

M6 READING COMPREHENSION SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

Companion Document



“As teachers of literacy we must have as an instructional goal, regardless of age, grade, or achievement level, the development of students as purposeful, engaged, and ultimately independent comprehenders. No matter what grade level you teach, no matter what content you teach, no matter what texts you teach with, your goal is to improve students’ comprehension and understanding” (Rasinski, 2000, p. 1).

This companion document is one in a series of six companion documents complimenting the Building Blocks of Reading Continuum. The companion documents provide an overview of research pertaining to reading instruction and the building blocks of reading:

- Research and Reading Instruction
- Phonological Awareness
- Phonics
- Fluency
- Vocabulary
- Reading Comprehension



Reading Comprehension and the Building Blocks of Reading

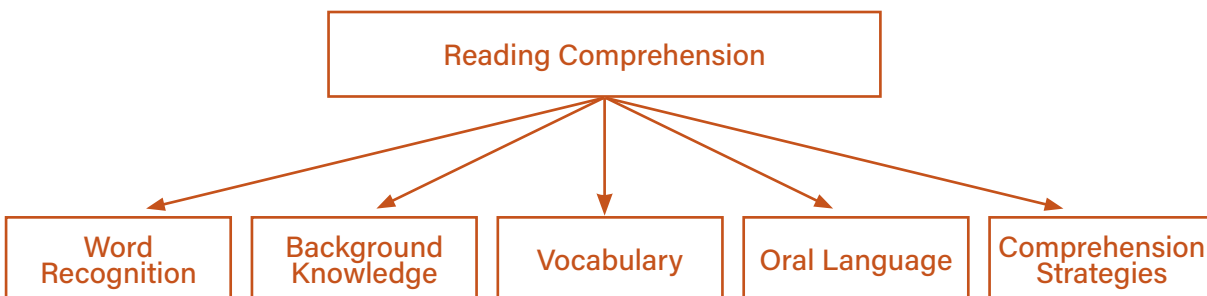


Reading is about understanding. Without understanding, reading is often a frustrating activity of simply identifying words. Ultimately, “comprehension is the reason for reading. If learners can decode words accurately but don’t understand what they’re reading, they’re not really reading. Good readers are purposeful and active. They may read to learn more about their favourite athlete, to complete a school assignment, or just to enjoy a good story” (Reading Rockets, 2021). Duke and Pearson (2001) indicate that the goal of developing reading comprehension goes hand-in-hand with the goal of developing solid sound-letter knowledge for all learners regardless of age. This allows learners to understand, interpret, and critique what is read to them and what they read. It also helps learners develop the skills needed to become competent and enthusiastic readers.

To teach comprehension is to help develop learners’ critical literacy skills. Critical literacy involves the ability to question, challenge, and evaluate the meaning and purposes of texts. It also involves the ability to read deeper into the content and make connections with texts. It is more than being able to read a menu, fill in a simple form, or recall details of a text. Critically literate learners become aware that all texts are created, “from a certain perspective or bias and examine each text to see how it positions them as they read, listen, or view” (Trehearne, 2006, p. 99–100). Teaching comprehension encourages learners to think critically, problem solve, collaborate, and communicate. Strong comprehension skills help fulfil the goals of the New Brunswick Global Competencies and provide a foundation for learners to work sustainably as global citizens into the future (see Appendix A).

Critical literacy is the awareness of language as an integral part of social relations. It is a way of thinking that involves questioning assumptions; investigating how forms of language construct and are constructed by particular social, historical, and economic contexts; and examining power relations embedded in language in communication. (*Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum: Elementary K-3*, 1998, p. 230)

There are many factors that contribute to a student’s ability to develop solid comprehension skills and knowledge. Research indicates that word recognition, background knowledge, vocabulary, oral language, and a growing repertoire of strategies support comprehension.



Word Recognition

Word recognition is the ability of a reader to recognize words correctly and effortlessly. It is a critical aspect of learning to read. Recognizing words automatically helps learners to read fluently and supports comprehension because learners who can “process words efficiently are better able to focus on the meaning of a text” (Hayes & Flanigan, 2014, p. 4). Automatic word recognition is built upon a foundation of phonological awareness and phonics skills. The more brain words (sight words) a learner has, the fewer cognitive resources they must use on word recognition, allowing them to focus on meaning making.

A sight word is any word a reader recognizes instantly and identifies without conscious effort regardless of their spelling pattern. Gentry and Ouellette (2019) refer to sight words as brain words.

Background Knowledge

Background knowledge is an essential element of reading comprehension. The more that a learner knows about a topic, the easier it is for them to read and understand the text. It is also easier for them to retain information. Learners with good background knowledge are also able to choose between multiple meanings of words and make inferences that rely on background knowledge.

Teachers are encouraged to support learner comprehension of texts by activating background knowledge and promoting text connections. Neuman, Kaefer, and Pinkham (2014) suggest several ways to build learner background knowledge and state that it “is not just accumulating facts; rather, children need to develop knowledge networks, comprised of clusters of concepts that are coherent, generative, and supportive of future learning in a domain” (p. 147). Strategies for activating background knowledge include the following:

- Teaching words in categories (e.g., “I am going to say the following words: strawberries, apples, oranges. They are all a type of ... fruit.”)
- Using contrast and comparison (e.g., “Is a potato a type of fruit? Why is it or is it not a type of fruit?”)
- Using analogies (e.g., “A bird is to a feather as a dog is to ... fur.”)
- Encouraging topic-focussed wide reading (e.g., learners identify an area of interest and read widely on that topic to develop a deeper knowledge.)
- Embracing multimedia as a way to introduce learners to important ideas and concepts in an engaging manner

Understanding figures of speech and idioms is often reliant on background knowledge. This is especially important for English Language Learners. Although strategy instruction is also important, research indicates that learners will continue “to spin their wheels when they don’t have background knowledge required to understand much of what they’re reading” (Frey, 2009, p. 9).

Vocabulary

Vocabulary knowledge is among the preeminent predictors of success in learning to read. The breadth and depth of a learner’s vocabulary, as well as their speed of accessing word pronunciations and meanings from memory, are strong predictors of word reading, reading comprehension, and overall academic success. Studies also indicate that a learner’s vocabulary growth is directly linked to their overall school achievement. The more words a learner knows, the easier it is for them to learn new ones, to recognize words in print, and to understand words, sentences, and stories (Weitzman & Greenberg, 2002). Effective strategies for vocabulary teaching and intervention include the following:

- Activating prior knowledge and providing opportunities for learners to make connections
- Building background knowledge
- Pre-teaching (front-loading)
- Building flexibility with and interest in language
- Thinking aloud as you infer meaning from pictures, key words, graphics, and texts
- Providing direct and explicit instruction concerning root words, affixes, and morphemes
- Holding discussions about vocabulary found during read-alouds



Researchers have identified a “knowledge threshold” when it comes to reading comprehension. If learners are unfamiliar with 59 percent of the terms in a topic, their ability to understand the text becomes compromised (O’Reilly et al., 2019).



Oral Language

Oral language development is directly linked to reading comprehension. In fact, oral language is key when a beginning reader makes the transition to written forms (McCardle & Chhabra, 2004). Learners must understand language at the oral level to understand language at the text level. Through oral language, learners gain information about word meanings and pronunciation. They also learn the structure of language and that the purpose is to communicate meaning. Research with learners between the ages of 6 and 14 “shows that scaffolded classroom-talk assists students to deepen their understanding of texts” (Mills, 2009).

Comprehension Strategies

Effective comprehension instruction helps learners become “independent, strategic, and metacognitive readers who are able to develop, control, and use a variety of comprehension strategies to ensure that they understand what they read” (Texas Education Agency, 2002). Good comprehension instruction includes both explicit instruction in specific comprehension strategies and time and opportunity for actual reading, writing, and discussion of text (Duke & Pearson, 2002, p. 207) (see Appendix B for strategies that promote comprehension).

Metacognition— Thinking about Thinking



Cognition refers to the mental process of thinking, processing, and understanding information, whereas metacognition refers to an awareness of how an individual thinks about their own thinking, processing, and understanding of information. Metacognition can be defined as “thinking about thinking.” Readers who “think about their thinking” while reading monitor their understanding of text, recognize when comprehension is interrupted, and apply appropriate strategies to restore and/or enhance understanding. This *metacognitive* understanding is the foundation upon which all comprehension strategies are based.

Learning how to read is a bit like learning how to drive. A new driver must follow the rules of the road, keep the pedal at the right speed, make sure the lights are on, and be conscientious of what lies ahead by reading the road signs. There are so many decisions to make: Is there enough gas? Why is the oil light on? What does that sign mean?

A confident driver also needs to know when to slow down and stop if things aren’t going well; what are the “fix-up” strategies if the gas or oil lights comes on?

A reader also has a lot to think about to navigate a text. They need tools like vocabulary, background knowledge, a good phonics base to be able to decode words effortlessly, and an understanding of text features, word structure, and context clues. Plus, they need fluency to read effortlessly and with meaning. There are so many decisions to make: What does that word mean? Why did the author put that exclamation point there? What do we know about the character?

A confident reader also needs to know when to slow down and stop if things aren’t understood, and what “fix-up” strategy to use to help with understanding.

Metacognition is a process that spans three distinct stages. To be successful thinkers, learners must:

- **develop a plan** before approaching the task, such as the choice of the book. Is it being read for information or for the pleasure of a story?
- **monitor their understanding** and use “fix-up” strategies when the meaning of a text becomes lost.
- **evaluate their thinking** after completing the task. Does that book provide the information they were looking for? Did they like how the author chose to portray the character?

Metacognition can be enhanced through practicing the following strategies:

- Activating prior knowledge
- Making inferences
- Using knowledge of text structures
- Generating and answering questions
- Retelling and summarizing

Supporting Reading Comprehension Skill Development



One way to help learners develop their responsiveness to text is through reading aloud. Read-alouds are an excellent way to share a variety of text forms, model reading comprehension strategies, strengthen oral comprehension, and stimulate discussions. Educators can use questions to guide or focus the discussion. As well, questions can be used to encourage learners to reflect further and deepen their response.

Read-Alouds

Reading aloud to students is an essential component of any reading program. It is one of the best ways to interest a learner in reading and to demonstrate that reading can be enjoyable and worthwhile. Reading *with* children is more than reading *to* children. “Reading with children involves an ongoing conversation with them. It means stopping, asking, listening, responding, explaining and commenting” (Weitzman & Greenberg, 2010).

Questioning

Researcher John Hattie (2009) reports that educators ask about 300–400 questions a day, the majority of which are low-level cognitive questions. In fact, 60% of questions asked are recall questions (e.g., “What was the name of the child in the story?”), another 20% are procedural questions (e.g., “Where did the child go?”), and the remaining 20% require the learners to think more deeply.

Educators can increase the number of higher-order questions asked during the instructional day so that learners can express their ideas more thoroughly. Examples include the following:

- “What does this remind you of?”
- “Why do you think _____?”
- “Tell me about this part/picture. Now, tell me more.”
- “Have you ever _____? Explain?”

See Appendix C for questions that help learners identify the gist of the story, predict-verify-decide, visualize-verify-decide, summarize, think aloud, and solve problems.

Wondering

Reading to learners helps them to understand the nature and purposes of reading. The *Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum Elementary: K–3* (1998) explains that it also helps them become familiar with the patterns of written language. It can interest them in different types of literature and different authors. Reading aloud can also be used to model effective reading strategies and to help learners build awareness and understanding of such strategies (e.g., predicting, making connections, creating visual images, and rereading when they don’t understand). It has been shown to have positive effects on the following:

- Reading comprehension
- Listening comprehension
- Quality of oral and written language
- Reading interests

“Wondering” helps a reader predict and make inferences about a text. Model “wondering” through a read-aloud of a book or passage. As you read through the text, use the following prompts:

- “I am wondering ...”
- “I think _____ will happen.”
- “I imagine that ...”
- “Maybe _____ will happen ...”
- “I predict ...”

See Appendix D to read more about how learners can learn to “think like a reader” and “act like a reader.” These are important skills that support comprehension.



Reading Comprehension Skills and Knowledge in the Classroom



Duke and Pearson (2002) state that “comprehension instruction should be balanced. By this we mean that good comprehension instruction includes both explicit instruction in specific comprehension strategies and a great deal of time and opportunity for actual reading, writing, and discussion of text.”

In this sense, comprehension instruction is similar to that of phonics instructions. It needs to be explicit and begins with direct, intentional teaching with a clear objective (Archer & Hughes, 2011). Instruction also needs to allow for ample time for learners to read, write, and talk.

Reading and Writing

To be a skilled reader and writer, learners need “phonemic knowledge, orthographic knowledge, semantic knowledge, and syntactic knowledge—all elements that are prevalent in reading and writing” (Moran & Billen, 2018, p. 191–192). Given this overlap, it makes sense that research has shown that when learners receive writing instruction, their reading fluency and comprehension improves.

Allington & Cunningham (1994) state that “children who write become better readers.

Research has shown a clear benefit from connecting reading and writing and has also shown that a writing program which includes instruction in specific informational text structures improves both writing and reading comprehension” (p. 94).

As with the other Building Blocks of Reading skill areas, the scope and sequence of reading comprehension outcomes can be found on the Building Blocks of Reading Continuum, organized by developmental phase progression.

Phases of Word Learning

Linea Ehri, an educational researcher, proposed the phases of word learning in 1995. This widely recognized theory helps us to understand the phases learners move through towards proficient reading. Each phase is characterized by a learner’s understanding and use of the alphabetic system in their word reading. Phases range from pre-alphabetic, to partial alphabetic, to full alphabetic, to consolidated alphabetic, to skilled reader.

Next we will examine each of the developmental phases of word learning, phase outcomes, and suggested learning activities.

Pre-alphabetic to Partial Alphabetic Phase: Reading Comprehension



Teaching Goal:

To develop comprehension skills and knowledge by responding to and retelling stories read aloud to progress learners to the partial alphabetic phase

End Outcomes



When being read to:

- Responds to stories read aloud/viewed by connecting information and events to personal experiences (text-to-self)
- Retells one or two events in familiar stories orally
- Predicts a plausible next event in a story
- Talks about information in non-fiction texts and elements of a story from pictures or read-alouds
- Retells the main events of a story orally or through own drawings, puppet plays, or provided images

Checklist of Teaching “Must Haves”

- Big books with simple storylines
- Fables, fairy tales, and true stories
- Question prompts for use after read-alouds (e.g., comprehension cubes, anchor charts, language experience charts, cue cards)

Activities to Encourage End of Phase Outcomes

Suggested learning activities for the pre-alphabetic to partial alphabetic phase are described below. Activities in the pre-alphabetic to partial alphabetic phase support comprehension as learners are being read to, which is developmentally appropriate for this phase.

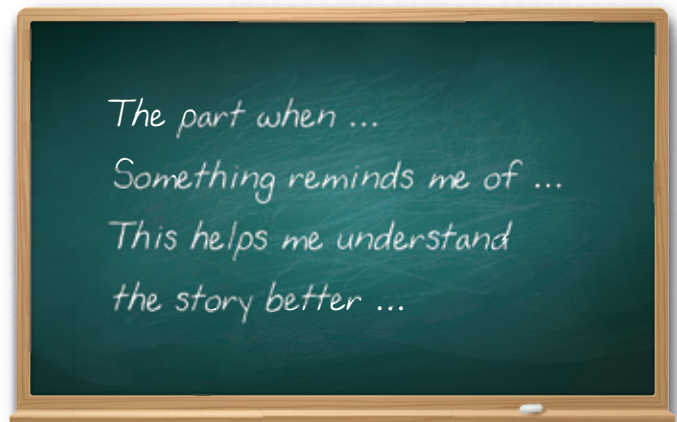


Outcome: Responds to stories read aloud/viewed by connecting information and events to personal experiences (text-to-self)

Making text connections supports learner development of comprehension skills and knowledge through the developmental phases of word reading. They begin by making text-to-self connections and will progress to making text-to-text and text-to-world connections.

Activity: This Reminds Me Of ...

1. Create a language experience chart with learners. Language experience charts can be created after a shared experience (e.g., a read-aloud, an outdoor walk, a special school event, etc.).
2. After a shared experience, record what the learners say on chart paper. Through discussion, learners will be encouraged to articulate text-to-self experiences.



Naming alphabet letters quickly and confidently is called automaticity. It is the fast, effortless identification of alphabet letter names and it is the first step in fluency and reading comprehension. Comprehension is reliant on confident readers who are not “bogged down” by unknown letters or sounds.

Activity: Wordless Picture Books

Wordless picture books provide learners the opportunity to orally tell their own stories based on the illustrations. The overall theme of the story will match the illustrations, but the details will be influenced by their own personal experiences and the prior knowledge they bring to the text.

Some favourite wordless picture books include the following:

- *The Snowman* by Raymond Briggs
- *A Boy, A Dog, A Friend* by Mercer Mayer
- *Changes, Changes* by Pat Hutchins
- *Pancakes for Breakfast* by Pat Hutchins
- *Journey* by Aaron Becker
- *Red Sled* by Lita Judge
- *Chalk* by Bill Thomson

Activity: Response Sheet

Graphic organizers can support learners as they respond to texts that they have heard or read. Learners can draw pictures and/or write their thoughts on the graphic organizer. During this developmental phase, a child can draw pictures and talk about their drawing in reference to the text. Eventually they may add random shapes or letters to symbolize words (see Appendix E).

Activity: Oral or Visual Products

Response to text can be supported in a variety of ways. As well as responding personally and critically, learners benefit from opportunities to respond by creating their own oral or visual products.

Creative responses can be encouraged in the following ways:

- Creating puppet plays
- Role-playing
- Painting
- Telling a story
- Drawing
- Creating with clay

(*Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum Elementary: K-3, 1998, p. 181*)



Outcome: Retells one or two events in familiar stories orally

Activity: Retelling a Story

Learning to retell a story takes time and requires practice. Learners can begin to retell one or two events orally, using familiar stories. As well, learners can retell the main events orally or through pictures, and they may require prompts. As learners progress, they can be expected to sequence events and provide some general supportive details. Before asking a learner to retell a story, read the story several times and model how to retell a story.

According to the *Atlantic Canada Language Arts Curriculum Elementary: K-3*, the first read-aloud should focus on reading for meaning and enjoyment. On successive readings, model retelling of events and invite learners to participate.

Activity: Sketch to Stretch

Sketch to Stretch encourages learners to make meaning and draw what they see while listening. Prior to asking learners to retell through drawing, model the steps below:

1. Read a story or poem to the children.
2. Ask the children to “make a picture” in their head about something they remember in the story (e.g., event or character).
3. Tell them to draw what they see.
4. Remind them it is a simple sketch and doesn’t need a lot of details. Model this for the learners.
5. Set a brief time limit and ask the learners to draw.
6. When the time is complete, have the learners share their sketch with a partner. The goal is not to have an exceptional drawing but to use a drawing to help with retelling one or two events in a familiar story.

(Trehearne, 2004)



Outcome: Predicts a plausible next event in a story

Activity: Prediction Practice

Having prior knowledge is an important foundation for predicting. Background information enables a learner to ask questions and relate their experiences to what they think might happen next in a text.

What's the Difference Between Predicting and Inferencing?

Predicting

We use our schema (background knowledge) and clues in a book to guess what will happen. A prediction is typically confirmed or denied by further reading.

Inferencing

Inferences are not always clearly confirmed or denied. We use our schema (background knowledge) and clues in a book to infer a character's feelings or actions.

Sometimes a learner enters school with little knowledge of print concepts and have fewer personal experiences than their peers. Teachers can encourage prediction by modelling how to ask questions as they read during a read-aloud (e.g., "I think ... is going to happen because ...").

Using pictures can also help children to predict what will happen next. Before a read-aloud, take a *picture walk* through the book and model to the learners how to ask questions (e.g., "I see the boy went to the farm. I wonder if he'll ... I think he's going to ...").

As well, oral comprehension is an important element of prediction. Learners need to be able to listen to a story and make sense of what they hear to predict what will happen next.

| Picture Books to Encourage Inferencing | Picture Books to Encourage Predicting |
|---|---|
| <i>Two Bad Ants</i> by Chris Van Allsburg | <i>I Went Walking</i> by Sue Williams |
| <i>Fireflies</i> by Julie Brinkloe | <i>What Do You Do with a Tail Like This?</i> by Steven Jenkins & Robin Page |
| <i>Duck! Rabbit!</i> by Amy Krouse Rosenthal | <i>Elmer and Rose</i> by David McKee |
| <i>Shhh We Have a Plan</i> by Chris Haughton | <i>The Doorbell Rang</i> by Pat Hutchkins |
| <i>Grandfather Twilight</i> by Barbara Berger | <i>If You Give a Mouse a Cookie</i> by Laura Joffe Numeoff |
| <i>Top and Bottom</i> by Janet Stevens | <i>Doctor De Soto</i> by William Steig |
| <i>The Little Mouse, The Red Ripe Strawberry and The Big Hungry Bear</i> by Don and Audrey Wood | <i>Sylvester and the Magic Pebble</i> by William Steig |
| | <i>Enemy Pie</i> by Derek Munson |



Outcome: Talks about information in non-fiction texts and elements of a story from pictures or read-alouds

Activity: Developing Oral Language and Comprehension During Read-Alouds

Asking questions before, during, and after reading is a strategy that supports comprehension in all content areas. In her book *Multiple Paths to Literacy*, Miriam Trehearne (2016) provides questions to ask before, during, and after reading.

| Before Reading | During Reading | After Reading |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Tell me about the cover of the book.▪ Tell me what you already know.▪ I think I will learn _____.▪ We have read another book like this. How do you think the two books might be similar, different?▪ Tell your partner what you predict will happen in this book. Say, "I predict _____" or "I think I will learn _____."▪ Do a picture walk of the cover and few key pages to help the children predict what might happen next. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Consider not stopping too frequently because children may lose focus on the story. It is more effective to stop during a re-reading of the text. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Play "I Remember"—children listen to a read-aloud and share something they remember.▪ Play "Say Something"—an open-ended strategy to get the conversation going. Children say something to a partner, small, or whole group.▪ Play "On the Page-Off the Page"—an activity that supports listening and reading comprehension. Teacher asks questions and learners decide if it's on the page or an inference (save this activity for later phases). |



Outcome: Retells the main events of a story orally or through own drawings, puppet plays, or provided images

Activity: Teaching Learners to Retell

Step 1—Begin with a direct explanation:

- Explain to learners why they retell. Retellings help them to understand better what they hear and what they read.
- Help learners understand that retelling happens every day (e.g., jokes, personal stories). Tell learners a favourite personal story and encourage learners to retell their own personal stories.
- Pick a favourite story. Read the story/nursery rhyme to the learners. A big book is best for a shared reading.
- Finger plays or nursery rhymes are great stories for retelling. The children can do the actions for the nursery rhyme which further helps with the retelling: *"Jack be Nimble, Jack be Quick, Jack JUMPED over the ..."*
- Share key elements of narrative retelling. Write the components on chart paper and draw pictures to go with each element. Start "small" at first and talk about the setting, characters, and main idea. Add on as the learners become better at retelling.

Steps 2 & 3—Model retelling and collaborate:

- Read the story again and have the learners listen for key elements.
- Now retell the story to the learners and ask if your retelling was correct. Use picture prompts with pictures of characters and key elements of the story. These can be simple drawings on recipe cards and placed in a pocket chart as you tell the story.
- On another retelling, mix-up some of the elements. Ask the learners if the story works "mixed up." Why or why not?

Step 4—Guide practice:

- Have learners do buddy retelling by taking turns retelling the story with a pocket chart, felt board, manipulatives (e.g., small animals, people, or props), or puppet centre. They can check on each other's retelling.
- Have small groups of learners each take a part of the story and retell it together. Use a "talking stick." Children sit in a circle and when the teller lays down the "talking stick" it is time for the next person to tell their part. Model this first. Children can make their own "talking sticks" out of paper towel holders at an Art Centre.

(Trehearne, 2004)

Partial Alphabetic to Full Alphabetic Phase: Reading Comprehension



Teaching Goal:

To develop comprehension skills and knowledge by making inferences, recognizing simple text forms, and retelling stories read aloud to progress learners to the full alphabetic phase

End Outcomes



When being read to:

- Makes simple inferences about a main character in texts
- Uses basic text features to gain obvious information
- Retells the sequence of events from beginning, middle, and end
- Elaborates on a main topic using a retell or illustrations, providing a few simple details
- Recognizes some simple text forms and basic characteristics

Checklist of Teaching “Must Haves”

- Big books with simple storylines
- A wide variety of text forms
- Fables, fairy tales, and true stories
- Question prompts for use after read-alouds (e.g., comprehension cubes, anchor charts, cue cards, graphic organizers)

Activities to Encourage End of Phase Outcomes

Suggested learning activities for the partial alphabetic to full alphabetic phase are described below. Activities in the partial alphabetic to full alphabetic phase support comprehension as learners are being read to, which is developmentally appropriate for this phase.



Outcome: Makes simple inferences about a main character in texts

Activity: All About Me Tubs—Practicing Inferencing

Create a *Me Tub* at the beginning of the year and put in items that show things you like to do (e.g., ski boots, recipe book, dog leash, and running shoes). Pull the mystery items out of the *Me Tub* one at a time and ask the children to infer what each item says about you.

Encourage the learners to create their own *Me Tubs* and present them to the class.





Outcome: Uses basic text features to gain obvious information

Activity: Going on a Text Features Walk

Before reading a story or non-fiction text, tell the learners you are “going on a text features walk.” Take a picture walk through the book and share how text features help us understand (comprehend) a book. Explore the following elements:

| Fiction Text Feature | Purpose of Text Feature |
|--------------------------|---|
| Title | Tells reader what the story is about |
| Table of Contents | Shows different chapters in a longer book |
| Headings | Tells the main idea of that section of the story |
| Pictures | Shows important parts of the story |
| Non-Fiction Text Feature | Purpose of Text Feature |
| Title | Tells reader information about what the book is about |
| Table of Contents | Shows different parts of the book |
| Glossary | Tells important words |
| Headings | Tells the main idea of that section of the book |
| Pictures | Shows important parts of topics in the book |
| Diagrams | Shows important topics in the the book through drawings |
| Maps | Shows places related to the main idea of the book |



Outcome: Retells the sequence of events from beginning, middle, and end

Activity: Beginning, Middle, End—Story Board

Using the Beginning, Middle, and End graphic organizer can support sequencing by helping learners identify beginning, middle, and end details in fiction texts. This may include descriptions of setting, characters, or plot. Use this on the board or on chart paper to guide learner responses as a whole or small group (see Appendix F).



Outcome: Elaborates on a main topic using a retell or illustrations, providing a few simple details

Activity: Scoops of Details

Using the Scoops of Details graphic organizer can support retelling by helping learners identify additional details or illustrations to support the main topic in fiction texts. Use this on the board or on chart paper to guide learner responses as a whole or small group (see Appendix G).

(Adapted from Graff-Silver, 2003)

Activity: Identifying Main Idea Graphic Organizers

Using the Main Idea graphic organizers can support learners as they attempt to identify supporting details for important ideas. Use these on the board or on chart paper to guide learner responses as a whole or small group (see Appendix H).





Outcome: Recognizes some simple text forms and basic characteristics

Activity: Building a Classroom Library

The best way for learners to recognize simple text forms and basic characteristics of a book is to be read to daily and to be exposed to a wide selection of books. Build your classroom library to include many kinds of genres. Simple text forms might include poems, letters, stories, informational texts, etc. Basic characteristics might include title, author, and illustrator.

Keep a chart of the books you read under simple headings. Have the children draw mini pictures to go with each sample book.

Books We've Read

| Text forms | Names of Books |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| Fiction books—stories | |
| Letters | |
| Poems | |
| Non-fiction text | |



Full Alphabetic to Consolidated Alphabetic Phase: Reading Comprehension



Teaching Goal:

To develop comprehension skills and knowledge by making inferences, connections, and predictions; asking questions of stories read aloud and independently; and self-monitoring understanding to progress learners to the consolidated alphabetic phase

End Outcomes



When being read to:

- Makes simple comparisons (text-to-text) and conclusions
- Makes simple inferences about a main character's actions/feelings, using concrete examples from the text; may require prompting
- Makes personal connections and relates prior knowledge to text
- Recognizes that a character's actions/motives may be related to the conflict
- Retells main idea of a story and the events and provides some general details in a variety of texts



When being read to and reading independently:

- Asks questions to understand texts
- Uses text features to gain obvious information
- Identifies a few simple text forms and describes the general purpose of the form
- Makes predictions to support comprehension



When reading independently:

- Self-monitors for comprehension by rereading, reading on, or slowing down
- Retells the main events of a story and main ideas from nonfiction texts, orally

Checklist of Teaching "Must Haves"

- A wide variety of text forms
- Fables, fairy tales, and true stories
- Question prompts for use after read-alouds (e.g., comprehension cubes, anchor charts, cue cards, graphic organizers)

Activities to Encourage End of Phase Outcomes

Suggested learning activities for the full alphabetic to consolidated phase are described below. Activities in the full alphabetic to consolidated phase support comprehension as learners are being read to and reading on their own, which is developmentally appropriate for this phase.

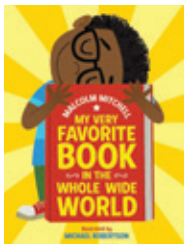


Outcome: Makes simple comparisons (text-to-text) and conclusions

Activity: Text-to-Text with Different Authors

In the full-alphabetic to consolidated phase, learners begin to make simple comparisons between books. These comparisons are called text-to-text connections.

An author study of a favourite author provides opportunities to look for comparisons. Draw a table or a Venn diagram to organize the comparisons you discuss as a group.



A little boy becomes very nervous when his teacher asks him to bring his very favourite book to school. He works really hard to find a solution and his teacher and classmates are so impressed.



When her school decides to perform Peter Pan, Grace wants to play Peter, but her classmates don't think she can. Grace's Ma and Nana tell her she can be anything she wants if she puts her mind to it.

Activity: Same, but Different?

Reading different versions of the same fairy tale is a great way to encourage simple text-to-text comparisons. Learners enjoy seeing the varying twists of a familiar tale and can have fun playing, "I spy with my little eye, something that is same (or different)!" (see Appendix I for the Same, but Different graphic organizer).





Outcome: Makes simple inferences about a main character's actions/feelings, using concrete examples from the text; may require prompting

Activity: Become a Character

An effective way to retell a story is to take turns being the character. When learners pretend to be a character, they can begin to imagine how the character feels and develop a greater understanding of the character's actions.

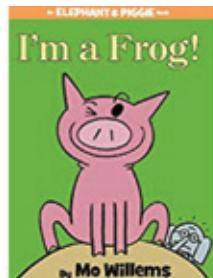
Young children do this naturally when they are provided opportunities to play and retell a story with puppets and dramatic props. Guide their understanding by asking key questions:

- "How do you think _____ felt about that?"
- "How do you know?"
- "What did they do?"

Activity: Read Stories with Strong Character Illustrations

Using picture books with strong character illustrations can help a learner see what a character is thinking or feeling and provide a perfect opportunity to explore a character's feelings or actions.

See examples below:



Activity: My Character

Using the My Character graphic organizer can support understanding of character development through questions about specific characters. As well, this graphic organizer supports inferential thinking and encourages learners to look for textual evidence to support ideas (see Appendix J).



Outcome: Makes personal connections and relates prior knowledge to text

Background knowledge is an essential element of reading comprehension. The more that a learner knows about a topic, the easier it is for them to read and understand the text. It is also easier for them to retain information. Comprehension of text is aided by activating this prior knowledge.

Activity: Using Our Schema—Let’s Describe a Cat

We all bring something different to a text, depending on our prior knowledge and experiences.

Have learners think of as many words as they can to describe a familiar animal (e.g., cat—fluffy, fuzzy, furry, sleeps a lot, lazy, plays with yarn, likes to chase mice, etc.). This activity can be done as a whole class activity or small guided reading group. Write the words on chart paper and talk about their differences and similarities.

Emphasize to the children how we think of different things according to our experiences (prior knowledge or schema). We use schema all the time when we are reading, without even thinking about it.

Activity: Before and After

Using the Before and After graphic organizer can help learners articulate what they know about a topic before they hear a text and what they know afterwards. This supports learner understanding of the role prior knowledge plays in comprehension (see Appendix K).



Outcome: Recognizes that a character’s actions/motives may be related to the conflict

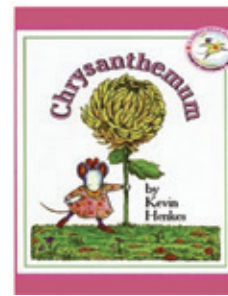
Activity: Read All About It!

Reading books with social justice themes provides an opportunity to explore a character’s actions, motives, and feelings.

Using open-ended questions encourages learners to articulate feelings and observations, and also supports critical literacy. Open-ended questions might include the following:

- “What does this remind you of?”
- “What do you think?”
- “Have you ever ... ?”
- “Tell me about the picture. Now tell me more ... ”

See examples of books with strong themes below:



Outcome: Retells main idea of a story and the events and provides some general details in a variety of texts

Activity: Five Finger Retell

Using the Five Finger Retell graphic organizer can help learners extend their retell by prompting setting, characters, problem, events, solution, and main idea details of a story (see Appendix L).



Outcome: Asks questions to understand texts

Activity: Modelling

Modelling the types of questions readers ask can be done during a read-aloud. While reading aloud, show learners how to form questions that help with comprehension by thinking aloud.

For example, during the read-aloud, think out loud while you consider these questions:

- "I wonder what this means ... "
- "Do we think this might mean ... ?"
- "Why might this character say this?"
- "How does this character feel?"

Planning read-alouds in advance helps to identify questions appropriate for before reading, during reading, and after reading.

Consider some of the following “questioning” examples below:

Questioning before reading and during a picture walk

- What do you think might happen in the story? (predicting)
- Who/what is the story about? (predicting)

Questioning during reading

- Do you remember the part when ... ? Let’s read it again.
- What do you think will happened next? (predicting)
- Is there a problem and will it be solved? (predicting)

Questioning to understand

Should I ...

- use my best guess?
- ignore and read on?
- reread or look back?
- reread out loud to myself? (whisper read)
- slow down?
- ask for help?

Questioning after reading

- What happened in that story? (retelling)
- What happened first, next, next, last? (retelling)
- Was there a problem in the story? How was it solved? (retelling)
- Did you like that story? Why? Why not? (responding)
- What was your favourite part? (responding)
- Does that story remind you of anything or another story? (responding)



Outcome: Uses text features to gain obvious information

Activity: How to Read Non-Fiction

Learners may indicate that a non-fiction text is “too hard” even though the text complexity may be appropriate. This is especially true of non-fiction texts if a learner has limited experience with this form. Reviewing how to read a non-fiction text is beneficial.

Share the following information about reading non-fiction with your learners:

- Read non-fiction books differently than fiction books
- Pick and choose what you want to read—you don't have to read beginning-to-end or top-to-bottom like fiction stories
- Look at the text features—pictures, labels, and captions
- Read a few sentences, "here and there"

Supportive Strategies for Reading Non-fiction Text

- Preview the text and visuals
- Always set a purpose for reading
- Make predictions
- Reflect on background knowledge of the topic

Activity: What I Read/What I Think

Using the What I Read/What I Think graphic organizer encourages learners to read between the lines and make inferences and conclusions using supportive evidence from the text (see Appendix M).



Outcome: Identifies a few simple text forms and describes the general purpose of the form

Activity: How Are They Different?—Fiction and Non-fiction Text

Help learners understand the difference between the text forms, fiction and non-fiction. Sort books into two piles—not real (i.e., fiction) and real (i.e., non-fiction). Encourage learners to observe and list the features that are different, such as illustrations, covers, and titles.

To extend the activity, have learners identify ways in which books can be further sorted.

| Fiction | Non-fiction |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Not real | Real |
| Story talk | Real talk |
| Read to enjoy | Read to learn |
| Read in order—beginning/middle/end | Read in any order |

| | |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Illustrations | Photos/charts/graphs |
| Characters/settings | Table of contents |
| Problem/solution | Index, glossary, bold words, labels |
| | True information/directions |



Outcome: Makes predictions to support comprehension

Activity: Predicting or Inferencing?

Share the definition of predicting and inferencing with learners. What's the difference between predicting and inferencing? Inferences are not always clearly confirmed or denied. We use our schema (background knowledge) and clues in a book to infer a character's feelings or actions. Predicting is different. We still use our schema (background knowledge) and clues in a book to guess or predict what will happen. A prediction is typically confirmed or denied by further reading.

Provide examples of predictions and inferences from a familiar text, and have learners do the same (e.g., I predict the Lorax will continue to speak for the trees *and* I infer the Lorax was very sad that the trees were chopped down but hopeful that the forest could be saved).



Outcome: Self-monitors for comprehension by rereading, reading on, or slowing down

Reading aloud and modelling how to self-monitor supports the development of comprehension strategies. Re-reading, reading on, and slowing down can be introduced in whole class groups and practiced in a small guided reading group and during independent reading.

It is important to do the following first:

- Explain *what* the strategy is
- Model *how* to use it
- Describe *when* to use it

You know you need a fix-up strategy when:

- the pictures inside your mind stop forming.
- you cannot answer your own questions.
- your mind wanders from the text; you read it, but are thinking about something else.
- the page you are now reading has nothing to do with what you thought the text was about.
- you cannot explain what you have just read.
- the characters appear and you cannot remember who they are.

(Zwiers, 2004, p. 134)



Outcome: Retells the main events of a story and main ideas from non-fiction texts, orally

Activity: Scoops of Details

Using the Scoops of Details graphic organizer can support retelling by helping learners organize and jot down additional details to support the main events in fiction texts and main ideas in non-fiction texts. Learners can use their notes to support retelling main events and ideas orally (see Appendix G). (Adapted from Graff-Silver, 2003)

Reading Out Loud

Early readers will often sub-vocalize as they read. This helps with comprehension. Reading orally with a friend also helps with comprehension as learners have the opportunity to talk about what they are reading and receive feedback from a peer, adult, or reading buddy.

Consolidated Alphabetic to Skilled Reader Phase: Reading Comprehension



Teaching Goal:

To develop more proficient comprehension skills and knowledge by making inferences, connections, and predictions; asking questions of stories read aloud and independently; and self-monitoring understanding to progress learners to the skilled reader phase

End Outcomes



When being read to and reading independently:

- Identifies specific facts found in one place in the text
- Uses text features to gain additional information from the text
- Makes obvious comparisons (text-to-text) and recognizes the direct relationship among ideas to draw conclusions
- Identifies a few simple text forms; describes overall characteristics and general purpose
- Makes predictions to support comprehension
- Uses context to support comprehension
- Makes simple inferences about a character's actions/feelings and story events, providing some general textual details
- Answers what if, how, and why questions



When reading independently:

- Self-monitors and uses self-correcting strategies to maintain meaning

Checklist of Teaching “Must Haves”

- A wide variety of text forms
- Question prompts for use after read-alouds (e.g., comprehension cubes, anchor charts, cue cards, graphic organizers)
- Comprehension self-assessments

Activities to Encourage End of Phase Outcomes

Suggested learning activities for the consolidated alphabetic to skilled reader phase are described below. Activities in the consolidated alphabetic to skilled reader phase support comprehension as learners are being read to and reading on their own, which is developmentally appropriate for this phase.



Outcome: Identifies specific facts found in one place in the text

Activity: Sticky Note Facts

Select a familiar non-fiction text. Go through the text together and pick out key words and important facts. Record this information on sticky notes and ask learners to help organize the sticky notes on chart paper.

Select a different text and have learners use sticky notes to record key words in a text and the most important information. Ask learners to explain why they felt certain words and facts were more important than others.

Non-fiction Text Features

- Table of contents
- Heading
- Sub-heading
- Index
- Photograph
- Caption
- Graph
- Contents
- Type of print (e.g., bold, italic, and highlighted)
- Map
- Diagram





Outcome: Uses text features to gain additional information from the text

Activity: CATS Pre-reading Strategy

Identify and define various text features with learners. Have learners use the CATS pre-reading strategy to assess text features to determine what they know about a book before reading it.

| | |
|---|---|
| C | What do the front and back COVERS tell us about the books? |
| A | What do you know about the AUTHOR and other books [they] may have written? |
| T | What does the TITLE suggest the book is about? |
| S | SKIM the text. Do you notice any pictures, charts, drawings, diagrams, and maps? Now make your prediction of what the text is about and decide if you want to read it. |

(Trehearne, 2006, p. 181)





Outcome: Makes obvious comparisons (text-to-text) and recognizes the direct relationship among ideas to draw conclusions

Activity: Same but Different

Using the Same but Different graphic organizer can encourage learners to make text-to-text comparisons and draw conclusions (e.g., Something happened to this character, so I can assume it might happen to another character in the same setting) (see Appendix I).



Outcome: Identifies a few simple text forms; describes overall characteristics and general purpose

Activity: Texts, Texts, Texts!

A learner's ability to identify text forms develops from being exposed to a wide variety of books through read-alouds, guided reading sessions, and their own personal browsing and reading of text.

Keep a chart of the books read throughout the year and list them under the various text forms.

| Text Forms | | |
|---|--|--|
| Narrative <ul style="list-style-type: none">PoetryNovelsShort storiesPicture booksComicsWordless booksRecountDiaryJournalsMemoirs | Instructions/Procedures <ul style="list-style-type: none">RecipesRule booksDirections and mapsInstruction manuals"How to" books and postersExperiments | Persuasive <ul style="list-style-type: none">LettersArticlesExplanatory reportDescriptive report |

| | | | |
|---|---------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Adventure | Autobiography | Biography | Classics |
| Comics | Fables | Fairy tales | Fantasy |
| Historical Fiction | Humour | Informational books | Legends and folktales |
| Manuals (e.g., vehicles, appliances, and electronics) | Memoir | Mystery | Newspapers |
| Picture Books | Poetry | Realistic fiction | Science fiction |
| Sports | | | |

Activity: CATS Pre-reading Strategy

Identify and define various text features with learners. Have learners use the CATS pre-reading strategy to assess text features to determine what they know about a book before reading it.



Outcome: Makes predictions to support comprehension

Activity: Predicting for Meaning

Have learners select texts and practice predicting “what will happen next” in small groups. Once learners have made predictions, they can read ahead as a group or individually to confirm their prediction is correct. Discuss with learners why their predictions are correct or incorrect and what makes a good prediction.

See prompt question examples below:

Questioning before reading and during a picture walk

- What do you think might happen in the story? (predicting)
- Who/what is the story about? (predicting)

Questioning during reading

- What do you think will happen next? (predicting)
- Is there a problem and will it be solved? (predicting)



Outcome: Uses context to support comprehension
Outcome: Makes simple inferences about a character's actions/feelings and story events, providing some general textual details

Activity: Context and Comprehension

Select an unfamiliar text. Go through the text together and pick out main ideas or important facts. Record this information and ask learners to help identify context that supports comprehension of main ideas and important facts (e.g., "I think Grandma will be upset because she told Youssef not to leave the house three times" or "I think this larvae will turn into a moth because this book is about the beautiful patterns in nature").

Activity: Drama to Enhance Comprehension

Drama is an excellent way to enhance comprehension. See examples below:

Tableau: A tableau is like frozen tag. A learner or a group of learners pose like frozen statues to represent a scene. Learners are encouraged to think of a character's facial expressions and movements and can use costumes, props, or a painted backdrop to help with the scene.

Mime: Mime is acting without words. Learners can use hand and body movements and facial expressions to express an idea or a character's feelings. Practice miming actions by having learners pretend to do the following:

- Ride a roller coaster
- Catch a fish
- Ice skate
- Mow the lawn
- Walk on a balance beam
- Play a team sport (e.g., hockey, basketball)
- Drive a bus

Role-play: Learners can take on the role of a character and are encouraged to retell a part of a story from the character's perspective.

Activity: Practice Inferencing with "Whose Shoes Are These?"

1. Show several different kinds of shoes to learners (e.g., running shoes, dress shoes, sandals, work boots, rain boots, golf shoes, and soccer cleats).

2. Pick one pair of shoes and ask the learners: “Who do you think wears this pair of shoes?”
3. Then ask: “What makes you say that?”
4. Encourage learners to point out specific details on the shoes to support their ideas.
5. As an extension of this activity, you can write the word “inferencing” at the top of a piece of chart paper and then, “Schema + Evidence = Inference.” Explain that schema is the prior knowledge and the evidence is what we observe about the shoes.

The word *homonym* can refer to three distinct classes of words:

- Words with identical pronunciations but different spellings and meanings (e.g., to, too, and two)
- Words with both identical pronunciations and identical spellings but different meanings (e.g., quail the bird and quail to cringe)
- Words spelled alike but are different in pronunciation and meaning (e.g., the bow of a ship and a bow that shoots arrows)

The first and second types are sometimes called homophones. The second and third types are sometimes called homographs—which makes naming the second type a bit confusing. Some language scholars prefer to limit homonyms to the third type (see Appendix N for more information on homonyms).



Outcome: Answers what if, how, and why questions

Activity: Trivia Game Show!

1. Create simple trivia questions using “what if,” “how,” and “why” questions.
2. Have learners work in teams to find the answers to the questions (e.g., How are chocolate bars made?; Why does a kangaroo live in its mom’s pouch?; What if school closes early today?).
3. Provide learners with time to answer questions and share with their peers.
4. After they have shared, have learners create their own “what if,” “how,” and “why” questions and pass them to another group to answer.



Self-monitors and uses self-correcting strategies to maintain meaning

Activity: Click and Clunk—Self-Monitoring and Self-Correcting

Miriam Trehearne (2006) refers to a click as a part of the text that is understood and a clunk as part of the text that is not understood, causing the reader to stop. Model clicking and clunking through a “think aloud.” Explain, when learners read and everything makes sense they are “clicking” along, but as soon as things don’t make sense, there is a “clunk,” and they need to stop.

Have learners use sticky notes with question marks. When learners come to a “clunk” they can place a sticky note with a question mark on the tricky part and choose a “fix-up strategy” to help to make meaning of the text (see Appendix O for an independent reading self-assessment).

Choosing a “Good Fit” Book

“I suggest students use the “five-finger test” to help them choose books at an appropriate reading level. I show them how to use their fingers to keep track of each word they have difficulty with. If there are five or more such words on the first page, I suggest they return the book and try another”.

(Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum Elementary, 1998)

Assessment of Reading Comprehension Skills and Knowledge



Running Records

The *Guidelines for Running/Reading Record Assessment for Kindergarten to Grade 6* states that running records provide “a reliable assessment of oral reading of a continuous text by capturing what a student knows and understands about the reading process” (p. 4). By observing learners during a running record, educators can assess a learner’s understanding as they process a text. Listening to a learner read can tell us a lot about how a learner tackles a text and the types of reading comprehension strategies they use.

When used to assess a learner’s reading comprehension, running records are useful in several ways. *Engaging and Exploring Running Records* (2012) suggest that they are helpful in:

- determining what learners are doing as they are reading.
- observing the strategies learners use while they are problem solving.
- informing and planning instruction for whole group, small group, and individual learners.
- assessing text difficulty in matching texts to readers.
- monitoring children’s progress over time.
- closely observing learners who have particular difficulty in the area of reading comprehension.

Guided Reading

A guided reading is an effective way to formatively assess and to teach reading comprehension strategies. In a guided reading group, educators work with a small number of learners who are grouped according to their needs. During guided reading, educators can help learners develop comprehension strategies by focussing on reading behaviours before, during, and after reading and develop reading strategies (e.g., predicting, checking, and self-correcting).

See Appendix P for more information on comprehension strategies and instructional practice.



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Appendix A:

New Brunswick Global Competencies

| Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving | Innovation, Creativity, and Entrepreneurship | Self-Awareness and Self-Management |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Engages in an inquiry process to solve problems ▪ Acquires, processes, interprets, synthesizes, and critically analyzes information to make informed decisions (i.e., critical and digital literacy) ▪ Selects strategies, resources, and tools to support their learning, thinking, and problem-solving ▪ Evaluates the effectiveness of their choices ▪ Sees patterns, makes connections, and transfers their learning from one situation to another, including real-world applications ▪ Analyzes the functions and interconnections of social, ecological, and economic systems ▪ Constructs, relates, and applies knowledge to all domains of life, such as school, home, work, friends, and community ▪ Solves meaningful, real-life, and complex problems by taking concrete steps to address issues and design and manage projects ▪ Formulates and expresses questions to further their understanding, thinking, and problem-solving | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Displays curiosity, identifies opportunities for improvement and learning, and believes in their ability to improve ▪ Views errors as part of the improvement process ▪ Formulates and expresses insightful questions and opinions to generate novel ideas ▪ Turns ideas into value for others by enhancing ideas or products to provide new-to-the-world or improved solutions to complex social, ecological, and economic problems or to meet a need in a community ▪ Takes risks in their thinking and creating ▪ Discovers through inquiry research, hypothesizing, and experimenting with new strategies or techniques ▪ Seeks and makes use of feedback to clarify understanding, ideas, and products ▪ Enhances concepts, ideas, or products through a creative process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Has self-efficacy, sees themselves as learners, and believes that they can make life better for themselves and others ▪ Develops a positive identity, sense of self, and purpose from their personal and cultural qualities ▪ Develops and identifies personal, educational, and career goals, opportunities, and pathways ▪ Monitors their progress ▪ Perseveres to overcome challenges ▪ Adapts to change and is resilient in adverse situations ▪ Aware of, manages, and expresses their emotions, thoughts, and actions in order to understand themselves and others ▪ Manages their holistic well-being (e.g., mental, physical, and spiritual) ▪ Accurately self-assesses their current level of understanding or proficiency ▪ Advocates for support based on their strengths, needs, and how they learn best ▪ Manages their time, environment, and attention, including their focus, concentration, and engagement |

| Collaboration | Communication | Sustainability and Global Citizenship |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Participates in teams by establishing positive and respectful relationships, developing trust, and acting interdependently and with integrity ▪ Learns from and contributes to the learning of others by co-constructing knowledge, meaning, and content ▪ Assumes various roles on the team and respects a diversity of perspectives ▪ Addresses disagreements and manages conflict in a sensitive and constructive manner ▪ Networks with a variety of communities/groups ▪ Appropriately uses an array of technology to work with others ▪ Fosters social well-being, inclusivity, and belonging for themselves and others by creating and maintaining positive relationships with diverse groups of people ▪ Demonstrates empathy for others in a variety of contexts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expresses themselves using the appropriate communication tools for the intended audience ▪ Creates a positive digital identity ▪ Communicates effectively in French and/or English and/or Mi'kmaq or Wolastoqey through a variety of media and in a variety of contexts ▪ Gains knowledge about a variety of languages beyond their first and additional languages ▪ Recognizes the strong connection between language and ways of knowing the world ▪ Asks effective questions to create a shared communication culture, attends to understand all points of view, expresses their own opinions, and advocates for ideas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understands the interconnectedness of social, ecological, and economic forces, and how they affect individuals, societies, and countries ▪ Recognizes discrimination and promotes principles of equity, human rights, and democratic participation ▪ Understands Indigenous worldviews, traditions, values, customs, and knowledge ▪ Learns from and with diverse people, develops cross-cultural understanding ▪ Understands the forces that affect individuals and societies ▪ Takes action and makes responsible decisions that support social settings, natural environments, and quality of life for all, now and in the future ▪ Contributes to society and to the culture of local, national, global, and virtual communities in a responsible, inclusive, accountable, sustainable, and ethical manner ▪ Participates in networks in a safe and socially responsible manner |

Appendix B:

Reading Comprehension Strategies

Proficient readers use a variety of strategies to construct meaning from texts. Most importantly, they “think about their thinking” while reading; they monitor their understanding of text, recognize when comprehension breaks down, and apply appropriate strategies to restore and/or enhance understanding. This *metacognitive* understanding is the foundation upon which all comprehension strategies are based. Reading comprehension strategies are the underlying thinking strategies readers employ to sustain and enhance understanding of text. They may be applied *before, during, and/or after* reading and rarely occur in isolation. Although these comprehension strategies are listed and categorized separately below, they are most often used simultaneously and interactively.

Effective comprehension strategy instruction includes an explicit description of the strategy and an explanation of how, when, and why it should be used. The strategy should be first modelled by the teacher, then followed by guided practice *with* the learners, and finally applied independently *by* the learners (e.g., gradual release of responsibility). It is important to teach a strategy in the context of reading, not as an isolated practice. Strategies are not an end in themselves, but rather a means to an end, that of creating meaning from text.

Key to improvement in reading comprehension is learners’ understanding and application of reading comprehension strategies. Although researchers and authors may vary in the number of comprehension strategies they identify and in the labels they apply, there is agreement on a number of key ideas.

Review eight different reading comprehension strategies below.

Self-Monitoring of Comprehension and Employing “Fix-up” Strategies

Proficient readers are constantly aware of their comprehension and recognize when and why problems occur. They keep their purpose in mind and can apply appropriate “fix-up” strategies to achieve their goal for reading.

Comprehension problems can occur for a variety of reasons and so learners might determine that a word needs to be corrected, a sentence needs to be reread, or a large passage of text needs to be summarized to restore comprehension.

Readers:

- are aware of purpose for reading.
- are aware of adequacy of understanding.
- know where a comprehension problem occurs (e.g., at word level/sentence level/text level).

- know which strategy/strategies to use to solve comprehension problems or enhance understanding.

Making Connections

Proficient readers activate background knowledge to connect new information in texts with prior experiences and understanding. They know what they “expect to find” in texts based on knowledge of the topic and text form. As they are reading, they constantly weigh new information with their previous knowledge. Based on these connections, they make predictions about “what is coming next” and generate questions for which they seek answers.

Readers:

- use prior knowledge to make connections with information in the text.
- seek connections based on personal experience (text-self), encounters with other texts (text-text), and general knowledge (text-world).
- use connections to assimilate new information, to make predictions, and to generate questions.

Creating Sensory Images/Visualizing

Effective readers, while reading texts, invoke sensory and emotional experiences to create images that help them better understand the text. Creating images helps readers fill in the gap between what is stated and what is implied. Visualizing helps readers better understand ideas such as comparisons (e.g., A blue whale is as long as two classrooms) and sequencing (e.g., First he went to the corner store and then he went to the bus stop). Sensory images personalize reading and keep readers engaged. Visualizing may be thought of as a form of inferring with images, instead of words.

Readers:

- use prior knowledge and information in the text to create images arising from sensory and emotional experiences.
- use images to better understand information in text.

Inferring

Proficient readers use information from the text and their own prior knowledge and experiences to create meaning not explicitly stated in the text. Inferences are often required for making predictions, drawing conclusions, and interpreting a character’s actions.

Readers:

- use prior knowledge and information from the text to go beyond literal understanding.
- use inferences to interpret text (e.g., make predictions, draw conclusions, make judgments).

Determining Importance of Ideas

Readers are faced with a large amount of visual and semantic information in texts and must decide where and when to focus attention. Their decisions are closely related to forms of text and their purposes for reading (e.g., “Am I skimming for information? Am I reading for pleasure?”). As readers encounter information, they must determine important words, key sentences, and overall main ideas and sift out nonessential information. A reader’s ability to make these decisions relies on knowledge of text structure and text features. For example, readers do not have to pay close attention to all details in a narrative but might be required to locate specific details in nonfiction text.

Readers:

- are aware of the purpose for reading.
- are aware of significant information at word/sentence/text level.
- distinguish important information from unimportant information.
- use text structure and text features to locate information and determine importance.
- recognize main ideas and necessary supporting details.

Asking Questions and Seeking Answers

Proficient readers ask questions of themselves, authors, and texts. Questions help engage the reader with texts as they seek information, confirm speculations, and clarify understanding. Readers must recognize that some questions require locating specific details while others requires understanding implied information; still other questions may not be answered in the text.

Readers:

- ask questions before, during, and after reading.
- form questions based on purpose for reading.
- form questions based on connections made with information in text.
- recognize that answers to questions may or may not be in the text.

Retelling, Summarizing, Synthesizing

In order to retell, summarize, or synthesize, readers must condense a large amount of information into a meaningful unit. Retells and summaries require sifting important ideas from text, inferring relationships between ideas, and relating a brief account. Synthesis, however, requires analyzing these important ideas (parts) and reforming them into a cohesive whole, often with new understandings for the reader. Synthesis is required when a reader asks—*What does this information mean to me?*

Readers:

- retell key components.
- identify main idea(s).
- relate “gist” of text, rather than full account of events/ideas.
- analyze the components of a text to make decisions about overall themes/ideas.
- integrate key information/ideas in a text with prior knowledge to form new understanding, opinions, and/or perspectives.

Critiquing/Evaluating

Effective readers take an evaluative stance toward texts and make decisions regarding usefulness, effectiveness, and truthfulness of texts. They form personal preferences and opinions and confirm or alter beliefs based on their reading.

Readers:

- critique appropriateness of text for reader’s purpose and interest.
- identify author’s perspective and intent.
- evaluate author’s craft and effectiveness.
- identify stereotypes and bias.
- form personal opinions about ideas in text.

Note: Many of the strategies listed above require learners to be aware of their purposes for reading and to make decisions based on their knowledge of text forms, structures, and features. Although the study of text types is not described as a separate strategy, it is a valid teaching point and provides learners with background knowledge they can use to deepen understanding. The same rationale applies to learning how to use graphic organizers to manage information from narrative and nonfiction texts. Although this technique is not listed as a separate strategy, learners benefit from having a variety of ways to represent textual information to better record and understand their thinking.

(Fountas & Pinnell, 2001; Harvy & Goudvis, 2000; Keene & Zimmerman, 1997; Miller, 2002; Serafini, 2004; Stead, 2006; Trehearne, 2006)

Appendix C:

Sample Questions

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>To get the gist:</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What is the story about? ▪ What is the problem? ▪ What is the solution? ▪ What makes me think so? |
| <p>To predict-verify-decide:</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What's going to happen next? ▪ Is my prediction still true? ▪ Do I need to change my prediction? ▪ What makes me think so? |
| <p>To visualise-verify-decide:</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What does this (person, place, thing) look like? ▪ Is the picture in my mind still good? ▪ Do I need to change my prediction |
| <p>To summarize:</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What's happened so far? ▪ What makes me think so? |
| <p>To think aloud:</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What am I thinking? ▪ Why? |
| <p>To solve problems or help when I don't understand:</p> | <p>Should I:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ use my best guess? ▪ ignore and read on? ▪ reread or look back? ▪ reread out loud to myself? (whisper read) ▪ slow down? ▪ ask for help? |

Sourced from *Comprehensive Literacy Resource for Grades 3-6 Teacher's Resource book*, Miriam P. Trehearne

Appendix D:

Think Like a Reader/Act Like a Reader

Thinking Like a Reader

1. Thinking about how we read is the first step in learning reading comprehension skills. A lesson on reading behaviour and “what readers do” could begin this way:

“Children, I think you know a lot about reading. Hazar knows some alphabet letters, Jack likes to look at the pictures in books and Samantha has a favourite story she likes to share with the class. I think that even though you are in kindergarten, you know a lot about reading. Can you think of someone you know who loves to read? Make a picture in your head of that person reading. What do they do when they are reading? Let’s make a list.”

Children’s possible responses:

- They read before bed.
 - They go to the library to get books.
 - Sometimes they go to the bookstore and buy books.
 - They have book clubs.
 - They read me stories.
2. Make a list on chart paper or sentence strips. Refer to this list as an anchor for what children know.
 3. Tell readers that you have a job for them: “Let’s be detectives and watch carefully for what readers do this week. At the end of the week, we’ll add to our list.”

Children’s possible responses about readers:

- Use bookmarks
- Sound out words
- Use the dictionary
- Tell others about their favourite books
- Look at the pictures and tell stories
- Read the signs in the grocery store

4. Add Step 3 comments to your list. Now ask them, “Where do readers read?” and make a list.

Children’s possible responses:

- In a chair
 - In bed
 - At the grocery store on the cereal box
 - In school
 - At the park on the bench, when I’m on the swings
5. Refer to the children’s ideas and comments as you speak to them about reading and model how to think like a reader.

Acting Like a Reader—Questioning to Comprehend

Questioning is an important part of reading comprehension. As teachers read aloud to learners, they must model for them some of the questions they might ask to understand a text. As learners develop this skill, it would be useful to ask them first and to make a list of their ideas for questions.

Before reading— do a picture walk together:

- What do you think might happen in the story? (predicting)
- Who/what is the story about? (predicting)

During reading:

- Do you remember the part when ... ? Let’s read it again.
- What do you think will happened next? (predicting)

After reading:

- What happened in that story? (retelling)
- What happened first, next, next, last? (retelling)
- Was there a problem in the story? How was it solved? (retelling)
- Did you like that story? Why? Why not? (responding)
- What was your favourite part? (responding)
- Does that story remind you of anything or another story? (responding)

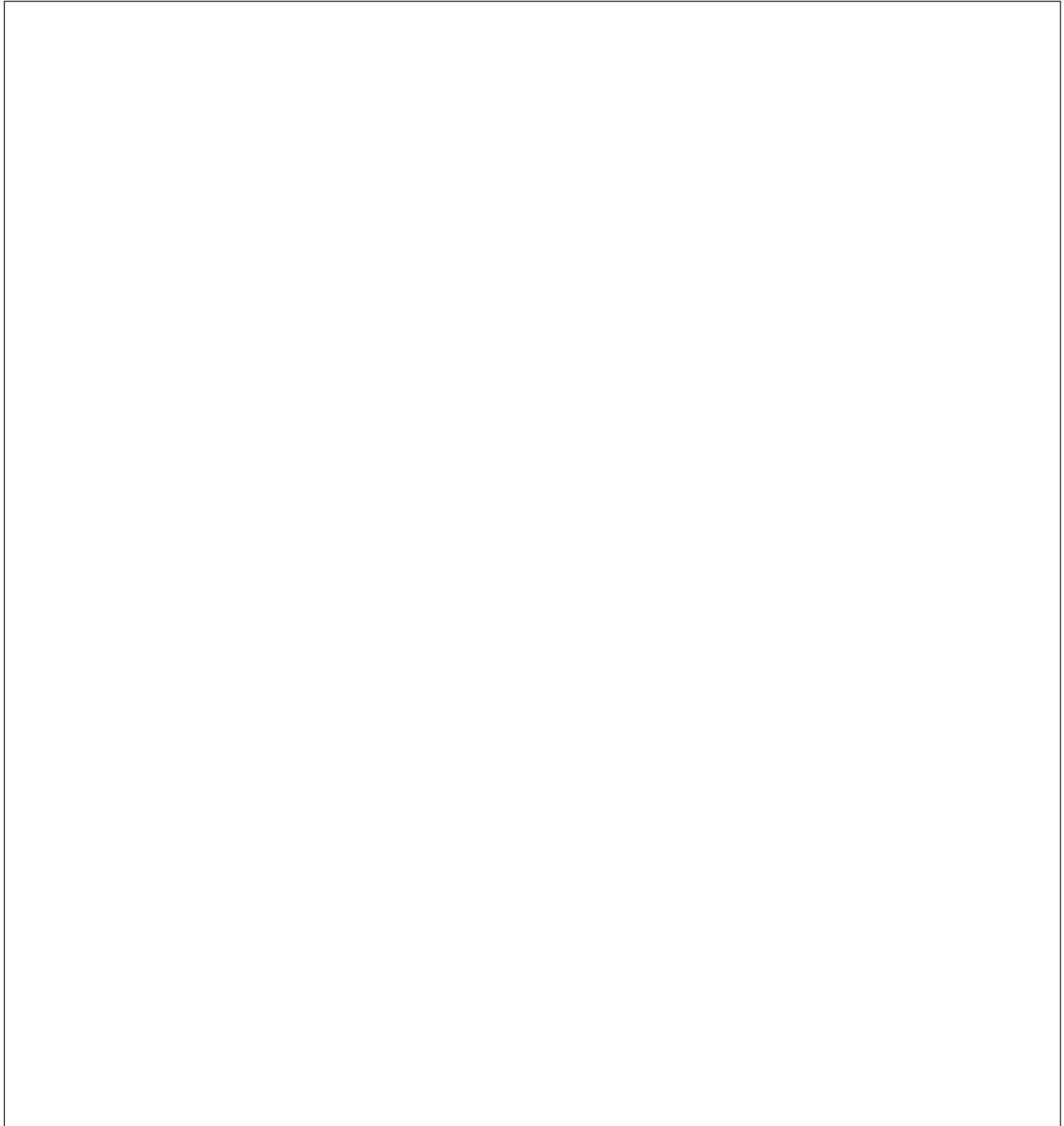
(Fountas & Pinnell, 2001; Harvy & Goudvis, 2000; Keene & Zimmerman, 1997; Miller, 2002; Serafini, 2004; Stead, 2006; Trehearne, 2006)

Appendix E: Response Sheet

Name _____ Date _____

Title: _____

Response Sheet



Modified from *Comprehension from the Ground Up* (2011), Sharon Taberski

Appendix F:

Beginning, Middle, and End

Name _____ Date _____

Title: _____

Beginning, Middle, and End

Draw and write what happened at the beginning, middle, and end.

| | |
|-----------|--|
| Beginning | |
| Middle | |
| End | |

Modified from *Comprehension from the Ground Up* (2011), Sharon Taberski

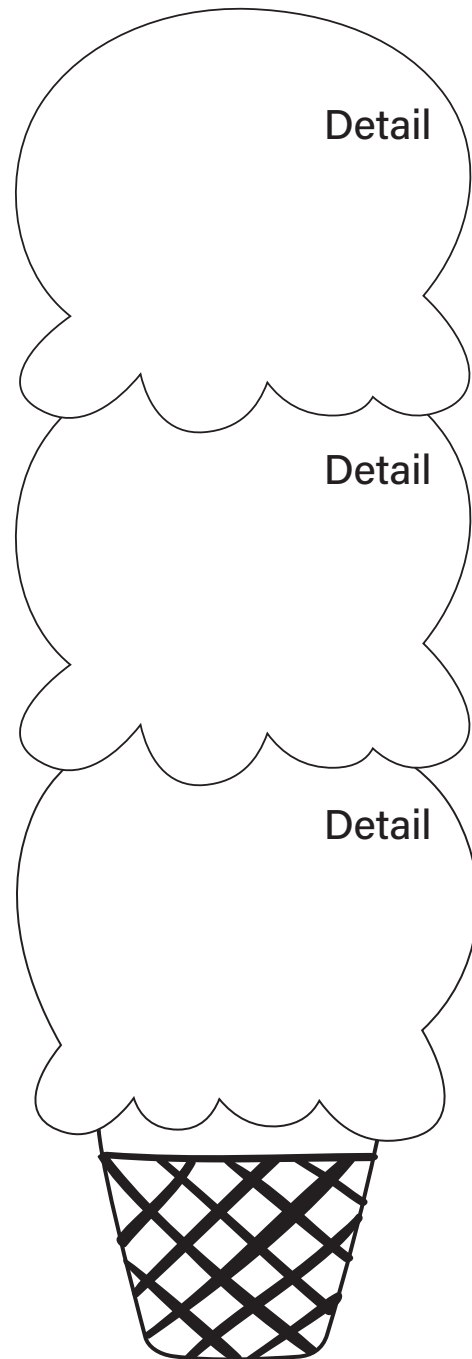
Appendix G: Scoops of Details

Name _____ Date _____

Title: _____

The main idea is ...

| |
|-------|
| |
| _____ |
| _____ |
| _____ |
| _____ |
| _____ |



(Adapted from Graff-Silver, 2003)

Appendix H:

Main Idea

Name _____ Date _____

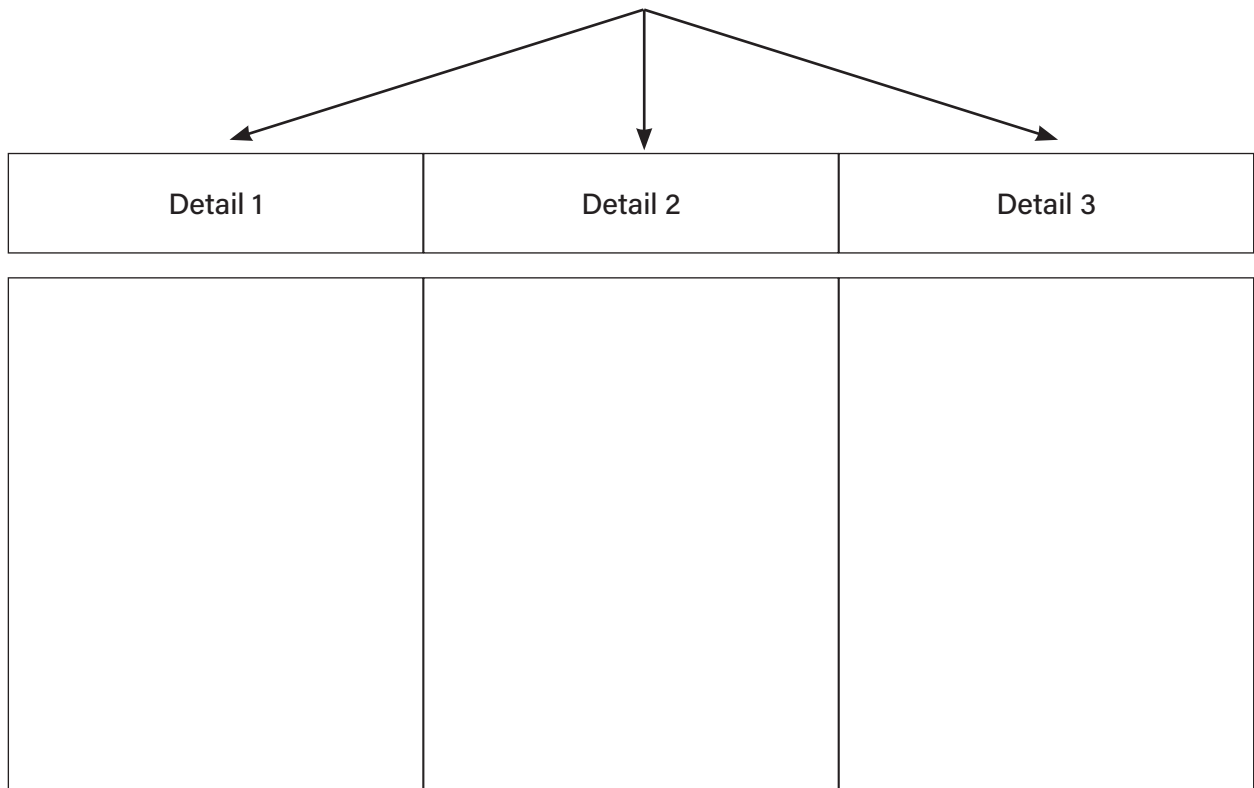
Title: _____

Author: _____

Main Idea

| |
|--|
| |
|--|

Main Idea

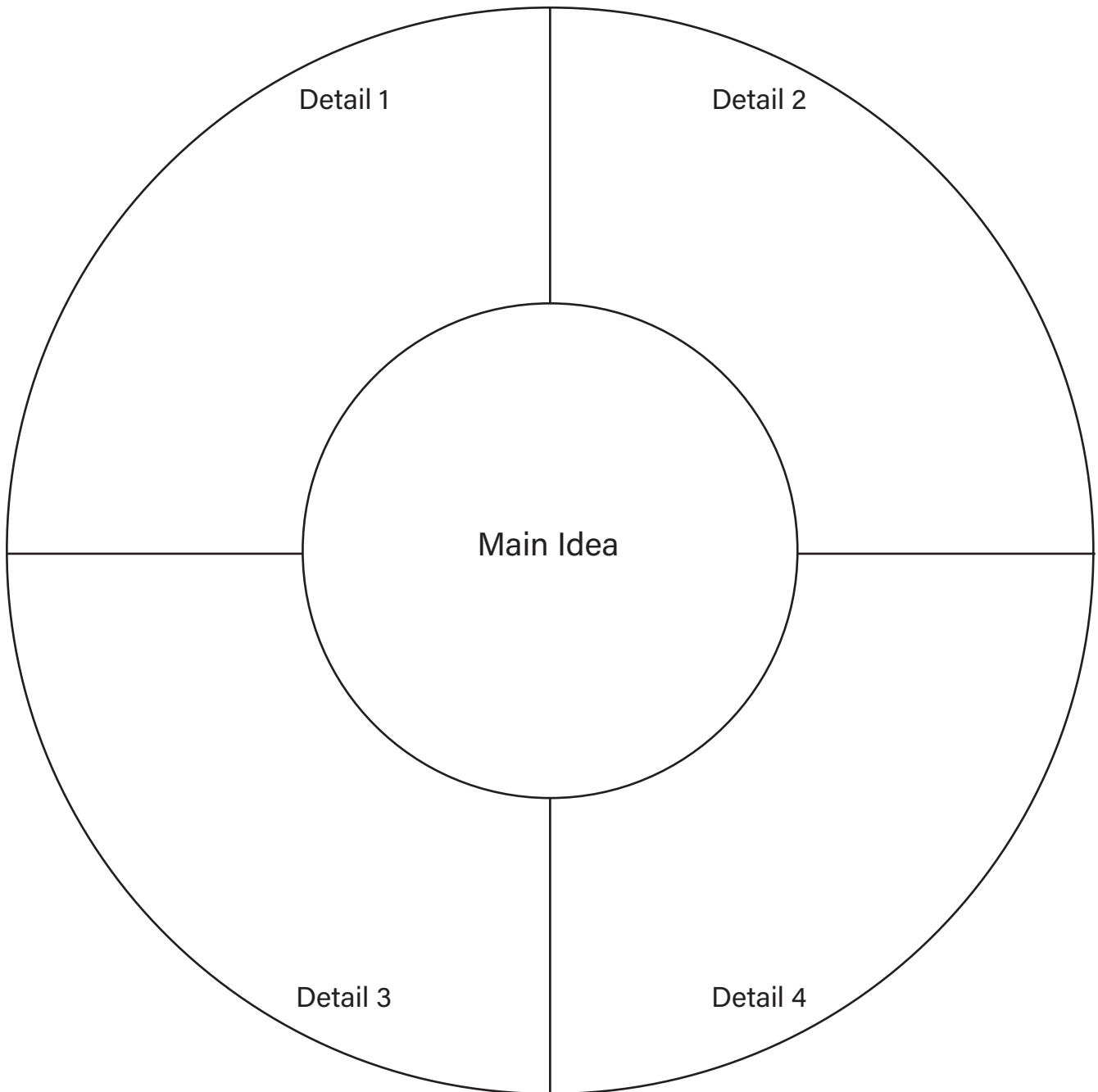


Modified from *Grades 1-2 Teacher's Resource Book*, Miriam P. Trehearne

Name _____ Date _____

Title: _____

Author: _____



Modified from *Grades 1-2 Teacher's Resource Book*, Miriam P. Trehearne

Appendix I: Same, but Different

Name _____ Date _____

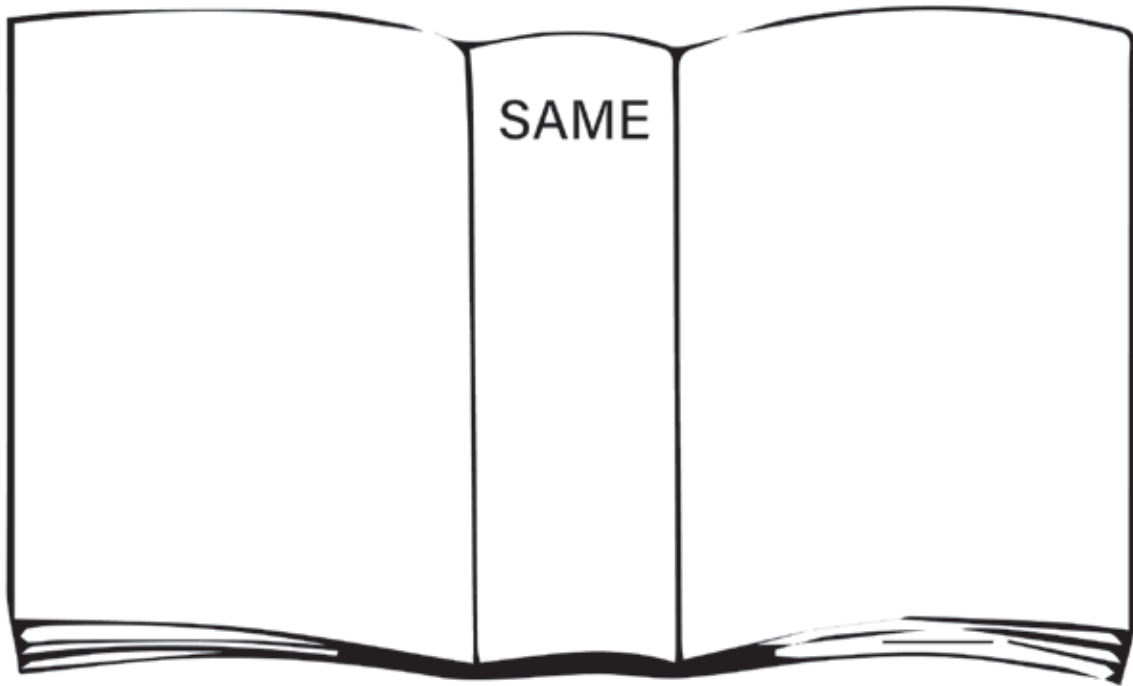
Same, but Different

Title: _____

Title: _____

Author: _____

Author: _____



Modified from *First Graphic Organizers: Reading*, Rhonda Graff Silver

Appendix J:

My Character

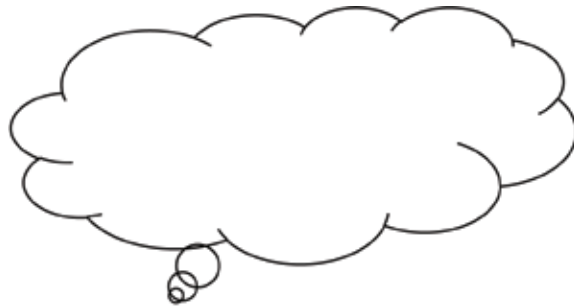
Name _____ Date _____

Title: _____

Author: _____

Here is a drawing of my character in action:

My character is thinking:



My character's name is _____

My character is feeling _____

I know this because _____

Modified from *Grades 1 & 2 Teacher's Resource Book*, Miriam P. Trehearne

Appendix K: Before and After

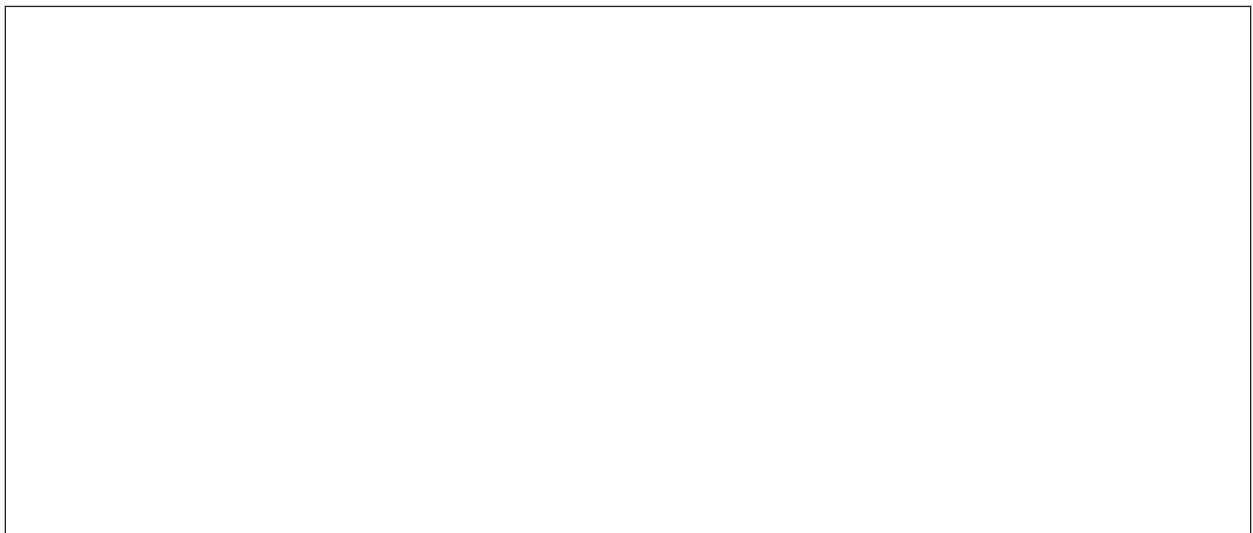
Name _____ Date _____

Title: _____

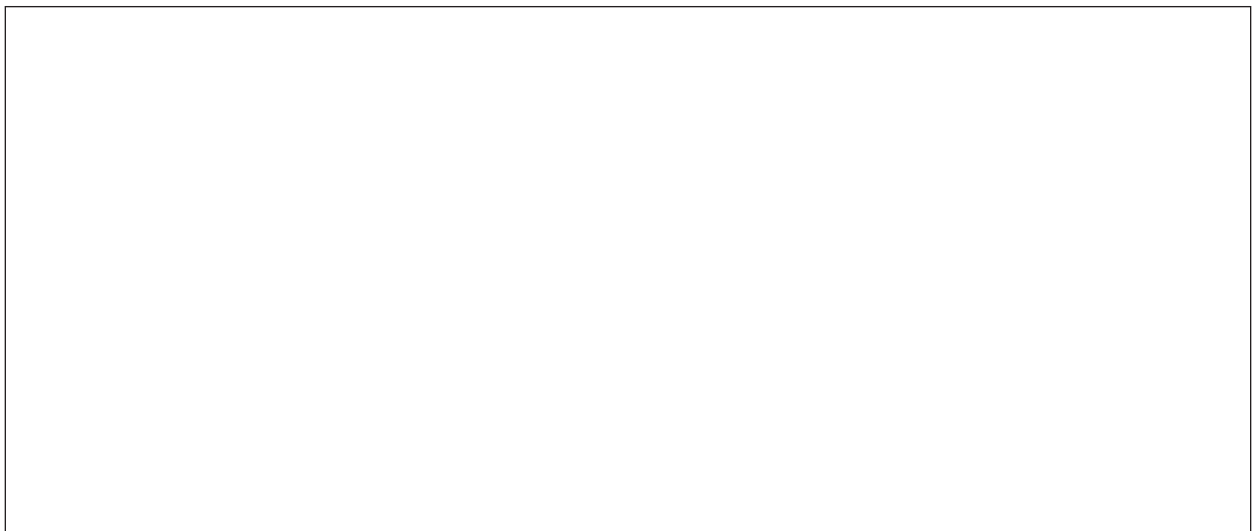
Before and After

(Draw a picture or write.)

BEFORE I read the book, I knew:



AFTER I read the book, I knew:

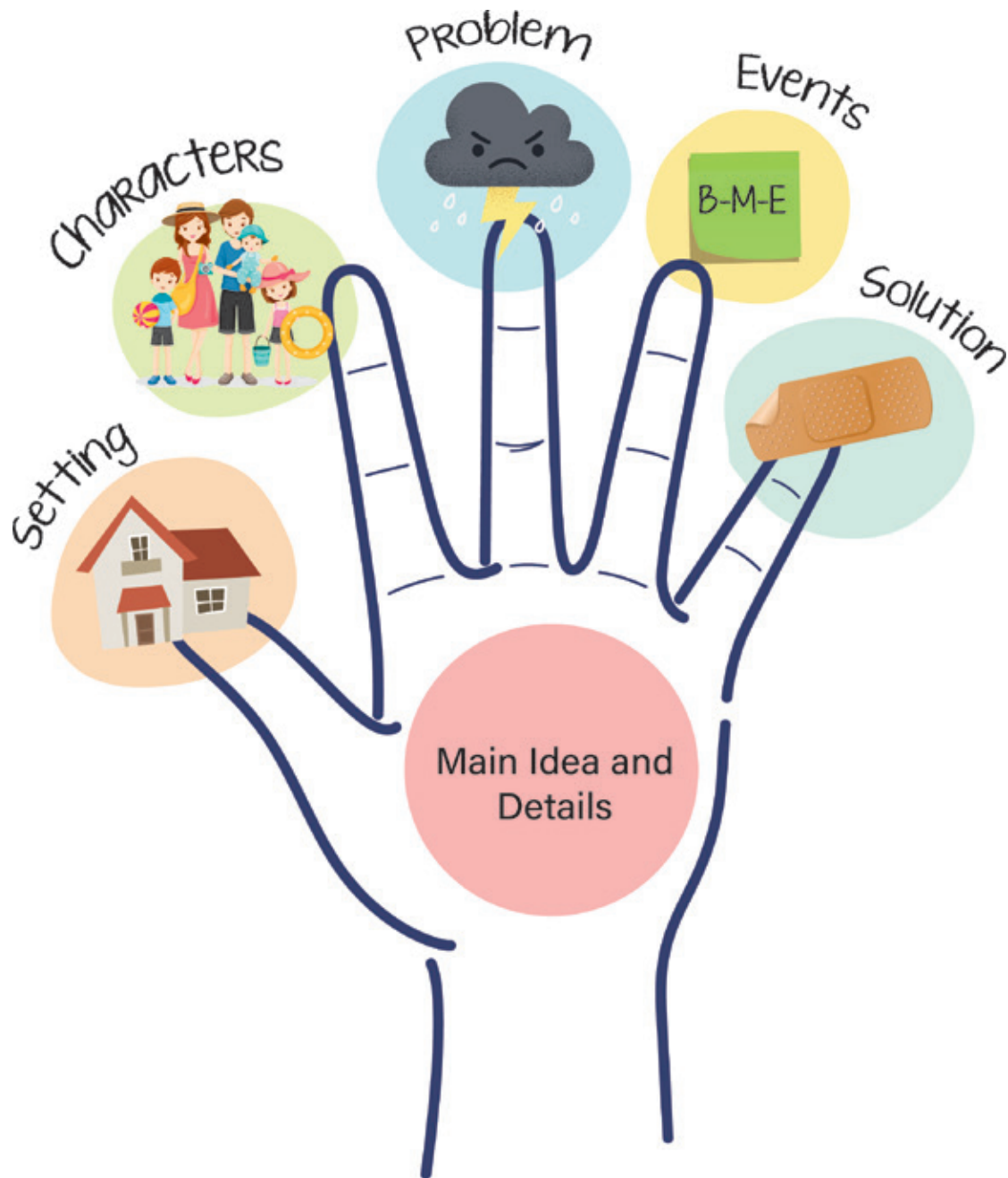


Modified from *Comprehension from the Ground Up* (2011), Sharon Taberski

Appendix L: Five Finger Retell

Five Finger Retell

When you retell you need ...



*B-M-E stands for beginning, middle, end.

Appendix M:

What I Read/What I Think

| What I Read | What I Think |
|-------------|--------------|
| | |

Appendix N:

Homonyms, Homophones, and Homographs

| Homonym List— Same Word Different Meanings | Meaning 1 | Meaning 2 |
|--|--|--|
| band | I like to play the trumpet in the school <i>band</i> . | There is a <i>band</i> of plastic around the newspapers to hold them together. |
| bark | My dog likes to <i>bark</i> . | The <i>bark</i> on that tree is grey in colour. |
| bat | <i>Bats</i> like to fly at night. | We need a new <i>bat</i> for the baseball game. |
| chest | There so many toys in that treasure <i>chest</i> . | I have been coughing so much that my <i>chest</i> hurts. |
| blue | <i>Blue</i> is my favourite colour. | I am feeling <i>blue</i> today. |
| fair | There is a ferris wheel at the <i>fair</i> . | I don't think it's <i>fair</i> that I can't play too. |
| match | Do your socks <i>match</i> ? | I need a <i>match</i> to light the candle. |
| ring | The school bell will <i>ring</i> at 8:30 a.m. | My grandmother gave me a new gold <i>ring</i> . |
| rose | I have a red <i>rose</i> bush in my garden. | He <i>rose</i> from his seat. |
| well | I'm glad you are feeling <i>well</i> . | We have cold, clean water in our <i>well</i> . |

Homonyms—Same Sound, Different Spelling, Different Meaning

























| Example #1 | Example #2 |
|---|---|
| You are not <i>allowed</i> in the library at this time. | Do not talk <i>aloud</i> during the assembly. |
| I <i>ate</i> an apple for snack. | There are <i>eight</i> people in my family. |
| <i>Here</i> is my pencil. | I can <i>hear</i> the beautiful music. |
| I used one cup of <i>flour</i> to make muffins. | I gave my teacher a beautiful red <i>flower</i> . |
| I feel a <i>pain</i> in my stomach. | The basketball hit the window <i>pane</i> . |
| He <i>threw</i> the ball to me. | She walked <i>through</i> the archway of the castle. |
| I'll <i>wait</i> for you at the bus stop. | The <i>weight</i> of the bananas could not be determined. |

Appendix O:

Self-Assessment of Independent Reading

Name _____

Please circle the picture that describe what you can do when you read independently.

| | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| I can choose books that are "just right" for me. |  |  |  |  |
| I can retell what I have read. |  |  |  |  |
| I can make connections between the text and my own life. |  |  |  |  |
| I know when my reading doesn't make sense. |  |  |  |  |
| I can read the titles, headings, and bold words. |  |  |  |  |
| I can learn more about the topic from the pictures, charts, maps, or graphs. |  |  |  |  |

I can infer what is happening, or “read between the lines.”



I can use a “fix-up” strategy to get back on track when I am stuck.



I can make predictions about a text (before reading and during reading).



I can make connections between the text and other texts I’ve read.



I can ask questions or wonder about things I have read.



I can pick out important details.



Appendix P:

Assessing Comprehension Instruction in the Classroom

Adapted from Duke and Pearson's *What Research Has to Say About Reading Instruction*.

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Are learners being taught to:</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ identify their purpose for reading? ✓ preview texts before reading? ✓ make predictions before and during reading? ✓ activate relevant background knowledge? ✓ think aloud while reading? ✓ use text structure to support comprehension? ✓ create visual representation to aid comprehension and recall? ✓ determine the important ideas? ✓ summarize what they read? ✓ generate questions for text? ✓ handle unfamiliar words? ✓ mentor their comprehension? ✓ use appropriate fix-up strategies? |
| <p>Does instruction about strategies include:</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ explicit description of the strategy and when it should be introduced? ✓ modelling of the strategy in action? ✓ collaborative use of the strategy in action? ✓ guided practice using the strategy, with gradual release of responsibility to the student? ✓ independent practice using the strategy? |
| <p>Questions teachers might also ask themselves:</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Are learners being helped to orchestrate multiple strategies, rather than to use only one strategy at a time? ✓ Are texts used for instruction being carefully chosen to match both the strategy and the learners being taught? ✓ Is there an active concern with students' motivation to engage in literacy activities and apply new learned strategies? ✓ Are the comprehension skills of learners being assessed on an ongoing basis? |

