based approach** has been defined as instructing children to read by using both fiction and nonfiction literature, written for purposes other than text use for teaching reading (Harp & Brewer, 2005). It is known as the top-down approach, going from the whole to the part.

Its advocates believe that reading materials should be unabridged pieces of literature and that instruction in strategies and skills should be presented in the context of real reading and only on an as-needed basis. There is no prereading vocabulary study. While the focus is on constructing meaning or understanding what is read, there are no comprehension worksheets. Children are offered choices in their literature selections, which cover a wide range of genres, including multicultural books. Finally, students are encouraged to discuss the interpretations of their reading with classmates and adults.

To implement this highly individualistic approach, the teacher must be knowledgeable about children's literature and able to incorporate skills development when it is needed. He or she must also have available class or group sets of core literature books so that several students are reading and responding to the same book at any given time.

Once the program has been introduced, four to five children choose to work in independent reading-response groups, based on their choice of books. These groups are given reading prompts (for use in their discussions) that are designed to evaluate the students' prior knowledge and to generate ideas derived from the text and ideas that go beyond the text to indicate reaction or interpretation. Throughout the reading-response group experience, members maintain journals or individual response logs. When one group has completed its reading and discussion of a book, it may plan and produce a summary activity such as a puppet plan, mural, or readers theater (Ruddell, 2006).

One popular form of the literature-based approach that some teachers use is *individualized reading*. (Although the term is often misunderstood, it does *not* mean that group instruction never takes place or that group activities never occur.) Such an approach is clearly needed for three reasons: First, it involves a variety of materials and can occur even in the absence of the teacher. It therefore simulates closely the type of reading method that literate adults use, and it helps students transfer school learning outside of the classroom. Second, it places a heavy emphasis on the personal enjoyment and satisfaction to be gained through reading, thereby establishing life-long reading habits. Finally, the approach helps the teacher meet the differing reading abilities that exist at every grade level, especially among at-risk students or ELLs. Because such differences actually increase as children grow older, the range of reading abilities among students in the sixth grade has been estimated to be a little more than seven years!

Other advantages of this approach include the development of a healthy rapport between child and teacher as instruction is adjusted to the specific needs of each learner and the equally important reduction of comparison and competition among readers. Small groups can be formed as needed for specific purposes when several students encounter similar and temporary problems in one area, such as contextual analysis. The key concepts underlying this approach are self-motivation, self-selection, and self-pacing.

However, the same concepts also relate to a major requirement of the individualized reading approach: a well-stocked library. In addition to the books in the media center, the classroom library should always have at least 100 carefully selected books that cover a wide range of reading abilities and genres and that are changed monthly. Such a collection is both difficult to house in a convenient corner and costly (in terms of either time or money) to gather. Furthermore, it leads to a second important prerequisite of individualized reading: the time-consuming effort by the teacher to select wisely the broad range of books that can then be promoted to allow for the most beneficial student-teacher conferences. Children can be urged to read a variety of subject matter only if the materials are available on those same subjects and written on reading levels and in styles suitable for elementary students.

Other weaknesses of the individualized reading approach include the substantial recordkeeping required of the teacher (even with computer assistance), the stressful requirement that he or she plan a minireading program for each student, the difficulty of interpreting the program to parents who are more familiar with the basal series and accustomed to their features and procedures, and the problem of insufficient skill development due to insufficient time. Finally, some children may lack the self-discipline needed to benefit from this approach; it becomes increasingly difficult to implement as the range of reading abilities, the size of the class, and the number of remedial readers grow.

Nevertheless, those teachers who wish to use individualized reading in their classrooms should become comfortable with the core of the approach: the student-teacher conference. It is held once a week and is generally centered around the book(s) the child has selected for his or her own reading. Although one may sometimes skip a few steps in the suggested format for such conferences, they usually proceed as follows and run approximately 12–15 minutes:

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1. Greet the child and converse briefly about a matter of personal interest, such as soccer (1/2–1 minute).
2. Ask the child what he or she has read since the last conference and what is being presently read, inviting a brief account of the reading material (1–2 minutes).
3. Have the child read a passage aloud from the book he or she is presently reading, noting vocal fluency as well as the difficulty of the material. Offer positive feedback (2 minutes).
4. Check up on a skill reviewed or introduced at the last conference and correct the assignment (see Step 6). Offer praise for any gains made (2 minutes).
5. Review or introduce a new skill (3 minutes).
6. Make a follow-up assignment to be checked at the next conference (1 minute).
7. Help the child set goals for completion by the next conference, telling him or her when that conference will be and which skills will be practiced (1 minute).
8. If a new book must be chosen soon, offer several suggestions, describing each book briefly (1 minute).
9. Compliment the child on progress already made and then dismiss him or her (1/2 minute).
10. Complete record keeping of items covered during the session before motioning the next student to come to the conference table (1 minute).

The individualized conference is also a critical part of the *readers' workshop* used especially in the upper-primary and intermediate grades when students are able to read independently. Much like the writers' workshop (to be discussed in detail in Chapter 10), the readers workshop has the following components: (1) *focus lesson* or minilesson by the teacher on some important aspect of reading (e.g., introducing a new literary genre) as the whole class listens; it may end with the teacher giving a status-of-the-class report to remind students of their individual progress; (2) *independent reading time* as children read quietly and the teacher conducts individualized conferences with some of them during each workshop session to discuss issues that have emerged during their reading; and (3) *sharing time* when the whole class listens as three or four volunteers discuss what they are reading, possibly raising queries about certain characters or events. Readers' workshops are generally held weekly for about 45 minutes.

Language Experience Approach

The **language experience approach** (LEA) is founded on the theory that reading and comprehending written language are extensions of listening to and understanding spoken language. The experiences of the children form the basis of reading materials because it is widely believed that everything that students read in early reading instruction should be as relevant to them as possible and certainly the children's own language is the most meaningful of all to them.

Girls and boys first dictate to the teacher (in groups and then individually) and later themselves write stories about field trips, school activities, and personal experiences outside of school. These stories and other student-produced materials become the texts for learning to read. Many are in the form of charts.

The *rationale* for the approach has been stated as thus:

I can think about what I have experienced and imagined.

I can talk about what I think about.

What I can talk about, I can express in some other form.

Anything I can record, I can recall through speaking or reading.

I can read what I can write by myself and what other people write for me to read.

A typical procedure for introducing the LEA approach involves the following steps (Tompkins, 2006):

1. The teacher selects a purpose and provides an experience that is stimulating for students of this age and background. Ordinary daily activities such as read-alouds and the care of classroom pets can serve to promote LEA. The experience must always be one of interest to the children and one that they have observed/heard or participated in and comprehend.
2. The teacher and children discuss the experience so they can focus on it, review it in greater detail, generate words, organize ideas, and use vocabulary specific to that subject.
3. The teacher records the dictation. Whether it is done originally on the board (and later copied) or on chart paper from the start, the teacher does the printing in front of the children. Furthermore, the language of the students is recorded exactly as it is dictated as much as possible so that they see that their thoughts can be written down and stored for later reading. However, the words of children who speak a dialect should be recorded in conventional spelling. When students take turns dictating sentences, some teachers wisely put the child's initials after his or her contribution to promote pride—and participation.
4. The teacher reads the chart aloud to remind the children what they have written and also to demonstrate how to read with expression. Then the class reads the chart chorally as the teacher moves his or her hand under the words. Next, volunteers are chosen to read parts of the chart aloud. Finally, the class and teacher read the chart chorally.
5. The children examine the text with the teacher's help. They can match word cards to words on the chart or use sequence sentence strips and match them to the line of the chart. They can participate in writing activities related to the content of the chart.
6. The teacher prepares word cards for each child's word bank after becoming convinced that that child has learned to read those words by sight. The word bank is the student's own sight vocabulary collection.
7. The teacher plans skills instruction as needs occur naturally, whether it is as simple as directionality of print or as complicated as punctuation.

Slowly the students begin to write their own experience stories, sometimes in small groups and sometimes individually, choosing at times to illustrate them. They may even decide to read them to their classmates or share them with their family members. Their word banks grow, as the teacher facilitates the development of their sight vocabulary.

The main advantage of the language experience approach is its stress on reading as one part of the language arts process. It also uses the interests and language of the students as the avenue for teaching reading, which makes it both appealing and successful. Still another advantage is its low cost; there is no expensive program to purchase. Finally, skills are presented to the child as they are needed and applied in contextual reading, not in isolation.

On the other hand, the approach has definite limitations. There are no printed content standards of skills to develop, which may lead to a haphazard method of reading instruction. There is a lack of both vocabulary control in general and the systematic repetition of new words in particular. Teachers spend a considerable amount of time preparing charts and worksheets concerned with past experiences as well as on planning activities to motivate future experience stories. Children are apt to become bored rereading the same stories and other passages again and again and may even memorize some of the sentences rather than actually read them.

Briefly, the language experience approach can be used at any elementary grade level by seasoned teachers interested in integrating their writing and reading programs. It has been well received as an appropriate way to present reading to beginning readers in the kindergarten–lower grades and with struggling readers in the intermediate grades, primarily because of the vocabulary and interest levels of the materials. Most important, it has been especially useful with at-risk students and ELLs.

Balanced Approach

A **balanced approach** combines skills development with literature and language arts activities. The program strikes a *balance between* the bottom-up (or skills based) approach and the top-down (or literature-based) view, a *balance between* explicit teacher-directed instruction and student-centered discovery learning, and a *balance between* authentic forms of assessment and standardized norm-referenced assessment (Harp & Brewer, 2005). The core of the program is literature, but students read a variety of materials, including **leveled books**—books that an educator has examined and then determined how difficult it would be for children to read based on features such as font size, number of pages, number of illustrations, text structure, and complexity of vocabulary—and basals as well as trade books; skills are taught both directly and indirectly; and literacy is regarded as reading AND writing, which are tools for learning in the content areas.

Furthermore, reading instruction involves word recognition and identification, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension; writing instruction involves learning to express meaningful ideas and apply the conventions of spelling, grammar, and punctuation. The goal of the balanced approach is to develop life-long readers and writers (Fitzgerald, 1999; Weaver, 1998).

The balanced approach is supported by the International Reading Association (1999) that believes teachers must know a variety of teaching methods as well as ways of combining them successfully. Furthermore, in 2002 in its concern for diverse classrooms, the IRA stated that teachers must be capable of making decisions about how to provide that balance of reading instruction.

Models of Reading

Five models of reading view reading as an active, constructive process. Three of these, which are older and have been documented by more research, are the bottom-up (or subskills) model, the top-down (or whole-word) model, and the interactive model that includes both of the others (Weaver, 1994). A fourth and newer model is the transactional model, which elaborates on the interactive. Finally, there is the balanced approach, which many teachers have adopted.

The *bottom-up model* is promoted by educators who view reading as a set of subskills that must be mastered by students and integrated to the extent that children use them automatically. Stepwise, they first must learn to recognize letters, then words, and finally words in context. When they combine a high level of accuracy with speed and proceed to read aloud with good expression, children are exhibiting automaticity (Samuels, 1994). Students therefore should not be taught using a method that considers reading as though it were a single process. Instead, for instructional purposes, it is best to think of reading as a set of interrelated subskills that must be practiced in the context of actual reading. Students can build automaticity only by spending considerable time reading, preferably with meaningful material that is easy and interesting.

This part-to-whole model is involved in the basal reader approach, which has been the dominant method to reading instruction for many years. Controversy, however, has developed regarding which set of skills to teach and in what order, and some teachers' overemphasis on learning skills as a goal in itself rather than as a means to an end has been criticized.

The *top-down model* is the whole-to-part model that teaches children to recognize words by sight, without any analysis of letters or sounds. It emphasizes the critical role that the reader's mind plays in comprehending the text. The child uses three cue systems—graphophonic, semantic, and

syntactic—and makes educated guesses about the meaning of the reading passage. The advocates of this approach view reading as a holistic experience and believe that what the reader anticipates profoundly affects how she or he actually perceives the text message. Educators, however, have criticized this approach because they believe that children really need to learn word recognition skills (as discussed in Chapter 7) for processing language to become independent readers.

The *interactive model* combines the bottom-up and top-down models and views the reading process as an interaction between the readers and the text. It assumes that students are simultaneously processing information from the materials they are reading (i.e., the bottom-up model) and information from their background knowledge (i.e., top-down model). Gove (1983) states that recognition and comprehension of printed words and ideas result from using both types of information.

The interactive model is based on the *schema theory* (Rumelhart, 1984), which explains how readers receive, store, and use knowledge in the form of *schemata* (the plural of schema—structures for organizing knowledge in the mind). The objective of this approach is to teach students strategies that will help them develop into independent readers who can monitor their own thinking while reading and link prior knowledge to the new material in their text. Consequently, reading becomes a highly individualized process as each reader's schemata and the ability to use them are personal and unique. The more prior knowledge that a reader possesses, the more likely he or she is to construct meaning from the printed text.

The *transactional model* is an elaboration of the interactive model. It takes into consideration the students' intentions when they read and how those can affect understanding (Kirshner & Whitson, 1997). Developed by Rosenblatt (1978), it implies that each child is engaging in a construction of meaning when he or she is reading, and reading is a process in which social, environmental, and cultural factors affect the reader's personal interpretation of the printed page.

When reading is viewed as a transaction or event, the stance that the reader takes must be considered: Is he or she eager to obtain information from the printed page (i.e., the efferent stance), or is the reader reading for entertainment or enjoyment (i.e., the aesthetic stance)? Using the latter stance, students can concentrate on thoughts and feelings that a particular book evokes, for example, Bunting's *Night Tree* (1994). Children adopt an efferent stance when reading Maestro's *The Story of Money* (1995). However, almost every reading experience evokes a balance between aesthetic and efferent reading (Rosenblatt, 1991), and students move back and forth between the two stances, with one exception: Literature should be read primarily for the aesthetic experience.

The balanced approach to reading instruction is the model that most teachers use today. One large-scale survey revealed that 89% of elementary teachers believe in this approach because it combines skills development and literature with "language-rich experiences" (Baumann, Hoffman, Moon, & Duffy-Hester, 1998, p. 642).

In a balanced approach literature is the core of the program, and readers develop the ability to take both efferent and aesthetic stances in reading. While word recognition skills are taught both directly and indirectly, reading is seen as more than word identification. Similarly, writing is not merely spelling, grammar, and punctuation, although these remain a part of effective writing as writers must be able to express their meaningful ideas clearly. Together with writing, reading constitutes literacy, and students use both as tools for learning in content areas. While there must be a balance between comprehension and word recognition, the latter is viewed as a means to enable comprehension and never as an end in itself. Finally, the goal of a balanced approach is to develop life-long readers and writers (Baumann & Ivey, 1997; Weaver, 1998).

Guided Reading

Guided reading involves children in small homogeneous groups who read the same text at about the same level of difficulty. Clay (1991) suggests that students should be able to read 91 to 94% of the words in a particular text for a guided lesson to be successful.

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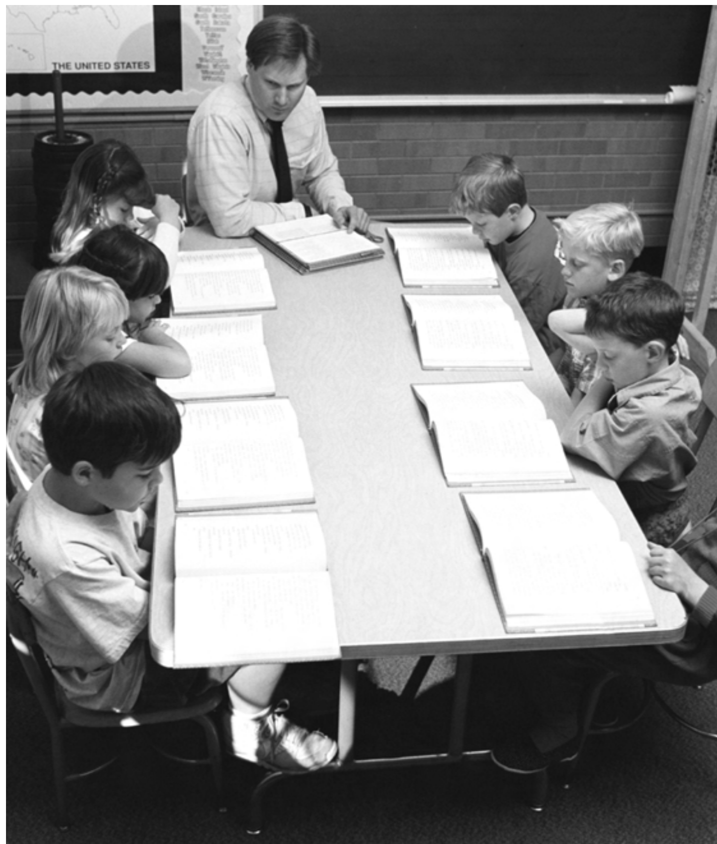
Characteristics

The teacher directs guided reading sessions, and skills and strategies are taught in context. Grouping is a critical part of the program, with groups ranging in size from three to eight children who have similar needs in areas such as oral reading skills, vocabulary development, and comprehension. Grouping is flexible, not permanent, and only in response to a specific need so students may work in one group for one reason (e.g., fluency) and in another group for a different reason (e.g., structural analysis). They are grouped and regrouped regularly as their needs change. Sessions run an average of 15 to 25 minutes.

The teacher wisely chooses books that are slightly beyond the students' independent reading level, according to Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, and provides each child with his or her own copy.

Critical to guided reading sessions is direct instructional support, also known as *scaffolding,* whereby the teacher's support is slowly withdrawn and more autonomy is transferred to the children as they gradually demonstrate strategic behaviors in their own learning activities. Also crucial to guided reading is classroom management because the other students must be able to work independently while the teacher works with small groups. Aides or parent volunteers may work with the other children on journal writing or other literacy activities as they help monitor the class.

Finally, the goal of guided reading is for students to be able to read silently and independently (Fawson & Reutzel, 2000; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, 2001).



Guided reading allows teachers to model reading skills and strategies in context to children reading the same text at about the same level of difficulty.

Steps in Guided Reading

The teacher should follow these steps. First, choose an appropriate book for the small group, collecting a copy for each child. Second, introduce the book to the group to activate prior knowledge, using key vocabulary as the group takes a "picture walk" or "book walk" through the book. Third, have the children read the book independently while providing support to help individuals deal with unfamiliar words, sentences, or ideas. Fourth, provide opportunities for children to respond to the book through questions and discussion. Fifth, involve students in one or two teacher-directed exploring activities such as vocabulary review or word work. Sixth, provide opportunities for independent reading by placing copies of the book under discussion in a book basket or classroom library (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

Leveled Books

It is critical that the teacher find books at the proper reading level for each of the guided groups. If children work with a book that is at their *frustration level*—the level at which the material is so difficult that they are unable to comprehend it—they begin to acquire negative attitudes about reading, about their teacher, and even about school in general. Students learn better with a book written at their *independent level* at which they read with comprehension and ease. The best choice is a book written at the students' *instructional level* that they can read with sufficient help from their teacher while simultaneously promoting their reading abilities and love of reading. For some students the material used during guided reading will be at their independent level while others will profit from reading a book at their instructional level. By asking each student to read aloud four or five sentences, the teacher can check the child's fluency level and then place the student in a group using the most appropriate leveled books.

Leveled books are those that an educator has examined and then determined how difficult it would be for a student to read based on features such as font size, number of pages, number of illustrations, text structure, and complexity of the vocabulary. The texts for guided reading may be either fiction or nonfiction (informational). Sometimes teachers work together to level the books in their collections. Fountas and Pinnell (1999) have leveled books specifically for guided reading. Below is listed a sampling of their fiction trade books from A to Z (easiest to most difficult):

Burningham's *Colors* (1985)

Hutchins' *Rosie's Walk* (2005)

Rylant's *Henry and Midge: The First Book* (1996)

Allard's *Miss Nelson Is Missing* (1993)

Cleary's *Ramona's World* (1999)

Paterson's *The Great Gilly Hopkins* (1987)

Myers' *Scorpions* (1995)

Comprehension: Categories and Influential Factors

There are four major categories or levels of comprehension that readers need to achieve. They generally operate together so that students can totally understand the text under scrutiny, as Miss Lucci's first graders learn to do in Vignette 6.1.

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VIGNETTE 6.1 Paper Hats and Comprehension

During a communications elective she took in her junior year in college, Miss Lucci studied *Six Thinking Hats*, a short book describing techniques for considering an issue or problem. Different colors represented various approaches, such as brainstorming new ideas, articulating the objective facts, or sharing personal feelings. Although the book was written as a business management tool, its strategy could work in a variety of settings. As she considered how to build reading and listening comprehension among her first-grade students, she wondered if "thinking hats" might hold a clue.

Miss Lucci decided to introduce the new process as she presented a new story. On Wednesday afternoon she gathered the class for a reader's circle and displayed a "big book" copy of *A Bargain for Frances*, a critically acclaimed "I Can Read" book published in 1970 (and one of Miss Lucci's own favorites from childhood). The class had previously enjoyed *Bread and Jam for Frances* and followed along attentively as Miss Lucci read the new adventure.

The class enjoyed the charming story about Frances and her tea set. After finishing the book, Miss Lucci pointed out some new words in the text and complimented the children for their attempts to read portions along with her. She knew Frances's fun rhyming songs made the story enjoyable for her young students.

"You are working so hard on your reading," she said. "I'm proud of you. We will read the book again so you can practice even more. But first we're going to try something new."

Miss Lucci reached into the large basket next to her chair and pulled out a pile of construction paper hats in six colors. While the children watched and wondered, she walked around the semicircle handing a hat to each child. She had intentionally made four or five hats of each color to ensure an approximately equal distribution among her class of 27 students.

"I'm going to ask you some questions about the book," she said as she returned to her seat. "But before I ask the question, I'll say a color. Only the people with that color hat may answer that question. Let's try one. White hats, what color tea set did Frances want?"

"Blue!" Ashley blurted out before remembering her own hat was also blue. She smiled sheepishly.

"It's okay, Ashley," said Miss Lucci. "That was a practice one. Remember to wait for your group. But you're correct, Frances wanted a blue tea set. White hats, let's try another one: What did Frances's mother tell her before Frances went to play with Thelma?"

She waited while the five children sporting white hats pondered the question.

"She said to be careful," Daryl answered after a moment.

"Good job!" Miss Lucci answered. "Okay yellow hats, here's one for you. Why did Frances's mother say to be careful?"

"Because Thelma was mean," Tonya answered.

"Thelma did do some mean things," Miss Lucci agreed. "Yellow hats, give me an example of Thelma behaving badly."

The yellow group successfully identified one of Thelma's tricks, and Miss Lucci proceeded to question the blue, green, red, and purple hats in turn. While the children wearing the white and yellow hats

received the easier knowledge and comprehension questions, she asked more sophisticated application and evaluation questions as the lesson continued.

"Red hats, what is another way the story could have ended?" she asked. A moment passed as the children thought.

"Frances and Thelma could get in a big fight and knock each other down," Anna said.

"Well, yes," Miss Lucci replied with a smile. She always enjoyed the answers to this type of synthesis question. "What's another way the author might have ended the book?"

After 15 minutes Miss Lucci asked the students to remove their hats and trade with a neighbor.

"Does everyone have a new color hat?" she asked. "Good. Now we're going to read the story together again, one last time. At the end I'll ask just a few more questions. But remember—now you're in a new group."

The children followed along as Miss Lucci read the book a second time, enjoying the story's humor even more because of their increased comprehension. As she finished the book and began asking another round of questions, the new approach seemed to have real benefit. Although some of the evaluation questions still challenged the young readers, their understanding of the picture book already exceeded the literal questions she'd started with. As an added bonus, the children had demonstrated increased motivation to listen and read actively as she shared the story a second time. She attributed their increased attention to competitiveness—none of the groups wanted to miss a question.

Teachers always tell students to "put on their thinking caps," she thought to herself. *Who knew they were made of construction paper?*

Levels of Comprehension

Literal or text-explicit comprehension: Often described as "reading on the lines," this level requires the reader to process information that is explicitly stated in the text, to understand what the author specifically reported. For example, the reader may be called on to recall or locate precisely stated main ideas, details, directions, or sequences of events. Literal comprehension requires a lower level of thinking skills than the other three levels because the reader must only recall from memory what the book said. Still it is the foundation for content-area courses and remains the most frequently tested comprehension category. It consumes the bulk of instructional time in the classroom and is the level that struggling readers and ELLs strive to attain.

Interpretive or text-implicit comprehension: Described frequently as "reading between the lines," this level demands that the reader process ideas based on what was read but not explicitly stated in the text. It involves understanding what the author meant, and the reader must call on his or her intuition, personal experiences, and imagination as the foundation for making inferences. Children may be asked to predict outcomes, find main ideas, determine word meanings from context, draw conclusions, make generalizations, or infer cause-and-effect relationships. Behaviors commonly associated with critical thinking are involved in text-implicit comprehension, which is said to separate the active reader from the passive reader.

Furthermore, the overall pattern of interpretive processes activated during reading may affect the amount of text actually remembered (van den Brock, Rhoden, Fletcher, & Thurlow, 1996). That is the reason that teachers should pose thought-provoking questions to stimulate classroom discussion and thereby promote interpretive comprehension.

Critical or applied comprehension: Sometimes stated as "reading beyond the lines," this level requires readers to integrate their own thinking with the facts from the text. Consequently, they evaluate and apply information and ideas from the printed page to their own experiences and judgment. It concerns skills such as the abilities to distinguish fact from opinion and fantasy from reality and to detect propaganda techniques, as discussed in Chapter 5.

Creative comprehension: This most advanced level calls for readers to develop original ideas based on the pages read. They must use divergent thinking skills as they ponder new or alternative solutions to problems or crises presented by the writer. They can write new endings to familiar folktales such as Early's *Sleeping Beauty* (1993), Kirsten's *Puss in Boots* (1992), or Galdone's *The Elves and the Shoemaker* (1984) or epilogues to chapter books such as Monjo's *The Drinking Gourd: A Story of the Underground Railroad* (1983), Gardiner's *Stone Fox* (1997), or Paulsen's *Hatchet* (1995).

Factors That Influence Comprehension

Several factors are known to influence the comprehension of all readers, but to varying degrees depending upon the individuals and situations involved.

The first of these factors is *purpose,* which focuses the readers' attention and helps them understand the text. While teachers routinely help students focus in the classroom, self-directed purpose is the better route to promote the feeling of competency that leads students to independent reading both in and out of school. In the classroom, children can make individual predictions about their reading (e.g., Do tsunamis occur in only one part of the world?), and those predictions then become purposes under the careful direction of their teacher. Outside of school, students may wish to assemble a toy for a younger sibling, and thus reading the directions for that task also has a clear purpose. In both instances, comprehension is stronger when the purpose is specific.

The second is *being an active reader* because active readers, according to Blachowitz and Ogle (2001), think as they read. They use their prior knowledge (which stems from previous experiences) and their vocabulary as well as reading strategies to help them comprehend what they are reading presently.

The third factor that affects comprehension is the *type of text* being used. Children who have had experience with story texts may encounter difficulty with expository or informational materials. Therefore, they should be introduced to these materials early and review them often as they usually contain concepts, vocabulary, and format that are markedly different from those found in storybooks. Teachers must keep in mind that the less familiarity students have with expository texts, the harder it is for them to comprehend such books.

The fourth factor affecting comprehension is the *quality of literacy instruction*. The Center for the English Language Arts at the State University of New York, Albany (1998) has identified effective literacy instructors as those who engage the students productively and keep them on task about 90% of the time and use and review/reteach explicit skills instruction in vocabulary, word recognition, writing, and spelling. They schedule daily reading and writing for at least 45 minutes in each skill. They emphasize literature by reading aloud, maintaining a classroom library, and discussing books and author studies; they integrate the curriculum by making direct connections between reading/writing and the content areas. These instructors manage all aspects of classroom learning, including planning, scheduling, and student behavior, and they maintain an environment characterized by fair rules, high expectations, and a learning atmosphere. They offer supportive instructional context by monitoring student accomplishments and establishing realistic but challenging expectations. Finally, they promote self-monitored learning by teaching students how to organize their work habits and use their time productively.

The fifth factor influencing comprehension is *interest*. When children are curious about a subject, sometimes to the point of absorption, they will read to seek information and discover answers

to satisfy that curiosity. Some students can even be described as hyperlexic—their interest in reading is strong enough to qualify them as avid readers.

The final factor is *independent practice* preceded by adequate instruction. Life-long readers evolve from students who are allowed to choose their own books, read them independently in class daily, and have the opportunity to discuss and share them with classmates. In Vignette 6.2, Mrs. Baker discovers a new and innovative way to help struggling intermediate readers—by having them practice reading to canine "friends."

VIGNETTE 6.2 A Struggling Reader's Best Friend

As long as she could remember, Mrs. Baker had loved dogs. As a child she enjoyed playing with her border collie named Mac, and since high school she'd volunteered with local animal shelters and cruelty prevention organizations.

During these years of involvement with animals, Mrs. Baker learned of several groups in the community that organized "therapy dog" programs. These nonprofit groups worked with private owners to train dogs for nursing home visits, outings to the children's hospital, and special events. The program provided hours of joy to residents throughout the city.

But Mrs. Baker was most intrigued by another initiative of the therapy dog programs. Last week, while chatting with some friends at her veterinarian's office, she learned that many owners also train their dogs for reading assistance.

"The dogs can't read, of course," her friend Laura laughed. "They sit next to the child while he or she reads aloud. Kids love it and studies show that their reading markedly improves."

Mrs. Baker's fourth-grade class had several struggling readers, including a few ELLs. When she learned that "PAWS," the nearby therapy dog organization, would work with her classroom at no cost, she immediately scheduled an introductory visit.

On Tuesday afternoon, about 15 minutes before the dogs arrived, Mrs. Baker asked Mariana, Ricky, and Darika to follow her to the learning center.

"Don't worry—you're not in trouble!" she said to them quietly as they left the classroom and walked down the hall. "I have a treat for you."

Mrs. Baker knew that inviting the dogs into the large classroom would be distracting (if fun) for the other students and would minimize the chance for these three children to benefit from the special experience. She intentionally scheduled a parent aide to stay with the class for an hour. With Margaret in the classroom supervising independent reading, Mrs. Baker could observe this new activity without interruptions.

When they reached the end of the hall, Mrs. Baker pushed open the door to the learning center and motioned for the three students to sit at a table next to her.

"I know how hard you're working to become better readers," she said. "Today I have some friends who are going to help you."

"More tutors?" Darika asked a little tiredly. Darika's family emigrated to the United States from India just a few years earlier, and she had worked with many private tutors to catch up on her studies.

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"No tutors," Mrs. Baker promised. "In fact . . ."

Just then the door opened, and three smiling adults entered leading three quiet dogs on leashes.

"Dogs?" Ricky asked. "Cool! This is way better than tutors!"

"Right," Mrs. Baker answered. "Each of you can choose a book to read and a reading area here in the learning center. You may sit anywhere you want, but it might be more fun to sit on the floor or on some pillows, because each of you will get to sit with one of these dogs. Go ahead and pick your books and your spots, and then I'll explain what happens next."

The children excitedly scattered to three corners of the room, where brightly colored pillows and cushions invited relaxed study. As the children got settled, Mrs. Baker met briefly with the three adults to determine which dog might be most suitable for each child.

"All the dogs are trained to be reading assistants," said Carla, a petite blond woman with an enormous St. Bernard named Jack. "Each of them should do equally well with any child."

Looking at the well-trained dogs Mrs. Baker had to agree. She dispatched Carla and Jack to Darika's corner, asked Mike and his golden retriever Duke to sit next to Ricky, and pointed Jackie and her adorable schnauzer Mitzi to where Mariana sat waiting.

"Take a few minutes and meet your new friends," Mrs. Baker instructed the students. "After you feel comfortable with your dog, their owners will leave. But first ask any questions you have. When you are ready to sit with the dog by yourself, raise your hand."

After a few moments each of the children sat with one hand raised, delighted at the furry companion curled up next to them.

"That was quick," Mrs. Baker said, smiling at the three dog owners.

"It usually is," Mike said. "We'll be back when the lesson's over. Have fun!"

The three adults left the room and headed to the teacher's lounge where Mrs. Baker had provided coffee and cookies for their hour-long wait. She turned to the students and dogs remaining in the room and announced the next task.

"Each of these dogs is trained to sit next to you and listen while you read to them," she said.

"But they can't understand what we're reading," Ricky said.

"That's true," said Mrs. Baker. Actually, that was one of the best parts of this experiment; the dogs would serve as nonjudgmental listeners that wouldn't be tempted to interrupt or correct pronunciation the way even the best-intentioned human helper might.

"They won't know what you're saying, but they love to sit with kids and listen," she continued. "I want each of you to quietly read your book out loud to your dog. Raise your hand if you get stuck or have trouble with a word. Remember, this is just a way to practice reading, so work at your own pace."

Although the children seemed a little dubious about reading to dogs, this was definitely more fun than their usual reading practice. The three students opened their books and slowly began reading aloud.

Despite the studies proclaiming the success of this approach, Mrs. Baker was prepared for the hour to show few results. At the very least it would be another hour of reading practice and a fun surprise for these hard-working students.

But as the minutes ticked by, Mrs. Baker was amazed at the students' progress. Just a few minutes into the session, little Darika leaned back against the broad expanse of Jack the St. Bernard. She contentedly snuggled with Jack and read him *A Chair for My Mother*, the second-grade-level book she'd chosen.

Meanwhile Mariana sat cross-legged in her corner animatedly sharing an adventure from *Encyclopedia Brown, Boy Detective* with Mitzi, who managed to look interested in the mystery story. In another corner Ricky haltingly read a chapter from *Chocolate Fever*, occasionally looking up to make sure Duke was paying attention. Mrs. Baker smiled to see Duke playfully nudge Ricky each time the boy began daydreaming.

As the hour ended, Mrs. Baker permitted the children to close their books and spend the last few minutes petting the dogs before the owners came back to claim them. She considered the experiment an unqualified success. Each of these children would need further practice in independent and oral reading; one hour could not make struggling readers into experts. But already she noticed improvements in their fluency. The dogs' presence prompted the children to read with more interest, more speed, and less distraction than they'd previously demonstrated. Just as important, the friendly dogs made the entire experience more relaxed and more fun, positioning reading as a skill to enjoy rather than a chore to dread.

Mrs. Baker hoped Margaret could return every Tuesday afternoon; with a scheduled parent assistant, these canine assistants could visit every week.

Comprehension Strategies

Concluding that comprehension can be taught, a report of the National Reading Panel (NRP, 2000) listed several strategies that have proven through research to be highly effective in teaching students to become active readers who understand what they are reading.

- *Self-monitoring:* This strategy assists students in determining when they understand what they have read and when they do not, as well as what strategies they can use to help them understand. It is considered a form of *metacognition* (or thinking about thinking) in which children can ask themselves these questions: "Is what I'm reading making sense?" and "What can I do to be certain that I know what I am reading?" One effective means that teachers can use to present self-monitoring to students is a demonstration of "think-alouds," following specific strategies outlined by Frey and Fisher (2007): (a) choose a short piece of text running from one to four paragraphs, (b) let the text tell you what to do after you have read it several times, (c) keep the think-alouds authentic by using a conversational tone, (d) think like an expert in the subject area under discussion to show students that your understanding of content is affected by prior knowledge, (e) tell students what strategies you are using to help you comprehend the material (e.g., highlighting important phrases or terms), and (f) resist the urge to "over-think" or else the meaning of the passage will be lost.
- *Cooperative learning:* When students work together to discuss comprehension strategies such as "think-alouds," they begin to take more control over their own learning.
- *Story structure:* Once students understand the elements of a story—plot, characterization, setting, theme, style, and point of view—they are better able to comprehend the story and recall it. One means that teachers can use to increase students' understanding of story structure is to introduce them to a plot relations chart that has four headings: "Somebody" (character), "Wanted" (goal), "But" (problem), and "So" (solution) (Schmidt & Buckley, 1991).

- *Summarizing:* This strategy assists the students in identifying critical facts from the text or story. Summarizing demands that readers decide what it is important, how to condense it, and how to rephrase the information. Children must comprehend that summarizing involves the ability to identify and connect main ideas, eliminate unnecessary information, and recall what they have read. An experienced teacher knows that asking students to summarize what they have read is a useful, significant, but difficult assignment, whether verbally or in writing, so he or she may choose to model the strategy (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2003). Summarizing is explored further under the Reading in the Content Areas section of this chapter.
- *Graphic organizers:* Visuals that help students organize concepts and ideas, graphic organizers aid in the development of knowledge of text structure. They also aid in the summarization of text, as well as the visual representation of information (Meddey & Jefferies, 2000/2001). Bromley and Irwin-Devine (1999) have identified 50 **graphic organizers**, including flow, tree, and Venn diagrams; concept and compare/contrast maps; and matrices. Three steps are involved in teaching the preparation of graphic organizers: First, the teacher chooses a particular graphic organizer that matches the text under scrutiny and models its outline for the students. Second, student groups complete the modeled example. Third, students individually complete the graphic organizer with teacher assistance, if needed. Hoyt, Mooney, and Parkes (2003) warn, however, that a graphic organizer that does not match the text will actually hinder students' comprehension so teachers must be cautious about their selection.
- *Activating prior knowledge:* This strategy helps readers draw on previous experiences to better understand the new material they are reading. Teachers can assist students in recalling what they already know about the topic, author, or text structure. They can also take the class on a picture walk through a storybook and have readers draw predictions about the plot and characters.
- *Question generating and question answering:* This critical strategy is discussed fully in the next section.

Implementing Strategies for Instruction

It is recommended that only one of the research-based strategies listed above (from the National Reading Panel, 2000) be taught at a time and that children then practice that strategy in a variety of texts before being introduced to another (Barone, Hardman, & Taylor, 2005).

Directed comprehension instruction includes explaining the strategies involved, providing practice in using them, assessing (and if necessary) reteaching them, and finally demonstrating how they can be applied. Such instruction takes place before reading, during reading, and after reading. *Before* the children begin their reading lesson, the teacher can first promote comprehension by making certain the boys and girls are reading materials of an appropriate level of difficulty, with slower readers often needing to spend more time at a particular plateau than one basal series can accommodate and with advanced students doing most of their reading in content texts and other materials because they can read through their basals so quickly. Then the teacher can enhance comprehension by making sure the children have appropriate background concepts by using the introductory activities in the series to activate or build on prior knowledge, whether the topic is river rafting or life in Borneo. Finally, the teacher can promote comprehension by making certain that girls and boys understand that the purpose of reading is to obtain meaning and that what they already know can help them attain that purpose. Children should be made aware of what the teacher is doing and understand why he or she is doing it so they can gradually be taught to accept responsibility for attaining comprehension.

During the reading lesson, the teacher can identify trouble spots such as vocabulary or figurative language and instruct students in how to address those problem areas. (The questions that accompany each guided reading lesson in most basal series may be helpful in this task.) However, the teacher's role is not complete until each child assumes an equal share of the responsibility for comprehension. Students must be taught to monitor their reading and to identify problems and solve them. Skilled readers can use one or more of the following techniques when they come to a problem sentence: Ignore and read on, suspend judgment, form a tentative hypothesis, reread the current sentence, reread the previous context, or go to an expert source.

After the reading, the teacher should focus instruction on summarizing the entire text and on relating it to other information or to other books or stories. All students, and particularly ELLs and slower readers, need this kind of comprehension activity. Other activities include having children write their own stories or participate in discussion comparing the most recently completed story to other stories or contrasting characters found in various assigned selections. One activity that does *not* belong in this segment of the reading lesson is answering a series of detailed, literal questions. Students must not get the impression that reading is just an exercise in factual recall.

Strategies Used by Good Readers

Whether before, during, or after reading, good readers use some strategies in one or more of the stages in the reading process. Not every strategy will be used in every text nor will the order of application be identical in each instance. Consequently, skilled readers choose individually those that work most effectively for them for each text they read. According to Barone and colleagues (2005), *before reading* good readers set a purpose for reading and activate prior knowledge, making connections between real-life experiences and textual content. They predict what the text might be about and then decide which strategies would be useful while reading the text. Finally, they develop mental images and use graphic organizers.

During reading, good readers monitor their own comprehension as they continually make and revise their predictions. They identify the main idea and answer and generate questions. Having determined which strategies would be appropriate for reading this text, they are also able, however, to incorporate remedial strategies when the text does not make sense. Finally, they are able to make inferences, develop mental images, and summarize.

After *reading,* good readers discuss the material, answering and generating questions. They share information after deciding whether or not it is worth remembering. If it is important and should be learned, they use graphic organizers to help them organize the information and identify the main idea. Finally, they develop mental images and summarize the information.

Questioning: A Critical Comprehension Strategy

Among the strategies that the National Reading Panel (2000) concluded have proven to be effective in teaching children how to become active readers (who comprehend what they are reading) is one that is particularly critical: questioning. This strategy covers both question-generating and question-answering skills.

Because they believe that it helps them assess student learning, *teachers traditionally use questioning more than any other strategy for developing comprehension*. Furthermore, the majority of questions at the elementary school level are not only teacher-generated but also explicit and require only one correct answer, thereby qualifying as "lower-order questions." As a result,

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Honing questioning skills helps children become active readers, provided that the questions push them to analyze and evaluate information.

numerous studies have concluded that students have little practice in answering implicit or "higher-order" questions and are virtually unprepared for answering those that require critical thinking.

Both lower-order and higher-order questions are included in a classification system commonly referred to as **Bloom's (1956) taxonomy (in the cognitive domain)**: Frey and Fisher (2007) consider this taxonomy to be the cornerstone in the description of questions used in the classroom. The six levels require increasingly more difficult questions, as follows (with examples):

Level One: Knowledge (requiring information)

Where did . . .

List the . . .

What was . . .

How many . . .

Name the . . .

Level Two: Comprehension (understanding meaning)

Give me an example of . . .

Describe what . . .

Tell me in your own words…

Make a map of…

What does it mean when…

Level Three: Application (using learning in new situations)

If you had been there, would you…

How would you solve the problem in your own life?

What would happen to you if…

Would you have done the same as…

On the Internet, find information about…

Level Four: Analysis (using the ability to see parts and relationships)

What kind of person is…

What is the main idea of the story?

What message was the author trying to tell us?

Which part of the story was the most exciting? Funny? Sad?

Which events could not have happened in real life?

Level Five: Synthesis (using parts of the information to create an original whole)

What would it be like to live…

Pretend you are…

Write (or tell) a different ending.

What would have happened if…

Design a…

Level Six: Evaluation (making judgments based on criteria)

Could this story really have happened? Why or why not?

Select the best….Why it is the best?

Which person in the story would you like to meet? Why?

Was…good or bad? Why?

What do you think will happen to….Why do you think so?

Levels One and Two (knowledge and comprehension) are sometimes referred to as literal or explicit questions because the answers to them are found verbatim in the text. They are also the easiest questions to write. Students who have experience with such lower-order questions do well on tests of basic skills because those tests reflect that type of questioning. Knowledge and comprehension questions comprise the bulk of those asked in the typical classroom.

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If, however, students are consistently asked only literal or recall kinds of questions, they will focus their attention on remembering details and not on analyzing or evaluating the information and storing it for future use. Instead, they will remember the information only until the questions have been asked (and answered) and then they will promptly forget it. On the other hand, if students are asked to read between or beyond the lines, they will be forced to integrate new input with what they already know about the topic, and therefore, they will retain much of the information. Students will be able to focus attention on significant aspects of the text if they can relate the information from the text to the most appropriate set of background experiences or prior knowledge, develop a coherent framework for remembering or understanding the text material, and practice cognitive skills that they will ultimately be able to use alone (Pearson, 1990).

The following lesson represents an effort to combine those skills:

1. The teacher begins with questions that focus student attention on appropriate background experiences or prior knowledge; for example, *Have you ever been to the municipal zoo? What do you know about that zoo?* Should prior knowledge or experience not be available or developed, the teacher might attempt a longer question; *In our story today about South America, there is a family of jaguars. A jaguar is somewhat like a house cat, somewhat like a wolf, and somewhat like a sports car. Let's see whether we can figure out how a jaguar is like all of those.*
2. The teacher than encourages students to use prior knowledge, whenever possible, to predict what might happen in the story; for example, *If you were lost in the forest as the jaguar family in our story is, and needed food, how would you get it?*
3. The teacher sets up a purpose that lasts as long as possible throughout the story; for example, *What did the jaguar family try to do to solve their problem?*
4. During the guided reading (which occurs during the reading in the primary classroom and immediately after the reading in the intermediate grades), the teacher asks questions that tie together the significant elements in the "story map" (the outline on the board that is a causal chain of events); for example, *What was the first event that caused the family to get lost?.*
5. Immediately after the reading, the teacher returns to the purpose-setting question(s), as suggested in Step 3 above. The teacher can reword or rephrase the question; for example, *Can you tell me in order the three things the jaguar family did to find food?*
6. In discussing the story, the teacher uses this sequence for generating questions: (a) retells the story map at a fairly high level of generality, (b) takes students beyond the literal stage by asking them to compare this story to their own experiences or to another selection or by asking them to speculate about the reactions of the characters when placed in a different situation, and finally (c) returns to the selection in an effort to appreciate the talent of the author. Activities useful for item (a) would include reenactment, discussion, production of a time line of events, or (beginning with students as early as third grade) the development of a flow chart of events. Questions appropriate for item (b) would include, Do you think that the jaguar family acted prudently? Why or why not? and What would you have done if faced with a similar situation? Questions illustrative of item (c) would include, What is your favorite part of the selection? What made you choose that part? and How does the author tell you that the father jaguar feels proud? (Pearson, 1990).

Going beyond the student answering of teacher-generated queries, the true objective of questioning is to move it from the teacher (an external source) to the student (an internal source) (Frey & Fisher, 2007). In that way the student can use the power of questioning as a means for monitoring, extending, or modifying his or her own learning.

An effective means for accomplishing student-generated questioning is the question-answer relationship strategy (QAR; Raphael, 1986). It covers the classifications established by Pearson and Johnson (1978) of text-explicit (Right There), text-implicit (Think and Search), script- and text-implicit (Author and You), and, finally, script-implicit (On Your Own). Teachers can model the QAR framework and typically present it in one lesson.

QAR should not be confused with Bloom's taxonomy of questions because it does not classify questions in isolation as the latter does. Instead, it considers the reader's background knowledge as well as the text because comprehension is influenced by both (McIntosh & Draper, 1996).

Two final but crucial elements to questioning are *wait time* and the *teacher's response to the student's answer.* The first has been defined as the amount of time between the teacher's asking a question about the passage read and allowing a student to respond. Providing sufficient wait time is particularly significant in the area of higher-order questioning because children must have adequate time in which to organize complete, original, and thoughtful answers. The amount of wait time affects both the quantity of the student response (i.e., the actual number of words used in the answer) and the quality of that response (i.e., the level of thinking demonstrated). Furthermore, if teachers respond too quickly after the student begins to answer, those answers are more often apt to be incomplete. Consequently, by increasing the duration of wait time, teachers elicit answers that will probably be clearer and more elaborate, and at the same time, their own replies to the student will be more appropriate.

In addition, teachers should be open to many possible responses to a particular question and not have a preconceived notion of one "correct" answer. They should give the student immediate feedback when he or she gives a correct answer to a comprehension question to reinforce learning.

Teachers' responses to student answers fall into three categories: acceptance, clarification, or rejection—with rejection being defined as a teacher response that could damage the student's self-image and his or her subsequent learning or participation in class discussion. Should the student response be only partially correct, teachers should recognize all its correct aspects while simultaneously directing the student toward the correct response. Even when the child gives an incorrect answer that is irrelevant or incongruent to the teachers' question, it is important that teachers respond in a accepting manner and, at the same time, redirect the child's thinking by clarification measures such as *Let's go back to the story to check that fact* or *Let me ask the question in a different way*.

Teaching Questioning Strategies

Teachers need to pose questions and then show the students how these questions may be answered by modeling aloud the thinking process used to come up with the responses. Such modeling includes sharing with readers what kinds of clues are found in the selection itself as well as how to integrate previously known information (or prior knowledge). By sharing his or her own knowledge as a teacher and by drawing on the background and knowledge of students, the teacher can make the task of presenting comprehension skills much more manageable.

By beginning lessons with questions that focus attention on what students already know about the topic and by encouraging them to use that knowledge to make predictions, teachers are helping the children deal with the questions in a more familiar framework. It is not enough to assign students to read a story and then have students answer questions about it. Instead, each teacher should have children share their thinking processes by going back to the assigned story and inquiring, "How did you know that? Which words gave you the clues that led you to this answer?" Although students who give incorrect responses are often redirected through clarification measures, teachers generally overlook the value of questioning students who give correct responses as well. When such girls and boys respond to questions, they not only reinforce the thinking process of individuals but model that process for their classmates.

Sorting Out Comprehension "Problems"

Many so-called comprehension problems are not really failures to understand the author's meaning (Harris & Sipay, 1990). Instead, the child who fails to respond properly to an assignment involving comprehension may actually be encountering other difficulties that masquerade as comprehension problems. Teachers should therefore consider the following questions before sending the student back for more directed practice in comprehension skills:

- *Was the reader able to decode most of the words in the selection?* If the child seems generally confused about an entire selection, the teacher should ask him or her to choose a particularly difficult passage and read it aloud. Then, if the problem seems to involve decoding, the teacher should try to ensure that the student's next assignment involves material at a more acceptable level of difficulty.
- *Did the reader understand the specialized vocabulary of the selection?* When the code is too complex, decoding cannot occur. So the teacher must give careful attention to technical vocabulary and introduce such words prior to their appearing in a reading assignment. Students will then be able to recognize those words in print quickly and be alert to important points in the assignment before reading begins.
- *Did the reader follow directions?* Teachers must be certain that children understand directions before starting a task. One way to demonstrate that understanding is to have the directions rephrased by a student or aide or to have the class do one sample question together as a written guide for everyone to follow.
- *Did the reader's experiential background interfere with comprehension?* When the reader's background is substantially different from that of the author's or teacher's, a "wrong" interpretation of a paragraph or passage is possible even though that interpretation is completely understandable in terms of the reader's own experience. Consequently, the teacher should evaluate readers' background through informal discussion before making reading assignments and then either change the assignment or introduce the necessary background or concepts. (This question is one of special importance when working with ELLs.)
- *Was the reader interested in the selection?* Comprehension is likely to be enhanced when students have questions that they are seeking to answer or when the teacher introduces the assignment in a way that piques their curiosity or arouses their enthusiasm.
- *Was the reader able to write the answer correctly?* Teachers must be able to distinguish between a child's spelling, handwriting, or grammatical problems and his or her comprehension problems. One way to handle the situation is to ask for oral answers if written responses are not decipherable. Student dictation, especially with ELLs or primary grade children, may help too.
- *Did the reader understand the question?* Sometimes misunderstandings arise from the form in which the question is asked, not from a student's lack of knowledge. When a student can repeat a question but still does not understand it, the teacher should either rephrase the question or have another student explain what was asked.
- *Could both the teacher's and the student's answers be correct?* Or could the child's answer be right and the teacher's wrong? As mentioned earlier in this chapter, teachers must be open to the possibility of several correct replies and not restrict themselves to answers suggested in the manuals or those based on personal interpretations of the author's message or viewpoint. Although a teacher cannot accept every answer a child offers, he or she should examine each reply on its own merits.

Reading in the Content Areas

Reading in the content areas demands the acquisition of **study skills** so that the learner can obtain, organize, and present information. And although the acquisition process may not appear to be especially exciting, the skills themselves are critical if the reader is going to be able to do anything with what he or she has decoded and comprehended. Study skills enable children to find and interpret information from numerous sources and to synthesize it to achieve a resolution of a question or the solution of a problem. In other words, study skills are valuable *learning tools,* and many students do poorly in school because they have never learned to use them.

Study skills should be taught in both the primary and the intermediate grades. Although the need is more obvious at the intermediate level, primary teachers can help students become aware of the need for such skills (e.g., learning to read simple maps and picture or circle graphs). Teachers at both levels can introduce study skills or techniques during a content class when the need arises or during a reading class. However, students will sense the need for such skills and retain the techniques longer if they are given a chance to apply them, preferably in the context in which they will use them. Consequently, the wise teacher periodically sets aside time during a content class to present a study skill that the children will need to use immediately in that lesson. She or he knows that *teaching study skills in isolation is unproductive and artificial.*

Reading in the content areas should include lessons in study methods, reading flexibility skills, locational skills, and organizational skills.

Study Methods

Best taught through teacher modeling followed by a whole class walk-through, SQ3R is the classic and most widely used study technique (Anderson & Armbruster, 1984). It consists of five steps:

1. *Survey:* Children read the table of contents, the introductory and concluding paragraphs, and the headings and marginal notes; then they inspect any visual aids such as maps, graphs, or illustrations. The purpose is to obtain an overview of the author's intent and the format of the section, article, or chapter. Sometimes unfamiliar vocabulary poses a problem for some students and should therefore be defined promptly. This step enhances prior knowledge.
2. *Question:* Children change each heading and subheading into a question before that section is read. The purpose is to focus reader attention, to offer a means for self-checking comprehension, and to provide a goal for reading. This step requires the most explanation from the teacher.
3. *Read:* Children read in order to answer the questions formulated in Step 2. The objective is to notice how the paragraphs are organized (to help readers recall the answers they uncover). Students should also be warned not to overlook any important information not included in the questions already developed and should be cautioned to make brief notes during the purposeful reading time.
4. *Recite:* Many consider this step to be the most critical of the five. Children give the answers to each of the questions formulated earlier and do so without looking back at the material. Recitation may be done subvocally or in some more permanent written form such as note taking or informal outlining. The primary purpose is to self-check how well the material has been understood and recalled. The check is really accomplished by the student's expressing the author's language in his or her own words. A secondary purpose is to help memorize the information.

5. *Review*. Children reread to correct or verify the answers given during the recitation just completed. The purpose is to recall the main points of the selection, article, or chapter and to understand the relationships among the various points. This step involves spending considerable time to go over the material promptly (both after reading and at varying intervals) to ascertain how well the material is still understood.

A second study method, especially appropriate for children in Grades 4 through 6, is the RESPONSE approach (Jacobson, 1989). While it asks students to generate questions, much like SQ3R, it adds the additional step of listing important points as well as new terms and concepts. It demands interaction between the student and the teacher as the student completes a form and the teacher "responds" either in class discussion or in writing. The areas to be completed are Important Points, Questions, and New Terms/Concepts/Vocabulary/Names—all with page numbers. By including page numbers, this study method is efficient for both teachers and students.

A third study method was developed expressly for use in mathematics, especially with word or story problems, and is titled SQRQCQ (Fay, 1965). It consists of six steps:

1. *Survey:* Children read through the problem quickly to obtain an idea of its general nature.
2. *Question:* Children must determine what is being asked in the problem.
3. *Read:* Children read the problem slowly, paying close attention to specific details.
4. *Question:* Children decide which mathematical operations must be carried out and, in some instances, in which order are these operations to be completed.
5. *Compute:* Children must perform the computations decided upon in Step 4.
6. *Question:* Children must examine the results of the computation performed in Step 5 and determine whether they have reached a correct and reasonable answer.

Reading Flexibility Skills

Reading flexibility has been defined as adjusting one's rate of reading to one's purpose for reading, to one's prior knowledge, and to the nature of the reading matter (Harris & Sipay, 1990). It therefore becomes one aspect of monitoring one's reading comprehension and is a concern during silent reading only. Children in the *intermediate* grades should be introduced to four skills: skimming, scanning, study reading, and surveying.

Skimming: Skimming is a quick type of superficial reading that is completed in an effort to get the overall gist of the material. Girls and boys generally skim at about twice the normal reading rate, selectively eliminating nearly one-half of the material because they are in a hurry and therefore willing to accept lowered comprehension. They may read only the topic sentence and then let their eyes drift down through the paragraph, picking up a date or name. Their intention is to get the main idea from each paragraph with only a few specific facts.

Instances when skimming is useful include sampling a few pages to determine whether the material is worth reading, looking through reading matter to judge whether it contains the kind of information the reader is researching, and previewing a text chapter before settling down to serious study in an effort to get a general idea of its scope. In this kind of skimming, the student must have a particular purpose in mind.

Scanning: One special type of skimming is called scanning and involves rapid reading to locate answers to very specific questions concerned with matters such as names, dates, or telephone numbers:

Which state produces the most corn?

What are the leading industries of Chicago?

Who was Hannibal?

Who accompanied Armstrong on the first trip to the moon?

When was the first television broadcast?

What is the telephone number of this school?

Two common occasions that call for scanning are using a dictionary and using an index or television schedule. Children quickly identify with such practical needs and sense the obvious importance of scanning.

Study reading: Study reading differs from scanning because it demands a deliberate pace that allows reflection and rereading. Readers must contrast text concepts with their own prior knowledge. The emphasis is not on simple recall but on comparing and evaluating information. Students preparing to write a thoughtful essay are not concerned with reading rate because the quality of their reflection is more important than the speed with which it can be completed.

Surveying: The purpose of surveying is to preview a large piece of text to get an overall sense of its contents. A long chapter or entire book should be surveyed before it is read. A survey might include an examination of the table of contents and the index, but not detailed reading. Chapter books of fiction as well as novels would be surveyed differently from nonfiction materials. Therefore, the rate for reading surveys depends upon the type of texts and the purpose for reading them.

Locational Skills

Students need to be able to access necessary materials quickly to be able to engage in such activities as inquiry learning. Exemplary elementary classrooms are those in which students are encouraged to regard themselves as researchers (Allington, 2002). They therefore approach learning through inquiry, which promotes independent learning and the discovery of knowledge. It is critical, however, that students have experience with nonfiction writing and reading before attempting the inquiry process for gathering information. The teacher must also instruct the students in how to use locational aids in books and how to access databases (Tower, 2000).

Book Utilization Skills

Children should gradually learn the parts of a book that are useful in locating needed information, whether it is a basal reader or a trade book or even a content area textbook. Such a skill is especially valuable for ELLs or struggling readers.

In the upper primary grades children are usually introduced to three printed parts of a book (e.g., title page, table of contents, and the glossary) and to two items in the physical makeup of a book (e.g., the spine that helps readers locate books on the shelves and the text or body of the book). Older students can learn about the preface/introduction, the appendices, the footnotes, and bibliographies. All students should become aware of the importance of graphic media and know how to interpret charts, tales, diagrams, and other aids. Some textbooks even contain marginal notes that further serve children as guides to reading.

Because of the nature of reference tools in the content areas, the one part of a book that demands special attention is the *index.* Children must acquire the ability to locate and use indexes. They can begin by comparing the tables of contents to the indexes in several books to learn that, while the table of contents lists the broad areas of a book's coverage, it is the index that offers a more detailed and alphabetical listing of the names and items mentioned in that book, along with the page numbers where they can be found. If a desired entry cannot be located, a synonym for the original word must be determined, thereby promoting thinking skills on the part of the students.

Learning to use such reference books as a dictionary (which can be introduced as early as the primary grades) has already been discussed in Chapter 5. Another common reference book is an encyclopedia, now often offered electronically in a CD-ROM or DVD-ROM format accessed by a computer. Learning how to use an encyclopedia is considered a skill for older students since its articles, according to Roe, Smith, and Burns (2005), are "very difficult for many intermediate grade readers to comprehend" (p. 358). Classes that use other reference sources (such as newspapers, periodicals, brochures, and pamphlets) to obtain information for an inquiry report will require special instruction by the teacher.

Accessing Computer Databases

Students in most elementary schools today need to be able to access information from a computer database, defined as an electronic file cabinet in which large amounts of data or information are stored in an organized fashion in separate file folders on a computer. The data are categorized and indexed for easy retrieval. Many databases can be accessed through the Internet.

Organizational Skills

As students prepare reports in content areas, they need to organize the facts and ideas they encounter in their reading of reference books, periodicals, and content-area texts together with material retrieved from the Internet. Sometimes teachers at the elementary level overlook the importance of presenting the three organizational skills of outlining, note taking, and summarizing because they mistakenly believe that such skills are more appropriately presented to students in middle school.

Outlining

Organizing factual material that has been collected and assimilated requires a high level of classification ability. Although the purpose of an outline is the more significant point for students at the elementary level to learn, some attention should still be paid to promoting an understanding of the structure of an outline. Such a structure or form usually reflects a hierarchy of ideas or a sequence of events much like the following example:

I. A main topic demands a Roman numeral.
  A. A subtopic requires indentation and a capital letter.
    1. A detail needs indentation and an Arabic numeral.
    2. Another detail on the same subtopic needs indentation and an Arabic numeral too.
  B. Another subtopic requires indentation and a capital letter as well.

II. Another main topic demands another Roman numeral.
  A. Subtopic
    1. Detail.
    2. Detail.
  B. Subtopic
    1. Detail.

Two types of outlines important for students to understand and develop are the *sentence outline* (in which each point is a complete sentence) and the *topic outline* (which is composed

solely of key words and phrases). Teachers should present the sentence outline first because the task of choosing key words and phrases is a difficult one for most children.

While students need to begin learning to outline in the intermediate grades, the prerequisite skill to outlining is identification of the main idea and supporting information, which should be taught beginning in the last half of the first grade. Children can be told that the first step in forming the framework or outline is to extract the main ideas or topics from the material they have heard or read and then list them with Roman numerals in sequential order. Next, they list subtopics beside capital letters, which are placed below the main topics they support. Details subordinate to the subtopics are indented still further and preceded by Arabic numerals.

It is recommended that the use of a *formal* outline be presented before teaching children to prepare *informal* outlines, which of course do not contain the various numerals and letters.

Note Taking

Once students understand outlining, it is easier for teachers to present the note-taking process in which children actually learn to make meaningful notes in their own words about information from a textbook or speaker. They can be helped to develop some class standards for note taking: read or listen first before writing down only the important facts in your own words, rechecking for accuracy whenever possible; and use underlining or highlighting to indicate emphatic ideas or key words and phrases, but never record every word, excepts for laws, rules, and direct quotations.

In the early grades, note taking is generally a group activity, culminating in an experience chart. In the middle and upper grades, however, students can be encouraged to keep individual notes (sometimes written on index cards) during a field trip or as they listen to a resource speaker, watch a video, or work in cooperative learning groups. Both Laase (1997) and Seitz (1997) suggest using sample paragraphs and the overhead projector to model note taking for the class.

Summarizing

Summarizing occurs as part of the reading program starting in the first grade. Each experience story, for example, is a small summary, and during social studies lessons, the conclusions reached after class discussions are often summarized on the board. This skill demands the ability to choose the most significant points in a report, article, story, or chapter and to relate these points in a sequential order.

Rules essential to summarization have been identified as follows (Brown & Day, 1983):

1. Delete trivial or unnecessary information.
2. Delete material that is important but redundant.
3. Substitute a superordinate term for a list of items (e.g., *pets* for *dogs, cats, hamsters*).
4. Substitute a superordinate term for the components of an action (e.g., write "Scott went to Chicago" instead of "Scott left the apartment. He took a shuttle that went to the airport. Finally, he boarded the plane for Chicago.").
5. Select a topic sentence.
6. Invent a topic sentence if one is not given.

Children can use the two deletion rules (1 and 2) at an early age but fifth (and even seventh) graders have difficulty with the generalization and integration rules (3 and 4) and with the topic sentence rule (5). The invention rule (6) is the last to develop (Brown & Day, 1983).

During think-aloud sessions, the teacher should model the deletion of nonessential material, the selection of superordinate terms, and the construction of topic sentences. Then the class must

practice each of these rules, beginning with many easy materials before advancing to longer passages. Understanding and using the rules of summarization have proved to have a positive effect on reading comprehension.

Fluency

Listed as one of the five essential components of reading instruction by the National Reading Panel (2000), **fluency** has been defined by the NRP as "the ability to read with speed, accuracy, and proper expression" in contrast to word-by-word reading. While attention to fluency is appropriate for all grade levels, it is regarded as one of the most neglected areas of reading instruction (Samuels, 2002).

Fluency plays a critical role in overall reading development because, according to Wolfe and Nevills (2004), the final step in reading is decoding automacity so that the brain's conscious processing functions are completely available for understanding print. In addition to identifying words with sufficient *speed,* fluency is related to reading comprehension in two other ways: Readers must have the ability to *group words into phrases* that can be understood and to read *accurately* so they understand the text message (Barone et al., 2005). Nevertheless, fluency and comprehension are separate processes, and it has been noted again and again that some children are fluent readers who do not understand what they are reading.

Numerous factors affect reading fluency, including the following: (a) the student's level of automacity and accuracy in decoding, which means that the reading brain can access phonological, morphological, orthographical, and perceptual processing at the letter and word level (Wolfe & Nevills, 2004); (b) the student's level of orthographic knowledge, which means that students are able to recognize high-frequency words and also process less familiar words; (c) the brain's rate of processing words as children read, with some students being fast processors (and therefore fluent readers) and others, not; (d) the student's background or interest in reading the text; and (e) the student's familiarity with the text, which is directly linked to the number of times he or she has read it.

Strategies That Promote Fluency

A critical element in the development of fluency is feedback, which occurs when the teacher, aide, or more capable student offers a helpful reaction to the efforts of an ELL or other at-risk reader.

For material related to this concept, go to Video Clip 6.2 on the Student Resource CD bound into the back of your textbook.

The most highly rated approach for developing fluency is *guided, modeled, repeated oral reading* (National Reading Panel, 2000). The teacher should choose to model fluent reading only from passages that are within the word recognition and comprehension ability of the struggling reader, and then have him or her imitate that model. This process should be repeated several times from the same passage until the struggler comes closer and closer to the model provided. The experienced teacher does not interrupt any read-aloud efforts but supplies any word over which the struggling reader is hesitating.

Others who can help students with repeated oral reading are aides, cross-age tutors, community volunteers, as well as parents who have been given passages in take-home book bags. Basically, when girls and boys read and reread the same material three or four times with assistance and support, it helps them improve in their ability to phrase text confidently, read difficult words, and comprehend the material.

Another well-recognized strategy for fluency is the *development of a large sight vocabulary.* Basic sight words that comprise more than 60% of the words in beginning reading materials and more than 50% of words used in materials for the upper grades are the most common words used in the English language. Flashcards have been deemed useful for practice in reading single words (Levy, Abello, & Lysysnchuk, 1997) when those same words are later found in the text.

A third recommended strategy for fluency is *independent reading*. This helps students increase their reading rate through silent reading at an appropriate reading level. Children who read more do better in school, and therefore school is where many books of different levels and interests are or should be available. Surprisingly, the National Reading Panel (2000) concluded, after examining only a few studies and most of those lasting less than a year, that there was no evidence to support more independent reading in school! Most teachers would definitely disagree with the NRP's conclusion as they continue to stock classroom libraries of different genres to meet the needs of all their students and especially those who are ELLs or struggling readers.

Other strategies that are also useful in improving fluency are the following:

- *Readers theater,* which allows the children to practice oral reading by dramatizing a story (or part of a story) they have read. Though this reading does not require memorization, costumes, or sets, it is usually planned and practiced. Students develop fluency in reading through rereading of text in preparation for a performance (Martinez, Roser, & Strecker, 1998/1999). Readers theater is discussed at length in Chapter 11.
- *Choral reading* (also known as choral speaking), whereby students read along in a group led by the teacher. The teacher first models reading the selected material and then has a small group practice with her or him several times. There are various formats for choral reading, depending upon the experience and age of the children. Patterned or predictable books and poetry are read with attention to using voices to orchestrate the reading. As with readers theater, choral speaking is discussed at length in Chapter 11.
- *Paired or partner reading,* in which a more capable reader is paired with a less fluent reader as they take turns reading aloud to one another. Materials chosen are generally more difficult than those read independently. Another possibility is to pair two students of equal reading ability to practice rereading a text after listening to the teacher, aide, or another adult read it initially. A further option is to pair children from different grade levels, (e.g., a second grader and a third grader) both of whom have fluency problems and allow them to work on second-grade-level passages (Wolfe & Nevills, 2004).
- *Tape-reading,* in which an audiotape of a book read by a fluent reader is played to a nonfluent reader. The latter first follows along, pointing to each word, and then reads along with the tape. Eventually that reader will read the book independently without the tape.
- *Neurological impress method,* which involves the teacher and the nonfluent student reading aloud from the same material simultaneously. However, the teacher reads slightly faster than the child to keep the reading fluent. Usually the teacher is seated next to the student, focusing his or her ear near the ear of the child and pointing to the words as they are read (Johns & Berglund, 2002).
- *Echo reading,* in which a less fluent reader immediately imitates or echoes the performance of a more fluent reader. Student A reads a sentence and then Student B reads the same sentence. This "first-and-follow" routine continues throughout the passage until both students can reread the passage individually at an increased rate. Another version of echo reading begins with the teacher distributing copies of the selection he or she will read aloud; after the teacher read-aloud, the children echo the selection that introduces new words and concepts.
- *Language experience approach,* which involves the teacher writing down on a chart what the children say and then reading and rereading it with them to promote knowledge about letter-sound relationships and sight words. Later the students individually may wish to walk over to the chart rack and read *and reread it for themselves, particularly if their names or initials complete each sentence.*

A sample lesson plan incorporating the concepts introduced in this chapter appears on p. 194.

Assessment

Regardless of the approach used to teach reading, a comprehensive assessment should be done to ensure success for the learner. Along with standardized testing, classroom assessments are critical in guiding and planning reading instruction. Each student's phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and comprehension skills should be assessed. These assessments will determine the student's independent and instructional reading levels. Along with these formal assessments, informal information gathered through interviews, work samples, demonstrations, and anecdotal records complete the student's reading portfolio. With this information the teacher can determine each student's needs and plan accordingly.

Working With English Language Learners

Beginning ELLs: Beginning ELLs need social, emotional, and academic support when learning to read. Using chanting, discussions, realia, and word cards for labeling, prior to reading the text, helps the students acquire enough vocabulary orally and in print that they can be successful when reading from the book. The teacher and the other students can provide the assistance necessary for the student to practice.

Early intermediate and intermediate ELLs: Along with all of the beginning-level support, early intermediate and intermediate ELL students may benefit from audiotapes of the text. Following along in the text as they listen to the words read in the listening center will help them hear the sound of the language and also reinforce vocabulary. For additional support and practice the students may take small tape recorders and tapes home to listen to books and lessons.

Early advanced and advanced ELLs: Early advanced and advanced ELLs continue to be successful when visuals and concrete experiences are used to enhance verbal lessons and instructions. In reading this translates to readers theater, plays, and videos of the text.

Practical Instructional Activities and Ideas

- *Daily read-alouds:* The teacher should read aloud quality literature daily. This not only models the reading process but demonstrates the joy of reading for pleasure.
- *Dictated stories:* The teacher can have the students dictate stories as a class. The teacher charts the stories. The students then read the story back as the teacher points to the words.
- *Alphabet books:* The teacher can read aloud alphabet books, which are available for all ages. This will help the students make the connection between the letters and the sounds and develop some concepts necessary for reading success.
- *Oral presentations:* In science and social studies, the students may work in small groups to develop and present an oral presentation to the class on the current area of study. This activity offers a low-stress environment and provides plenty of opportunity for concept and vocabulary development.
- *Learning centers:* The teacher sets up literacy learning centers, such as make-a-book and poetry play, to encourage language development through interaction and play.
- *Predictable books:* The teacher reads predictable books with a repetitive pattern to establish and reinforce the relationship between letters and sounds.

LESSON PLAN 6.1 Daily Fluency Practice

Objective

- Students improve their fluency skills.

Materials

- Fluency passages marked with word counts
- File folders
- Colored pencils
- Graph paper to record results
- Overheads of a passage and the graph paper

Content Standards

Language Arts: Word Fluency

- Students understand the basic features of reading.
- Students apply this knowledge to achieve fluent oral and silent reading.

Day 1

- Teacher talks to students about improving reading fluency by comparing it to riding a bike. What was it like when you first learned to ride a bike? What happened? How did it feel? How did you get better? How did you improve your skills and confidence? Fluency is the same. It takes time and practice.
- Teacher models stapling graph paper in the folder for charting word count, writing a name on the tab, and decorating the folder to personalize it.
- Students complete their folders.

Day 2

- Teacher reviews the discussion of fluency and chooses a student to help model the process.
- With the passage on the overhead, Teacher reads it and the student helper watches the clock to tell Teacher when to stop reading (one minute).
- The student helper puts a slash after the last word Teacher read.
- Teacher shows the class how to count the number of words that were read in the one minute.

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- Teacher shows the student how to record on the graph the number of words read.
- Teacher chooses reading partners to ensure compatible reading levels and personalities and informs students.
- Using a practice passage and a practice graph (not the one in their folders) the partners each take a turn reading, timing, and graphing.

Day 3

- Teacher passes out the reading folders and passage for the rest of the week.
- Students read and record their fluency counts.
- The class discusses the process, and the students take the passage home to practice for homework each day.
- Reading begins with a partner fluency session each day. Progress is shared with the parents. Teacher provides new passages based on improvement and need.

Integration Across the Curriculum

Science, Social Studies, and Health

- Students complete K-W-L charts to access prior knowledge of a new topic in social studies, health, and science.
- For each unit of study, students create word banks of new vocabulary words along with illustrations to remind them what the words mean.

Literature

- The teacher uses pieces of children's literature as mentor text to model decoding and comprehension strategies.
- Students use stories in basal readers and big books as shared reading.
- Students read and discuss literature in book clubs or literature circles.
- The teacher uses exemplary children's literature as read-alouds.

Visual and Performing Arts

- The students create a word wall as they come across new words in their reading.

Physical Education

- Students play "Reading Relay." Divide the class into teams for a relay race. Each student takes a turn running across the field to the team bucket. Each pulls a strip from the bucket, reads and follows the directions on the strip, and then runs back to the line to tap the next person. The first team that is finished wins.

Music

- Students read the lyrics of songs to notice their similarity to poetry.
- Students learn and perform songs that reinforce language concepts ("The Synonym Song").
- Students sing songs to reinforce phonemic awareness ("Apples and Bananas").

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Parents as Partners

- *Reading at home:* Parents should model good reading practices by reading books for personal pleasure as well as manuals for different kinds of information.
- *Shared print*. Parents should share magazines and newspapers and encourage the child to find familiar words in advertisements.
- *Visiting the library:* Parents should visit the children's room at the local public library, help the child obtain a library card and book(s), and then make going to the library a weekly trip.
- *Environmental print at home:* Parents should read with the child cereal boxes, menus, place mats, coupons, and other forms of print.
- *Traveling vocabulary:* Parents should take the child on visits and trips, using specific terms when discussing the experience, such as *gate, flight attendant, pilot,* and *luggage.*
- *Environmental print outside:* Parents should point out and read familiar signs, such as "Burger King," "Wal-Mart," and "Stop," and encourage the child to read them too.
- *Books on tape:* Parents can listen with the child to stories or books recorded on audiotapes, which are readily available at the local library; this is especially helpful for ELLs of any age.
- *Promoting pride:* Parents can encourage a positive school attitude by posting notes from school, "refrigerator art," and "papers to be proud of."
- *Study space:* Parents can provide a quiet place for the child to read without distractions.

Student Study Site

The Companion Web site for *Language Arts: Integrating Skills for Classroom Teaching*
www.sagepub.com/donoghuestudy

Visit the Web-based study site to enhance your understanding of the chapter content. The study materials include chapter summaries, practice tests, flashcards, and Web resources.

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Anticipation Statement Answers

1. Agree
2. Disagree
3. Agree
4. Agree
5. Disagree
6. Agree
7. Disagree
8. Agree
9. Agree: As long as the students have interesting books, spend time reading, and discuss the reading with their peers, they will learn to comprehend regardless of the quality of instruction. However, knowing the comprehension strategies and watching demonstrations of those strategies in use improve comprehension.
10. Agree: Students do not need to be asked questions to be actively engaged with a text. However, consistent attention to minute facts from the reading trains the reader to shift his or her attention from the big idea or story to focusing on details.