

Time with text

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Most reading authorities agree that students benefit from time spent reading. Benefits include vocabulary growth (Anderson, 1996; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998b; Nagy, Herman, & Anderson, 1985; Stahl, 1999), increased fluency in word recognition (Adams, 1990; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998a; Samuels, Schermer, & Reinking, 1992), and gains in comprehension (Cipielewski & Stanovich, 1992; Guthrie, Wigfield, Metsala, & Cox, 1999; Taylor, Frye, & Maruyama, 1990). Venezky (1999) summarized the belief of many professionals in the reading community when he asserted that "children need to read to become better readers" (p. 233).

It is unfortunate that not all children are provided with substantial opportunities to read during the school day (Allington, 2001; Guthrie & Greaney, 1991; Taylor et al., 1990). Or, if they are provided with reading time, such as through sustained silent reading (SSR), not all students take advantage of the opportunity. Indeed, in a recent observational study, we found significant differences in the amounts of time students in the same classroom spent reading during SSR periods (Yopp & Yopp, 2003). It is important that teachers allocate time for reading, and it is equally important that they ensure students actually read during that time.

In this article we share five activities for use in the classroom that require active participation in reading by all students. In addition to ensuring time with text, the activities incorporate repeated reading, a practice that has been demonstrated to have a positive impact on students' reading ability (National Reading Panel, 2000). They are appropriate for elementary, middle, and high school students and may be implemented with a variety of text materials across the curriculum.

Book bits

Book bits is an activity that requires students to read small portions of text multiple times (Yopp & Yopp, 2001). In this activity, the teacher writes on strips of paper short excerpts or sentences (depending on the age and abilities of the students) from a text the students will soon be reading—enough for each child in the group or class to have a different excerpt. Each student is given an excerpt, or "book bit," to read silently. The teacher circulates among the children and supports any child who may need assistance reading his or her book bit. After reading, each student writes a brief prediction of the text. Then, at a signal, the students move around the room, find partners, and read their book bits to one another. The students may not paraphrase or discuss their book bits; they simply read and listen and then move on to a new partner. Once the students have shared their book bits with several partners, they return to their desks and write a new prediction based on the additional information they have gathered. After writing, the students circulate again to find new partners with whom to share their book bits. The students then write final predictions.

Finally, the teacher engages the class in a discussion by asking the students to share their predictions and how their predictions changed during the activity. As they listen to one another's predictions, some students can volunteer to read their book bits aloud in order to support or raise questions about a prediction.

The book bits activity requires all students to read and reread excerpts of a text to their peers. Along with providing a structure that demands that every student read, this activity encourages students to make predictions, generate questions, and establish purposes for reading.

Powerful passages

In this activity, students skim back through a book they have been reading to select a “powerful passage” to read and discuss with peers. The passage is selected because it is meaningful to the student in some way. Perhaps the passage is thought provoking or personally relevant; perhaps it is surprising, humorous, or interesting. Sometimes, students may be asked to locate a passage from individual, self-selected books (such as the book they are reading during SSR time). Other times, they select a passage from a content area text or a work of literature that the entire group is reading.

After time for rehearsal, students read their passages aloud to a partner. Students may pair with a neighbor or assigned partner, or they may share with several partners in an “inside-outside” circle structure. In this structure, students form two circles, one inside the other. Students forming the inside circle face a peer in the outside circle, read their passage aloud, and briefly tell the listener why they selected the passage. The listener responds to the passage and the comments of the reader and then shares his or her selection. At a signal, students in the outside circle move one person to the right and passages are shared again. The inside-outside circle rotation continues until passages have been read and discussed several times.

Students report that with each sharing of their powerful passage they find themselves reading with greater fluency. They also note that their ability to articulate reasons for selecting their passages and their understanding of their passages become richer with each sharing.

Readers Theatre

Readers Theatre provides students with the opportunity to read a selection several times in preparation for a performance. The performance consists of students standing or sitting in a row at the front of the room and reading aloud from a script, usually adapted from a book. There are typically no props, scenery, or staging because emphasis is placed on oral interpretation of the text.

In one implementation of Readers Theatre, researchers worked with two classes of second-grade students 30 minutes a day for 10 weeks (Martinez, Roser, & Strecker, 1999). The first day of each

week, the teachers read aloud the story on which the script was based and conducted minilessons on an aspect of fluency. Students were then provided scripts to read independently. On Tuesday and Wednesday, students met in small “repertory” groups and read the script several times, taking a different role with each reading. At the end of the period on Wednesday, students selected roles. Thursday, students practiced their roles with their groups, and Friday they performed for the class or other audiences. The researchers noted that there were dramatic gains in some of the students’ rate of reading after participating in this 10-week Readers Theatre program.

Readers Theatre provides students with a reason to read and reread a script several times. Because a performance will culminate the experience, motivation tends to be high and students willingly rehearse. Further, students tend to spontaneously support others in preparing for their roles.

Many books are easily adapted to Readers Theatre scripts. For example, see the list offered by Worthy and Broadus (2001/2002). The website www.aaronshep.com/rt offers free downloadable scripts for a range of grade levels.

Choral reading

Choral reading involves several individuals simultaneously reading the same text aloud. The teacher first models fluent reading of the text, and then students read and reread it together until they are satisfied that they have read it in a fluent, natural, and pleasing manner.

Types of choral reading include whole-group choral reading, alternating reading, echo reading, and cumulative reading. Probably most familiar to teachers is whole-group choral reading in which all students read all lines of the text in unison. We have seen teachers engage students in whole-group choral reading with both classroom-produced and professionally published poetry, narratives, and expository text.

In alternating choral reading, also called antiphonic reading, student groups alternate reading portions of the text. Books written for two or more voices, such as Paul Fleischman’s *Joyful Noise: Poems for Two Voices* (1988), *I Am Phoenix: Poems for Two Voices* (1989), *Big Talk: Poems for Four*

Voices (2000), and Theoni Pappas's *Math Talk: Mathematical Ideas in Poems for Two Voices* (1991), are well suited for alternating choral reading.

When echo reading, the teacher reads aloud a sentence or paragraph of a selection and then the students echo the teacher by reading aloud the same portion of the selection, attempting to mimic the reading rate, expression, intonation, and phrasing of the teacher. The teacher then reads the next portion of the selection and again the students echo. They continue in this manner until they have completed the selection.

Cumulative reading, as the name implies, involves the accumulation of voices in the reading of a selection. One student reads aloud the first line or portion of the text. A second student, perhaps one sitting beside the first reader, joins in, and together they read the second line of text. Next, a third student joins in, and the three read aloud the third line of text. This continues until the entire group is reading together. Rereading of the same selection may begin with a new leader and the students joining in a different order.

The goal of all types of choral reading is to communicate the author's message with expression.

Poetry reconstruction

Our children's teacher, Bev Maeda, engaged her students in a poetry reconstruction activity that required considerable and repeated attention to text. To prepare for the activity, Maeda recorded on stiff paper a poem with which the children were unfamiliar and then cut the poem into phrases. She met with a group of about 10 children and told them that she had the phrases of a poem and that their task—as a group—was to put the phrases together to reconstruct the poem. Strips were randomly distributed to the children, and each child received two or three strips. First, the students read the strips to themselves, with anyone needing assistance supported by the teacher or a peer. Then, the students were free to decide the strategies they would use to reconstruct the poem.

As we observed this activity, we noticed that students chose to begin by taking turns reading their strips aloud to the entire group. Then they worked together to organize the strips in a coherent fashion, rereading phrase combinations as they

worked. Students used a variety of cues to assist them: punctuation, syntax, semantics, rhythm, and rhyme. Once several phrases were combined, the students read aloud together—spontaneously—their construction to that point. New phrases were added, some were readjusted, and reading aloud occurred again. We were surprised by the frequency with which students reread the poem as a group until they achieved a version with which they were satisfied. When the teacher read the poet's version, the students tracked their rendition carefully to see how closely it matched.

Since observing the high level of engagement in this classroom and the amount of time students focused on and interacted with the text, we have used this activity with many groups of students of all ages. Sometimes a single small group reconstructs a poem. Other times, several groups of students simultaneously reconstruct the same poem.

Text reconstruction is not limited to poetry. We have used this activity to teach students to analyze and write expository text. Sentences from an expository text are written on individual strips of stiff paper. Students work together to determine which statements are main ideas and which are details that support the main ideas. Discussion and rereading occur as students organize the strips into a coherent composition.

Reading time is important

As we focus more and more on addressing individual components of reading, we must not lose sight of the fact that students need to read in order to grow as readers. Time spent reading is related to growth in vocabulary, fluency in word recognition, and comprehension. Teachers must commit themselves to ensuring that all of their students spend time reading every day. Activities—such as those described here—that demand participation by all students in reading and rereading text are easily implemented across the curriculum, can complement the regular reading program, and can help ensure time with text.

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Connecting Kwanzaa and literature to build a classroom community

CHINWE LATANYA OBIJIOFOR

Many people picture Kwanzaa as an African American holiday to be celebrated between December 26 and January 1. It is that and so much more. Malana Karenga created Kwanzaa in 1966 as a way of uplifting members of the black community in the United States by incorporating the values and principles of our African ancestors into daily living. Here are the seven principles of Kwanzaa, known as the Nguzo Saba, in

Swahili and English: *Umoja* (Unity), *Kujichagulia* (Self-Determination), *Ujima* (Collective Work and Responsibility), *Ujamaa* (Cooperative Economics), *Nia* (Purpose), *Kuumba* (Creativity), and *Imani* (Faith). Several years ago I decided to use the Nguzo Saba as a way of creating a sense of community in my first-grade classroom. These principles also lay the foundation for a problem-posing education.

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