



Read Aloud

Setting the Stage for Reading to Learn and Learning to Read

“Before a child can have an interest in reading, he must first have an awareness of it. The child who is unaware of the riches of literature certainly can have no desire for them.”

Jim Trelease, The Read Aloud Handbook

Reading Aloud:

- Exposes students to a wide variety of literature in an enjoyable way
- Builds content area background knowledge as well as general world knowledge
- Helps students develop interests for later self-selection of reading material
- Introduces students to the language of books – book concepts, story structures, literary language, and specialized vocabulary
- Models effective reading behaviors
- Creates an atmosphere for developing good discussion skills
- Provides concrete models of writing for students
- Helps students develop a cohesive school program by connecting books to their academic and personal lives
- Develops higher order thinking skills

Selecting Books for Read Aloud:

- Select high quality literature that is based on students’ interests, age, needs, reading and life experiences
- Select from a balance of genres: poetry, short stories, essays, Dear Abby letters, news or magazine articles, nonfiction pieces about word origins and inventions and student writing
- Use books that invite the reader to interact with the text such as those that ask them to figure out mysteries or solve problems

- Select books that represent our diverse society

Teacher Preparation

- Choose texts you enjoy reading and that is beyond the students' reading level
- Before reading, generate lots of talk to connect selection to the students' background knowledge and their personal lives
- If the read aloud is part of a larger unit or inquiry, be prepared to help students make the connection consciously
- Choose places where you might want to stop to build suspense, clarify words or help listeners who might get lost
- Check for the background information of the author, time period, illustrator or text in case students' questions lead in that direction
- Choose a consistent time for read aloud. Read aloud is an effective transition into and out of a class period. It is also an effective transition from one activity to the next
- During reading, facilitate "analytic" talk – comprehension strategies, text structure, language use...
- After reading, facilitate a retelling to check for comprehension and connections

Student Preparation

- Establish clear expectations of student behavior – If you want to allow students to doodle, take notes or create images, establish parameters for those activities
- Keep chart paper, overhead transparencies and markers available in case student discussions lead to memorable talk
- If the read aloud has illustrations, be sure to change positions so that all students can have access to the illustrations
- Find a way to help keep students focused – "Is everyone with me?"
- Help students find comfortable places but establish that those places should not be areas of distraction

No matter what your instructional purposes might be for using a particular read aloud selection, choose each one because it has interesting content, intriguing or unique points of view, humor, emotional impact, voice and dialogue that add to the message, and language that invites listeners into the experience

"Five to ten minutes spent in this way each day has a significant influence on students' literacy and learning lives."