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## Comprehension Strategy Lesson Plans for Third Grade Teachers Incorporating Informational Science Trade Books

Trinidad M. Rivera

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## ABSTRACT

### COMPREHENSION STRATEGY LESSON PLANS FOR THIRD GRADE TEACHERS INCORPORATING INFORMATIONAL SCIENCE TRADE BOOKS

by

Trinidad M. Rivera

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The purpose of this project is to create a set of lesson plans for teachers useful in teaching comprehension strategies to monolingual third grade students. Research on comprehension strategies and the effects they have on children's reading comprehension was explored. Effective comprehension strategies were defined. Lesson plans were created to aid educators as they teach comprehension of informational material to third grade students.

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## Chapter One

### Introduction

Being literate is without a doubt the most important accomplishment in a child's life. It is through this complicated process that children learn about themselves, their community, country, and the world. Literacy gives many opportunities to all children. Fisher and Adler (1999) assert:

Learning to read is arguably the most important accomplishment of the first few years of schooling. The ability to read-fluently and with good comprehension opens door to human knowledge which, in turn, can lead to better jobs and more productive, satisfying lives (p.1).

An important aspect of reading is comprehension. Comprehension is possible when children use their background knowledge while extracting meaning from a text, which in turn creates new learning. Children learn when they understand the new concepts they are studying. Smith (1994) states that when children are learning they are, "... relating their understanding of the new to what they know already, while modifying or elaborating their prior knowledge" (p.183). Therefore, comprehension facilitates learning.

### Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to create a set of lesson plans incorporating informational science trade books using research-proven comprehension strategies for third grade teachers. Teachers will be able to use these lessons with either the whole class, a group, or individual students. The lessons may be modified to meet the needs of individual students. All of the lessons will address different aspects of comprehension such as activating students' prior knowledge, summary writing, repeated reading, and written retelling. All the lessons address reading components that third grade students have to learn according to the Washington State Essential Academic Learning Requirements.

### Significance of the Project

Reading comprehension is vital to a child's literacy development. There are children who can pronounce every word in a book but cannot summarize the meaning of the story. These children need to learn reading comprehension strategies. Fisher and Adler (1999) in their research on improving early reading achievement conclude that low reading ability

causes, "... disappointment, disengagement from educational process and drastically lowers expectations for success beyond school" (p. 1). Educators must teach comprehension reading strategies to struggling readers.

As was previously mentioned, it is possible to increase children's reading comprehension ability by training students to use comprehension strategies. Reading comprehension strategies are defined by Lee, Haymond, and Langemen (1997) as, "... mental activities a reader uses to make sense of text. Strategies are any techniques, principles, or rules that enable readers to solve their reading challenges and gain meaning from text" (p. 35). Rhodes and Shanklin (1993) also support the notion of teaching children comprehension strategies. They hypothesize, "Effective readers and writers are often aware of their reading and writing strategies as well as other knowledge (such as about how texts are structured) to support and monitor their construction of meaning" (p. 109). Teaching reading strategies help students build reading comprehension.

Teaching comprehension strategies in various ways helps because merely *one instructional strategy* will not meet all of the needs of students. Braugner and Lewis (1997) support teaching comprehension strategies by using different approaches. They believe, "Children need a wide variety of experiences with texts to gain sophistication in reading. In addition, teachers need to employ a wide variety of teaching strategies to provide experiences and opportunities for children to learn to read" (p. 45). No one-size-fits-all method exists for teaching comprehension reading strategies.

There is no doubt that comprehension strategies, "... empower learners by helping them develop independent, self-monitoring techniques" (Lee, Haymond & Langeman, 1997, p. 35). In addition, these strategies facilitate children's literacy growth, which increases their chances to succeed in a society that places high value upon learning. Therefore, educators must learn the roles these strategies play in students' education. Weaver (1994) makes reference to this as she comments on children's success in reading by implying:

Children's success at reading reflects their reading strategies; their reading strategies typically reflect their implicit definitions of reading; their definition often reflect the instructional approach; and their instructional approach reflects a definition of reading, whether implicit or explicit (p.3).

Some effective comprehension strategies are: (1) Double-Entry journal, (2) Directed Reading-Thinking Activity, (3) K-W-L, (4) Summary Writing, and (5) Reader's Theatre. These are the comprehension reading strategies that will be focused on in this project.

### Limitations of the Project

This project will be developed for monolingual teachers who are teaching comprehension strategies using informational science trade books to third graders. The limitations of this project include the following:

- (1) The project does not address the use of narrative text.
- (2) The project was not developed with a bilingual teacher in mind.
- (3) Only reading comprehension strategies will be included.

### Definition of Terms

Comprehension. "... a complex mental process in which readers construct meaning from interactions with text based on prior knowledge and experience with the information in the text" (Ruddell, 1999, p. 97).

Comprehension Strategies. "... mental activities a reader uses to make sense of text. Strategies are any techniques, principles, or rules that enable readers to solve their reading challenges and gain meaning from text" (Lee, Haymond & Langeman, 1992, p. 34).

Schema/Schemata. "A system of cognitive structures stored in memory that are abstract representations of events, objects, and relationships in the world" (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 227).

Prior Knowledge. "... that which represents the sum of knowledge individuals have acquired as a result of their cumulative experience both in and out of school" (Braugner & Lewis, 1998, p. 28).

Metacognition. Used interchangeably with these terms: metalinguistic awareness, metacognition, and metacomprehension. "These terms refer to being aware that you have such strategies, and being able to use them consciously" (Weaver, 1994, p. 23).

Metacognitive Training. Training provided to children in which the reader becomes "Aware of his or her mental process" as they read a text (Carr, Dewits & Patberg, 1983, p. 4).

Directed Reading-Thinking Activity. "... reading lesson plan involving: (a) preparation and motivation for reading; (b) silent reading; (c) vocabulary and skills development; (d) silent or oral rereading; and (e) follow-up or culminating activities. Note: The directed reading activity can take various forms, but the underlying concept is prediction and verification (Stauffer, 1969)" (Harris and Hodges, 1995, p. 61).

K-W-L. An instructional activity which, "... helps students combine new information with prior knowledge and to develop their vocabularies" (Tompkins, 1998, p. 53).

Double-Entry Journals. An instructional strategy which, "... allows students to record dual entries that are conceptually related" (Vacca & Vacca, 1999, p. 278).

Trade Books. "Commercial books, other than basal readers, that are used for reading instruction" (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 258).

Cloze Procedure. A strategy in which a teacher, "... systematically deletes words from a text passage and then evaluates student's ability to accurately supply the words that were deleted" (Vacca & Vacca, 1991, p. 156).

Reader's Theatre. A strategy that is used to increase comprehension of nonfiction trade books in which, "A performance of literature, as a story, play, poetry, etc., read aloud expressively by one or more persons, rather than acted" (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 206).

## Chapter 2

### Review of Literature

#### Introduction

Comprehension strategies are essential for constructing meaning. Comprehension is seen as a mental process which occurs, “. . . before the book is opened, changes as the book is read, and continues to evolve even after the book is closed” (Rhodes & Shanklin, 1993, p. 213). In addition, they assert that although comprehension can not be seen directly, strategies may be deduced to make reading comprehension more observable. These are the various strategies that are used in the meaning making process; “. . . predicting, confirming and disconfirming predictions, using prior knowledge, making comparisons, rereading or reading ahead to deal with difficult ideas, visualizing . . . ” (Rhodes & Shanklin, 1993, p. 213). Implementing effective comprehension strategies in reading programs will facilitate literacy growth for all students.

In this review of literature, reading comprehension research will be investigated. First, the importance of comprehensions will be addressed. Next, comprehension strategies that provide metacognitive training will be reviewed. Finally, comprehension strategies that support students' comprehension of written text will be summarized.

#### Importance of Comprehension

Research studies support literacy development through comprehension instruction because it allows children to become cognitively aware of the reading process (Carr, Dewitz, & Patberg, 1998). This awareness increases their knowledge of comprehension strategies that will facilitate greater understanding of written text. Reading is an important developmental process that effects every child's educational success. Being literate allows children to explore and make discoveries of the world around them which then facilitates growth in all academic areas (Smith, 1994).

Although reading is such an important part of reading achievement in school, many children have difficulty with literacy. Most of the time, these students need to be taught strategies to help them comprehend what they read. Swanson and De La Paz (1998) state that poor readers “. . . who have difficulty comprehending text need to be taught explicitly how to carry out appropriate strategies so that their reading comprehension

improves" (p. 210). They also concur that poor readers do not learn appropriate comprehension strategies on their own and need to be taught how, where, and when to use them.

### Metacognitive Research

The purpose of metacognitive research according to Pearson and Fielding (1984) is to explore the processes of reading comprehension. Within their findings, attention is drawn to a study by Paris, Lipson, and Wixson in 1983, who discovered the importance of declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge, and conditional knowledge to reading comprehension instruction. Declarative knowledge helps children learn what comprehension strategies are and their purpose. Procedural knowledge allows children to learn the steps of a comprehension strategy. Conditional knowledge teaches children why and when certain strategies should be used. Comprehension strategy training is essential to children who are not proficient readers.

Yopp (1988) argues in favor of teaching students' metacognitive strategies because these active comprehension strategies increase students' text comprehension. Students who have learned strategic behaviors comprehend and remember concepts under study better than students who only participate in traditional reading activities. Traditional reading instruction involves (a) pronouncing and defining new vocabulary, (b) reading the text, and (c) answering teacher-posed questions. Alternatively, active comprehension instruction focuses on training students to monitor their mental processes before, during, and after they read. Therefore, metacognitive training helps students to become more independent and active readers, which will increase their reading comprehension. Yopp's research on metacognition training concludes with this assertion, "When students are taught to generate questions using their knowledge of general story structure, their ability to comprehend narrative text is enhanced" (p. 237).

Another study that supports metacognitive training was done by Schmitt (1988). This study found that Directed Reading Activities improve comprehension skills in third grade students. In addition, nine metacognitive behaviors were taught that increase childrens' reading comprehension. The behaviors are:

- (1) Activate their own background knowledge
- (2) Set purpose for reading
- (3) Generate prequestions
- (4) Answer generated prequestions
- (5) Hypothesize/ rehypothese with justification
- (6) Verify or reject hypotheses
- (7) Check purpose
- (8) Evaluate success with predictions and purpose, and
- (9) Summarize where appropriate (p. 170).

These behavior will improve students reading comprehension.

Miller (1987) conducted a study to explore if it was possible for average and above average students to increase their comprehension monitoring performance through self-instruction comprehension monitoring strategies. She asserts, "... self-instructional strategy training can elicit greater comprehension monitoring in skilled readers" (p. 314). In addition, Miller found that less skilled readers did not show increased comprehension through self-instruction because the training sessions were not long enough. Miller believes that if the instructional sessions were extended for less skilled readers they would benefit from self-instruction monitoring while reading.

A study by Schunk and Rice (1987) discussed the issue of enhancing comprehension skills by informing children how to use comprehension strategies to improve reading performance. They stated, "... strategy effectiveness feedback affected children's self-efficacy and comprehension as well as providing specific strategy value information" (p. 298). It is also inferred that a teacher can very easily incorporate strategy training into comprehension instruction. Finally, Schunk, and Rice (1987) express the following:

The present studies suggest that remedial readers may not benefit much from minimal strategy value information. Whether derived from teacher feedback or from training procedures themselves, multiple sources of strategy value information are likely to promote children's comprehension skills and self-efficacy for applying them (p. 300).

Paris and Myers (1981) conducted the study titled, "Comprehension monitoring, memory, and study strategies of good and poor readers." They wanted to see if poor readers were able to monitor their reading comprehension, memory, and study strategies. Their findings suggest that poor readers, "... adopt decoding rather than meaning comprehension goals during reading and they are less accurate in applying monitoring skills toward resolving comprehension failure" (p. 5). This study demonstrates the importance of metacognitive training for poor readers they assert:

The production of deficiency for comprehension strategies may be eliminated in part by explicit instruction regarding strategies. Such instruction must emphasize the child's awareness of the goal of meaning construction during reading and the functional value of specific means for achieving comprehension (p. 21-22).

Children who learn to monitor their reading comprehension as they read become proficient readers.

#### Inference Training

Hansen (1981) observed the relationship that children's reading comprehension had after inference training and practice was provided. The instructional procedures for inference training and practice incorporated these activities: vocabulary instruction, pre-reading activities, guided reading, and phonic skill activities. The strategy group, as well as the question group, was presented with the experimental procedures; however, the question group responded to inferential questions only. While the strategy and question groups received the experimental procedure, the control group was only exposed to a traditional basal-reader procedure. Hansen findings suggest, "... both instruction and practice have direct consequences on children's comprehension performance" (p. 415). Furthermore, "... strategy technique which focused on helping children make connections between what they already know and what is in a text should increase the likelihood that they would draw inferences spontaneously" (p. 412-414). Lastly, although the strategy groups fared well above the question and control group, the question group data did support the effectiveness of inferential question training.

Carr, Dewitz, and Patberg (1983) directed a study that researched the question of whether inference training would affect children's comprehension of expository text. The

instruction was designed to activate students' background knowledge before reading, relate previous knowledge with textual information, and teach self-monitoring techniques. A structural overview-cloze treatment was given so students could learn to relate previous knowledge with textual information. The structural overview-cloze treatment described by the following three components:

- (1) an overhead presentation of a structured overview to activate background knowledge and order textual information to facilitate assimilation of the information,
- (2) the use of a modified cloze procedure to help students to integrate background knowledge and text information, and (3) the application of a self-monitoring checklist to maximize the possibility that the steps of a self-monitoring strategy were completed, thus encouraging transfer of these skills to new learning situations (p.6).

The self-monitoring checklist of questions were subsequently given:

- (1) Does the answer make sense? (2) Does the answer make sense in the sentence? (3) Is the answer based upon a combination of knowledge you had before you read the passage and clues in the passage? (4) Is there a forward clue in the same sentence, paragraph, or passage? (5) Is there a backward clue in the same sentence, paragraph, or passage? (6) Did the clue make you change your answer or is your answer the same? (p. 9)

These questions are extremely important because their main function is to activate students' metacognition, which will improve their self-monitoring techniques as they read. Therefore, their reading comprehension will improve. In the discussion of their study Carr, Dewitz, and Patberg (1983) state, "The results of the present research demonstrate that children can be trained to increase their inferential comprehension of expository text and can apply these skills to comprehending untaught material" (p. 15). Training students to make inferences as they read will facilitate greater reading comprehension.

#### Comprehension instruction through prose

A study by Kapinus, Gambrell, and Koskinen (1985) support the notion that comprehension can be improved with poetry. In their study they discovered, "... verbal practicing of poetry is an effective teaching strategy for increasing reading comprehension in

proficient and less proficient readers" (p. 139). Thus, they inferred that students reading comprehension can be improved through poems and short stories.

### Direct Instruction

Baumann (1984) investigated the effectiveness of a direct instruction model for the comprehension skill, finding the main idea. This strategy was focused on helping students get the gist of a story by completing eight lessons. The lessons completed by the experimental group involved the following: (a) main idea and details in paragraph, (b) review, reinforcement, and practice of lesson 1 and 2, (c) main ideas and detail in passages, (d) two main ideas outlines of passages, and (e) review, reinforcement, and practice of all main idea skills. There are two significant findings in this study. First, the basal and control group did not perform as well as the strategy group did in recognizing paragraph main idea, recognizing details that support main ideas, recognizing the passages main ideas and constructing paragraph and passage main ideas for a main idea pattern. The second important discovery was:

The strategy group's consistently superior performance compared to that of the control group was satisfying, but not particularly surprising, for common sense tells one that students who just received intensive, direct instruction in how to comprehend main ideas should outperform comparable peers who received no similar instruction (p. 103).

Providing direct instruction of comprehension techniques to struggling readers was proven to be a successful teaching strategy.

### Repeated reading

The following study conducted by Dowhower (1987) examined if repeated reading improved second-grade transitional readers' rate, accuracy, comprehension, and prosodic reading as well as fluency. Dowhower's findings contend that repeated reading increases children's comprehension of text. Simply put:

Results of this investigation showed transitional readers' rate, accuracy, comprehension, and prosodic reading (reading in meaningful phrases) with practice and unpracticed passages were significantly improved by repeated reading regardless of the training procedure employed (p. 402).

Children who are encouraged to read books repeatedly demonstrate an increased level of reading comprehension as they read.

Amund, Kardash, and Kulhavy (1986) also investigated whether repeated reading helps children with recall and retentions of new concepts. The "... results suggest that repetitive reading as a study strategy yields optimal benefits in terms of overall recall and retention when material to be learned is read twice during initial contact" (p. 57). Thus, they assert that repeated reading does improve reading comprehension.

#### Effects of previewing

Neuman (1988) explored the effects of previewing. The first effect was if previewing was more effective than not previewing, which is done in classrooms that use a basal for reading instruction. Next, it was investigated if previewing could be used as a independent instructional technique. The study's conclusions indicated that recall of text increased with teacher instruction. Additionally, previewing as an independent reading strategy did not improve students' story comprehension. In conclusion, Neuman adds that the collected:

Data emphasize the importance of the teacher's introductory activities on story comprehension. Sufficient time should be devoted to activities which link children's background knowledge, introduce to vocabulary and concepts central to the story prior to reading stories on their own" (p. 223-224).

Teacher can increase students' reading comprehension when they make time to preview the books with students.

#### Retelling stories

Morrow (1985) questioned whether there were any correlations between retelling stories and comprehension. This question was investigated by directing two studies. The first study did not have strong correlations between these two processes, which was due to the children's lack of background knowledge in retelling stories. Therefore, the next study was aimed at building children's background knowledge in story retelling. All the data collected from the second study was in favor with Morrow's hypothesis, that story retelling increases children's reading comprehension. According to Morrow the data implies, "... a common factor was responsible for both types of gains and is consistent with the argument

that retelling experiences enhance a sense of story structure leading to both improved retelling accuracy and greater comprehension (p. 659).

Kapinus, Gambrell, and Koskinen's (1985) study supports Morrow's (1985) findings. They found that practice in retelling facilitates greater comprehension of proficient and less proficient readers. The positive correlations of these two studies is evident when Kapinus, Gambrell, and Koskinen asserts, "The findings of this study, in particular, suggest that practice in retelling enhances story structure awareness for proficient readers" (p. 139). Childrens' reading comprehension is improved when they retell stories that are read to them.

### Instructional Comprehension Strategies

Reading instruction must focus on teaching children reading awareness and comprehension strategies. A study by Paris and Jacobs (1984) supports teaching children reading awareness and comprehension skills. Reading awareness, as well as metacognition, refers to the knowledge children report about reading. Throughout the year the study was in progress, students received instruction about reading strategies as to how, when, and why they are used. Afterwards all the children where tested on their knowledge about strategies and it was found that the children who had greater reading awareness also had higher comprehension levels; thus, " . . . higher reading awareness is related significantly to better general reading comprehension for all children in the study" (p. 2090). Paris and Jacobs state:

Teachers can supplement their lesson reading by teaching children the declarative, procedural, and conditional aspects of reading strategies that might help children to comprehend better what they read and to be more motivated to read on their own (p. 2092).

Providing children with declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge about comprehension strategies will help them use the strategies effectively.

Swanson and De La Paz (1998) investigated which comprehension strategies are most effective for students who have learning and reading disabilities. These are the strategies they report are extremely helpful for instructing reading comprehension: summarizing expository text, comprehending story structure, self questioning, text-

lookbacks, and question-answer relationships. In summary, they agree with the research that has supported the notion, "... students with learning and reading problems can learn metacognitive comprehension strategies and that these strategies help students improve their understanding of text" (p. 217).

Braugner and Lewis (1998) are in accordance with the belief that comprehension instruction should be an on-going process that occurs before, during, and after reading.

They believe that in order:

To support this construction of meaning, instruction should include explicitly taught comprehension strategies for reading narrative as well as expository text. Many and varied opportunities should be provided to require the reader to use and practice strategies that aid the reading in prereading, during reading, and post reading comprehension (p. 28).

As was mentioned previously, metacognitive training is essential for students who have not internalized appropriate comprehension strategies. Reutzel and Cooter (2000) cite seven comprehension strategies given by Collins and Smith. The strategies are as follows,

- ◁ Ignore the problem and continue reading.
- ◁ Suspend judgment for now and continue reading.
- ◁ Form a tentative hypothesis, using text information, and continue reading.
- ◁ Look back or reread the previous sentence.
- ◁ Stop and think about the previously read context, and reread if necessary.
- ◁ Seek help from the environment, reference materials, or other knowledgeable individuals (p. 209).

Teaching children about comprehension strategies is a very important part of reading instruction this helps them become strategic readers.

Krashen (1993) in his book, The power of reading insights from the research, discussed that free voluntary reading is a way for teachers to facilitate students' reading comprehension. He states "... when free reading and direct, or traditional, instruction are compared directly in method comparison studies, free reading nearly always proves to be superior on test of reading comprehension, vocabulary, writing, and grammar" (p. 19).

Moreover, childrens' reading comprehension may be improved by allowing them plenty of time to read what they find interesting.

#### Modified directed reading-thinking activity

Smyers (1997) discusses a reading strategy that facilitate reading comprehension for reluctant readers. The activity is a modified version of the Directed Reading-Thinking Activity (DRTA). This activity has three steps. The first is predicting. At this step children are asked to predict what a book will be about. Next, the student reads up to a predetermined spot. The last component requires that the child proves or disproves their predictions. All the components are repeated until the story is read. In addition to the components mentioned above, the teacher can add writing to make the literacy activity more complete. Smyers provides an outline of what is needed to prepare for the lesson as well as three steps that teacher can follow. The steps necessary in preparing the lesson are, "(1) Select an exciting story, (2) Mark off three to four good predicting stops, and (3) For each segment, write two fact-related questions and one question design to elicit predictions for student discussion" (p. 67). These are the three steps for conducting a modified DRTA lesson:

- (1) Students make their initial predictions as to what the story is about. This is often done by using the title and pictures on the first page or by reading the first paragraph.
- (2) Students read to the next stopping point in order to prove or disprove what they have predicted.
- (3) At each stopping point they answer the two fact-related questions and the prediction or inference question (p. 67).

Another activity that facilitates comprehension is Unscramble Me, created by Valeri-Gold (1985). The focus of this lesson is to help students make outlines of the basic concept of a book. According to Gold this activity requires these seven steps:

- (1) Define outlining as a visual way of displaying key ideas and details.
- (2) Tell students that numbers, letters, and indentations show the importance of ideas in an outline. Roman numerals state the major ideas, uppercase letters identify important supporting details, Arabic numbers represent minor supporting details,

and indentations tell the significance of ideas and details. The further from the left margin a word is placed, the lower its priority.

(3) Write lists of related words on transparencies. Give students the same lists of words, representing scrambled major ideas and supporting details, on duplicated worksheets.

(4) Ask student to read the word lists and answer three questions: Which words fit into groups? Which describe large categories? What word describe the whole topic?

(5) Students unscramble the related word lists by identifying the main idea, major points, and supporting details and rewriting them on the outline forms provided.

(6) As an individual activity, students create their own word lists using their science or social studies textbooks.

(7) Finally, students exchange their word lists with classmates who unscramble and write them on outline form (p. 80-81).

This activity would work well with science trade books because it will help students sort out basic concepts which will help them understand a book better than if they had just read it.

### K-W-L

Creating K-W-L charts (Know-Want-Learned) is an excellent strategy that will assist students' text comprehension because it activates students' background knowledge. Ogle (1986, 1989) created this activity. This instructional procedure helps students combine new information with prior knowledge and to develop their vocabularies. The first step is to make a chart divided into three equal parts. In the first box one records, "what we know." On the second section one writes, "what we want to learn." The last box should read, "what we have learned." Next, the teacher asks the students what they know about the topic they are about to read and writes it in the, "know" column. In the following column, what we want to learn, students are directed to dictate questions they have about the topic as the teacher writes them. Then the teacher reads several books on the subject until all the students' questions are answered. Finally, in the last column the teacher writes all the things students state they have learned. An added benefit of this lesson is that it can be done individually, in a group, or with the whole class.

### Double-entry journal

Barone (1990) gives an alternate activity, double-entry journals, that can facilitate text comprehension. First, students divide the pages in their reading logs into two columns and label the left column, "Quotes" and the right column, "Reflections." Next, as students read, they write important or interesting quotes in the left column of their reading logs. Finally, students reread the quotes and make notes in the right column about their reasons for choosing the quote and what it means to them. It is helpful to students if they share the quotes with a reading buddy. These strategies should be introduced one at a time. The teacher is encouraged to provide a lot of guided practice and provide follow up lessons. This will increase students' success as they begin to internalize the strategies. After much practice students can begin to take the teacher's role and demonstrate these strategies to other students.

### Reader's theatre

Reader's Theatre is an instructional strategy that motivates children to read. It improves, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Fluency is increased by students rereading a script several times in order to perform it with expression. While doing this, children's vocabulary increases. This is because nonfiction books contain a lot of new concepts which students learn while reading their scripts. Reading comprehension increases because children must understand a story completely before acting it out.

Young and Vardell (1993) provide evidence on its effectiveness in improving children's comprehension of content area concepts. Nonfiction informational trade books can easily be adapted into Reader's Theatre scripts. They state that comprehension is improved because the reading experience allows for dramatic participation, which focuses on interpretation of the text.

Martinez, Roser, and Strecker (1998, 1999) backup the effectiveness of Reader's Theatre as a comprehension strategy. In a study they conducted, all the children who participated in the study showed improvement in reading fluency and rate which improves comprehension. They assert, "As rate increases, the reader is able to devote more attentions to meaning and the interpretation of meaning through phrasing and expressiveness" (p. 327).

Reader's Theatre provides young readers with an opportunity to reread scripted nonfiction stories, as they do that their story comprehension increases.

### Summary

Reading is an active language process between the reader, text, and the author. The process requires a reader to use prior knowledge to create new knowledge. For some children this process takes more time to develop and unfortunately for others, its essence is never experienced. Many times this is due because the reading instruction they have received has focused on sounding out words and very little time is directed towards building a knowledge base in reading.

Children who are not proficient readers need to learn reading strategies in order for their literacy to develop to its fullest potential. Less skilled readers do not monitor their comprehension, which severely effects their reading. Alternatively, skilled readers have internalized many strategies that allow them to comprehend text. Although many reading strategies exist, only comprehension strategies were discussed in this project.

When educators teach comprehension strategies they are, "... giving student reading power" (Lee, Haymond & Langeman, 1992, p. 34). These are effective reading strategies that can be used to increase students comprehension: (1) Double-Entry Journal, (2) Directed Reading-Thinking Activity, (3) K-W-L, (4) Summary Writing, and (5) Reader's Theatre.

When educators teach reading comprehension strategies, the needs of less proficient readers are met. As students learn how to metacognitively monitor their own reading, their literacy development will increase, which will facilitate educational success. Evidence was found in this literature review to support comprehension instruction because it helps incompetent readers become skilled readers.

## Chapter 3

### Procedure

#### Introduction

Literacy development is one of the most important educational goals for all children. It is an active language process that requires active comprehension. When a child reads, he or she must make connections between prior experience and new knowledge, which is when comprehension occurs. Ruddell (1999) defines comprehension as "... a complex mental process in which readers construct meaning from interactions with text based on prior knowledge and experience with the information in the text" (p. 97).

Although it is obvious that the most important part of reading is comprehension, there are children who can read books and not understand what they read. Students like these exist in every grade level. Therefore, it is crucial for all teachers to instruct children to use comprehension strategies when they read.

#### Criteria for trade book selection

This study used trade books because these books are appealing to children of all ages. Children's books support instruction because they have a mix of the following criteria: illustrations, word patterns, rhymes and predictability. Trade books are "Commercial books, other than basal readers, that are used for reading instruction (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 258). All the books in this study were informational books that discussed science topics. The Washington State Essential Academic Learning Requirements provide a guidepost for all the lessons because they state the reading components that need to be addressed in third grade.

#### Procedure

The purpose of this project is to create a set of lesson plans for teachers useful in teaching comprehension strategies to monolingual third grade students. Extensive research was conducted to find studies that support the strategies that facilitate greater comprehension to struggling readers. The procedure of this project was to review the professional literature related to reading comprehension strategies by using informational science trade books.

Once the topic was decided upon the author proceeded to review selected literature related to comprehension strategies. These are the comprehension strategies that facilitate reading comprehension and according to research are most effective: (1) Double-Entry Journals, (2) DRTA, (3) K-W-L, (4) Summary Writing, and (5) Reader's Theatre.

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Lesson Plans:  
Reading  
Comprehension

by  
Trinidad M.  
Rivera



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*Reading can provide interest and excitement, it can stimulate and alleviate curiosity, console, encourage, arouse passions, relieve loneliness, assuage tedium or anxiety, palliate sadness, and on occasion anesthetize" (Smith, 1994, p. 180)*

# Chapter 4

## Comprehension Lesson Plans

### Introduction

Jennifer Rose

When I Read a Good Book

( Rhodes & Shanklin, 1993, p.210)

As the poem above clearly suggests, literacy enriches students' lives. Luckily for Jennifer Rose, reading is entertaining, meaningful, and has a purpose. Sadly, not all children share the same opinion of reading. The author's purpose for this chapter is to provide educators with a resourceful collection of lessons that implement the most successful, research-proven, comprehension strategies. These plans will help reluctant readers see reading for what it is and perhaps some day be able to say, like Jennifer Rose, that reading is like, "someone drawing on my eyelids" and have changed lives.

The following are lesson plans for third grade teachers teaching, students comprehension strategies incorporating informational science trade books. Each lesson includes objectives, Reading EALRs, selection of trade books appropriate to the lesson, materials needed, and procedure. There is a lesson for each of the following comprehension strategies:

- (1) Double-Entry Journal
- (2) Directed Reading-Thinking Activity
- (3) K-W-L Procedure
- (4) Writing Summaries
- (5) Reader's Theatre

Double-Entry Journals are useful in teaching comprehension because they help students make connections between what they know and new information they are reading. Students are asked to record important or interesting information during and after reading. The information is recorded on a piece of paper that is divided into two sections. The first column is titled, "Quotes" and the second one, "Reflections". This activity will motivate reluctant readers because it provides time for them to conceptualize their thoughts and feelings as they read (Vacca & Vacca, 1999).

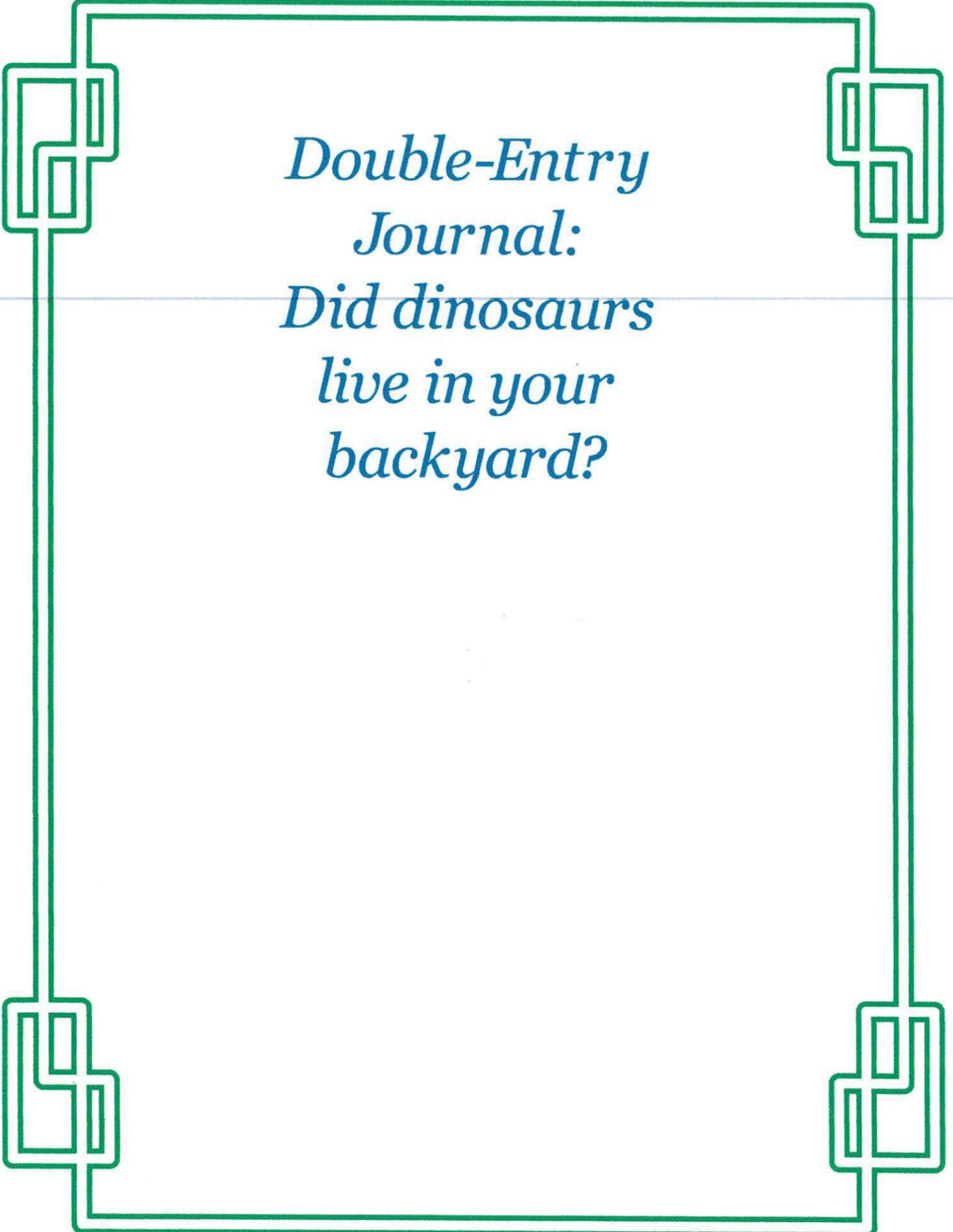
The Modified Directed Reading-Thinking Activity (Smyers, 1987) is an activity that probes students' thoughts as they read a selection. Questions are generated before, during, and after the reading. This facilitates comprehension because the students are constantly answering questions about what they are reading. In addition, they make predictions about the text while confirming their predictions. This activity may be adapted for fiction and nonfiction text (May, 1994; Smyers, 1975).

K-W-L (Ogle, 1986, 1989) is a comprehension reading strategy that helps children combine new information with prior knowledge. In the beginning of the lesson, students are asked to share information they know about the subject they are studying. Students then say questions they have about the subject. After the story is read, the students communicate what they learned. All the comments students make at each section are recorded on a sheet of paper (this may be done by the teacher or the students). This activity is intended to be used with nonfiction topics; however, when modified, it works well with fiction text. The main focus of this activity is to activate student's prior knowledge (Reutzel & Cooter, 2000; Ogle, 1986, 1989).

Writing summaries is a comprehension strategy that teachers can use to activate students' understanding of nonfiction books. This activity requires students to sort out important information and summarize paragraphs. The main purpose for writing summary statements is so students can learn how to get the gist of the stories they read (Eddy, 1988).

Reader's Theatre is a strategy that supports readers' comprehension as they dramatize a story. Young and Vardell's (1993) research support the effectiveness of this strategy. Although this activity was designed for fictional stories, currently it has also been adapted for nonfiction trade books. Students comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, and reading rate are improved with this strategy, as it requires students to become actively involved with a scripted text.

The following lessons have incorporated comprehension strategies as well as reading components from the Washington State Essential Academic Learning Requirements.



*Double-Entry  
Journal:  
Did dinosaurs  
live in your  
backyard?*

Strategy: Double-Entry Journal

Objective:

Based on their comprehension and understanding of a dinosaur story the students will write reflections about the main idea.

Essential Academic Learning:

Reading 2.1 Benchmark 2.2

Demonstrate comprehension of the main idea and supporting details; summarize ideas in own words.

Book:

Berger, M., & Berger, G. (1998). Did dinosaurs live in your backyard? Questions and answers about dinosaurs (A. Male, Illus. ) . New York: Scholastic.

Materials:

Book    sheets of paper    world map    pencils    poster board

Additional books that can be used with this strategy :

Elting, M. (1987). Dinosaurs (G. Nenzioni & M. Cutrona, Illus. ) . Racine, WI: Western Publishing Company, Inc.

Sweat, L., & Phillips, L. (1995). The smallest stegosaurus (L. Sweat, Illus. ) . New York: Scholastic.

Dixon, D. (1990). The new dinosaur library the first dinosaurs (J. Burton, Illus. ) . New York: Dell Yearling.

Zalliger, P. (1977). Dinosaurs New York, NY: Random House.

Anticipatory Set:

To probe students' interest of the lesson, write on the board the title of the book, "Did dinosaurs live in your backyard?" Have several students come to the board to read the question and respond to it this will help them understand the lesson focus. As students are sharing a response, the rest of the class can ask them questions about their response.

Procedure:

1. Give all of the students a sheet of paper and tell them to fold it horizontally. Now have them write on the left side, "Quotes" and label the right side as, "Reflections" (see Figure 1.1).
2. Next, tell the students that as you read the book, they need to write any new interesting or important quotes on the left side. While reading, make several pauses so students have time to write down their quotes. Let students know that the quotes do not have to be exactly like the book.
3. After the book is read and the quotes are written, give children an opportunity to read their quotes to a buddy. After sharing their quote, ask them to write on the "Reflections" side some thoughts and feelings about the quotes they wrote.
4. Last, have students share their reflections of the story with the class.

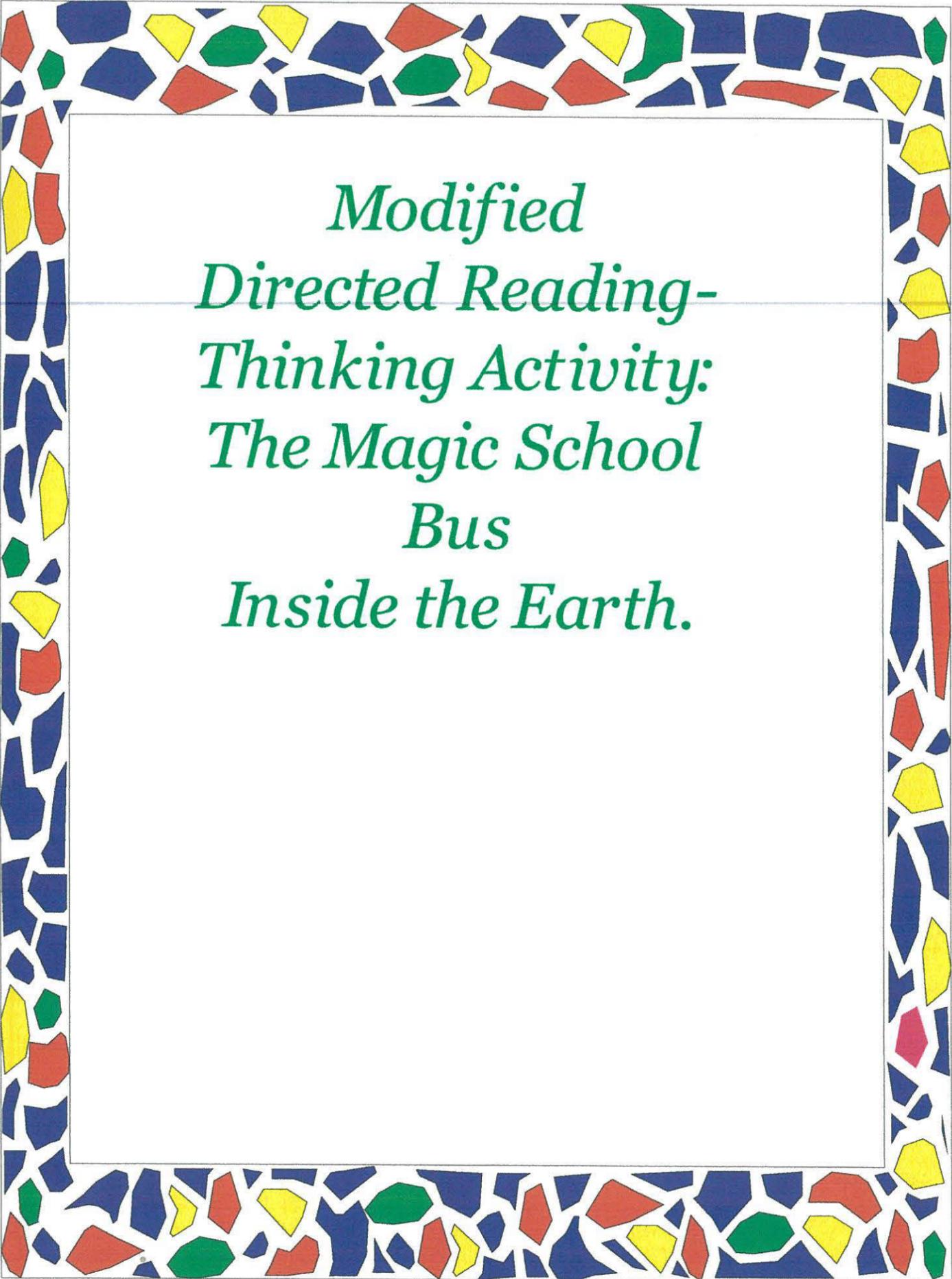
Conclusion:

Divide the poster board into two sections and write on each part "Quotes" and "Reflections." Ask five children to read one of their quotes with its reflection and write their responses on the poster.

QUOTES

REFLECTIONS

FIGURE 1.1  
Double-Entry



*Modified  
Directed Reading-  
Thinking Activity:  
The Magic School  
Bus  
Inside the Earth.*

Strategy: Modified Directed Reading-Thinking Activity

Objective:

Students will be able make predictions about rock formations and read a story in order to confirm their predictions.

Essential Academic Learning:

Reading 2.1 Benchmark 2.4

Make inferences and predictions based on the reading text.

Book:

Cole, J. (1987). The magic school bus inside the earth (B. Degen, Illus. ) .  
New York: Scholastic.

Materials:

Book    marker    1 piece of butcher paper    rocks

The following list of books can also be used with this strategy:

Solar system (1999). New York:NY: Golden Books.

Krinking, K. W. (1999). Earth: where would we be without it? (S. Gray, Illus. ) .  
New York: Scholastic.

Berger, M. & Berger, G. (1998). Do stars have points? Questions and answers about starts and planets (V. DiFate, Illus. ) . New York: Scholastic.

Anticipatory Set:

Take the class outside to collect rocks. After everyone gets a rock, walk back to the classroom and have a brief sharing time. Now draw the students a semantic map of different rock characteristics (see Figure 1.2 ).

Procedure:

1. Tell the students that today they are going use a comprehension strategy titled Modified Directed Reading-Thinking Activity (DRTA). Say to the students, "This lesson will help you connect new information about rocks to what you already know". On the board write, "The purpose of the lesson is to identify rocks."
2. You should now post the piece of butcher paper on the wall and write the following:
  - 1) Predictions Before Reading, "The magic school bus inside the earth."
  - (2) Predictions Midway Through the Story
  - (3) Reflections on Predictions After Reading (see Figure 1.3).
3. Ask a students to read the first step to the class. Next, introduce the story. These questions will facilitate the discussion:

"What do you think a story with a title like this might be about?"

"What do you think might happen in this story?"

"Does the picture on the cover give you any ideas about what might happen in this story?"
4. Now have them give background knowledge about rocks. Write students' response on the butcher paper.

5. Begin reading the story and stop on page 20 and have one student read step two of the strategy. Ask students the following questions:

"What do you think now?"

"What do you think will happen next?"

"Why do you think that idea is a good one?"

It is very important that you write some of the students responses to these questions in the section titled, "Predictions Midway Through The Story."

6. Continue reading the book until the end and read the final step of the lesson which states, "Reflections on Predictions After Reading". Now is a good time for you to call on the students who made predictions and have them defend them.

#### Conclusions:

Lastly, say to the students that the follow up lesson will require sorting through various rocks. Tell them to bring any rocks they have at home to share. The next lesson can be to construct a compare and contrast chart on the various characteristics rocks have.

(Although this lesson discussed the procedures for a whole class presentation, it may also be done in small groups.)

## THE MAGIC SCHOOL BUS INSIDE THE EARTH

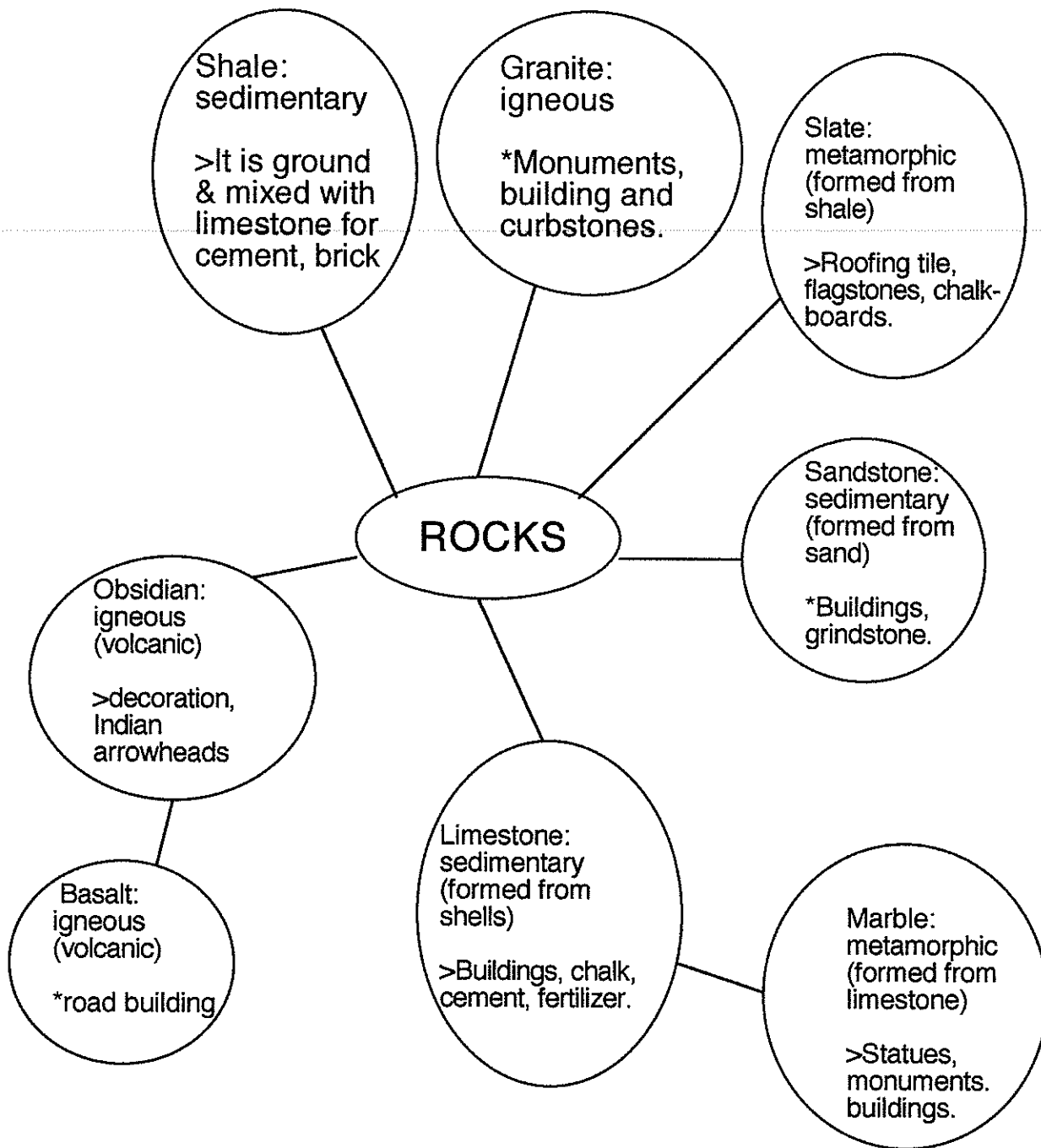


FIGURE 1.2  
Concept Web

# Predictions Before Reading the Story:

[illegible]

Reflections on  
Predictions of the  
Story.

---

FIGURE 1.3  
DRTA

FIGURE 1.3  
DRTA

---

---

K-W-L:

---

Why Don't  
Haircuts  
Hurt?

---

---

Strategy: K-W-L ChartObjective:

Students will be able to generate questions about the circulatory system.

Essential Academic Learning:

Reading 2.1 Benchmark 2.3

Connect previous experiences and knowledge when reading to understand characters, events, and information.

Book:

Berger, M., & Berger, G. (1998). Why don't haircuts hurt? Questions and answers about the human body (K. Barnes, Illus. ) . New York, NY: Scholastic.

Materials:

Book            butcher paper            Video

These are additional books that can be used with K-W-L charts:

Gelman, R . G. (1992). Body battles (E. Freem, Illus. ) . New York: Scholastic.

Cole, J. (1995). The magic school bus inside Ralph a book about germs (B. Degen, Illus.) . New York: Scholastic.

Anticipatory set:

Show the class a video clip of a heart beating. Say, "How many times do you think your heart beats per minute?" Write the guesses on the board and whoever guesses closer to the right answer gets a standing ovation.

Procedure:

1. Today you will learn how a K-W-L comprehension strategy works. To do this I will read the book, Why don't Haircuts hurt? Questions and answers about the human body. Show the students what a K-W-L chart looks like. First divide a piece of butcher paper, the size of two poster boards, into three equal columns. On the first section write, "What we know". In the second section write, "What we want to learn". On the third section write, "What we learned" (see Figure 1.4).
2. Ask the following question to a couple of students, "What facts do you know about your heart?" Write their responses on the "What we know" section.
3. Next, ask the students what questions about the heart they would like answered by the story. Write all the students' question on the second column that reads, "What we want to learn".
4. Read the book and stop at the places that address the answers to students' questions. After you finish reading the story have a small book talk. Then check if all the answers students had were answered and write them in the third column. Ask children if they have new questions and write them in the third column. Tell the students that although there is no more time in the lesson to find the answers to all the questions, you will put some books at the science center that answer all the questions. Now read to the students the list of books that will be out in the science center.

Conclusion:

A good closure to this lesson is to show a semantic map of heart characteristics.

WHAT DO  
I KNOW

WANT TO  
LEARN

WHAT I  
LEARNED

FIGURE 1.4  
K-W-L

---

Summary  
Writing:  
Earth: where  
would we be  
without it?

Strategy: Summary WritingObjective:

The student will be able to explain the main idea of a story by writing a summary.

Essential Academic Learning:

Reading 2.1 Benchmark 2.2

Demonstrate comprehension of the main idea and supporting details; summarize ideas in own words.

Book:

Krinking, K. W. (1999). Earth where would we be without it? (S. Gray, Illus. ) . New York: Scholastic.

Materials:

book    3 paragraphs of text typed    highlighters    outline for writing a summary

Additional books that can be used with this strategy:

Tresselt, A. (1946). Rain drop splash (L. Weisgard, Illus. ) . New York: Scholastic.

Cole, J. (1986). The magic school bus at the waterworks (B. Degen, Illus. ) . New York: Scholastic.

Anticipatory Set:

Write on the board in huge letters, "Story title: Earth: where would we be without it?" After reading the phrase, show students the first two pages of the story and ask them to share what they see.

Procedure:

1. Tell the students that today they will learn how to write a story summary. Show them the summary writing outline and discuss its purpose. Now call on students to read each of the points given in the outline (see Figure 1.5).
2. Read the story to the class, stop at various places and ask students to summarize what has been read up to that point.
3. After reading the whole story give students a handout that has three paragraphs from the story typed out sequentially (see Figure 1.6). Hand out highlighters to all the students. Ask them to read the first paragraph aloud.
4. After reading the paragraph say, "Highlight the most important ideas in the paragraph. In other words, highlight what helps you know about the problem or solution." Give students an opportunity to share and justify what they highlighted.
5. Next have the students read silently with a partner the second paragraph. After it is read say, "I want you to share the main ideas of this paragraph with two sentences. You may work with a partner. Write the sentences on the back of the paper."
6. When everyone is done writing, ask the groups to share their two sentence summary.

7. The last paragraph should be read chorally. Tell the students that they have to write a summary using their own words to describe what the paragraph was all about. As students finish ask them to read their summary to the class.

Conclusion:

To recap the lesson have students share the most interesting thing they learned about the earth's atmosphere and human survival.

## How to Write Summary

1. Look for the most important ideas.  
(What helps us know about the problem or the solution.)
2. State important ideas in your own words.
3. Combine ideas into one or two sentences.
4. Leave out anything that repeats information, explains important ideas, or seems unimportant.

Eddy, J. E. (1988). Summaries and sequence for active comprehension. In M. W. Olson, & S. P. Homan, (Eds.) Teacher to teacher strategies for the elementary classroom (pp. 69-71). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

FIGURE 1.5  
Summary

## Earth: Where Would We Be Without It?

Krinking, K. W. (1999). Earth where would we be without it? (S. Gray, illus. ) . New York: Scholastic.

FIGURE 1.6  
Summary

Reader's  
Theatre  
Presents:  
The magic  
school bus gets  
a bright idea!

Strategy: Reader's TheatreObjective:

Students will read a Reader's Theatre script fluently.

Essential Academic Learning:

Reading 2.1 Benchmark 2.1

Demonstrate basic comprehension of the content of literary, informational, and task oriented texts such as plays, newspaper articles, and instructions.

Book:

Cole, J. (1999). The magic school bus get a bright idea a book about light (B. Degen, Illus.) . New York: Scholastic.

Materials:

book                      script of the story                      mirror                      flashlight

Additional books that can be used with this lesson:

Cole, J. (1997). The magic school bus spins a web a book about spiders (B. Degen, Illus.) . New York: Scholastic Inc.

Cole, J. (1998). The magic school bus in the Arctic a book about heat (B. Degen, Illus.) . New York: Scholastic Inc.

### Anticipatory Set:

To stir students' interest for the lesson, close all the curtains and turn off the lights to get the room as dark as possible. Have a small flashlight in hand and direct students to the carpet area. Then say, "The focus of today's lesson is for you to learn how light travels in straight lines and bounces off things."

### Procedure:

1. Introduce the book and read it all. However, do not turn on the lights, just read with the light given off by the flashlight.
2. After the story is read, turn on the lights and tell students that they will have an opportunity to act out the story, The magic school bus gets a bright idea a book about light. Show students a script you made of the story. Hand out the scripts and ask the students to read them (see Figure 1.7).
3. After reading the script once, the students need to choose what character they would like to be. Since the class is big, not all the kids will get a parts. However, let them know that the same activity will be done many more times and everyone will have an opportunity to participate in the near future (see Figure 1.8).
4. Next, the teacher should read the script demonstrating fluency, voice, and character. Explain to the students how important these things are when performing a Readers' Theatre story.
5. Now have the group perform the story for the class. After the performance, have the students take the scripts home for extra practice so they can perform it again the next day.

### Conclusion:

To conclude the lesson, demonstrate to the class how light from the flashlight bounces of a mirror. Lastly, have students write in their journals how light travels and bounces of objects.

The Magic School Bus Gets a Bright Idea

adapted by Trinidad Rivera

Narrator 1:

Awesome! Amazing! That's what the kids in my class were saying about the terrific Light Show. The theater was filled with kids from all the schools in town. Even Arnold's cousin Janet was there, but she was in a bad mood.

Janet:

This show is boring. A yawnburger with a side of snores. We should have went to the magic show instead. At least the magic show would have a few surprises.

Narrator:

In the lobby after the show, Janet said.

Janet:

What a snooze! I could do better than that-I could do something *magic* with light. But I can't right now because of the ghost in the theater!

Keesha:

Good one, Janet. But there are no ghosts.

Janet:

Now you have done it. You made the ghost really angry. If anything bad happens to us, it's all your fault.

Narrator 2:

Just then the lights went out! Even though we all know ghosts weren't real, we ran as fast as we could out of the theater. Luckily for us, our teacher Ms. Frizzle, was coming around the corner in a stretch limo. The limo looked a lot like our school bus. We looked around but Janet and Arnold were missing!

Frizzle:

Lighten up, class! Janet and Arnold, here we come!

Narrator 1:

We all went back into the theater to look for Janet and Arnold. It was dark and spooky in the theater lobby. We followed our teacher because her earrings were lamps.

Keesha:

Your earrings are cool, Ms. Frizzle, but we need another source of light.

Narrator 2:

Right then we saw a ghostly image of Arnold. We could see right through him and then he disappeared.

Keesha:

We'll never find Arnold and Janet unless we get some light in here.

Narrator 1:

All of a sudden, the stage floor started to rise. As we went up on a platform, the bus rose up out of a giant trapdoor it had a giant lightbulb and a funnel.

Frizzle:

Time to shed some light on this ghost story. Come on kids jump in the funnel.

Keesha:

Do we have to jump in the funnel.

Frizzle:

Well, if you want to brighten up the night, you have to be light!

Keesha:

You mean if I jump in there I'll turn into light?

Frizzle:

Bingo! Time to take chances, get messy, and be enlightened.

Narrator 2:

Keesha jumped into the funnel and turned into light! She came shooting out of the bus-bulb straight toward the Friz.

Keesha:

Wow! That was so quick I only was light for a second.

Frizzle:

Actually, less than a millionth of a second!

Wanda:

Can we be light to?

Frizzle:

Dazzle me!

Wanda:

I'll take that as a yes.

Narrator 1:

Everyone jumped into the funnel. Even though we all started at the same source, we shot straight out in different directions and ended up all over the place. As soon as we landed somewhere, we turned back into ourselves.

Narrator 2:

Carlos sped across the theater and grabbed onto a rope attached to a pulley. His weight pulled down on the rope . . . and the rope pulled up a backdrop with a cemetery scene painted on it. Then Ralphie smashed right into the backdrop!

Keesha:

I get it light travels in straight lines away from its source until it runs into something.

Narrator 1:

D. A. and Tim landed at the side of the stage. D. A. found a flashlight. But when he turned it on, they got a big scare! Something on the wall looked like a big hand but it turned out to be a cardboard tree.

D. A.:

Because light travels in straight lines and can't go around things, the light from my flashlight hit the tree but never makes it to the wall. That is how a shadow is made.

Keesha:

Where could Arnold and Janet be. We need to find a way to aim the light so we can see what's going on in that black corner.

Frizzle:

How about this.

Narrator 2:

She brought out a large mirror and turned it at an angle.

Frizzle:

Show them how it is done, Liz.

Narrator 1:

Liz jumped into the light funnel, then streaked out toward the mirror. She hit the mirror, bounced off it, and zipped right up to the dark corner! For an instant the corner was lit up. Then Liz hit the wall and turned into herself.

Carlos:

That's great, but the light from the bus-bulb is going out in all directions. How do we get it to go up to that corner.

Keesha:

We need something like this thing, it's an old-fashioned footlight, it was used to light the floor of the stage before there was any electricity.

Frizzle:

I think the bus-bulb has something like that.

Carlos:

I think I see a footlight attachment! I'll pull it out so the giant footlight can cause the light to shine in one direction instead of spreading out all around the bulb.

Keesha:

Let me help you move it. It works, we can aim the light anywhere we want! Lets aim it upward.

Narrator 2:

Then we saw Arnold's ghost bigger and brighter than ever!

Ralphie:

Aren't ghost supposed to disappear when you shine light at them? How come this ghost looks clearer?

Keesha:

That's what happens to real things when you shine a light on them. Maybe that isn't a real ghost.

Frizzle:

To find the light follow the light.

Keesha:

That light proves it! This is a trick.

Narrator 1:

Next thing we knew, Keesha was climbing back into the light funnel. She shot all the way backstage and smashed smack into Arnold's "ghost"-except it wasn't a ghost at all. It was a pane of glass hanging from two wires, and Keesha bounced right off it!

Narrator 2:

After Keesha bounced off the glass, she grabbed a rope that was hanging from the ceiling.

When she looked around, she saw how Janet made Arnold's ghost.

Keesha:

I was right! It wasn't Arnold's ghost . . . it was Arnold's reflection!

Narrator 1:

Keesha and the rest of us figured out how Janet's trick works. Janet shines a light on Arnold . . . the light bounces off him, then bounces again off the piece of glass . . . and then down to where we are. And because Janet uses glass instead of a mirror, we can see Arnold's reflection and what's behind the glass. That's why we could see through him-like a ghost!

## Guidelines for Adapting Script

1. Provide students with the opportunity to read or skim a potential book or excerpt beforehand; or the teacher or student who chose the book can give a brief "book talk", which provides background information. It helps to begin the scripting process with familiar material.
2. Choose a portion of the text that is particularly interesting and contains the desired content. It may be only a few pages. The entire text of a typical picture book is only 2-5 typed pages without illustrations.
3. Reproduce the selected portion of the text.
4. Delete lines that are less critical to the development of the script, those peripheral to the main actions, those that represent complex imagery or figurative language that is difficult to express, or those that simply state that a character is speaking (Cox, 1988; Swanson, 1988). This is *not* a new approach to "round robin reading" here each student simply prepared to read the next paragraph aloud. Readers' Theatre strives to weave a coherent whole-a narrative, a sequence of events-told in many voices. Some portions of the text can be omitted.
5. Decide how to divide that parts for the readers. Naturally, dialogue can be assigned to appropriate characters (Swanson, 1998). In other text, it may be necessary to rewrite the text as dialogue or with multiple narrators. Converting third-person point of view to the first person ("I" or "we") can create an effective narration in many cases. There are a number of creative possibilities for dividing the text.
6. Add a "prologue" to introduce the script in storylike fashion. If necessary, a postscript may be added to bring closure to the script.

7. Label the readers' parts by placing each reader's name in the left-hand margin, followed by a colon.

8. Provide time for all readers to read over their parts (at least silently), and if time allows, perform the Readers' Theatre twice. The first run through, readers are still working on their timing and expressiveness. An additional incentive for a second more polished reading is to audiotape the final version for further listening pleasure, or to perform the script for another audience (peers, principal, parents, etc.).

Young, T. A., & Vardell, S. (1993) Weaving readers theatre and nonfiction into the curriculum. The Reading Teacher, 46 (5), 396-406.

FIGURE 1.8  
Reader's Theatre

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## Chapter 5

### Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

#### Summary

Upon completing the research and creating lesson plans, the author validated her own belief that comprehension is vital to the reading process. By reading, children discover the world around them and how all things are related in one way or the other. It is with reading that they discover the principles of writing, science, social studies, music, and health. As children read, they discover the customs and practices of other countries. However, if comprehension is removed from reading the only thing left are meaningless word phrases. Students must learn the many strategies and procedures that will increase comprehension.

#### Conclusions

Teaching comprehension strategies increases literacy development in all children. Ample research supports comprehension instruction for children in all grade levels, K-12. The message from the research is clear: educators must provide all children with the essential strategies necessary to understand written text. In addition, the author discovered that comprehension instruction does not have to be boring. However, it can be extremely fun and motivating when using informational science trade books. Furthermore, teaching metacognitive strategies may be done at the same time as students learn essential reading components found in the Washington State Essential Learning Requirements.

#### Recommendations

The writer of this project recommends that teachers, principals, superintendents and parents read the project in order to familiarize themselves with research-proven strategies that improve reading comprehension. In addition, the author recommends that field testing be done using this project in order to test its effectiveness and practicality in the classroom. Finally, the writer recommends that research on comprehension instruction continue because the more that is learned about this skill the better off struggling readers will be.

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