

SHARED READING

Why is it the
best
instructional activity?

1. Shared Reading is Context-Rich
2. Scaffolded Access to Difficult Texts
3. Increase in Background Knowledge
4. Instant and Frequent Feedback
5. Quickly Increase Reading Levels
6. Build Reading Comprehension



Six Reasons for Shared Reading

Here are the six reasons why shared reading should receive more of your instructional time in class:

1. Context-rich reading practice
2. Scaffolded access to more difficult text
3. Massive increases in background knowledge
4. Instantaneous and frequent feedback
5. Quickly increase reading levels
6. Builds reading comprehension

1. Shared Reading is Context-Rich

Context-rich reading practice is the key to increasing reading levels. A worksheet doesn't cut it. Neither does direct instruction. These have their place (direct instruction especially), but shared reading is a merge between direct instruction and the actual application of the reading process.

In shared reading, students are using the reading process within two contexts: instruction and text. The instructional context is when the teacher supports students, questions students, and challenges students. Using a text for instruction is when students are applying just-learned skills in an actual text.

Reading is comprehension. Shared reading just simply focuses on that!

2. Scaffolded Access to Difficult Text

Shared reading gets the most results when students are reading text beyond their independent level. You can even push shared reading slightly beyond students' instructional reading levels. This is when shared reading promotes the quickest growths in fluency, vocabulary development, and reading comprehension.

Quick learning results occur when students are provided with scaffolding in challenging texts. What types of scaffolding are provided in shared reading that allows access to difficult texts?

- Teacher modelling of fluency and problem-solving.
- Risk-free attempts at quick decoding.
- Instant corrective feedback on those attempts.
- Instant application of the feedback.
- Embedded questioning of vocabulary and comprehension.
- Instant feedback on those text-dependent questions.
- Spiral review of previously learned skills.
- Instruction while practicing the reading process.

Just remember, students won't increase reading levels in shared reading if the texts are too simple. Students will increase reading levels if the texts are significantly challenging and the scaffolding is in place.

3. Background Knowledge

We all know that reading comprehension is impacted, for good or worse, by students' background knowledge. Background knowledge shows up in their vocabulary knowledge, their academic knowledge, and a variety of life experiences. Shared reading results in massive increases in background knowledge.

Here's how this happens:

- Shared reading gives exposure to a variety of texts and topics.
- When the teacher carries the load for decoding, students can focus more on the content of the text.
- Questioning during shared reading helps students to deepen knowledge.
- Background knowledge can be literary: patterns in plots, character problems repeat in different stories, authors' tricks are fairly common, etc.
- Background knowledge can be content: exposure to the same themes, topics, and information.

4. Instant and Frequent Feedback

In our article on *What is Student Visible Learning?* we discussed five ways to help students monitor their own learning during the process of learning. Shared reading also helps to make learning visible through instant and frequent feedback.

Essentially, students need to know when they make mistakes, how to correct those mistakes, and try again. Shared reading is perfect for this type of instant and frequent feedback. I can think of four types of feedback that students receive in shared reading:

1. Exposure to challenging texts above their reading level helps students try to decode words, hear the right decoding, and attempt it also.
2. The teacher models fluency as students read along in their head. This internalizes the processes that are required for silent reading!
3. During shared reading, the teacher frequently pauses and poses challenging questions. Without telling the answer, the teacher can scaffold thinking by asking simpler questions that guide student thinking to the right answer.
4. When new and advanced vocabulary words are read, the teacher can prompt student conversations to build word meanings.

Shared Reading is perfect for making plenty of mistakes, correcting, and trying again.

5. Quickly Increase Reading Levels

In shared reading, students are reading higher levels of text. Of course, the teacher is carrying the load of print, but this can gradually be released to students. Their fluency and comprehension will increase much faster than in read-alouds or in silent reading. The results are amazing if shared reading is used frequently or daily!

6. Build Reading Comprehension

Reading is comprehension. All of the activities we do in class are geared towards reading comprehension. Shared reading is effective for comprehension because it takes away the burden of decoding from the students. It allows them to focus on comprehension. Why does shared reading build comprehension?

It allows students to focus on comprehending more complex text structures and plot structures. Complex syntax and sentence structures become easier with shared reading. And the increase in fluency and vocabulary also increases comprehension.

With the right questions and scaffolded questions, shared reading can make the biggest impact on reading comprehension!

<https://teamtomeducation.com/shared-reading-effective-instructional-activity/>