

Using Story Retells to Monitor Children's Comprehension

- Through story retells, children learn to introduce a story with its setting and characters, recount the problem, sequence plot events, and state the solution or outcome.
- Through retelling, children reveal their comprehension of story details and sequence and their ability to add inferences and interpretations.
- To help children learn how to retell stories:
 - read the story aloud on several different occasions,
 - model a retell activity,
 - use questions or prompts to scaffold first retell attempts, and
 - use props.

Questions to Ask:

What is the title of this book?

Where does it take place?

Who are the characters?

What is it about?

What happened first?

If children leave out details important to the logical sequence of the story, ask them "how" or "why" questions to fill in what's missing.

How did...?

Why did...?

Story Retell Record Sheet

Name:		
Date:		
Story:		
Number of Times Story Has Been Read:		
Story	Child's Retelling	Prompts
Beginning		What happened in the beginning? Where did the story happen? Who were the main characters? What was the problem?
Middle		What happened next? What did ___ do? Why?
End		How was the problem solved? How did the story end?

Adapted from Morrow, L. M. (2001). *Literacy development in the early years: Helping children read and write* (4th ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon; Tompkins, G. E. (1998). *Fifty literacy strategies: Step by step*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.

Suggestions for Motivating Children to Read

- Include a variety of different types of books, such as picture books without words, fairy tales, nursery rhymes, picture storybooks, realistic literature, decodable and predictable books, information books, chapter books, biographies, big books, poetry, and joke and riddle books.
- Provide other types of print such as newspapers, magazines, and brochures.
- Introduce and discuss several books each week (may be theme-related, have same authors or illustrators, be same types of books, etc.).
- Have multiple copies of popular books.
- Include books in children's native languages.
- Have an easy-to-use system for checking out books.
- Provide a record-keeping system for keeping track of books read (may include a picture-coding system to rate or evaluate books).
- Showcase many books by arranging them so that the covers are visible, especially those that are new, shared in read-aloud sessions, or theme-related.
- Organize books on shelves by category or type (may color code) within easy reach of children.
- Provide comfortable, inviting places to read (pillows, rugs, a sofa, large cardboard boxes, etc.).
- Encourage children to read to "friends" (include stuffed animals and dolls for "pretend" reading).
- Have an Author's Table with a variety of writing supplies to encourage children to write about books.
- Have a Listening Table for recorded stories and tapes.

Adapted from Morrow, L. M. (2001). *Literacy development in the early years: Helping children read and write*. (4th ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Instructional Procedures That Promote Comprehension

As part of reading comprehension instruction, some of the following instructional activities and procedures may be used. Based on research and effective practice, the activities and procedures are intended to help students learn how to coordinate and use a set of key comprehension strategies as they read a variety of texts.

General Instructional Activities

To correspond with a typical reading lesson, comprehension strategy instruction can be organized into a three-part framework, with specific activities used before, during, and after reading. Providing instruction such as the following example allows students to see, learn, and use a variety of comprehension strategies as they read.

Note, however, that the framework is a general one and represents an array of strategies. All of the strategies in this framework do not have to be used with every text or in every reading situation.

Before Reading

Before reading, the teacher may:

- Motivate students through activities that may increase their interest—book talks, dramatic readings, or displays of art related to the text—making the text relevant to students in some way.
- Activate students' background knowledge important to the content of the text by discussing what students will read and what they already know about its topic and about the text organization.

Students, with some help from the teacher, may:

- Establish a purpose for reading.
- Identify and discuss difficult words, phrases, and concepts in the text.
- Preview the text (by surveying the title, illustrations, and unusual text structures) to make predictions about its content.
- Think, talk, and write about the topic of the text.

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During Reading

During reading, the teacher may:

- Remind students to use comprehension strategies as they read and to monitor their understanding.
- Ask questions that keep students on track and focus their attention on main ideas and important points in the text.
- Focus attention on parts in a text that require students to make inferences.
- Call on students to summarize key sections or events.
- Encourage students to return to any predictions they have made before reading to see if they are confirmed by the text.

Students, with some help from the teacher, may:

- Determine and summarize important ideas and supportive details.
- Make connections between and among important ideas in the text.
- Integrate new ideas with existing background knowledge.
- Ask themselves questions about the text.
- Sequence events and ideas in the text.
- Offer interpretations of and responses to the text.
- Check understanding by paraphrasing or restating important and/or difficult sentences and paragraphs.
- Visualize characters, settings, or events in a text.

After Reading

After reading, the teacher may:

- Guide discussion of the reading.
- Ask students to recall and tell in their own words important parts of the text.
- Offer students opportunities to respond to the reading in various ways, including through writing, dramatic play, music, readers' theatre, videos, debate, or pantomime.

Students, with some help from the teacher, may:

- Evaluate and discuss the ideas encountered in the text.
- Apply and extend these ideas to other texts and real life situations.
- Summarize what was read by retelling the main ideas.
- Discuss ideas for further reading.

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Activities and Procedures for Use with Expository Text

The following are some procedures teachers use to help students improve their comprehension of expository texts.

K-W-L³⁹

The purpose of the K-W-L procedures is to help students become good readers by learning to do the things that good readers do. Specifically it helps students learn to activate their background knowledge and to set purposes for reading.

KWL stands for determining What I **K**now, What I **W**ant to Learn, and reviewing What I Have **L**earned. The following chart shows the steps in each part of the procedure:

What I Know	What I Want To Learn	What I Learned
Students discuss what they already know about a topic in the text they will be reading. The teacher has students list ideas and concepts related to the topic, then has them organize their ideas into broad categories.	Students discuss what they want to learn from reading the text and write down specific questions that they think may be answered in the text.	After reading the text, students discuss what they learned from it. They next write what they learned and answer student-generated questions about topics that were addressed in the text.

As they confirm the information in the Know column of the chart, students relate new information gained from their reading to knowledge they already have. As they generate questions for the Want column, they learn to set their own purposes for reading. Further, because they are reading to answer their own questions, students are more likely actively to monitor their comprehension. By putting information in their own words for the Learned column, students better understand what they know and what they do not know. Proceeding through these steps reinforces students' learning from text, involves them in doing what good readers do, and teaches them about their own reading processes.

³⁹ Ogle, D.M. (1986). *K-W-L: A teaching model that develops active reading of expository text*. *The Reading Teacher*, 39, 564-570.

Ogle, D.M. (1989). *The know, want to know, learn strategy*. In K.D. Muth (Ed.), *Children's comprehension of text: Research into practice* (pp. 205-233). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

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Narrative and Expository Texts

Listening to and reading both types of texts helps students:

- comprehend a variety of written materials
- build and extend background knowledge about a variety of topics
- develop vocabulary
- make connections to real-life experiences
- learn how different texts are organized and written
- distinguish different genres

Narrative Texts	Expository Texts
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tell stories that usually follow a familiar story structure• Usually include the following story elements:<ul style="list-style-type: none">CharactersSettingPlotResolutionTheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Also referred to as information books• Explain information or tell about topics in different ways• Contain structures that can differ from one text to another and within a single passage (e.g., problem-solution, compare-contrast, description, persuasion)• Help students comprehend content-area textbooks

Different Types of Expository Texts

Types	Prompts	Key Words
Descriptive	Does the text tell what something is?	
Sequence	Does the text tell how to do something or make something?	first, second, next, then, finally
Cause/Effect	Does the text give reasons for why something happens?	because, then, so, therefore, for this reason, results, since, reasons, effects, consequences, in order, thus
Problem/Solution	Does the text state a problem and offer solutions to the problem?	
Compare/Contrast	Does the text show how two things are alike or different?	same, similar, although, however, on the other hand, but, yet, still, rather, than, instead of
Enumeration or Categorizing	Does the text give a list of things that are related to a topic?	an example, for instance, another, next, finally

Adapted from Blachowicz, C., & Ogle, D. (2001). *Reading comprehension: Strategies for independent learners*. New York: Guilford Press; Westby, C. (1999). Assessing and facilitating text comprehension problems. In H. Catts & A. G. Kamhi (Eds.), *Language and reading disabilities* (pp. 154-219). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Reading for Understanding

Strategies to help me understand what I read . . .

Stop and ask myself questions:

- Does this make sense?
- Do I know what all the words mean?
- Can I picture in my mind what is happening?
- What do I think will happen next?
- Was my prediction correct? Why or why not?

If I am having trouble understanding, I will use a fix-up strategy:

Reread the sentence or paragraph to help me figure out what a word means or what the author is saying.

Read a sentence or two ahead to see if it helps me understand.

Retell in my own words what I just read.

Think and connect what I read to what I already know and my own experiences:

This reminds me of _____.

Based on ____ I know ____.

If I am still having trouble understanding, I ask someone for help.

Adapted from Blachowicz, C., & Ogle, D. (2001). *Reading comprehension: Strategies for independent learners*. New York: Guilford Press.

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Sample After-Reading Activities

Learning to identify main ideas helps students comprehend narrative and expository texts.

One way to help young readers learn how to identify the main ideas of what they hear read aloud or what they read themselves is to ask:

- **Who (or what) is the story (paragraph, book) about?**
- **What is the most important thing about the who (or what)?**

So students will focus on the most important ideas rather than details, help them limit the number of words in the main idea.

For example, have students tell the main idea in 10 words or less. Students can count the words on their fingers.

You can introduce summarizing by showing students how to link the main ideas together to make a summary.

On a chart, write the main ideas of the text. Then, with your students, combine these ideas into a summary of that text.

Main Idea + Main Idea + Main Idea = Summary

Adapted from Klingner, J. K., & Vaughn, S. (1998). Using collaborative strategic reading. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 30(6), 32-37; Mathes, P. G., Fuchs, D., & Fuchs, L. S. (1995). Accommodating diversity through Peabody Classwide Peer Tutoring. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 31(1), 46-50.

Literacy Lesson

What's in a Story?

Objective: Students retell familiar stories.

Materials: Storybooks, chart paper

Directions:

- Reread a story.
- Ask questions about story elements such as setting, characters, and plot.
- Model how to ask questions about the story, including questions that need thoughtful answers, such as "Why...?", "What if...?", and "How...?"
- Provide explanations and clarifications and help students relate the story to personal experiences.
- Help students correctly sequence events and retell the story.

Scaffolding Strategies:

Begin with strategies that offer less support (e.g., ★) and increase support (e.g., ★★★★★) as needed to help each student successfully complete the task/activity.



Ask: "Can you tell me what the story is about?"

Have students predict what may happen next: "How will the boys build a tree-house?"

Ask students to explain: "Why did she call the police?"

Help students make connections to their own personal experiences: "Have you been to the lake?"

Encourage additional comments: "Who can tell us more about how tortillas are made?"



Ask for clarification when necessary: "Did the mouse build a nest outside or inside the house?"

Recast or restate comments to clarify what students mean: "You mean he was so happy that he hugged everyone, including his dog."

★ ★ ★

Review story elements to help students retell the story in the correct sequence: "Jason and Tim are the characters. What happened after they won the contest?"

Help students sequence: "What happened in the first part of the story? How does the story end?"

Encourage students to use the illustrations to help them retell the story.

Explain one story element each day.

Review previously taught elements.

★ ★ ★ ★

Summarize the events to help students correctly sequence the story: "The bear was hunting for a place to spend the winter so he..."

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Use graphic organizers to help students learn story elements and retell stories.

Provide more than one possible response to help students remember what happened: "Did Mrs. Jones laugh or cry?"

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Ask specific questions about story elements: "What happens in the beginning of the story? Where does it happen? Who is the story about?"

Prompt students to ask questions when they don't know the answer: "Ask Larry what happened first."

State the answer to a question and ask students to echo the answer: "Taylor called the principal. Who did Taylor call?"

Adapted from O'Connor, R. E., Notari-Syverson, A., & Vadasy, P. F. (1998). *Ladders to literacy: A kindergarten activity book*. Baltimore: Brookes.

Extending Learning in Small-Group Settings

Narrative and Expository Cards

Number of Students: Individual or pairs

Teacher Preparation: Read the text. Create a reading guide, such as:

Story Title
Before reading, answer green cards # 1-3.
Read pp. 1-3. Answer yellow cards #4-7.
Read pp. 4-7. Answer yellow card #10.
Read pp. 8-12. Answer yellow cards #8-9.
Finish story. Answer red cards #11-15.

Materials: Narrative or expository cards; reading guide; text

Directions:

- Place cards in number order: green, yellow, red.
- Use the reading guide.
- Answer orally or write answers on a piece of paper.
- Reread if you can't answer a question.

Variation: Record stories on audio cassettes. Include reading guide.

Extending Learning in Small-Group Settings

Story Frames

Number of Students: Individual

Directions: After reading a story, students complete a story frame.

The story takes place _____.
_____ is
a character in the story who _____
_____.
A problem occurs
when _____.
After that, _____ and
_____.
The problem is solved when _____
_____.
The story ends with _____.

Extending Learning in Small-Group Settings

Investigation Chart

Number of Students: Individual, pairs, or small group

Directions: Students choose a topic related to an expository text they are reading or studying in a content area. They complete the chart as they research information in three different sources.

Topic Questions	Source 1	Source 2	Source 3	Summary

Different Types of Comprehension Charts

Comprehension charts are graphic organizers that are most commonly used after reading. Comprehension charts help students think about what they have read, evaluate their thoughts and feelings, and make connections.

Use comprehension charts:

- to record responses to literature such as story elements, personal connections, and questions;
- to record information so that comparisons and connections can be made between books when participating in ongoing units of study (several books on a particular topic or by a particular author);
- to document topics of study completed during the year so they can be reread and reviewed.

Procedures:

- Choose the type of chart to match the text and purpose of discussion.
- Before you begin writing on the chart, provide time for students to discuss what they have read.
- Write students' responses on charts during discussion.
- Acknowledge students for their ideas by placing their names beside their comments.
- Ensure that all students' responses are recorded on a regular basis.

Examples of charts:

Author Chart

(Consider including a picture of the author or book)

Title	Illustrator	Main Character	Problem	Resolution	Connection to other books

(Include several rows depending on how many books by the selected author are read.)

Narrative Chart

Title	Author	Beginning	Middle	End

**Expository (Data) Chart
"Whales"**

Kind	Appearance	Food	Home
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**Thematic Chart
"Friendship"**

Title	Author	How did character(s) show friendship?	Connections to other stories	Connections to my life
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Connection Chart

Title	Author/ Illustrator	Character with description	Observations	Connections
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Prediction Chart

Title/Author	Interesting words	Predictions	Checking predictions
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Adapted from Blachowicz, C., & Ogle, D. (2001). *Reading comprehension: Strategies for independent learners*. New York: Guilford Press; Roser, N. L., Hoffman, J. V., Labbo, L. D., & Farest, C. (1992). Language charts: A record of story time talk. *Language Arts*, 69, 44–52; Tompkins, G. E. (1998). *Fifty literacy strategies: Step by step*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.

Question and Answer Cards

Level One

- Questions can be answered in one sentence
- Answers can be found word-for-word in the story

Level Two

- Questions can be answered by looking in the story
- Answers require one sentence or more
- Answers are found in more than one place and put together

Question and Answer Cards

Level Three

- Questions cannot be answered by looking in the story
- Answer questions by thinking about what has been read, thinking about what is already known, and thinking about how it fits together

