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A Handbook of Strategies for Making Intertextual Connections During Read-Alouds to Build Schema for Elementary School Students

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ABSTRACT

A HANDBOOK OF STRATEGIES FOR MAKING INTERTEXTUAL CONNECTIONS DURING READ-ALOUDS TO BUILD SCHEMA FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

By Andrea Kay Manion

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A handbook has been created to give primary teachers strategies for building valuable schema and an awareness of text connections during their read-aloud time. The handbook consists of an introduction, ten read-aloud lessons which include some student responses, reviews and classroom activities for twenty read-aloud books, as well as a critique of popular web sites for quality children's literature. Current literature and research regarding schema theory, intertextuality, and reading aloud were reviewed.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Overview

The Washington State Legislature adopted the Education Reform Act of 1993 to create established learning goals for all Washington students. These goals were intended to raise academic standards across the state (Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2003). The accountability system to hold school districts accountable for academic improvement is a criterion-referenced test called the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) (OSPI, 2003).

The reading goal for Washington students meeting state standards is 74.6%. During the 2001-2002 school year 65.4% of fourth grade students met the standard. As a result, State Superintendent Terry Bergeson published a scoring analysis for the 2002 WASL regarding the reading scores. The Superintendent provided a list on the OSPI web site, which included the strengths and areas for improvement in reading instruction in order to help raise fourth grade WASL scores. They are as follows:

Strengths: Summarizing texts, interpreting vocabulary, making predictions about the reading, low number of “blanks” on constructed response items.

Areas for Improvement: Making connections within and among texts, analyzing author’s purpose and understanding information text features (OSPI, 2003).

This project will focus on making connections within and among text and analyzing the author’s purpose when reading aloud.

Statement of the Problem

According to this analysis elementary students need to improve their ability to connect and analyze text. This falls into the category of reading comprehension. The Essential Academic Learning Requirements (which are the guidelines for instruction) (OSPI, 2003) have benchmarks for teachers to use and guide their instruction.

The following Benchmarks deal with comprehension:

- 2.1 *Comprehend important ideas and details*
- 2.2 *Expand comprehension by analyzing, interpreting, and synthesizing information and ideas*
- 2.3 *Think critically and analyze authors' use of language, style, purpose and perspective.* (OSPI, 2003).

The elements that are important for this project are within these benchmarks for grade four. For example, 2.1 goes on to explain that students must be able to “Connect previous experiences and knowledge when reading to understand characters, events and information.” and “Make inferences and predictions based on the reading text.” 2.2 says the reader must “Find similarities and differences in stories; understand relationship between parts of a text or between two simple texts.” Finally, 2.3 asks students to “Apply information gained from reading to give a response and express insight” (OSPI, 2003).

Purpose of the Project

In order to improve WASL scores students must improve their comprehension skills, especially those that ask them to make essential text connections and analyze the authors they are reading about. Therefore, the purpose of the project is to create a handbook for elementary teachers in grades K-3, which provides ideas to help students

activate schema and make intertextual connections, in order to build comprehension. The strategies will be incorporated during read-alouds, an already popular way for elementary teachers to teach content.

Limitations

The review of literature cites only qualitative studies. There is a need for quantitative studies as well. The handbook activities deal mostly with fictional read-alouds. This handbook would have been stronger with more activities from nonfiction read-alouds.

Definition of Terms

Comprehension. When readers construct meaning from the text. “Readers think not only about what they are reading but what they are learning” (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000, p. 9).

Fairy Tale Variants. Several versions of the same fairy tale (Sipe, 2001)

Intertextuality. “Connecting of texts with other texts to form a dialogue with the total texts of the reader’s experience” (Kristeva, 1980, as cited in Cairney, 1990, p. 480).

Read-aloud. “Reading orally to students with expression and fluency” (Opitz & Rasinski, 1998, p. 49).

Shared Reading. “A learner or group of learners, sees a text, observes an expert reading it with fluency and expression, and is invited to read along” (Routman, 1991, p. 33).

Schema. “A schema is a generic concept, composed of our past experiences, and our knowledge organized and filed away” (Rumelhart, 1980, as cited in Gunning, 2002, p. 354).

Text-to-self. “Connections that readers make between the text and their past experiences or background knowledge” (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000, p. 21).

Text-to-text. “Connections that readers make between the text they are reading and another text, including books, poems, scripts, songs, or anything that is written” (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000, p. 21).

Text-to-world. “Connections that readers make between the text and the bigger issues, events, or concerns of society and the world at large” (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000, p. 21).

Chapter Two

Review of the Literature

Introduction

Reading can be defined as the process of constructing meaning from text.

Readers use their prior knowledge or *schema* and the context of the reading situation in order to interact with the information suggested by the written language. Reading is fundamental to literacy (Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2003).

The purpose of this project is to introduce read-aloud strategies that will encourage elementary students to make intertextual connections, in order to build valuable schema. The literature being reviewed will incorporate books and articles on the subjects of: schema, intertextuality, and read-alouds. This review will attempt to show that making intertextual connections during read-alouds will help students build their schema which in turn will help them develop better vocabulary and comprehension skills.

Schema

According to (Gunning, 2002) “A schema is a generic concept, composed of our past experiences, and our knowledge organized and filed away (Rumelhart, 1980).

Schemata are based on our background of experiences. We have schemata for persons, places, objects and events” (p. 354). We also have schemata for cars, school experiences, apple pie, and horseback riding. The more detailed our experiences, the richer our schema is for that particular memory. Anderson (1984) describes schema as a theory already accepted by many of the scholars in education. He explains, “ According to the theory, a reader’s *schema* or organized knowledge of the world, provides much of the basis for comprehending, learning, and remembering the ideas in stories and texts” (469).

Activating schema is important for comprehension. When a person is reading a text, they are making critical connections between the written text and their prior knowledge in order to comprehend the material. The importance of schema is impressed upon us by many researchers in the field today (Anderson 1984, Blair-Larsen & Williams 1999, Dowhower 1999, Goodman 1986, Gunning 2002, Kucer 2001, Moustafa 1997).

Gunning (2002) believes, "Comprehension depends, to a large extent, on the adequacy of our schemata for world knowledge, and our schemata for text" (p. 354). For example, if we are reading a legend, our schema will alert us to look for a moral message. If we are reading a fairy tale, we will expect a villain to be introduced into the story.

Goodman (1986) explains that, "Readers construct meaning during reading. They use their prior learning as experience to make sense of the texts. Readers predict, select, confirm, and self correct as they seek to make sense of print" (p. 38).

Gunning (2002) also supports the idea that schema makes text more meaningful. He has found that if we are reading a true story about baseball and as a child our father took us to games during the summer, the book will evoke a personal connection within us. However, he says that our schema can also lead us in the wrong direction. If a story is not following the familiar pattern we are anticipating, an effective reader will reread the material to make sure they comprehend the book. Background knowledge effects how well a person is able to read a text. According to Kucer (2001):

In general, the more the reader's and author's backgrounds parallel one another, the smoother the reading... processes are likely to be. For the reader, background knowledge impacts both the quality of the miscues and how a text is ultimately understood. (p. 108)

Blair-Larsen and Williams (1999) explain that reading passages will mean different things to different people because of their past experiences. When a connection is made it is a unique moment between the reader and the text because of their individual interpretation. Anderson (1984) wants teachers to be aware of this because so often minority children are seen as being unable to comprehend text. Such a generalization is incorrect. A student's background knowledge might be different from that of a traditional basal program and they may be having difficulty relating to material being presented.

Anderson explains:

When prior knowledge is required, it is assumed to be knowledge common to children from every subculture. When new ideas are introduced, these are assumed to be equally accessible to every child. Considering the strong effects that culture has on reading comprehension, the question that naturally arises is whether children from different subcultures can so confidently be assumed to bring a common schema to written material. (p. 480)

Working to activate important schema for *all* classroom children is important for comprehension.

Moustafa (1997) discusses several natural strategies for increasing the background knowledge of all students. The first thing she suggests is providing the children with a variety of experiences when they are very young. Moustafa suggests:

As we take young children to the store, zoo, airport, beach, auto repair shop, and on vacations, and talk with them, we help them acquire background knowledge about various places and events and language associated with these places and events. (p. 68)

She also suggests we provide a large selection of books and watch TV programs which can show children places and experiences from all over the world. This way, children will enter school with all kinds of rich experiences. She explains that background knowledge can also be enhanced by reading several books on the same subject, giving children lots of information on an unknown subject. For young children Moustafa (1997) believes that a rich background, full of experiences will help a child learn to read. She explains,

Just as the background knowledge children have on a topic prior to reading a passage on that topic has a powerful effect on their ability to make sense of the passage, children's background knowledge about print itself has a powerful influence on their ability to learn to read. (p. 70)

Dowhower (1999) uses schema activation as the first building block for her comprehension strategies framework. She incorporates these techniques in her *Prereading* phase. "The *Prereading* phase includes three activities: (a) eliciting prior knowledge, (b) building background and relating that to prior knowledge, and (c) focusing on the specific strategy to be taught – specifically what the strategy is and why it is being taught" (p. 673). With schema activation as her first priority Dowhower is able to construct a comprehension framework that establishes a purpose for reading, group discussions, reader response, and text extensions and connections in order to help students comprehend unfamiliar texts.

Schema and Text Connections

Researchers are discussing the importance of making personal connections with text in order to build understanding (Allington 2001, Bluestein 2002, Harvey & Goudvis

2000, Keene & Zimmermann 1997). Reading becomes important as students interact with it and begin to make connections with the text. Harvey and Goudvis (2000) explain,

Readers take the written word and construct meaning based on their own thoughts, knowledge, and experiences... Reading shapes and even changes thinking. Getting readers to think when they read, to develop an awareness of their thinking, and to use strategies that help them comprehend are the primary goals of comprehension. (p. 5)

Keene and Zimmermann (1997) believe that schema is activated and recalled in four different ways. They want students:

- To relate unfamiliar text to their prior world knowledge and/or personal experience---those connections generally take three forms: text-to-self connections, text-to-text connections, and text-to-world connections.
- To use what is known about an author and his or her style to predict and better understand a text,
- To identify potentially difficult or unfamiliar text structures or formats,
- To recognize when they had inadequate background information and to know how to build schema---to learn the information needed, before reading. (p. 56)

Text-to-self connections - The first bullet explains how we relate to unfamiliar text. One of the first connections to text that children make is a text-to-self connection. Harvey and Goudvis (2000) used an example of a picture book by Kevin Henkes entitled *Owen* which centers around a mouse who does not want to give up his old blanket. Young children will be able to relate to Owen because most of them have a favorite toy

or special “something” they do not want to give up. Therefore, making comparisons between the text and their own lives is easy.

Text-to-text connections are made when a student can in some way compare one text to another text they have just read. Harvey and Goudvis (2000) give a few examples:

- Comparing characters, their personalities, and actions
- Comparing story events and plot lines
- Comparing lessons, themes, or messages in stories
- Finding common themes, writing style, or perspectives in the work of a single author
- Comparing the treatment of common themes by different authors
- Comparing different versions of familiar stories. (p. 73)

Text-to-world connections are made when a student can take what they have read and apply that knowledge to the world around them. This works particularly well for content areas such as science, social studies and other nonfiction texts.

Harvey and Goudvis (2000) claim:

Students who have background knowledge about a topic have a real advantage because they can connect the new information they encounter to what they already know. Our responsibility is to help build students’ background knowledge so that they can read independently to gain new information.

Encouraging students to make text-to-world connections supports our efforts to teach students about social studies and science concepts and topics. (p. 75)

The authors give the example of fourth and fifth grade students reading a picture book by Sherry Garland called *The Lotus Seed*, about a refugee family fleeing their home during

the Vietnam War. Students who use that story to discuss or look for information about the Vietnam War are making text-to-world connections.

Schema for Authors - The second bullet deals with schema for authors. Every author has a distinct style, and teaching children to recognize it enhances their understanding of the author. Keene and Zimmermann (1997) use the example of a classroom, where students are predicting the content of books and poems by familiar authors, based on the style of their previous works. “The children brought in books and poems written by a number of different authors...Next to each author’s name on a chart, the students listed expectations and predictions based on their schema for that author” (Keene, Zimmermann, 1997, p. 64). Schema for authors helps us develop a rich understanding for the books they write.

Difficult or Unfamiliar Text - The third bullet explains difficult or unfamiliar text structure. Sometimes a book is difficult to read because the format is unusual. This can be frustrating for a student and can potentially turn them away from a particular style of text. According to Keene and Zimmermann (1997) the key is a group investigation of different styles of text structure. This way, students will be able to recognize if a book is predictable, poetic, non-fiction or in a dialogue format. The authors explain that in this classroom children, “talked about how understanding different kinds of text structures helps them to understand the book better...” (p. 67).

Inadequate Schema - The final bullet gives advice on how to recognize inadequate schema. Keene and Zimmermann (1997) also recommend that teachers use a think-a-loud strategy when dealing with a book that is difficult for children to relate to, because they do not have the background knowledge to connect with the story. The

teacher models generalized personal connections as children listen to the story. This lets the students know that even if they cannot fully relate to the characters, there are pieces in every book that we can identify with. "My idea was to begin by activating any schema they did have, around what I felt were the key concepts in the book" (p. 69).

It is important to note, that once each component of schema has been introduced, studied and understood, the students have the ability to put all of the strategies together during reading. The result is a classroom where students are making very real and personal connections with the books they come into contact with. Keene and Zimmermann (1997) explain:

There were, and are, times when my awareness of my own reading processes and my use of a strategy like schema are so prevalent that they annoy and distract me from my reading...I have come to believe that this hyperawareness may be a necessary and inevitable stage in coming to know oneself as a reader...we need to make conscious the strategies our minds have used subconsciously for so many years. (p. 71)

According to Allington (2001), as we make thoughtful text connections in literature we are exercising the use of our own background knowledge. We are making the literature more meaningful to ourselves and to our students. Allington discusses the concept of teaching using *thoughtful literacy* as a way to ensure students are, comprehending and making connections instead of simply reciting facts. He makes distinctions between remembering and understanding literature. He begins his theory by discussing the basic act of summarizing a story. Allington explains:

When you summarize you may also include references to your own experiences (text-to-self) or other things that you have read (text-to-text). In other words, you might begin summarizing the article on whole language by saying, "It's another one of those teacher-bashing articles that the *Post* is famous for." Someone else, with different experiences, might begin by saying, "The *Post* hit the nail on the head again about teachers and that social promotion nonsense." Summary is rarely a "Just the facts" retelling in real world exchanges outside school. (Allington, 2001, p. 91)

Allington believes comprehension is more than simply remembering facts and having the ability to read. He does not want us to confuse recall with comprehension. He explains the characteristics (in his own words), of a classroom using thoughtful literacy.

In these classrooms, teachers and students were more likely to make connections across texts and across conversations. The talk was more often of a problem-solving nature. In addition, the students in the exemplary teacher classrooms were more likely to be engaged in peer conversations about text they had read. Thus, the quality and quantity of classroom talk also differed. (p. 96)

Bluestein (2002) discusses the benefits of making personal connections with the characters in a story. It is her belief that a reader must be able to connect with the characters they read in order to become deeply involved with the text. She explains that characterization is an excellent strategy to enhance comprehension. Bluestein feels that student comprehension will increase through class discussion on the character's problems feelings, beliefs and actions. Bluestein (2002) explains, "Reading is comprehending what

is read and making personal connections with the events and themes of a book or story. Characterization is only one road toward this goal among many” (p. 434).

Intertextuality

Some researchers use the term intertextuality when explaining how readers make text connections (Cairney 1992, Dickinson 1994, Lenski 1998, Many 1996, Oyler & Barry 1996, Sipe 2001, Wolf, Carey & Mieras 1996). Sipe, (2001) explains intertextuality:

When we read, we forge links between what we are reading and the texts we already know, whether those texts are collections of words, visual images, or the ‘text’ of our life experiences. Intertextuality (Kristeva, 1980), this connecting of texts with other texts, results in a complex tissue of interrelated texts. (p. 333)

Most readers will indicate that when they read a story, they think of other books they have read and make connections between the two stories (Cairney, 1992). Research shows that making intertextual connections builds schema and reading strategies (Oyler & Barry 1996, Sipe 2001). Also, when students are given the strategies they need to make connections in literature, there is an increase in comprehension, and vocabulary development (Dickinson, 1994).

Lenski (1998) believes that readers bring both, information from their prior knowledge and information from previous texts read to every reading situation. This process is defined as intertextuality. Highly skilled readers draw on these intertextual links to comprehend texts at deeper levels. Meaning is constantly being reworked and redefined by the reader until full comprehension is achieved. “The relationship that is drawn between past and future texts and the inner text of the reader is a construction of

each individual and is influenced by reader's skill in creating intertextual links" (p. 2).

Lenski goes on to explain that teachers are not doing enough to teach their students how to become aware of the intertextual links they are making. She recommends that teachers organize multiple texts in a variety of ways so students can discover the relationships between them.

Hartman & Allison, 1996 (as cited in Lenski, 1998) provides five ways teachers can organize texts to promote connections. They include: complementary texts, conflicting texts, controlling texts, synoptic texts, and dialogic texts.

- **Complimentary Texts** are texts arranged around a central topic. All of the texts support that topic.
- **Conflicting Texts** provide alternate perspectives on a central topic.
- **Controlling Texts** are benchmark texts around which other texts are organized. This arrangement provides students with the opportunity to use one text as the base from which other texts are interpreted.
- **Dialogic Texts** present a dialogue about one topic. Books in a series are examples of dialogic texts. They contain some of the same characters, issues, and events that reappear in a variety of books.
- **Synoptic Texts** are variations of a single story. When students read stories written from different points of view, they make connections to similarities and differences between the authors' perspectives. (p. 5)

According to Lenski (1998) the reader's ability to see relationships between texts is essential to comprehension. Teachers can help students make these links by providing and organizing texts in ways that promote text connections.

In a study conducted by Wolf, Carey and Mieras (1996), preservice teachers tutoring young students, personally gained knowledge of intertextual connections. Wolf, et al. (1996) explain “Through predictable paths and/or unexpected turns, the preservice teachers learned that one of the things children *do* with written text is to connect it thoughtfully to their own lives” (p. 148). They discovered that text-to-life connections were the most common connections made by the students. The majority (95%) of the preservice teachers reported that their students made this connection during story reading.

Another common connection found in this study was text-to-text. About 40% of the preservice teachers reported references to intertextuality. The more the students read with their tutors, during the year the more text-to-text connections were made.

The least common according to Wolf, et. al.(1996) was the life-to-text connections, accounting for only 6% of the intertextual responses by students. The authors noted that only students who knew their teachers well discussed these connections. The authors felt that perhaps the more time a teacher spends with a student the better they are at talking with them and drawing our more sophisticated connections.

In summary, the preservice teachers learned a great deal about intertextuality and children’s literary responses. “The power of literature was revealed not as gospel, frozen in form, to be literally interpreted in limited ways, but instead as a power for understanding others’ lives as well as our own” (Wolf et al., p. 154).

Intertextuality and Writing

Cairney (1990) conducted a naturalistic study on the influence of stories children have previously read and their current writing. A total of eighty grade 6 children from New South Wales, Australia, were interviewed. The first question was, “Do you ever

think of stories you've read when you are writing a story?" If the answer was yes, Cairney (1990) would ask several more questions such as, "Give me an example" or "Did your story end up like it in any way?" (p. 480).

The findings were seventy-two students (90%) were aware of intertextual connections and only eight students (10%) were unable to remember a connection made. Cairney then took each response and categorized it into seven areas: use of genre, use of character, use of specific ideas, copying plot, transferring content from expository to narrative, creating a narrative out of several other narratives.

According to Cairney's (1990) study, the most common type of response was "*Use of specific ideas without coping plot*" (p. 481). An idea or event for a story previously read triggered an idea for a story. A small number of high ability (6%) students able to create a narrative from several narratives they have read in the past. These students had read a great deal and had a wide variety of stories to pull from in their background.

Cairney explained that although the depth and diversity of links made were very different, almost every student was able to draw from previously read books and make connections to their writing. Even those with low reading levels. Cairney concluded the following:

The interview data in this study suggests that intertextuality is not simply confined to mature readers and writers. Rather, it is a common and important literary phenomenon, with considerable impact upon the writing of children. Each new text written reflects in some measure the shadows of texts experienced in the past. (p. 484)

Many (1996) conducted another naturalistic study on eleven and twelve year old students in a Scottish classroom. She wanted to find out how students used their intertextual connections in the classroom setting. She found that life experience was something, which helped to shape a student's intertextual connections during a class discussion on a literary topic. Many explains " In some instances associations to previous literary and life experiences served to enrich participants' understandings. In other situations, students used intertextual connections to merely note a personal awareness of a topic being discussed" (p. 53).

Many also found a very strong connection between students' writing and intertextual connections. The students were asked to write a historical fiction story set during World War II. Many found that students pulled information not only from previous texts read but also from television, movies, computer programs and drama activities.

Many concluded by stating the following "From an aesthetic perspective, students effectively capitalized on the thoughts, associations, and emotions evoked when writing or discussing works of literature. Students used intertextual associations to create, relate to, verify, and understand imaginary worlds" (p. 61).

The Importance of Reading Aloud

An important strategy in helping students activate their schema and make intertextual connections is the act of reading aloud (Snipe, 2001). According to Routman (1991), "Reading aloud is seen as the single most influential factor in young children's success in learning to read" (p. 32). She also explains that reading aloud improves

students' comprehension, builds vocabulary and enhances listening skills. She believes that reading aloud should take place daily and at every grade level.

Routman (1991) expands her definition of the read-aloud by adding in *shared reading*. "I define shared reading as any rewarding reading situation in which a learner--- or group of learners---sees the text, observes an expert (usually the teacher) reading it with fluency and expression, and is invited to read along" (p. 33). During a shared reading, students are asked to participate and become involved with the text. It immerses students in rich literary-level language. The storybooks are from every genre, and are chosen by the teacher with care (p. 33).

Routman states that reading aloud can sometimes be overlooked because it is so enjoyable that teachers often feel guilty spending time reading aloud. This is especially helpful for students who have limited exposure at home to storybook reading. Shared reading approaches may include: teacher reading, student reading, paired reading or tape recordings.

Opitz and Rasinski (1998) define twelve benefits to reading aloud. Number four is: *To develop listening comprehension and vocabulary*. The authors state "An expanded listening vocabulary assists reading growth by providing readers with the sounds and meanings of words that can be read" (p. 4). The authors also explain that reading aloud allows children to hear a text read with expression and fluency. "Regardless of the student's age, fluent oral reading to the student, coupled with discussion of and response to the reading, should be a regular part of any instructional package for children who are struggling with reading" (p. 49). The rest of this literature review will focus on research

and articles, which support teaching students to make intertextual connections through reading aloud.

Reading aloud to preschool children

Dickinson and Smith (1994) conducted a longitudinal study composed of twenty-five preschool classrooms. Their purpose was to report results, which show links between a teacher's read-aloud style and their children's growth in vocabulary and story comprehension one year later. They isolated three distinct approaches to book reading across the different classrooms: co-constructive, didactic-interactional, and performance-oriented. The *co-constructive approach* was characterized by high amounts of talk by both children and teachers during a read-aloud. With this approach, little talk was heard at the beginning and ending of each story. The *didactic-interactional approach* engaged in limited amounts of talk during the entire read-aloud. Most of the conversation concerned immediate recall or task organization. Finally, the *performance-oriented approach* allowed for detailed conversations before and after the book was read and some limited conversation during the story itself.

The next part of the study by Dickinson and Smith (1994) looked at student utterances or what *kind* of talk was going on during the read-aloud. The study concluded that a read-aloud rich in: predictions, vocabulary discussion, and analysis had a positive effect on comprehension and vocabulary development one year later. The performance-oriented approach was favored; because these students scored considerably higher on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test and slightly better, on a comprehension test given a year later. According to the authors, it seems that meaningful discussion before and after

the reading of a book can have positive results on students' vocabulary and story comprehension.

Dickinson and Smith (1994) conclude by explaining the following,

Regular participation in discussions that involve analysis may have effects that reach beyond the book-reading event. Such discussions may help children develop a more analytical stance toward texts and language, enabling them to distance themselves from the story and become aware of their own mental activity. As a result of talking about language, children may be quicker to notice words whose meanings they do not know, more prone to search for their meanings, and more able to make use of available information to figure out meanings for themselves. (p. 118)

Reading aloud using fairy tale variants

Sipe (2001) conducted a grounded theory study in a combined first/second grade classroom. His purpose was to record the children's responses to the read-alouds of five fairy tale variants of the *Rapunzel* story. He wanted to describe the variety of intertextual links the children made and to watch their schema for the tale develop over eight weeks. Using observation, field notes and audiotapes, the students' conversations were coded and put into the following categories: analytic, personal, text-to-text, transparent, and performative. Once this was complete, researchers analyzed and coded students' schema-building responses.

The study found that responses to the first *Rapunzel* text were mostly analytical. The second version, reported a large increase in text-to-text connections. During the third reading, schema was being developed and students were making predictions

followed by the fourth text where they consolidated their responses and practice what they had learned. On the last version of the tale, students had a strong schema for the story and were able to make up their own tales and analyze each text with confidence. The study concluded that reading different versions of the same story is beneficial for schema development. Sipe (2001) explains his findings,

The study shows empirically that the use of text sets is a powerful way of enabling children to make intertextual connections and to engage in schema-building for a particular story. Pedagogically, the broad range of rich uses for intertextual links suggests the importance of arranging experiences for children that enable the making of these links. Teachers who know the potential of this broad range will more easily be able to identify and appreciate children's interpretive purposes. Using a series of variants of the same story seems to be a powerful way of encouraging intertextual connections. (p. 349)

Sipe's article stated a few limitations in the study. The first limitation was the teacher's role in facilitating questions that elicit intertextual responses. For example, if the teacher chosen for the study did not allow children to comment during the oral readings or only encouraged analytical questioning, the responses may not have been same. A teacher's line of questioning can influence student responses. The second limitation was that the study dealt with only one traditional tale, *Rapunzel* and with only one group of children. The author explains it would have been helpful to have several studies using different text sets that supported the findings stated in this article.

Reading aloud using information books

Oyler and Barry (1996) discovered the rich intertextual links, which children can make listening to information books. The purpose of their quantitative study was to examine the variety of sources urban children were able to draw on in order to make intertextual links. They also wanted to analyze the role of the teacher, in order to discover his or her role in making these connections happen. The authors developed a mnemonic to help them code the types of connections being made by the students. They called them “the four I’s...information books, interactive read-alouds, initiations, and intertextuality” (p. 325). During their study, Oyler and Barry observed students participating in read-alouds. They were able to question and make connections during the read-aloud. The most common connections seemed to be text-to-self and text-to-text connections. They explain the kinds of connections witnessed,

Over the course of these 14 recorded read-alouds students juxtaposed the information book texts with other texts such as poems, songs, television, videos and cartoons, retold stories, information books, storybooks, and personal experiences of the classroom, self, and family members. (p. 326)

By the end of the year these students had encountered hundreds of books, poems, songs and shared experiences. The room created an environment where read-alouds and intertextual connections were an everyday occurrence. The classroom was full of rich discussions and the students were in turn building valuable schema. “By creating room for students to initiate and make read-alouds interactive, classroom talk becomes an opportunity to construct shared understanding through the connections make visible by intertextuality” (p. 328).

Building a Classroom Community

In order to have a classroom where students make intertextual links, teachers must spend the time building these connections with their students. This takes organization and a clear purpose for teaching. Sipe (2000) discussed the amount of thought a teacher (in his study) put into her read-aloud time. Over the course of a year this teacher read approximately three hundred books to her children. Children were seated on the carpet where they had a good view of the book. The book was chosen ahead of time. There was a discussion before during and after the book read. According to Sipe, the teacher pursued conversation with her students, particularly if the student was making connections between the story and their own lives. The teacher was aware of the fine line between meaningful connections and those that became off topic and distracting to the story. This process created a classroom community where students were free to exchange ideas and take risks.

According to Cairney (1992) “The sharing of literature with students is much more than simply a pleasurable way to spend time. It is an important way in which classroom communities build common ground” (p. 507).

Conclusion

Research supports that schema activation is an important part of the reading process. Readers use their past experiences in order to make the text they are reading meaningful. Intertextual connections will develop as students begin to draw from both their prior knowledge and past reading experiences. Reading aloud will help students build schema and strengthen their intertextual connections. Giving students the opportunity and the strategies to make intertextual connections will increase their

vocabulary and comprehension skills. Strategies, such as reading aloud with analytical discussions before, during, and after reading and organizing books to foster text connections, will create a classroom community where students can make important text-to-self, text-to-text and text-to-world connections with the literature they come into contact with.

Chapter Three

Procedures of the Project

Introduction

This project aims to help students make intertextual connections while reading. The Handbook in Chapter Four, will provide lessons and activities for teachers to use with elementary students during their read-aloud time. It is intended, that these lessons will give students the strategies they need to personally connect with text (text-to-self), compare and contrast books, authors, and ideas (text-to-text), and connect the text they are reading with the outside world (text-to-world), all with the goal of enhancing valuable schema, vocabulary development, and comprehension skills (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000).

The handbook incorporates a critique of children's literature web sites. These web sites will be an excellent resource for lessons that focus on text connections.

Development for the Project

A handbook was designed to create activities that teachers could use along side any basal program. The new reading curriculums, which are being adopted by schools such as the Yakima School District and surrounding areas, are strongly skills based programs. This handbook will give ideas to teachers using these programs in order to make the most out of their read-aloud time. Hopefully, they can use these strategies along with their intensive basal programs in order to create a more balanced approach to reading instruction. For Union Gap and other schools that currently teach a literature-based program, these strategies will enhance and add to their programs making it even stronger and more successful.

Procedures

Information for the project was gathered from books, existing curricula, journals and, the Internet. Key terms used in the search were: “intertextuality,” “schema,” “read-alouds,” “comprehension,” and “vocabulary development.” These terms were important aspects of the literature review. Many articles were found off the library page at Central Washington University using the data-bases of ERIC and ProQuest. The web sites of Amazon.com (2003) and Barnes and Noble.com (2003) were used to obtain the small book covers in the corner of each “Responding and Connecting” page in the project. The springboard for this project was based on the text, *Strategies that Work* by Harvey and Goudvis (2000). It was this book, which first introduced to the author the idea of connecting different texts to create meaning. Then through further research the term *intertextuality*, coined by Kristeva in 1980, was found and added to Chapter Two (Sipe, 2001). Through a review of research it was discovered that teachers were beginning to use the platform of the read-aloud to teach strategies for text connections and comprehension.

Finally, in an effort to have a project that related to the needs of elementary students, the OSPI’s report on the fourth grade WASL reading scores were consulted (OSPI, 2003). It was here that the need for increased comprehension skills, and the need for students to enhance their ability to make intertextual connections was revealed.

The Project

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Let's Read Aloud!

A Handbook of Strategies for Making Intertextual
Connections to Build Schema for K-3 students.

Created by:

ANDREA K. MANION

Chapter Four

The Project

Introduction

If reading can be defined as the process of constructing meaning from text, then teaching students comprehension strategies is critical to any reading program.

Activating prior knowledge or *schema* is important for comprehension. Readers use their schema and the context of the reading in order to fully understand the text they are engaged in.

When a person is reading a text, they are making critical connections between the written text and their prior knowledge in order to comprehend the material. Encouraging students to make these intertextual connections will help them build the valuable schema they need for successful comprehension. According to Allington (2001) as we make thoughtful text connections in literature we are exercising the use of our own background knowledge. We are making the literature more meaningful to ourselves and to our students. Lenski (1998) believes that highly skilled readers draw on these intertextual links to comprehend texts at deeper levels.

Contents of the Project

The read-aloud lessons in this project were designed with Union Gap School District (WA) K-3 students in mind. However, these lessons can be used in conjunction with any reading program, as long as the teacher is allowed the freedom to teach beyond their district's reading program.

This project introduces lessons that will focus on helping students make intertextual connections. These lessons are based on the ideas from Keene and

Zimmermann (1997). They believe that schema is activated and recalled in four different ways. They want students:

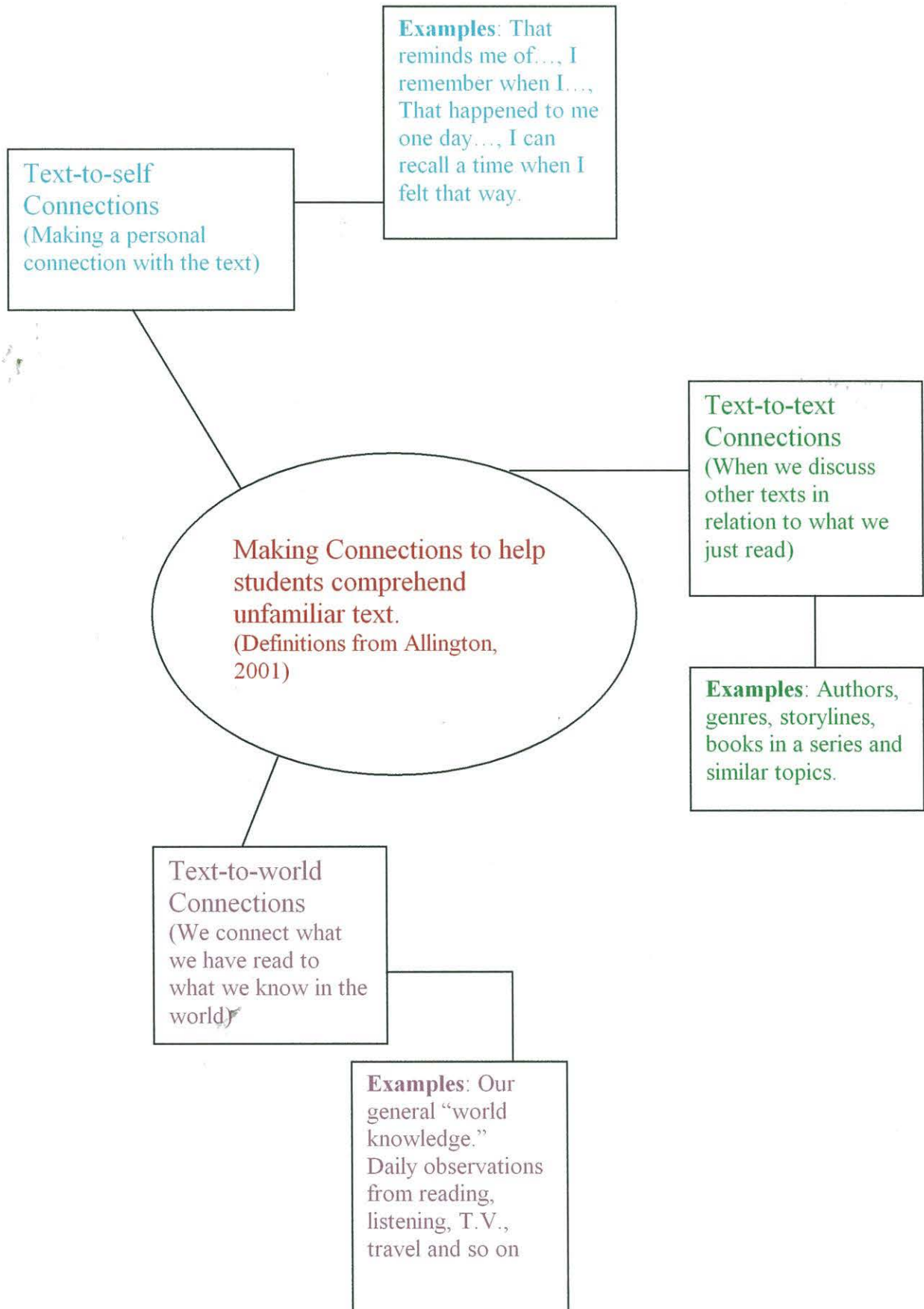
- To relate unfamiliar text to their prior world knowledge and/or personal experience---those connections generally take three forms: **text-to-self connections, text-to-text connections, and text-to-world connections.**
- To use what is known about an author and his or her style to predict and better understand a text,
- To identify potentially difficult or unfamiliar text structures or formats, and,
- To recognize when they had inadequate background information and to know how to build schema--- to learn the information needed, before reading. (p. 56)

The author of this project chose the read-aloud format because it is something that primary teachers do everyday. These strategies can be incorporated into any reading program to help students with comprehension. According to Routman (1991) "Reading aloud is seen as the single most influential factor in young children's success in learning to read" (p. 32). She also explains that reading aloud improves students' comprehension, builds vocabulary and enhances listening skills. She believes that reading aloud should take place daily and at every grade level.

The first part of the handbook consists of: an introduction, and ten read-aloud lessons, which include some student responses and activities for the classroom. The second part of the handbook is a collection of twenty read-alouds with reviews and suggestions for classroom activities. However, these read-alouds do not contain actual in class lessons. Finally, there is a critique of popular web sites for quality children's literature. It is the author's hope that enough genres were *touched* on such as fiction, nonfiction, fantasy, biography and poetry, so that teachers can adapt the strategies and

use them with any text. The author also chose literature, which can be used across the primary grade levels.

Most of the responses written in the project came from the author's second grade classroom. However, the author had cooperation and participation from other classroom teachers and students. This was done in order to get authentic responses from students of different ages. It is the hope of the author that teachers will be able to look at each lesson and see its potential use in their classroom with texts of their choice.



What does “coding the text,” mean?

When students are listening to the teacher read-aloud they should be encouraged to ask questions, make predictions and voice comments before, during, and after the story. These responses can be written down on a chart or on sticky notes for a later discussion time.

Once the comments and questions are on the chart, Harvey and Goudvis (2000) recommend “coding the text.” This can be done before or after the story is over. Here are some ideas for codes:

(R) Reminds me of

(T-S) Text-to self

(T-T) Text-to-text

(T-W) Text-to-world

(A) Questions were answered in the text

(BK) Questions were answered through someone’s background knowledge

(I) Questions whose answers can be inferred from the text

(D) Question needs further discussion

(RS) Question needs further research

(Huh? or C) Question is confusing

Why should you spend time coding?

According to Harvey and Goudvis (2000) “The purpose of coding the text is to monitor comprehension, think about meaning, and enhance understanding” (p. 79). It is also a way for students to understand where their questions are coming from. If they can see that their question was an inference or recognize another student’s inference that empowers them. Why should we keep all of this great information to ourselves? Let the students’ see what kinds of great connections they are making. They will walk away with a deeper understanding of the story.

What if the student’s are confused by the code?

Don’t get “hung-up” on the letters in coding. Some codes can over lap or not apply to that particular situation. If your class becomes confused, then only use a few codes at a time until they become comfortable with them. In fact each code should be explained and taught throughout the year. The idea is to enhance understanding not cause confusion.

Choosing Literature Student's Can Relate To!

If our focus is comprehension and we want students to personally relate to the reading, then we want to select quality literature that every child can relate to. According to Mitchell (2003) children in our classrooms should see people who look like them in literature, as well as people who don't look like them. Also, the different perspectives offered by multicultural literature can open up a child's world to new ideas and expanded view-points.

Mochizuki author of *Baseball Saved Us* (1993) discusses the importance of multicultural literature (as cited in Engberg, 2002). He grew up in Seattle when Asian Americans were still called Orientals. As a kid, he adopted African American cultural mannerisms because that was what he was exposed to. He explains:

If you were of Asian descent, you were a social chameleon. You just acted like everyone else around you – became them...So growing up, a lot of people would notice the way I talked or the way I acted at times and they'd say, 'Gee, why do you act so black?' So again, why? Because there were no role models in the media at the time; in fact, all of the images were negative. (p. 10)

As teachers it is our responsibility to make sure that all of our students have a chance to "see themselves" in children's literature. We need to provide books that are familiar to them so they can make honest and meaningful connections with the text. So don't save your multicultural books for a special month, read the all year long and give your students access to your best reading material.

Included in each lesson are the corresponding numbers for the Essential Academic Learning Requirements.

Washington State Essential Academic Learning Requirements

Reading

1. **The student understands and uses different skills and strategies to read.**
 - 1.1 Use word recognition and word meaning skills to read and comprehend text
 - 1.2 Build vocabulary through reading
 - 1.3 Read fluently, adjusting reading for purpose and material
 - 1.4 Understand elements of literature –fiction
 - 1.5 Use features of non-fiction text and computer software

2. **The student understands the meaning of what is read.**
 - 2.1 Comprehend important ideas and details
 - 2.2 Expand comprehension by analyzing, interpreting, and synthesizing information and ideas
 - 2.3 Think critically and analyze author’s use of language, style, purpose, and perspective

3. **The student reads different material for a variety of purposes.**
 - 3.1 Read to learn new information
 - 3.2 Read to perform a task
 - 3.3 Read for literary experience
 - 3.4 Read for career applications

4. **The student sets goals and evaluates progress to improve reading.**
 - 4.1 Assess strengths and need for improvement
 - 4.2 Seek and offer feedback to improve reading
 - 4.3 Develop interests and share reading experiences (Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2003.)

Responding and Connecting with Children's Books



Barnes & Noble.com

Author: Janell Cannon

Title of Book: *Stellaluna* (Harcourt Brace, 1993)

Genre: Picture Storybook

Subject or theme: Friendship and family, being different from those around you.

EALR's: 1.2 1.4 2.1 2.2 2.3 4.3

Brief Summary of plot or format: A baby bat named Stellaluna, becomes separated from her mother and is raised by a family of birds. Stellaluna, tries to behave just like a bird but is unable to fit in. One day she finds her real family and learns that there is room in her heart for both families. Even though they are very different they can still be friends.

How will students relate to this book? What kinds of connections might they make? (text-to-text, text-to-self, text-to-world)

Text-to-text: These are books that deal with being different: *Elmer* by David McKee, *Tacky the Penguin* by Helen Lester

Text-to-self: Do you ever feel different from those around you? What makes you unique? Why are you special? Have you ever been lost before? How did you feel?

Text-to-world: Bats in our region. What kinds are native to Yakima? What kinds of misconceptions do people have about bats?

Possible classroom activities for this book:

Drama: Roll play situations where someone is being teased for not fitting in. How can we solve this problem?

Writing: If you were Stellaluna, how would you have felt? Would you have done anything differently?

Bats: How does the Illustrator make Stellaluna so lovable? Write your responses.

Read-Aloud Lesson #1: Stellanuna (2nd grade)

Purpose: Helping students make text-to-self connections. Using the phrase “reminds me of” to activate the conversation.

Procedure:

- **Discuss** - Seat the students comfortably in the room so they can all see the book. Show the class the cover of the story. Next, ask the class what they think the book will be about? You can record predictions on chart paper or simply listen to their ideas.
- **Read** - As you begin reading the story stop and model personal connections that you are making while you read. For example, when I read the part about Stellanuna becoming lost...I explained to my class that it reminded me of the time I was lost from my mother in the supermarket.
- **Record** - As students begin to make their own personal connections record them on chart paper. You can do this yourself or a student can be the recorder.
- **Helpful Hint-** Keep the students on topic, you want to encourage meaningful connections. They should always be brought back into the story.
- **Closure** - When the story is over, check comprehension by asking the class to explain what the story was about. See if they can get all of the main ideas. Write these down on the chart as well.
- **Finally** - Discuss the chart you have created. This can easily go into a creative writing activity. The topic would depend on the kinds of answers your students gave and the kinds of experiences they discussed.

Class Example: Stellaluna

This book is about...

“A bat named Stellaluna.”

“She lost her bat family but she found a bird family”

“It’s about bats”

“She had to act like a bird in order to stay in the nest.”

“It was hard because of the bugs and sleeping at night and stuff.”

“Then she found her mom and shared her bat family with her bird family.”

“They were different but they were still friends.”

This book reminds

... me of

“I have been lost before at the store and my mom found me.”

“I was scared once when I lost my mom too.”

“You have to follow rules at home.”

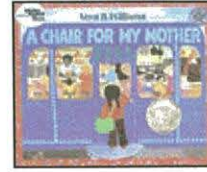
“When the birds were hanging by their feet and the mom got mad it reminded me of when my dad fell out of a tree and my mom yelled because she was scared.”

“The bird family reminds me of my foster family, now I live with my dad.”

“Some kids have step-moms and step-dads.”

“I am different from my friends.”

“You don’t have to like the same things to be friends.”



Responding and Connecting with Children's Books

Author: Vera B. Williams

Barnes & Noble.com

Title of Book: *A Chair for My Mother* (Mulberry Books, 1982)

Genre: Picture Storybook

Subject or theme: Families can rebuild their dreams with hope and hard work.

EALR's: 1.2 1.4 2.1 2.2 2.3 4.3

Brief Summary of plot or format: A family experiences the loss of all their personal possessions when their apartment burns down. With the help of extended family, they are able to start over. A young girl sees this through her mother's desire for a special new chair that she is saving up for. The chair becomes a symbol of hope that everything is going to be okay.

How will students relate to this book? What kinds of connections might they make? (text-to-text, text-to-self, text-to-world)

Text-to-self: Have you or your family ever saved money for something special? Have you ever had to pickup and move quickly or has anyone ever had a fire in their house? Does anyone have a mom who works hard at her job?

Text-to-text: *Something Special for Me* (Sequel to: *A Chair for My Mother*) by Vera B. Williams, *Uncle Jed's Barber Shop* by James Ransome

Also by Williams: *Music Music for Everyone*, *Cherries and Cherry Pits*, *LuckySong*

Text-to-world: Perhaps a student has seen local firefighters putting out house fires on the news. How might those families feel?

Possible classroom activities for this book:

Discovering Inferences: Use a class chart and write down inferences the students wish to discuss. For example, understanding that the family struggles financially with out the book directly saying so.

Art: Make a book in the shape of a big stuffed chair. Have students decorate their chair any way they wish. **Writing:** Describe your chair or bring in a newspaper article on a family who has had a fire in their home. Make them cards, perhaps they will want to become involved and help the family with clothes and food.

Read-aloud Lesson #2: A Chair for My Mother (2nd grade)

Purpose: Teaching students to think and search for inferences while they read.

Procedure:

- **Discuss** - Seat the students comfortably so everyone can see the story. Explain to the class what an inference is and why it is important. For example an inference is a type of question, only with this kind the answer is not directly in the story. You have to think about your answer and search through the text in order to make an educated guess.
- **Model** – As you begin to read the story, to point out things you know about the character or her situation and then explain to the class your reasoning behind knowing this information. For instance, in the beginning of the story the young girl explains how she stops by her mother’s restaurant after school to fill ketchup and salt and pepper shakers. Now, think out loud: “I wonder why she does this?” “Oh I know, it’s because they are empty from being used all day, I bet she even puts them back on the tables for the dinner crowd.” Now explain that you are making an *inference*. Model this as many times as needed before students catch on and begin raising their hands as well.
- **Write Down** – Write down students’ inferences and questions on sticky notes or chart paper.
- **Code** – When the story is finished go over each inference. Discuss how they knew the answers to their questions. Code any answers that stand out as coming from background knowledge as (BK) and (I) for inferred from the text. Making

this distinction will help students realize that inferences come from information in the text and their own past experiences.

- **Sticky Notes** – Encourage students to use sticky notes in their own personal books. They can write down thoughtful inferences or questions they have about the text.
-

Example: Class Inference Chart

TQ = teacher question SQ = student question I = inference by the student BK = background knowledge from the student

*Inferences for **A Chair for My Mother***

TQ – *Why does the little girl go to the restaurant after school?*

I – Because her mom is still working when school gets out and the school doesn't have a Latch-Key program like our school (**BK and text-to-self**).

TQ – *Why does mom look worried when she doesn't get tips for working?*

BK – Because they are poor.

I – I think they lost all their money in the fire.

SQ – I wonder if she lost all her toys in the fire?

I – She did...look at the picture, it's all gone.

I – Buying new shoes made them happy.

BK – Buying new shoes makes me happy too! (**text-to-self**)

SQ – *Why is everyone giving them so much stuff?*

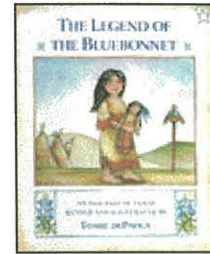
I – Because they know they're poor.

I and BK – They knew they couldn't buy everything again it's too much money!

SQ – *Why can't she sit in the new chair in the back of the truck while they drive home?*

BK – You could stop fast and fall out and hurt yourself.

Responding and Connecting with Children's Books



Barnes & Noble.com

Author: Tomie DePaola

Title of Book: *The Legend of the Bluebonnet* (Scholastic, 1983)

Genre: Multicultural (Legend)

Subject or theme: Sacrifice and a love for your family.

EALR's: 1.2 1.4 2.1 2.2 2.3 4.3

Brief Summary of plot or format: A young girl's tribe is suffering from a famine. The Shaman explains to the tribe that they have been selfish and must sacrifice their most valued possession in order to bring back the rain. The young girl is the only one in the tribe to give something up...it is her doll.

How will students relate to this book? What kinds of connections might they make? (text-to-text, text-to-self, text-to-world)

Text-to-self: What is your most valuable possession?

Text-to-text: *The Legend of the Indian Paintbrush* by Tomie dePaola.

Text-to-world: Are there places around the world today where people do not have enough to eat? Does everyone have enough to eat in Yakima? What can we do to help?

Possible classroom activities for this book:

Venn-diagram: One side is her doll; the other side is their (the students) most special possession. They draw a picture and write down notes on each item, how they are different and how they are alike.

Names: Each member in the class is given a new name to represent them in their tribe. Just as She-Who-Is-Alone, students look for traits in each other and give appropriate names to their tribe members.

Literature Circles: Have small group discussions where students can express their feelings and opinions.

Read-aloud Lesson # 3 *The Legend of the Bluebonnet* (2nd grade)

Purpose: Helping students become aware of text-to-self connections in order to increase comprehension.

Procedure:

- **Introduce** – the story of Bluebonnet with a conversation of the phrase “most precious possession” What does that mean? Some items are more valuable to us because they have a special story or meaning. For example a blanket made by your grandmother or a picture of your family. But no matter how much we love our “things” do they take the place of the people we love? No of course not, and that is what this book is about.
- **Explain** – to the class that as you read this story feel free to ask questions, make predictions and express how you are feeling.
- **Record** – students questions and feelings on a chart or have students write them down in a notebook as you read the story (pausing occasionally to make sure story plot isn’t being lost).
- **Discuss** – the story after you have read it. Talk about **bravery** and **sacrifice**. What do these mean to the students now that they have heard the story?
- **Code** – Students code their questions and comments. Can they be answered with:
 - **Background knowledge (BK)**
 - **Answered in the text (A)**
 - **Inferred (I)**
 - **Need further discussion or research (D) or (RS)**
 - **Is the question confusing? (Huh?)**

- **Venn-diagram** – The students will draw a picture of their most valuable possession and compare it with the doll in the story. This creates a personal connection with the story.

Example: Class Response Chart

I Wonder...

What does the red ribbon on the cover mean? (RS)

Why is the drought happening? (A)

Where are the spirits? (I)

Why did everyone die? (A)

Who takes care of the little girl? (A)

Why is her name like a sentence? (She-Who-Is-Alone) (I)

Why is she the only one to give up her doll? (I)

Why did she throw her doll in the fire? (A)

I think...

I feel...

This book is about rain. (A)

The Spirits are like God. (I)

The rain will come after the offering. (A)

The Spirits want her doll. (A)

She threw the doll to feel the Spirits. (I)

This will be a sad story (BK)

Sad for She-Who-Is-Alone (BK)

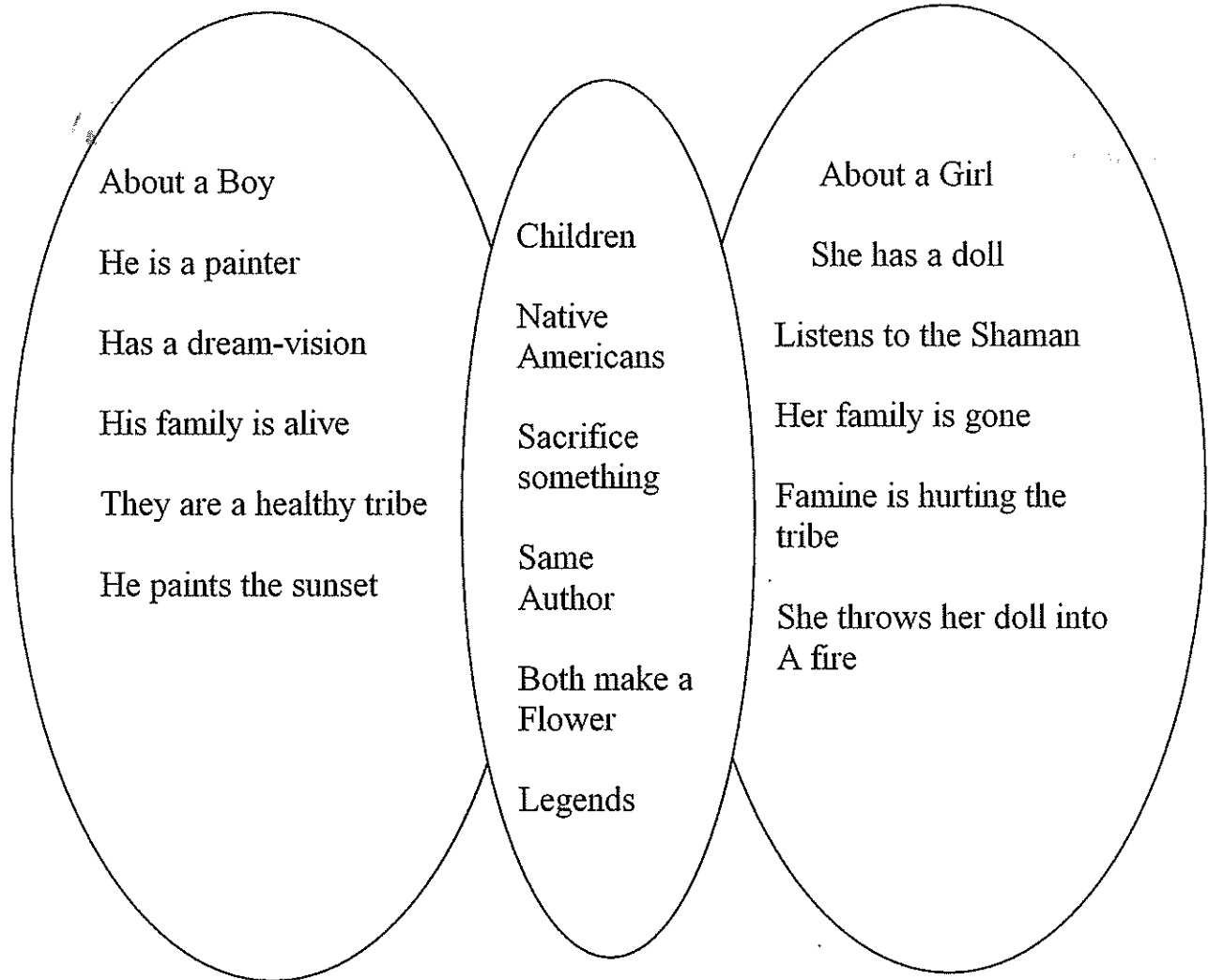
She was very brave. (I)

Happy in the end (BK)

Text-to-text Connections: *The Legend of the Bluebonnet* and *The Legend of the Indian Paintbrush* by Tomie de Paola (Class Example

Indian Paintbrush

Bluebonnet

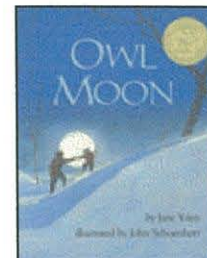


Different

Same

Different

Responding and Connecting with Children's Books



Barnes & Noble.com

Author: Jane Yolen, John Schoenherr (illustrator)

Title of Book: *Owl Moon* (Scholastic, 1987)

Genre: Picture Storybook

Subject or theme: Father and son relationships, special moments, owls, winter, snow.

EALR's: 1.2 1.4 2.1 2.2 2.3 4.3

Brief Summary of plot or format: A father and son venture out one cold evening to catch sight of an owl in the woods. This story is full of wonder and anticipation.

How will students relate to this book? What kinds of connections might they make? (text-to-text, text-to-self, text-to-world)

Text-to-self: Have you ever seen an owl? Have you ever been in the snow at night? What special things do you do with your mom or dad?

Text-to-text: *The Owl Who Became the Moon* by Jonathan London/ Ted Rand (illustrator) (Poem) *Stopping by Woods On A Snowy Evening* by Robert Frost

Text-to-World: Are there any species of owls that are endangered?

Possible classroom activities for this book:

Science: Read non-fiction books on owls; make an owl shaped book with facts inside.

Writing: Write a narrative on a late night adventure with a member of your family.

Storytelling: Discuss special things you do with your family in your literature circles.

Read-aloud Lesson #4 *Owl Moon* (2nd grade)

Comprehension Web

Purpose: Students will make text-to-self connections and practice their questioning skills for deeper understanding of the text.

Procedure:

- **Pre-view** the story by asking students what they think the book will be about.

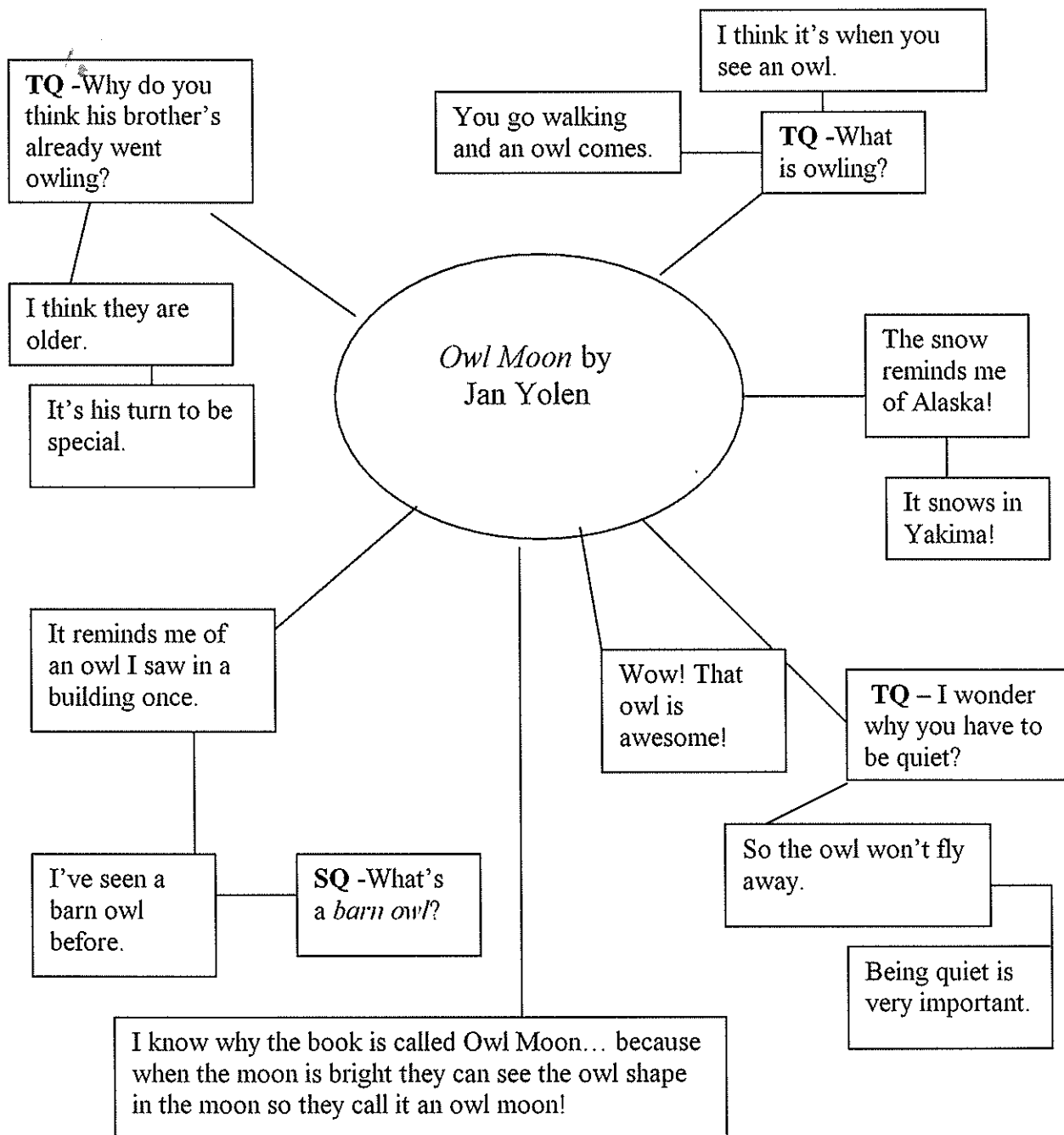
Make sure everyone can see the pictures easily. You can write down their predictions or simply make it part of the discussion.

The story begins like this, "*It was late one winter night, long past my bedtime, when Pa and I went owling.*"

- **Model** – As you begin the story think aloud by asking “I wonder what *owling* is?”
“Do you think the story will explain it to me or am I going to have to infer its meaning?”
- **Write** – down your question on the chart in this activity we used a webbing format. Accept answers from the students on what they think “*owling*” means.
- **Read** – the story, stopping now and then for questions and comments about the story. Write them down on a chart.
- **Keep Focused** – Make sure students stay focused on the story, remember your goal is deeper understanding of the text. Therefore, keep the lesson moving.
- **Discuss** – Go over the class web and make sure all of their questions were answered. You can code each answer (see lesson 3) or just talk about the significance of each answer.

- **Write (text-to-self)** Students can write about a special time they had with a member of their family or a good friend.

Class Comprehension Example Web for *Owl Moon*: TQ = teacher question, SQ = student question. All answers were given by students.



Breaking Down the Significance of the Comprehension Web:

Let's take some of the comments students made during the read-aloud and code their significance. As a teacher, you want to make sure that the questions you are asking and the comments being made work toward a deeper understanding of the story.

Therefore, comments that came from a child's background knowledge are just as important as the inferences that were generated because they all bring the students closer to the book. They are making important text-to-self connections.

1. TQ – What is “owling”? Students generated their ideas by looking at the book cover and the first illustration. Drawing on their prior knowledge of how picture clues give us hints to stories they were able to make an excellent hypothesis to an unfamiliar expression.

2. Student – The snow reminds me of Alaska. This particular child had never been to Alaska but it is clear that the student is looking for some way to relate to this book. She is trying to figure out the setting of the story.

3. TQ – I wonder why you have to be quiet?

Student – This student was making an inference when he said, “**So the owl won't fly away.**” The book never gives that as an answer but the inference is correct. It is important to let the student know that they made an inference so they are aware of their intelligence.

4. TQ – Why do you think the brother's already went owling?

Students – I think they are older.

It's his turn to be special.

These answers are good inferences and perhaps they show some background knowledge as well because the students understand the idea of older siblings getting to do things first sometimes.

5. Students – I've seen a barn owl before.

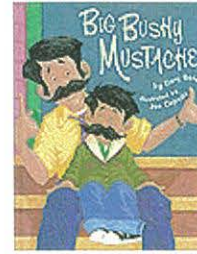
It reminds me of an owl I saw in a building.

These are text-to-self connections! The students are drawing from their own prior-knowledge and using it to relate to the book.

6. Student – I know why the book is called Owl Moon... because when the moon is bright they can see the owl shape in the moon so they call it an owl moon!

This is a wonderful inference and it shows the child really paying attention and working to understand the story.

Personal Note: It becomes very powerful when you (the teacher) begin to analyze your student's comments. They make important connections all the time and when they are written down, the whole class benefits from the insights of others.



Barnes & Noble.com

Responding and Connecting with Children's Books

Author: Gary Soto, Joe Cepeda (illustrator)

Title of Book: *Big Bushy Mustache* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1998)

Genre: Picture Storybook (Multicultural)

Subject or theme: The special relationship between father and son.

EALR's : 1.2 1.4 2.1 2.2 2.3 4.3

Brief Summary of plot or format: A young boy is tired of looking more like his mother than his father. When he discovers that a costume mustache he tries on at school makes him feel grown-up like his dad, he doesn't want to take it off!

How will students relate to this book? What kinds of connections might they make? (text-to-text, text-to-self, text-to-world)

Text-to-text: (Other books by Soto with a family theme) *The Old Man and His Door*, *Too Many Tamales*, *A Birthday Basket for Tia*, *Pablo's Tree*.

In My Family: En Mi Familia, by Carmen Lomas Garza

Text-to-self: Books by Soto are especially good for ethnically diverse classrooms because the children will be able to "see themselves" in these books. He also uses several Spanish words in each book, which really helps the children connect with each story. They are family based books that I think all children can relate to.

Possible classroom activities for this book:

Writing: Write a book report on your favorite Soto book! Why do you like it so much? Write a letter to the author!

Read aloud: Choose a story and read it together in a small group.

Art: Draw a picture of what you will look like when you are all grown up.

Read-aloud Lesson # 5

Text-to-self Activity for *Big Bushy Mustache*:

Purpose: Students will be able to make a personal connection with this story.

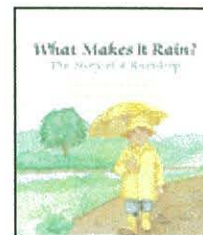
Procedure :

- **Pre-reading** - Ask the students who they feel they look like in their family. I could be anyone: mom, dad, cousin, brother or sister. Talk to the students about how this makes them feel. Do they like it when people say, “Oh you look more and more like your uncle every time I see you!” or do they wish they looked like someone else in the family?
- **Note** - If you have a student or several students who are in foster homes or are adopted you may want to re-think the direction of this activity. Know your students and understand where they are coming from. This activity can also be done with a small group of students during a literature circle discussion. You could also take this in the direction of personalities instead of looks.
- **Read** the book and encourage questions and comments along the way.
- **Discuss** – Did the story change the way you feel? Do you feel proud of the way you look and person you are going to be when you grow up?
- **Write and Draw** – Two choices: (1) Students may want to draw themselves next to the person in their family to whom they believe they look like the most. (2) Students may want to draw a picture of what they believe they will look like when they grow up. Then have them write an explanation to go along with their picture.

Name _____

In *Big Bushy Mustache* by Gary Soto, Ricky is often told that he looks just like his mother. Who do you look like? Draw a picture of yourself and the person you look like *or* draw a picture of what you think you will look like when you are all grown up! Then explain how you feel about it.

The form consists of a large rectangular box. The top two-thirds of the box is blank, intended for drawing. The bottom third of the box contains four horizontal dashed lines, providing a guide for writing an explanation.



Responding and Connecting with Children's Books

Author: Keith Brandt

Barnes & Noble.com

Title of Book: *What Makes it Rain?* (Troll, 1982)

Genre: Non-Fiction

Subject or theme: Weather and the water cycle

EALR's: 1.2 1.5 2.1 2.2 2.3 3.1 4.3

Brief Summary of plot or format: Students learn about water, where it comes from and where it goes. What makes rain, what is evaporation, and how is it all connected.

How will students relate to this book? What kinds of connections might they make? (text-to-text, text-to-self, text-to-world)

Text-to-self: Kids can talk about what they like or dislike about the rain.

Text-to-text: *A Drop Around the World* by Barbara McKinney, *The Magic School Bus Wet All over: A Book About the Water Cycle* by Patricia Relf, *Where Do Puddles Go* (Rookie Read-About Science) by Fay Robinson and Allan Fowler.

Text-to-world: Discuss how rain affects us in Yakima with our crops and around the world. What would happen if it stopped raining? Are there places around the globe experiencing a drought right now? How can we find out?

Possible classroom activities for this book:

For **literature** fun read, *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs* by Judith Barrett.

Science: This is a great book to use during a weather unit. Get into detail on kinds of clouds and what kinds of weather they cause.

- * Go outside and look at the clouds, what kind do you see? Describe them.
- * Draw your own map of the water cycle, use arrows to explain where it's all going.
- * Get together in a group and make a chart of reasons why water is important to the earth.
- * Make an *I Wonder* chart full of questions about rain and where it comes from.

Read-aloud Lesson # 6 *What Makes it Rain?* (2nd grade)

Purpose: Students will read a non-fiction book and work towards making text-to-world connections.

Procedure:

- **Pre-reading activity:** Make an *I Wonder* chart in the classroom and brainstorm with the students, questions they have about rain and where it comes from.
- **Read** – the book to the class stopping along the way to check for answers to the student’s *I Wonder* question about rain.
- **Post-reading activity** - Check off questions that were answered on the chart and circle or star any questions that were not answered. Decide if these questions need further research in order to be answered.
- **Activities: Text-to-world** - This story explains the water cycle in depth. It is recommended that the students be given related activities to help them understand how the water cycle truly works. *For example*, showing the class how ice in a glass creates condensation or how steam from boiling water rises and evaporates are concrete experiments to help with understanding. **How does the water cycle affect our world?** Does it matter whether or not it rains in Yakima? Why? Talk about Yakima’s dependence on apple crops and other agricultural products. What would happen if we didn’t get any rain? Use maps and globes to try and create an awareness of the earth’s dependence on the water cycle and how important rain and snow are to our survival

Class Example: *I Wonder* chart on rain

I Wonder?

Where do we get the rain?

Does God make rain?

Why does it fall from clouds?

What makes clouds?

What's hail?

Why does it rain in some places and then in the desert it doesn't rain?

What makes a rainbow?

Why does it rain hard sometimes and not other times?

Will a puddle dry if you put a lid on it?

What if it rained all the time?

Can it rain all the time?

Will the oceans dry up if it doesn't rain?

Is snow like frozen rain?

Does it rain at the North Pole?



Barnes & Noble.com

Responding and Connecting with Children's Books

Author: Beverly Cleary, Alan Tiegreen (illustrator)

Title of Book: *Ramona and Her Father* (Avon Books, 1975)

Genre: Realistic Fiction (Newbery Honor Book)

Subject or theme: Families and growing up

EALR's: 1.2 1.4 2.1 2.2 2.3 4.3

Brief Summary of plot or format: Ramona Quimby wishes her family would be happy. The Quimby family has hit a bump in the road when their father loses his job and mom has to go to work full time. Ramona also deals with her father's smoking habit.

How will students relate to this book? What kinds of connections might they make? (text-to-text, text-to-self, text-to-world)

Text-to-self: Lost jobs, smoking parents and making ends meet are common themes for the children I teach. The day I started this book a little girl came up to me and told me her father had lost his job (and this was before I started the book) Ramona has feelings and thoughts children can relate to, she isn't perfect and neither is her family.

Text-to-text: Other Ramona books include: *Ramona the Pest*, *Ramona Quimby Age 8*, *Beezus and Ramona*, *Ramona and Her Mother*, and *Ramona Forever*.

Possible classroom activities for this book:

Small group book discussions: Students can talk about their favorite parts.

Discuss: Do you think Ramona is a good sister? Why or why not?

Write about your family: Do you have an older sister that drives you crazy? How about a little brother?

Write: Are you a little like Ramona or are you more like Beezus? Boys...do you see yourselves at all in this book? (*Henry and Ribsy* by Beverly Cleary is a good choice for boys.)

Read-aloud Lesson #7 *Ramona and Her Father* (2nd or 3rd grade)

Purpose: Read a chapter book aloud in order to improve listening skills. Students can visualize the characters in their minds while the teacher reads. Students will make personal connections with the text.

Procedure:

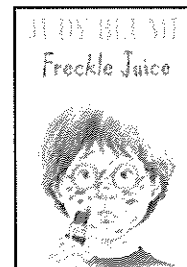
- **Read** - everyday find time to read from a chapter book. Seat the students around you on the floor or allow them to draw at their desks while you read.
- **Pre-reading** – review what you read the day before by asking the class to explain what happened.
 - This reminds the students where you are in the book, checks for comprehension and allows students who were gone the day before a chance to catch-up on the plot.
- **Read and Model** – While you are reading you can model your *Think-aloud* strategies. This shows the students that you ask yourself questions while you read.
- **Discuss** – What was important about that chapter? Any “high point” was anything funny or sad? Did the story remind you of anything? Point out and text-to-self, text-to-text or text-to-world connections the kids make.
- **Respond** - Students can do a quick response in a journal dedicated to that chapter book. It doesn't need to be a long response, just a few sentences on the chapter you just read. Sometimes you can ask them to answer a question or they can make a prediction for next time. Whatever works for you!

My Reader Response Journal

Ramona and Her Father

By Beverly Cleary

Name _____



Barnes & Noble. com

Responding and Connecting with Children's Books

Author: Judy Blume

Title of Book: *Freckle Juice* (Bantam Doubleday Dell, 1971)

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Subject or theme: Be happy with who you are.

EALR's: 1.2 1.4 2.1 2.2 2.3 4.3

Brief Summary of plot or format: Andrew wants freckles so badly that he is willing to try Sharon's freckle juice recipe for fifty cents.

How will students relate to this book? What kinds of connections might they make?
(text-to-text, text-to-self, text-to-world)

Text-to-self: Students want to be like the kid in front of them (better at baseball, curly hair, nicer clothes). They can relate to Andrew's feelings of wanting something that he doesn't have.

Text-to-text: Other great stories by Judy Blume: *Blubber*, *Otherwise Known as Sheila the Great*, *Tales of the Fourth Grade Nothing*, and *Superfudge*.

Possible classroom activities for this book:

Writing: You are great because...notes children can write to each other.

Make up your own "Freckle Juice" what will it give you? Will you have, longer hair, faster feet maybe a super-brain? Advertise your invention to the class.

Read-aloud Lesson # 8 *Freckle Juice* (2nd or 3rd grade)

Purpose: Students will make important text-to-self connections.

Students will make several predictions during the story.

Procedure :

- **Read** - Each day read a chapter from this hilarious story!
- **Write (predictions)**– Throughout the story have students write down their predictions to the following questions: Will Andrew believe Sharon’s recipe for freckle juice? Will Andrew drink her recipe for freckle juice? What will happen to Andrew now that he has swallowed the awful mixture for freckle juice?
- **Discuss (text-to-self)** – Have you ever wanted to change something about yourself? Why? What would it be? Why do you think Andrew wanted to change his looks?

Example:

Today’s Freckle Juice Prediction!

by _____

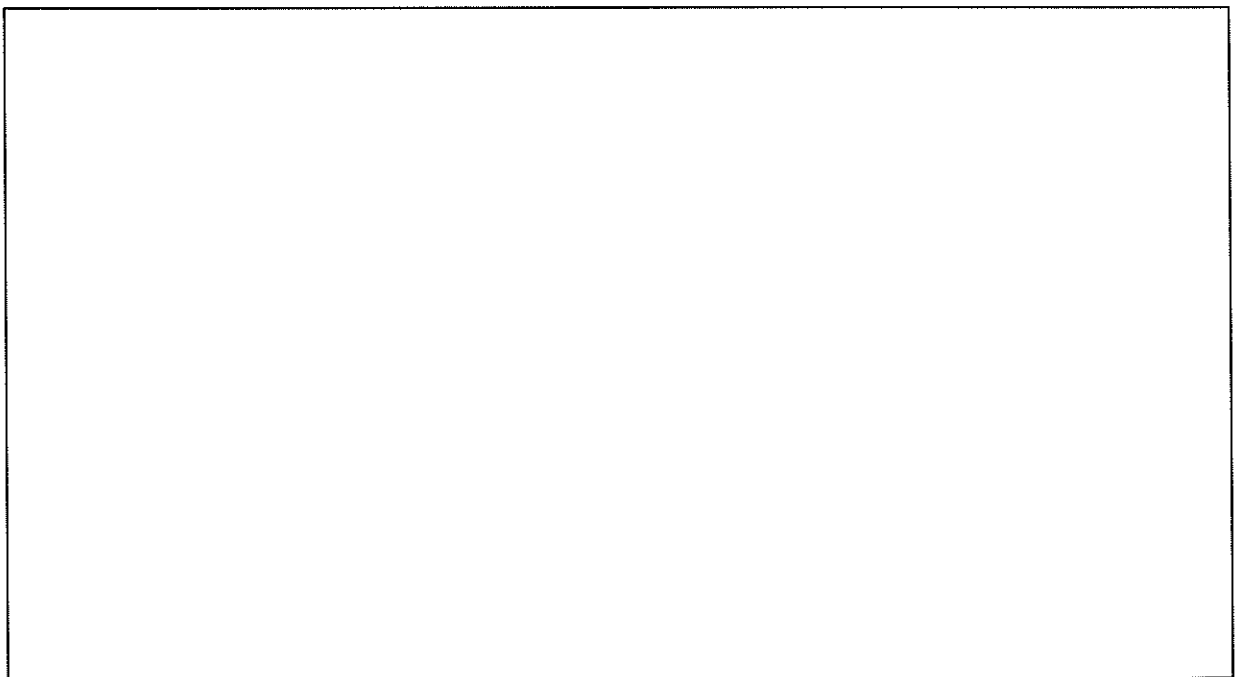
Directions: Fill in the sentence and create your recipe. Then, draw a picture of what it will supposedly do for the person who eats or drinks it.

My Recipe for _____

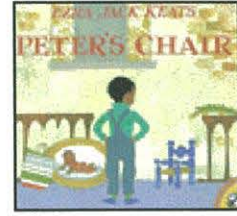
will give you _____!

Just look at these results!

Recipe:



Responding and Connecting with Children's Books



Barnes & Noble.com

Author: Ezra Jack Keats

Title of Book: *Peter's Chair* (Harper Collins Publishers, 1967)

Genre: Picture Storybook (Multicultural)

Subject or theme: Growing up, a new baby sister is born.

EALR's: 1.2 1.4 2.1 2.2 2.3 4.3

Brief Summary of plot or format: Little Peter is tired of watching all of his baby things painted pink for his new baby sister (cradle, crib, highchair). He finds one small chair that hasn't been painted pink and decides to take it and run away from home (well to the front steps anyway) until his mother explains how much she misses him and he gets hungry for lunch.

How will students relate to this book? What kinds of connections might they make? (text-to-text, text-to-self, text-to-world)

Text-to-self: My students are at an age where new babies are being born into the family. I must have at least five or six each year that experience the birth of a new sibling. Other children have new baby cousins to talk about and even new stepsiblings can create a connection with this story.

Text-to-text: *Arthur's New Baby Book* by Marc Brown, *Julius, the Baby of the World* by Kevin Henkes, *I'm a Big Sister* or *I'm a Big Brother* by Joanna Cole (non-fiction).

Possible classroom activities for this book:

Writing: Do you have brothers and sisters? Discuss the pros and cons. Are you an only child? Discuss the pros and cons.

Art: Draw a picture of your family and friends.

Read: There are other books by Ezra Jack Keats including: *Snowy Day*, *Whistle for Willie*, *A Letter to Amy*, *Goggles*, and *Pet Show!*

Read-aloud Lesson #9 *Peter's Chair* and *Julius Baby of the World*

Purpose: Students will make text-to-self and text-to-text connections during this two day read-aloud.

Procedure:

- **Read:** Read-aloud the story *Peter's Chair* by Ezra Jack Keats. Use pre-reading strategies such as predicting. Allow children to ask questions and make comments after the story has been read.
- **Read:** The next day, read *Julius Baby of the World* by Kevin Henkes. Again using pre-reading and questioning strategies for comprehension.
- **Compare and Contrast:** (After reading *Julius*) On a large piece of butcher paper ask the students how each book was the same or different. Write down all of their comments. Make sure you use both of the books, refer to pages and remind them of their questions and predictions given during the read-aloud. This will help them remember both stories.
- **Write:** The teacher can ask student to write down which book was their favorite and why or what was their favorite part in each book. Another idea for first graders is to have them illustrate their favorite picture from each book.

Compare and Contrast (First Graders)

Peter's Chair and Julius Baby of the World

How are these stories different?

One story had a party.

One story had a human baby and one story had a baby rat.

Peter ran away because they were painting all of his stuff pink.

Lilly was mad because they were caring more for the baby.

In Julius they were giving the baby stuff, but in the other story they were painting Peter's stuff.

Peter's chair was more about his chair.

The titles are different.

Lilly said she hated Julius and Peter did not say that.

Peter hid from his mom.

How are these stories the same?

They both have babies.

Both kids hate the babies.

Both kids liked the babies at the end.

They were both jealous.

Both kids were excited at first about the baby.

The grownups gave the babies more love in both stories.

Both kids were happy at the end.

Both stories had moms and dads.

They both had families.



Barnes & Noble.com

Responding and Connecting with Children's Books

Author: Paul O. Zelinsky

Title of Book: *Rapunzel* (Penguin Putnam Inc., 1997)

Genre: Fantasy or Fairy Tale

Subject or theme: Love conquers over evil.

EALR's: 1.2 1.4 2.1 2.2 2.3 4.3

Brief Summary of plot or format: A young girl named Rapunzel is kept in a tower by a sorceress until a young prince sees her and tries to save her. Through trial and pain the two triumph over the sorceress and live happily with their two children.

How will students relate to this book? What kinds of connections might they make? (text-to-text, text-to-self, text-to-world)

Text-to-self: Do you dream of one day finding true love? When you get into trouble and are sent to your room, do you ever feel like you are "locked away" in a tower?

Text-to-text: Rapunzel variants by the following authors: 1) Grimm (illustrated by C. Heyer), 2) A. Berenzy, 3) Grimm (illustrated by Dusikoval) and 4) *Petrosinella: A Neopolitan Rapunzel* by D. Stanley.

Another fairy tale adapted by Zelinsky: *Rumpelstiltskin*

Other fairy tales illustrated by Zelinsky: *Hansel and Gretel* by R. Lesser, *Swamp Angel* by A. Isaacs, *The Enchanted Castle* by E. Nesbit

Possible classroom activities for this book:

Compare and Contrast: Students can read or listen to several versions of the tale and write responses to each one.

Compare and Contrast: How is this fairy tale different from Cinderella or Snow White? **Writing:** Students can write their own versions of Rapunzel.

Read aloud: As the teacher reads the story students can write down questions and predictions on chart paper or on sticky notes for further discussion after the story is over.

Read-aloud Lesson # 12 *Rapunzel* (2nd or 3rd grade)

Purpose: Students will make a variety of connections including text-to-self, text-to-text and possible text-to-world. Students will ask important questions, which will enhance comprehension.

Procedure:

- **Writers** – Choose two students to write on a class chart while you read aloud. One chart will be for *student questions* and the other chart will be for *student predictions*. Label the charts accordingly.
- **Read** – Read the book aloud to the class, stopping at the end of each page or every few pages. This will provide students the opportunity to make predictions and ask questions about the story. Student writers will copy down these comments on the class charts.
- **Discuss** – After the story has been read, go over each prediction. Did it come true or not? Also revisit each question written down and code them:
 - **Background knowledge (BK)**
 - **Answered in the text (A)**
 - **Inferred (I)**
 - **Need further discussion or research (D) or (RS)**
 - **Is the question confusing? (Huh?)**
- **Follow-up** – Choose a writing activity or project to use as a follow-up to the lesson. For example they can write about their favorite part, give written responses to some of the questions on their chart, create a book cover, write a summery, or change the ending. If you continue to read different versions of

Rapunzel, then they can begin to compare and contrast the different variants.

This will strengthen their text-to-text connections.

Example: Class Response Chart (3rd grade)

Remember: These are not only *before the story* predictions. The teacher is stopping *throughout the story* for predictions. Then going back after the story is over to see

how many were correct. This helps comprehension.

Predictions "I think"	Was the prediction correct? (Yes or No)
I think she has to eat the Rapunzel or else she will die.	Yes (A)
I think the Rapunzel plant makes you want it even more.	Yes (A)
I think it will taste so good she will need more.	Yes (A)
I think Rapunzel is the girl in the castle.	Yes (BK)
Rapunzel is going to marry the prince.	Yes (BK)
I think the Sorceress is going to visit Rapunzel in the castle.	Yes (A)
I think the Prince will save Rapunzel from the tower.	No (A)
Her dress is tight...she's going to have a baby!	Yes (BK)
I think the Sorceress will take away Rapunzel's baby too.	No (A)

I think she has to eat the Rapunzel or else she will die.	Yes (A)
I think the Rapunzel plant makes you want it even more.	Yes (A)
I think it will taste so good she will need more.	Yes (A)
I think Rapunzel is the girl in the castle.	Yes (BK)
Rapunzel is going to marry the prince.	Yes (BK)
I think the Sorceress is going to visit Rapunzel in the castle.	Yes (A)
I think the Prince will save Rapunzel from the tower.	No (A)
Her dress is tight...she's going to have a baby!	Yes (BK)
I think the Sorceress will take away Rapunzel's baby too.	No (A)

- I think her hair is going to grow back. Yes (I)
- The Sorceress is going to cast the Prince out of the tower. Yes (A)
- I think the Sorceress will trick the Prince. Yes (A)
- I think Rapunzel is going to help the Prince see again. Yes (A)
- I think the Prince will help take care of the babies. Yes (I)
- I think the Prince is the daddy. Yes (A)
- I think the Rapunzel's tears will make his eyes better. Yes (A)
- I think that all he had to do was *feel* to find Rapunzel. Yes? (I)

Questions "I wonder"

What's a Sorceress? (I) or (RS)

Why is the mother going to die? (A)

Why does the mother have to eat the rapunzel? (A) (I) magic?

Why did the father have to hurry in the garden? (I)

Why does the mother want to eat more of the rapunzel? (A)

I wonder if the sorceress made the mother want more rapunzel? (NA)
(However we could *infer* that she had something to do with it.)

Does this story remind anyone else of Rumpelstiltskin? (Text-to-text)

Is Rapunzel locked in the tower? (A)

Why did the sorceress cut Rapunzel's hair? (A)

I wonder if the prince is going to be blind forever? (A)

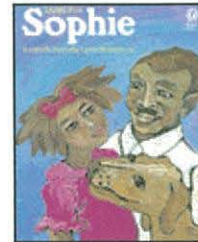
I wonder if anyone can help him find Rapunzel? (A)

*Notice that most of the questions were focused towards the beginning of the story. This is when children are trying to relate to the text, they want to understand what is happening so they can enjoy the story. Once they have this, then they can sit back and enjoy listening and predicting.

This next section contains more
read-aloud ideas to help
students make meaningful
text connections.

These do not contain the extra classroom activities.

Responding and Connecting with Children's Books



Author: Mem Fox, Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson (illustrator) Barnes & Noble.com

Title of Book: *Sophie* (Harcourt, 1994)

Genre: Picture Storybook (International)

Subject or theme: Dealing with the death of a loved one and the circle of life.

Brief Summary of plot or format: A young girl is born and grows up with her grandfather as a strong influence in her life. His death brings her a great deal of sadness. The story ends with the birth of her daughter.

How will students relate to this book? What kinds of connections might they make? (text-to-text, text-to-self, text-to-world)

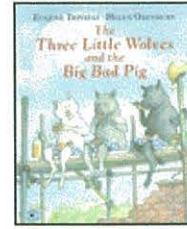
Text-to-self: Many of my children have lost a grandparent already, and if they haven't, most of them can relate to the love that Sophie feels for her grandfather. They will have plenty of stories to tell.

Text-to-text from Mem Fox: *Night Noises, Tough Boris, Feathers and Fools, Shoes from Grandpa.*

Possible classroom activities for this book:

Writing: Write about a day spent with an adult that you love or admire. It could be an aunt or a grandmother or a perhaps a friend of the family who you admire and want to spend time with.

Discuss: The illustrations in this book are very different from a traditional family story. What do the kids notice? Do they like them? Perhaps look at other books from this illustrator such as *Elijah's Angel* by Michael J. Rosen. Is it the same or different?



Responding and Connecting with Children's Books

Author: Eugene Trivizas, Helen Oxenbury (illustrator)

Barnes & Noble.com

Title of Book: *The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig* (McElderry Books, 1993)

Genre: Picture Storybook (International)

Subject or theme: A switch around version of *The Three Little Pigs*, this story emphasizes friendship and kindness over revenge. Where there is kindness, people will change.

EALR's: 1.2 1.4 2.1 2.2 2.3 4.3

Brief Summary of plot or format: Three little wolves set out into the world together and build themselves a house made out of bricks. Along comes a big bad pig, he destroys each house the wolves make, until at last they make one out of flowers. The smell is so beautiful that the pig turns into a "good pig" and they all live happy.

How will students relate to this book? What kinds of connections might they make? (text-to-text, text-to-self, text-to-world)

Text-to-text: *The Three Little Pigs* a traditional tale, retold by Sheila Black and illustrated by Robyn Officer. *The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs* by Jon Scieszka, illustrated by Lane Smith. *Suddenly! : A Preston Pig Story* by Colin McNaughton (There are many Preston Pig Stories all written by McNaughton.)

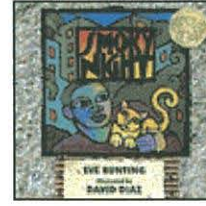
Text-to-self: What can we do about bullies? Have you ever been bullied? How would you have built your house?

Possible classroom activities for this book:

Writing: Students will write their own version of *The Three Little Pigs*. They can use different animals and different kinds of houses!

Art: Find a building material in the classroom; work in small groups to build a house. Will it stand up to the big bad wolf or pig? Why? Explain your strategy to the class.

Drama: Provide the students with an opportunity to act out the play. They can do it from memory or you can make up a reader's theatre for them to enjoy.



Barnes & Noble.com

Responding to and Analyzing Children's Books

Author: Eve Bunting

Title of Book: *Smoky Night* (Harcourt Brace, 1994)

Genre: Picture Storybook

Subject or theme: Getting along with each other, helping one another.

EALR's: 1.2 1.4 2.1 2.2 2.3 4.3

Brief Summary of plot or format: A riot is taking place outside a young boy's apartment. He becomes frightened when their building is set on fire and he cannot find his cat. Daniel's cat is found hiding with another cat he always fights with. It takes these two cats becoming friends for the people in the neighborhood to realize they all need each other and should all try to get along.

How will students relate to this book? What kinds of connections might they make? (text-to-text, text-to-self, text-to-world)

Author and illustrator combinations (Text-to-text): *Going Home*, *Smokey Night* are illustrated by David Diaz and written by Eve Bunting. *Fly Away Home*, *A Day's Work*, and *The Wall*, are illustrated by Ronald Himler and written by Eve Bunting.

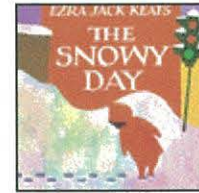
Possible classroom activities for this book:

Discuss: All of the stories listed above deal with troubled times. Discuss with students any personal experience they may have relating to any of these stories.

Illustrators: How are they different? Why do you think Eve Bunting chose to use two people with such different styles?

Text: Can you tell by listening to the text that the author is Eve Bunting? How?

Responding to and Analyzing Children's Books



Barnes & Noble.com

Author: Ezra Jack Keats

Title of Book: *The Snowy Day* (Scholastic, 1962)

Genre: Picture Storybook

Subject or theme: Wintertime/Snow/Childhood

EALR's: 1.2 1.4 2.1 2.2 2.3 4.3

Brief Summary of plot or format: A young boy plays in the winter snow. The author follows him throughout his day of making tracks, playing with a stick, getting in the middle of a snowball fight with "big boys" making snow angels and sliding down hills.

How will students relate to this book? What kinds of connections might they make? (text-to-text, text-to-self, text-to-world)

Text-to-self: Ask students about their own wintertime fun. What do they like to do in the snow? Do they remember their first snowball fight? How did they feel when they came inside from the snow?

Text-to-text: *The Mitten* adapted by Jan Brett, *Owl Moon* by Jane Yolen, *Snow* by Uri Shulevitz, *The Big Snow* by Berta & Elmer Hader, *When Winter Comes* Nancy Van Laan, *White Snow Bright Snow* by Alvin R. Tresset.

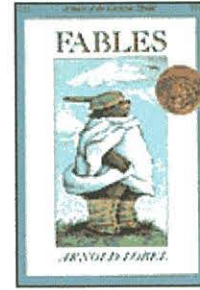
Text-to-world: Students can watch the local news report and find out where it is snowing in the U.S. or around the world. They can also check the news paper for stories on snowy weather.

Possible classroom activities for this book:

Expository Writing: How to build a snowman.

Narrative Writing: My walk in the snow.

Art: Make a snowy day mural out of construction paper and colored chalk. This will make their pictures look a great deal like the artwork, by Ezra Jack Keats.



Barnes & Noble.com

Responding and Connecting with Children's Books

Author: Arnold Lobel

Title of Book: *Fables* (Harper Collins, 1980)

Genre: Picture Storybook

Subject or theme: A collection of fables with a moral lesson attached.

EALR's: 1.2 1.4 2.1 2.2 2.3 4.3

Brief Summary of plot or format: Frogs rushing to get to the rainbows end, a dancing camel, and a lobster and crab alone on a boat...these are just a few of the funny and surprising fables told in this book.

How will students relate to this book? What kinds of connections might they make? (text-to-text, text-to-self, text-to-world)

Text-to-self: Morals give us life lessons that we can relate too. Discuss these morals and see if students have any similar experiences.

Text-to-text: Read lots of books by Arnold Lobel including: *Frog and Toad are Friends*, *Owl at Home*, *Mouse Soup*, and *Ming Lo Moves the Mountain*.

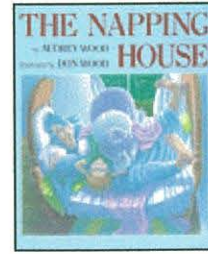
Also: *The Classic Treasury of Aesop's Fables*: by Aesop (editor) and Don Daily (Illustrator)

Possible classroom activities for this book:

Writing: Write your own fable and combine them into a class fable's book.

Sit in literature circles: Share favorite fables from the book (multiple copies needed).

Discuss the meaning of each fable. What do students think the morals of the stories are?



Barnes & Noble.com

Responding and Connecting with Children's Books

Author: Audrey Wood, Don Wood (illustrator)

Title of Book: *The Napping House* (Harcourt Brace, 1984)

Genre: Picture Storybook

Subject or theme: Family, home and comfort.

EALR's: 1.2 1.4 2.1 2.2 2.3 4.3

Brief Summary of plot or format: A little boy and his grandmother, are joined by their pets for a quiet afternoon nap on a rainy day. Suddenly, a simple flea causes them all to wake up! This book has repetitive text, which builds throughout the book.

How will students relate to this book? What kinds of connections might they make? (text-to-text, text-to-self, text-to-world)

Text-to-text: *I'm Quick as a Cricket*, *Silly Sally*, *King Bidgood's in the Bathtub*, *Jubal's Wish*, *Little Penguins Tale*, all by Audrey and Don Wood.

These books are similar in style *The Little House* by Virginia Lee Burton and *There was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly* by Simms Taback

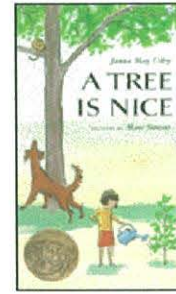
Text-to-self: What would wake you up from a cozy nap? Do you have any of these pets?

Possible classroom activities for this book:

Writing: Students work in small groups to write their own version, using different characters. Share their writing in groups.

Reading: Read other books by Audrey Wood and compare them with *The Napping House*.

Reading: If you are lucky enough to have multiple copies, students will enjoy reading this story in small groups. The text is repetitive so everyone can be successful.



Barnes & Noble.com

Responding and Connecting with Children's Books

Author: Janice May Udry, Marc Simont (illustrator)

Title of Book: *A Tree is Nice* (Harper Trophy, 1956)

Genre: Picture Storybook

Subject or theme: Trees are everywhere. We should appreciate their beauty and take care of them.

EALR's: 1.2 1.4 2.1 2.2 2.3 4.3

Brief Summary of plot or format: Children and families are enjoying trees. The book shows us all of the fun we can have with trees from climbing on them to having a picnic underneath them.

How will students relate to this book? What kinds of connections might they make? (text-to-text, text-to-self, text-to-world)

Text-to-self: Most of the children in my room have played around and climbed on trees. It would be an easy topic for them to relate to.

Text-to-world: Why are trees important in Yakima? What kinds of trees do we grow?

Text-to-text: Read non-fiction books on the importance of trees.

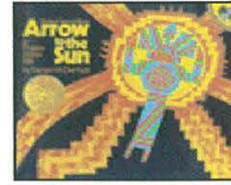
Fiction: *Once There Was a Tree* by Natalia Romanova (illustrated by Gennaday Spirin)

Possible classroom activities for this book:

Writing: Students can write a narrative story about children/themselves playing around a tree. Students could also make a class big book, which highlights different ways we enjoy trees.

Art: Students can draw or paint a tree through its many stages, from winter to summer.

Science: Lifecycle of a tree, types of trees.



Responding and Connecting with Children's Books

Barnes & Noble.com

Author: Gerald McDermott

Title of Book: *Arrow to the Sun (A Pueblo Indian Tale)* (Penguin Group, 1974)

Genre: Picture Storybook (Legend)

Subject or theme: Right of passage, going from boy to man, family.

EALR's: 1.2 1.4 2.1 2.2 2.3 4.3

Brief Summary of plot or format: A young boy is a social outcast until he learns that his father is the Lord of the Sun. He travels to the sun and passes through three Kivas in order to earn the right to be the Lord's son. He returns to his village with honor.

How will students relate to this book? What kinds of connections might they make? (text-to-text, text-to-self, text-to-world)

Text-to-text: *Musicians of the Sun* by Gerald McDermott is an Aztec Tale. For other Native American Legends to read: see my unit on Native Americans.

Trickster Tales: *Coyote, Raven, Zomo the Rabbit, Jabuti, Anansi the Spider* all by McDermott

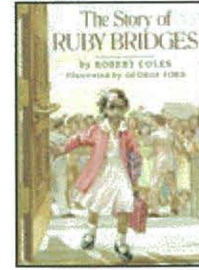
Text-to-self: Have you ever felt the need to prove your self to others? How do you feel about growing up? Have you ever been teased?

Possible classroom activities for this book:

Social Studies: Study the Pueblo Indians by integrating this book into a thematic unit.

Writing: Students can write their own Legends or Trickster Tales.

Art: Use colored chalk to make illustrations similar to the book.



Barnes & Noble.com

Responding and Connecting with Children's Books

Author: Robert Coles / George Ford (illustrator)

Title of Book: *The Story of Ruby Bridges* (Scholastic, 1995)

Genre: Picture Book Biography

Subject or theme: Overcoming adversity and racial prejudice.

EALR's: 1.2 1.4 2.1 2.2 2.3 3.1 4.3

Brief Summary of plot or format: Six-year-old Ruby Bridges, was the first black child to attend an all-white elementary school. She overcame anger and hatred and paved the way for other black children to break down the walls of segregation.

How will students relate to this book? What kinds of connections might they make?
(text-to-text, text-to-self, text-to-world)

Text-to-self: The story centers around a child with all the hopes and dreams that the children in my room have. Although they may not have experienced that kind of extreme anger, they can relate to the feeling of being singled out and feeling frightened.

Text-to-text: *Through My Eyes* by Ruby Bridges, Margo Lundell

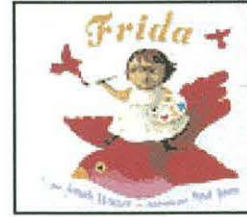
Text-to-world: How is society now? Is there still prejudice in our society?

Possible classroom activities for this book:

Writing: Write about a time when you felt left out or different from others.

Comprehension and Vocabulary: What is bravery? How is Ruby brave? What is a hero? Is Ruby a hero? Why?

Class discussion: Do you think Ruby's parents should have let her go to that school? Would you want to go to school like this?



Responding and Connecting with Children's Books

Barnes & Noble.com

Author: Jonah Winter / Ana Juan (illustrator)

Title of Book: Frida

Genre: Picture Book Biography (Arthur A. Levine Books, 2002)

Subject or theme: The life of artist Frida Kahlo.

EALR's: 1.2 1.4 1.5 2.1 2.2 2.3 3.1 4.3

Brief Summary of plot or format: This book actually paints a picture of the life and hardships that surrounded the artist. The reader learns of her incredible strength and her ability to overcome incredible pain.

How will students relate to this book? What kinds of connections might they make?
(text-to-text, text-to-self, text-to-world)

Text-to-self: Most children love to paint, so they can relate to her love of painting.

Text-to-text: *Diego* by Jonah Winter and Anna Juan (illustrator) this book is about Diego the great Mexican muralist of Mexico. *My name is Georgia: A Portrait* by Jeanette Winter. (A female artist)

Frida Kahlo: The Paintings by Hayden Herrera (This will give students and idea of her art work)

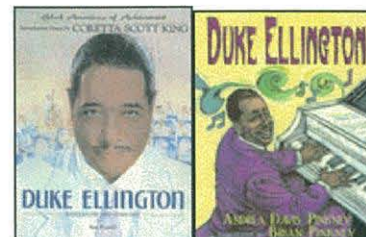
Possible classroom activities for this book:

Art: Look at the artwork of Frida Kahlo. Share in small groups your favorite paintings. Why do you like them? Why don't you like them? Does her art remind you of other illustrators in the classroom?

Art History: Travel through time and observe other great artists from different periods. (Vincent Van Gogh, Monet, Pablo Picasso, Renoir)

Guest Speaker: Invite a local artist to the classroom to talk about making a living as an artist.

Responding and Connecting with Children's Books



Barnes & Noble.com

Author: Ron Frankl

Title of Book: *Duke Ellington: Bandleader and Composer* (Chelsea House, 1988)

Genre: Biography

Author: Andrea D. Pinkney / Brian Pinkney (illustrator)

Title of Book: *Duke Ellington* (Scholastic, 1998)

Genre: Picture Book Biography

Subject or theme:

The amazing life of jazz musician and composer, Duke Ellington.

EALR's: 1.2 1.4 1.5 2.1 2.2 2.3 3.1 4.3

Brief Summary of plot or format:

Both biographies take the reader from Ellington's childhood all the way to Carnegie Hall in 1943.

How will students relate to this book? What kinds of connections might they make?
(text-to-text, text-to-self, text-to-world)

Text-to-self: Children will relate to his love of music and having a dream come true.

Text-to-text: Reading both versions is important. The book by Frankl has real photographs of the Duke and his band. The picture book by Pinkney has the catchy text for younger students who will enjoy the fun way his life story is told.

Text-to-world: What about Jazz music today? Do any of today's top artists use Jazz?

Possible classroom activities for this book:

Music: Listen to some of Duke Ellington's music so students can have an appreciation for jazz.

Listen to different styles of piano music. Can they pick out a jazz piano vs. a classical sound? **Write:** What is your favorite kind of music?

Responding and Connecting with Children's Books



Barnes & Noble.com

Author: Miriam Schlein

Title of Book: *The Year of the Panda* (The Trumpet Club, 1990)

Genre: Multicultural Novel

Subject or theme: The Giant Panda is endangered and needs an expanded environment in order to thrive again. This book is also about families and life in the countryside of China.

Brief Summary of plot or format: A young boy (Lu Yi) finds an orphaned baby panda while walking with his father. With the help of his family, he takes care of it until it regains its strength. Lu Yi then accompanies the young panda to a rescue center; where he learns the reasons behind their near extinction. This information changes the course of his life.

How will students relate to this book? What kinds of connections might they make?
(text-to-text, text-to-self, text-to-world)

Text-to-self: At first Lu Yi wants to keep the panda for a pet, when he realizes that isn't possible, he feels sadness and disappointment. I think most children can relate to wanting a pet or wanting to keep a pet they have found and being unable to. Perhaps someone has seen a Panda at the zoo and is willing to share.

Text-to-text: Non-fiction books on Pandas, websites, films.

Text-to-world: What is being done for Pandas today? How is their environment?

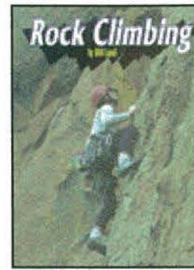
Possible classroom activities for this book:

Writing: Reports on Pandas (habitat, eating habits, lifecycle).

Art: The students can make Pandas out of paper plates. (Might be a little "old school" but the kids really love it)

Social Studies: Combine this with a unit on China or Pandas. January can be a good month because it ends with the Chinese New Year celebration.

Responding to and Connecting with Children's Book



Barnes & Noble.com

Author: Bill Lund

Title of Book: *Rock Climbing* (Capstone Press, 1996)

Genre: Non-Fiction

Subject or theme: Information on rock climbing.

Brief Summary of plot or format: This information book takes the reader through rock climbing's history, techniques, and safety tips for the beginning climber. There are web sites for extra support and vocabulary words to become familiar with.

How will students relate to this book? What kinds of connections might they make? (text-to-text, text-to-self, text-to-world)

Text-to-text: *To the Top! Climbing the World's Highest Mountain* by Sydelle A. Kramer.

There are other titles in this series on: Kayaking, Triathlons, and Weight Lifting.

Text-to-self: Students may have experience on rock wall or they may know someone in the family who climbs.

Text-to-world: Where can you go to rock climb? Is there a job where people are expected to climb mountains?

Possible classroom activities for this book:

Writing: Imagine you were a rock climber; describe your adventure.

A teacher can use this book as part of a unit on mountain formations and the earth.

Compare rock climbing with other adventure sports such as: kayaking, rafting, biking, skiing, and hang-gliding. Which one sounds like the most fun to you? Why?

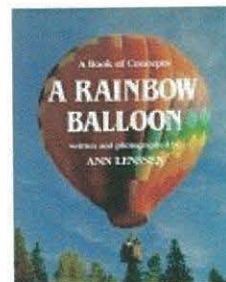
Responding and Connecting with Children's Books

Author: Ann Lenssen

Title of Book: A Rainbow Balloon (Cobblehill Books, 1992)

Genre: Non-Fiction

Subject or theme: Hot Air Balloons



Amazon.com

Brief Summary of plot or format: This book explains how hot air balloons fly. It is easy for children to understand. Vocabulary words are clear and in bold print. This book is beautifully photographed.

How will students relate to this book? What kinds of connections might they make? (text-to-text, text-to-self, text-to-world)

Text-to-self: Children can tell stories of the balloons they have seen in the sky. Perhaps someone has been to a balloon fair in Walla Walla, or Prosser, WA.

Text-to-text: *Hot Air Henry*, by Mary Calhoun and *The Big Balloon Race* by Eleanor Coerr.

Text-to-world: Has anyone every flown around the world? Where can you buy a hot air balloon? Do people from other countries fly them?

Possible classroom activities for this book:

Science: Hot air balloons are a good way to explain how hot air rises. It also demonstrates air pressure, and wind patterns.

Art: Make hot air balloons out of plaster and a regular balloon.

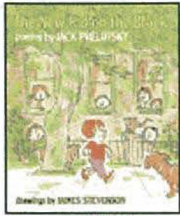
Students can design beautiful cover for hot air balloon books.

Video: It would be beneficial for students to watch a documentary on ballooning.

Reading Rainbow (GPN Educational Media) hosted by LeVar Burton, has one on hot air balloons and they read the story, *Hot Air Henry*.

Poetry Books to Read-aloud in the Classroom:

Author: Jack Prelutsky / James Stevenson (illustrator)



Barnes & Noble.com

Title: *The New Kid on the Block* (Greenwillow Books, 1984)

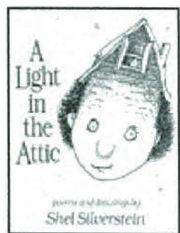
Genre: Poetry

About the Book: These poetry books are full of rich and hilarious language. Prelutsky's poems are down to earth and right for children of every age. If you want to expose your classroom to clever poetry use these books.

Text-to-self: These poems are about animals and children and the crazy things that happen to them. So they are easy to relate to.

Text-to-text: (Other Prelutsky, Stevenson books) *It's Raining Pigs and Noodles*, *Something Big Has Been Here*, *A Pizza the Size of the Sun*

Author: Shel Silverstein



Barnes & Noble.com

Titles: *A Light in the Attic* (Harper & Row, 1974)

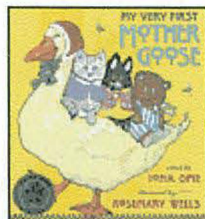
Genre: Poetry

About the Book: Classic children's poetry! Experience Backward Bill, and a polar bear in the frigidaire! His books will create a love of poetry; students will ask for his books all year long.

Text-to-self: Crazy relatable characters that complain about homework and chores make this book easy to relate to.

Text-to-text (Other Silverstein books) *Where the Sidewalk Ends*, *Falling Up: Poems and Drawings*, *The Giving Tree*, *The Missing Piece*, *A Giraffe and a Half*

Author: Iona Archibald Opie (Editor), Rosemary Wells (illustrator)



Barnes & Noble.com

Title: *My Very First Mother Goose* (Candlewick Press, 1996)

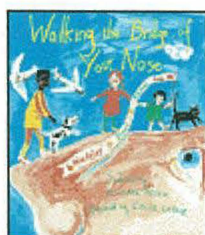
Genre: Poetry (Folk)

About the Book: This book is a collection of over 60 nursery rhymes. They include titles like, “Jack and Jill,” “Little Jack Horner,” “To Market, To Market,” and “Hey Diddle, Diddle.” Clever and warm illustrations make this book enjoyable.

Text-to-self: Many children will have memories of family members or daycare providers reading these wonderful rhymes.

Text-to-text: *Here Comes Mother Goose* (by Opie and Wells)

Author: Michael Rosen, Chloe Cheese (illustrator)



Barnes & Noble.com

Title: *Walking the Bridge of Your Nose* (Kingfisher, 1995)

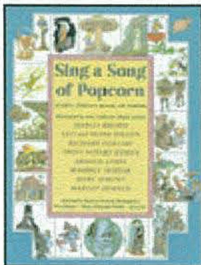
Genre: Poetry

About this Book: Full of wordplay and rhymes this humors book is a great deal of fun. The illustrations are whimsical as are the words on the page. The text stretches and flows in many shapes along the page.

Text-to-self: The rhymes have repeatable nonsense verses and tounge twisters they might remind some students of jump rope rhymes.

Text-to-text: Doodle Dandies: Poems That Take Shape by J. Patrick Lewis / Lisa Desimini (illustrator)

Selected by: Beatrice Schenk de Regniers / Eva Moore, Jan Carr, Mary M. White (Editors)



Barnes & Noble.com

Title: *Sing a Song of Popcorn* (Scholastic, 1988)

Genre: Poetry

About this Book: 128 poems in nine thematic sections, each illustrated by a Caldecott Medalist. Some of the artists include: Maurice Sendak, Arnold Lobel, and Marcia Brown. The poems are mixed in style; (Shel Silverstein, A.A. Milne, Robert Lewis Stevenson and more) they are thoughtful, funny, naturalistic, and touching. This is a must for any classroom.

Text-to-text: *The Random House Book of Poetry for Children* by Jack Prelutsky and Arnold Lobel.

Web Site Critique:

Based on web site recommendations from Diana Mitchell

1) Nancy Keane's Book Talks – Quick and Simple

<http://nancykeane.com/booktalks/>.

Part of the Nancy Keane children's literature web site.

The author gives lists of books by title, age level and interest. She has a section on tips for giving booktalks. Such as: putting the booktalk in context, use dramatic readings and promote reading for pleasure. There is an information section for people who want to know more about booktalks and how they can be used in the classroom.

2) Only the Best for My Child

www.oz.net/~walterh/biblio.html.

This site is an enormous list of picture books with positive and strong female characters. The first list is for children K-3, the second is for children 3 and older. Here are three example titles from the list: *Ruby the Red Knight* by Amy Aiken, *The Princess and the Lord of Night* by Susan Gaber, *Abuela's Weave* by Omar S. Castaneda. This is an excellent site: it takes some of the "guess work" out of shopping, if you are looking for a specific kind of story and you want to make sure it represents both men and women well.

3) The Children's Literature Web Guide

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/~dkbrown/index.html>

This site contains links to the growing number of web sites dedicated to children's literature. There are links for the Caldecott and Newbery winners as well as links for curriculum sites and author sites.

4) Database of Award-Winning Children's Literature

www.dawcl.com

This site helps readers find books in all categories such as: genres, ethnicity, and ages. The web site author Lisa Bartle has created a way for teachers, librarians and parents to have access to award winning literature from five, English speaking countries (U.S., England, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand).

5) Penguin Group (USA)

www.penguinputnam.com

This site features the authors and illustrators from Penguin publications. The section for **Young Readers** is full of book reviews, interviews with and biographies of authors, plus links to other cool sites. There is even a section for librarians and teachers.

6) Read-Aloud Books too Good to Miss

www.acpl.lib.in.us/Childrens_Services/readalouds.html

From the Indiana Library Federation this site divides award winning books in to the following categories: primary, intermediate, middle school and ageless. It also has links to other web sites on literacy. There are links for adults on, home schooling, teaching, awards, booklists, and internet safety. The site is maintained by Teresa Walls.

7) A Pocket Full of Rhymes

www.hometown.aol.com/Bvsangl/pocket.html

At first glance, the browser is smacked with rows of teddy bears but once you get past the “cutie” web page, there are lots of wonderful poems for anyone to print out and use. This is a good site for children. There is also a section called “Wickywaks” where the reader can choose a funny character and enjoy a little poetic legend that accompanies it.

8) Poetry Teachers.com

www.poetryteachers.com

A site just for teachers, there are four categories to choose from. They are: Poetry Class (ideas for inspiring kids to love poetry) Poetry Fun (activities for kids); Poetry Theatre (poems turned into plays for kids); and Poetry Contests (Free contests for kids to enter). There are also interviews with authors and suggested books for teachers to buy.

9) Cynthia Leitich Smith

www.cynthialeitichsmith.com

Multicultural Children’s and Young Adult Books: Her webs site has a list of articles from journals and magazines on multicultural text choices. There are links provided for different genres as well. It is an excellent children’s literature resource.

10) Multicultural Book Reviews

www.isomedia.com/homes/jmele/joe.html

This web site takes reviews of anyone who wishes to share. Readers can also read reviews on different multicultural books. The book lists are categorized by ethnic group such as: African Americans, Asian Americans, Latino...

11) Aesop's Fables

www.aesopfables.com

Complete with 655+ fables, this site has all you will ever need. They list the fables by title and moral. You can read or listen to the morals. There is also a link to web sites that will give you lesson plans to use with the fables.

12) Boulder Public Library

www.boulder.lib.co.us/youth/booklists

This is the web site. The library has a list of historical fiction titles. I feel the list is short perhaps they have a different view of deciding what is historical fiction. For example they do not list the *Little House on the Prairie* series as historical fiction, they list it as juvenile fiction.

13) Dear America

www.scholastic.com/dearamerica/index.htm

A web site for the popular Dear America book and video series, kids can click on interviews with the actors, buy the books and videos, make recipies and crafts items. The Dear America series is based on historical women.

14) Boulder Public Library

www.boulder.lib.co.us/youth/booklists

A fun part of the Boulder Colorado libraries web site which lists all kinds of twisted fairy tale variants from *The Paper Dragon* to the *True Story of the Three Little Pigs*. I liked it so much I printed it out and put it in my fairy tale section of this notebook.

15) Harry Potter

www.scholastic.com/harrypotter/home.asp

This segment of the Scholastic site is full of wonderful graphics and sound effects! There are reviews of each Harry Potter book plus a discussion chamber, wizard challenges, portrait gallery and screensaver. Basically if you love all that is "Harry" go to this web site.

16) National Geographic

www.nationalgeographic.com

This site is full of everything you would expect from National Geographic. There are videos, discussion groups, biographies, magazine articles, and information on animals. There is a special link to the "kid's page" which includes coloring books, activities, maps, cartoons, and fun facts. This web site is chuck full of ideas and fun.

17) National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)

www.nasa.gov

Interested in science? The kid's link from the NASA web site will give children lots of information. For example there are explanations on The Four Forces of Flight, Robots, Bugs in Space and Why the Sky is Blue. Not to mention tons of information on the space program. The home page has great sound effects and pictures of those lost in the space shuttle.

18) Lives, the Biography Resource

<http://amillionlives.com>

This site is an easy way to find information on just about anyone you want. Plus there are special categories for African Americans, Women, the U.S. Civil War, the Holocaust, Canadians, Australians, Latin Americans or Hispanics. Each link you "hit" goes into its own web page. It is very impressive.

19) 4000 Years of Women in Science

www.astr.ua.edu/4000ws/4000ws.html

This is a web site about Women in Science. There are photos and biographies of over 125 female scientists. Most are pre-1900 due to the fact that they are the least well known. As there are so many women scientists today, it would be impossible to list them all.

Chapter Five

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary

Reading can be defined as the process of construction meaning from text. Readers use their prior knowledge or *schema* and the context of the reading situation in order to interact with the text. In order to help students comprehend unfamiliar material, educators need to teach strategies, which will help students relate to the text. These “text connections” are referred to by some researchers as *intertextual connections* (Cairney 1992, Dickinson 1994, Lensiki 1998, Many 1996, Oylar & Barry 1996, Sipe 2001, Wolf, Carey & Mieras 1996). While other researchers seem to prefer to keep the concept of text connections under the umbrella of *schema activation* (Harvey and Goudvis 2000, Keene & Zimmermann 1997, Allington, 2001). Whatever the term, researchers agree that these connections are a necessary for deeper comprehension.

Through the process of reading aloud teachers can help their students relate to unfamiliar text by teaching them how to recognize the intertextual connections they are making. Introducing them to text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections will open the door to deeper comprehension. The goal is for students to be able to compare different authors and genres with confidence. It is about allowing *them* to ask the questions, rather than the teacher asking all the questions and expecting a certain answer from the student.

After an extensive review of the research in the areas of schema, intertextuality, and read-alouds, the author created a handbook of sample lessons, which show educators

how to turn a simple read-aloud into a lesson on deeper comprehension by allowing students to ask questions and make text connections.

Conclusions

The read-aloud lesson plans were based upon the latest strategies available in helping students with text connections. Although the author of this project was unable to conduct a qualitative study in order to substantiate her belief in these strategies, the teachers who participated in the development of a few of the read-aloud lessons voiced their surprise and approval for the strategies they were given. One first grade teacher exclaimed, “I always feel so guilty when I read-aloud to my kids, like we aren’t working or something, but when the kids started comparing the two texts we read I thought wow look at all these levels of thinking coming through!” In addition, the author’s personal experience as a K-2 teacher for the past nine years played an important role in determining which strategies were chosen for successful read-aloud lessons.

Recommendations

The lessons in the handbook can be used in conjunction with any reading program as long as the teacher is given the freedom to teach beyond their district’s reading program. The teacher should use both fiction and non-fiction material. One of the limitations in the project is the lack of nonfiction books used.

It is the opinion of the author that these in-depth read alouds should be taught several times each week. It is also recommended that teachers simply sit and read-aloud to their students without a lesson attached. Sometimes students just want to sit and listen to a good story “no strings attached.”

The nice thing about making text connections is that they are student driven lessons. Very little planning is needed, just a strong idea of the types of questions you are going to ask in order to set the lesson in motion. The author recommends a writing activity, small group discussion or a small project after each read-aloud lesson. The writing topic or project will often emerge from the discussions so be flexible with your lesson plans. The activities extend comprehension and tie the book into your literature program.

It is also important that student comments and questions stay focused on the story at hand. Children can get “off track” and start to make connections that do not relate to the story. It is the job of the teacher to facilitate and encourage questions and comments that develop a deeper comprehension of the story.

Sometimes teachers’ ask, “ What kinds of questions do I ask the kids? They just like to sit and listen to the story.” **Here are some recommended questions for you and your students that promote intertextual links:** (Lenski & Kinzinger 1998, Muth 1987 as found in Lenski, 1998).

- When reading this text, what other texts come to mind?
- What nonprint texts come to mind?
- Why did you remember those texts when reading the current texts?
- How is the information form this text like other information you know?
- How is the theme in this book similar to themes in other books you have read?
- How are the characters in this book similar to characters in other books you have read?

- How is the problem in the story similar to or different from problems in other books you have read?
- What other texts follow a text organization similar to this one?
- What texts support the conclusions of this text?
- What supporting texts add to the information from this text?
- After reading this text and thinking about other texts, what conclusions can you draw?
- What stories can you create from this information?
- How does your culture and background support or refute the claims made in this text?
- What other texts discuss the problems in this text?
- What other texts discuss the solutions in this text? (p. 6)

It is the recommendation of this author that for younger children the teacher should use, “student friendly” language when asking these questions. For example, “What does this book remind you of?” will make more sense to a first grader than, “What nonprint texts come to mind?” Use your good judgment when asking questions.

Finally, it is the recommendation of this author that users of the handbook take one strategy at a time. Do not introduce everything at once. The coding and the responses take time. Start with text-to-self connections and the code R for “reminds me of”, then text-to-text and lastly text-to-world. After students are comfortable with these connections then you can begin introducing other codes and expanding into more detailed types of questioning strategies.

There may be some kindergarten and first children who will begin to make text-to-world connections, but this can be a difficult concept for them. Keep modeling, and they may develop during the year. Second and third graders seem to be comfortable with text-to-world connections, but again it takes modeling and time. Just remember, if your class is asking questions, discussing the plot, and relating to the text, then you are on the right track!

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