

# Content Area Reading Comprehension:

## Strategies for Teachers and Students

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## Foundation - Engagement of all Students

### Variety of responses

- Say answer - As a group (choral responses)
- Say answer - To a partner
- Say answer - To a partner then individual
- Say answer - To cooperative team
- Say answer - As an individual

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## Foundation - Engagement of all Students

### Variety of responses

- Write answers - Write on paper, post-its, journals
- Write answers - Response slates
- Display response cards
- Act it out
- Utilize “appropriate” hand signals

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## Content Area Reading Comprehension:

### **Before Reading Strategies**

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### **Preview - Before Reading Strategies**

- Teach the pronunciation of difficult to read words.
- Teach the meaning of critical, unknown vocabulary words.
- Teach or activate any necessary background knowledge.
- Preview the text.

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### **Before Reading - Pronunciation of Difficult Words**

#### **Competent Readers:**

- Can **pronounce the difficult words** in the text both accurately and quickly.
  - As a result, the student can focus all cognitive energy on comprehension.
  - Accurate pronunciation of words also supports vocabulary acquisition and use of words in discussions/writing.

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### **Before Reading - Pronunciation of Difficult Words**

#### **The teacher:**

- Determines difficult to pronounce words.
- **Tells** students the pronunciation of the entire word.  
OR
- **Guides** students in reading the decodable chunks of the word.
  - **Loop-Loop-Loop:** Segments the word into decodable chunks making sure that the prefixes and suffixes are separate chunks. Looping under each chunk, guides students in reading words.
- OR
- **Rewards Strategy:** Uses the **REWARDS** strategy for reading long words.
- Incorporates instruction on pronunciation of words with vocabulary instruction.

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## Before Reading - Pronunciation of Difficult Words

### REWARDS - Overt Strategy

1. Circle the prefixes.
2. Circle the suffixes.
3. Underline the vowels.
4. Say the parts of the word.
5. Say the whole word.
6. Make it a real word.

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## Before Reading - Pronunciation of Difficult Words

### REWARDS - Covert Strategy

1. Look for prefixes, suffixes, and vowels.
2. Say the parts of the word.
3. Say the whole word.
4. Make it a real word.

REWARDS: Multisyllabic Word Reading Strategies published by Sopris West.

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## Before Reading - Vocabulary

### Competent Readers

- Understand **critical vocabulary terms** found in the text.
- Can use **word-learning strategies** to determine the meaning of unknown words.

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## Before Reading - Vocabulary

### The teacher:

- Determines critical vocabulary necessary for passage comprehension.
- Provides systematic, engaging instruction on selected words.
- Reinforces use of word-learning strategies.
- Has students maintain a record/log of critical vocabulary.

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## Before Reading - Vocabulary

### Selection of Words

- Select a **limited number** of words for robust, explicit vocabulary instruction.
- **Three to ten words** per story or section in a chapter would be appropriate.
- Briefly **tell students the meaning of other words** that are needed for comprehension.

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## Before Reading - Vocabulary

- Select words that are **unknown**.
- Select words that are **critical** to passage understanding.
- Select words that students are likely to encounter or use in the **future**. (Stahl, 1986)
  - Focus on Tier Two words (Beck & McKeown, 2003)
  - “Academic Vocabulary”
- Select **difficult words** that need interpretation.

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## Before Reading - Vocabulary

- Tier One - Basic words
  - chair, bed, happy, house, car, purse
- **Tier Two - Words in general use, but not common**
  - analyze, facilitate, absurd, fortunate, observation, accountant, dignity, convenient, laboriously

(Academic Vocabulary)
- Tier Three - Rare words limited to a specific domain
  - tundra, totalitarian, cellular respiration, genre, foreshadowing, monoculture farming, judicial review

(Background Knowledge Vocabulary)

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## Before Reading - Vocabulary

- **In content area classes, add “Academic Vocabulary” to content area words.**  
(Example: [Holt World History: The Human Journey](#), Chapter 13, Section 2)
  - Suggested words - feudalism, fief, vassal, primogeniture, manorialism, serfs, chivalry
  - Added “Academic Vocabulary” - maintain, maintenance; inherit, inheritance; analyze, analyzing, analysis

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## Before Reading - Vocabulary

- In content area classes, add “Academic Vocabulary” to content area words.

(Example: Prentice Hall, Science Explorer: Earth's Changing Surface Chapter 3, Section 2)

- Suggested words - runoff, rills, gully, stream, river, drainage basin, divide, flood plain, tributary, meander, oxbow lake, alluvial fan, delta, ground water, stalactite, stalagmite
- Added “Academic Vocabulary” - process, feature, factor

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## Before Reading - Vocabulary

Select 8 words for robust explicit instruction.

Reading Level: Eighth Grade Series: Prentice Hall		Passage: The Gift of the Magi Words: *Selected for instruction in manual. ^Defined in text.
discreet*	imputation^	modest
ravages*	parsimony^	prudence
chaste*	flat^ (apartment)	laboriously
cascade*	mendicancy squad^	ecstatic
meretricious*	Queen of Sheba^	duplicate
Instigate*	Coney Island	conception

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## Before Reading - Vocabulary

- **Dictionary Definition**

- **compulsory** - (1) Employing compulsion; coercive. (2) Required by law or other rule.

- **Student-Friendly Explanation**

- **Uses known words.**
- **Is easy to understand.**
- When something is required, you must do it, it is compulsory.

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## Before Reading - Vocabulary

- Use a dictionary designed for English language learners for better definitions.

- **Example - conglomeration**

- First dictionary: The act of conglomerating.
- Second dictionary: The act or process of conglomerating; an accumulation of miscellaneous things.
- Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary: a large group or mass of different things all gathered together in an untidy or unusual way

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## On-line Dictionaries with Student-friendly Explanations

Longman's

<http://www.ldoceonline.com>

(Longman's Dictionary of Contemporary English Online)

Heinle's

<http://www.nhd.heile.com/home.aspx>

(Heinle's Newbury Dictionary for American English)

Merriam Webster's

<http://www.learnersdictionary.com>

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## Before Reading - Vocabulary

### Step 1. Introduce the word.

- Write the word on the board or overhead.
- Read the word and have the students repeat the word. If the word is difficult to pronounce or unfamiliar have the students repeat the word a number of times.

*Introduce the word with me.*

*This word is authority. What word? authority*

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## Before Reading - Vocabulary

### Step 2. Introduce meaning of word.

Option # 1. Present a student-friendly explanation.

- Tell students the explanation. OR
- Have them read the explanation with you.

*Present the definition with me.*

*When you have authority, you have the power to tell other people what they must do. So, if you have the power to tell other people what they must do, you have \_\_\_\_\_? authority*

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## Before Reading - Vocabulary

### Step 2. Introduce meaning of word.

Option # 2. Have students locate the definition in the glossary or text.

- Have them locate the word in the glossary or text.
- Have them break the definition into the critical attributes.

Glossary Entry: **Industrial Revolution** Social and economic changes in Great Britain, Europe, and the United States that began around 1750 and resulted from making products in factories

Industrial Revolution

- o Social & economic changes
- o Great Britain, Europe, US
- o Began around 1750
- o Resulted from making products in factories

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## Before Reading - Vocabulary

### Step 2. Introduce meaning of word.

#### Option # 3. Introduce the word using the morphographs in the word.

autobiography  
auto = self  
bio = life  
graph = letters, words, or pictures

hydroelectricity  
hydro = water

telescope  
tele = distant  
scope = look at

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## Before Reading - Vocabulary

### Step 3. Illustrate the word with examples.

- Concrete examples.
- Visual examples. (Google Images; www.taggalaxy.com)
- Verbal examples.

(Also discuss when the term might be used and who might use the term.)

*Present the examples with me.*

*A police officer can pull over a speeding car. The police officer has the \_\_\_\_\_ authority*

*Congress can make laws. Congress has the \_\_\_\_\_ authority*

*In the middle ages, the kings and nobles ruled the peasants. The kings and nobles had \_\_\_\_\_ authority*

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## Before Reading - Vocabulary

### Step 4. Check students' understanding.

#### Option #1. Ask deep processing questions.

*Check students' understanding with me.*

*What are some different ways that authority may be gained?*

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## Before Reading - Vocabulary

### Step 4. Check students' understanding.

#### Option #2. Have students discern between examples and non-examples.

*Check students' understanding with me.*

*Who has the authority to change the school schedule, the principal or the students? The principal*

*Who has the authority to set wages on a job, the employees or the boss? The boss*

*Who had authority to regulate the use of land in the Middle Ages, the serfs or the king? The king*

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## Before Reading - Vocabulary

- Step 4. **Check students' understanding.**  
Option #3. **Have students generate their own examples.**

*Check students' understanding with me.*

*Make a t chart. Label the first column, authority. In the first column, list who has authority and in the second column, who that person would have authority over. For example, boss and employees. Principal and students. King and serfs.*

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## Before Reading - Vocabulary

- **Have students maintain a vocabulary log.** (See examples.)
- The log can be used for:
  - ☒ Scheduled vocabulary reviews with the class.
  - ☒ Study with a partner or a team.
  - ☒ Self-study of vocabulary.
  - ☒ Reference when writing about the topic.

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## Before Reading - Background Knowledge

### Competent Readers

- Bring a wealth of **background knowledge** to passage reading promoting passage comprehension and allowing connections between the text, past experiences, and previously acquired knowledge.

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## Before Reading - Background Knowledge

### The teacher:

- Determines background knowledge needed for full understanding of the passage.
- **Directly teaches critical background knowledge by:**
  - Narrative**
    - Reading the back cover of the book.
    - Presenting necessary information on the setting (time and place) of the narrative.

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## Before Reading - Background Knowledge

### Expository

- Reading other text that provides background knowledge.
- Frontloading information before reading.
  - Providing explicit instruction on necessary background knowledge.
  - Creating and presenting a PowerPoint with visuals to convey background knowledge.

**Remember** - *Even a thin slice of background knowledge improves reading comprehension.*

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## Before Reading - Background Knowledge

The teacher activates students' background knowledge by:

1. Asking **questions** designed to activate knowledge.
2. Utilizing an **anticipation guide**.
3. Utilizing **KWL** (What do you **know**? What do you **want** to learn? What did you **learn**?)

*(Note: Frontload before using KWL.)*

4. Having students **brainstorm topics** that might be covered in the text using **Think, Pair, Share**.

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## Before Reading - Background Knowledge

(Olson & Gee, 1991)

<b>K</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>L</b>
What I <b>know</b>	What <b>want</b> to find out	What I <b>learned</b>

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## Before Reading - Background Knowledge

**Directed Reading/Thinking Activity** (Stauffer, 1969)

What I know I know:

What I think I know:

What I think I'll learn:

What know I learned:

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## Before Reading - Background Knowledge

Cooperative KWL.

**What I know or think I know:**

**What others know or think they know:**

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## Before Reading - Previewing

### Competent Readers

- **Preview** the selection attending to the introduction, headings, subheadings, graphics, summary, and questions.

As the student previews, he/she discovers:

- the topics to be covered,
- the information that will be emphasized, and
- how the material is organized.
- In addition, background knowledge is activated.

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## Before Reading - Previewing

### The Teacher:

- Guides students in previewing the chapter and formulating a topical outline using the **text structure**: title, introduction, headings, subheadings, questions.
- Guides students in previewing the text by examining the **visual representations** and graphics in the selection.
- Has students preview the selection independently, with his/her partner, or team members.

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## Before Reading - Previewing

### Warm-Up

Before you read a chapter or a section of a chapter in your science, social studies, or health book, Warm-up. Get an idea of the chapter's content by previewing these parts.

#### BEGINNING

- Title
- Introduction

#### MIDDLE

- Headings
- Subheadings

#### END

- Summary
- Questions

Curriculum Associates, *Skills for School Success*

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## Content Area Reading Comprehension:

### **During Reading Strategies**

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### **Preview - During Reading Strategies**

- Utilize passage reading procedures that provide adequate reading practice.
- Ask appropriate questions during passage reading.
- Have students generate questions.
- Teach text structure strategies that can be applied to passage reading.

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### **During Reading**

#### **Competent Readers**

- **Actively read** the text material constantly monitoring comprehension, adjusting reading rate, and connecting information to other experiences and knowledge.
- As the student reads, he/she utilizes strategies to support comprehension and recall.

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### **During Reading - Passage Reading Procedures**

#### **The teacher:**

- Guides students in passage reading using
  - augmented silent reading,
  - choral reading,
  - cloze reading,
  - and/or partner reading.

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## During Reading - Passage Reading Procedures

### ■ Silent Reading

- Pose pre reading question.
- Tell students to read a certain amount.
- Ask them to reread material if they finish early.
- Monitor students' reading. Have individuals whisper-read to you.
- Pose post reading question.

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## During Reading - Passage Reading Procedures

### ■ Choral Reading

- Read selection with your students.
- Read at a moderate rate
- Tell your students, "Keep your voice with mine."

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## During Reading - Passage Reading Procedures

### ■ Cloze Reading

- Read selection.
- Pause on "meaningful" words.
- Have students read the deleted words.

*(Excellent practice for reading initial part of a chapter or when you need to read something quickly.)*

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## During Reading - Passage Reading Procedures

### ■ Partner Reading

- Assign each student a partner.
- **Reader** whisper-reads to partner. Students alternate by sentence, paragraph, page, or time period.
- **Coach** corrects errors.  
Ask - *Can you figure out this word?*  
Tell - *This word is \_\_\_\_\_. What word?*  
*Reread the sentence.*

#### Alternatives to support lowest reader

- Lowest readers placed on a triad.
- Reader says ME (I will read.) or WE (Let's read together).
- First reader (better reader) reads material. Second reader reads the SAME material.
- Students read the material together.

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## During Reading - Passage Reading Procedures

- **Read - Pause - Question**
  - Partner #1 reads. Partner #2 asks questions. Students alternate as reader and listener.
- **Read - Pause - Record**
  - Partner reads. Both students record notes or entries on graphic organizer.
- **Read - Pause - Retell**
  - Partner reads and retells content.

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## During Reading - Teacher Generated Questions

Why might you have students read a segment of text and then ask questions about the content?

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## During Reading - Teacher Generated Questions

### The Teacher:

- Divides the material into appropriate segments.
  - Develops questions on the content, focusing on the **most important** understanding that students should construct.
- OR
- Asks questions provided by the curriculum material.

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## During Reading - Teacher Generated Questions

**Memory Questions** (who, what, when, where)

**Convergent Thinking Questions** (why, how, in what ways)

**Divergent Thinking Questions** (imagine, suppose, predict, if/then)

**Evaluative Thinking Questions** (defend, judge, justify, what do you think) (Ciardiello, 1998)

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## During Reading - Teacher Generated Questions

Procedure for asking students questions on text material.

1. Have students read a segment of the text.
2. Ask the question and give thinking time.
3. Have students share their answers with their partners.
4. Call on a student to answer the question.
5. Discuss the answer with the class.

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## During Reading - Teacher Generated Questions

### Discussion Skills

Students are taught to:

1. Take a position.
2. Express their opinions.
3. Express personal reactions.
4. Connect comments to those of others.
5. Consider counterarguments

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## During Reading - Teacher Generated Questions

If the question is a difficult, higher order question, scaffold (support) the students' performance by:

- Asking lower order (literal) questions **first** to establish a foundation on which higher order responses can be based.

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## During Reading - Teacher Generated Questions

### Question to be asked:

6. Who do you think benefited the most from the system of feudalism, the lord (the higher noble) or the vassal (the lower noble)? Why?

### Scaffolding Questions:

How did the lords (the higher nobles) benefit from feudalism?

How did the vassals (the lower nobles) benefit from feudalism?

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## During Reading - Teacher Generated Questions

### Question to be asked:

8. Why did the author suggest that the standard of living between the very rich and the very poor was not as great as the difference is today?

### Scaffolding Questions:

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## During Reading - Teacher Generated Questions

### The teacher could also scaffold student success by:

- Asking more frequent questions when working with students having comprehension challenges.
- Posing a pre-reading question and post-reading question on a paragraph or section.
- Asking students to read the material more than one time, posing higher level questions for subsequent readings.

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## During Reading - Teacher Generated Questions

### Teacher generated questions can also be used within a partner activity.

1. Develop questions on the each section of an expository chapter or on a number of pages of a short story or chapter in a novel.
2. Have students work with their partner. A routine such as the following can be used.
  - a. Partners read the questions on the first segment.
  - b. Partner #1 reads. Partner #2 follows along and corrects any errors.
  - c. Partner #2 asks questions. Partner #1 answers. (Optional: Students can write down answer to question.)
3. Partners reverse role for next segment.

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## During Reading - Student Generated Questions

### Student-Generated Questions based on Headings and Subheadings

#### Class Option:

1. Class reads the heading/subheading.
2. Students verbally generate questions with their partner.
3. Students suggest questions based on the heading or subheading.
4. Teacher records questions on board/overhead/smartboard.
5. Class reads section of text (silent reading, partner reading, choral reading, cloze reading).
6. Teacher and students discuss answers to the student-generated questions.

#### Partner Option:

1. Partners read the heading/subheading.
2. The partners write down one to three questions.
3. Partner #1 reads section and Partner #2 follows along.
4. Partners answer their questions in writing or verbally.
5. Partners reverse reading roles.

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## During Reading - Student Generated Questions

### The Teacher:

- Has students generate questions on the material after reading a segment of text.
- Questions are then used:
  - As focus of team or class discussion.
  - As a vehicle for self study or partner study.
  - Within a game format with teams.
  - As possible test items.

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## During Reading - Comprehension Monitoring

**Monitor** how well you understand what you are reading.

- *Does this make sense?*

If it doesn't make sense, use a **fix-up strategy**

- *Reread.*
- *Look back.*
- *Read ahead.*
- *Restate in your own words.*
- *Connect to what you already know.*

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## During Reading - Expository Strategies

### The Teacher:

- Teaches students strategies that can be used during reading of **expository materials**.
  - Verbal rehearsal
  - Note-taking
  - Mapping.
- **Expository strategies** are based on the pattern found in factual paragraphs: topic and critical details.

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## During Reading - Expository Strategies

### Paragraph Shrinking

1. **Name the who or what.**  
(The main person, animal, or thing.)
2. **Tell the most important thing about the who or what.**
3. **Say the main idea in 10 words or less.**

(Optional: Record your main idea sentence.)

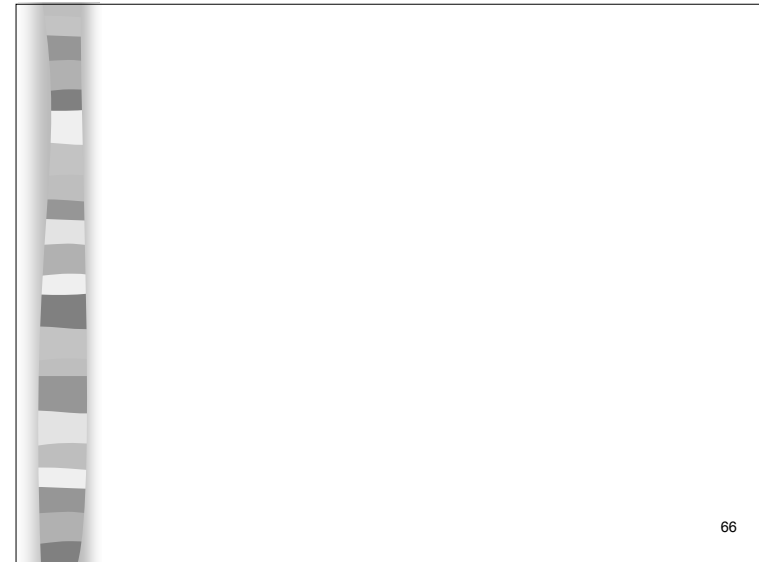
(From the PALS program by Fuchs, Mathes, and Fuchs)

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## Strategy Instruction

- Model      I do it.
- Prompt     We do it.
- Check      You do it.

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## During Reading - Narrative Strategies

### The Teacher:

- Teaches students strategies that can be used during reading of **narrative passages**.
- The elements in narrative passages:
  - Title
  - Setting

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## During Reading - Narrative Strategies

### Uses of narrative elements (story grammar).

1. Students can be given a story grammar reference sheet to use in discussions.
2. Teachers can ask story grammar questions during passage reading.
3. Students can generate story grammar questions.
4. Students can complete a story grammar graphic organizer on short story. This can be done with the entire class, with a cooperative team, with a partner, or independently.

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## Content Area Reading Comprehension:

### After Reading Strategies

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### Preview - After Reading Strategies

- Have students complete or generate graphic organizers that summarize critical information.
- Lead students in a discussion of the text material.
- Have students complete assignments that promote review, rehearsal, and/or reflection.

Teach students strategies for completing the assignments.

- Have students write a summary of the passage content.

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### After Reading - Graphic Organizers

#### Competent Readers:

- **Organize the critical information** using a graphic organizer so that they can see the relationships between critical information and concepts.
- **Create visual representations** of critical passage content.
- Use these graphic organizers for self-study, partner study, and summary writing.

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### After Reading - Graphic Organizers

#### The teacher:

- Provides students with a **graphic organizer** that reflects the structure of the text material
  - Central Idea
  - Hierarchy
  - Compare/Contrast
  - Sequence of Events
  - Cause/Effect
  - Problem/Solution

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## After Reading - Graphic Organizers

- After completing the graphic organizer, students:
  - Teach the content on the graphic organizer to their partners.
  - Use the graphic organizer as a support during class discussions.
  - Write a summary of the content based on the graphic organizer.

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## After Reading - Complete Assignments

### Competent students:

**Strategically complete assignments** that accompany passage reading such as:

- answering questions
- studying for exams
- taking exams

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## After Reading - Complete Assignments

### The Teacher:

- Introduces strategies for completing assignments including:
  - answering questions
  - studying for exams
  - taking exams
- Guides students in strategy use.


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## After Reading - Summarize Passage

### The Teacher:

- Has students **retell** the passage content using their notes or graphic organizer.
- Teaches students how to write a **summary** using a writing frame or a writing strategy.
- Has students formulate and share **passage summaries**.

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## Conclusions

While all teachers are not teachers of reading, **all teachers must scaffold students' reading comprehension.**

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## Thank You

May you and your students thrive  
in 2011. Anita Archer

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