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Successful Reading Comprehension Strategies for Beginner Readers

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SUCCESSFUL READING COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES
FOR BEGINNER READERS

by

Elizabeth S. Gordon

A Research Project Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Education

REGIS UNIVERSITY

April, 2007

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by

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ABSTRACT

Successful Reading Comprehension Strategies for Beginner Readers

This research examines the different reading comprehension strategies that students can use in order to be successful at reading comprehension. The strategies discussed in this research project were chosen based on the research available and the success rates of the strategies. Numerous strategies will be introduced and examined in order to provide both teachers and parents with guidelines to follow when they teach students about reading comprehension. If reading for meaning is the goal for students and teachers, more emphasis should be placed on the teaching of successful reading comprehension strategies. The findings of this research culminate in a unit plan designed to teach comprehension strategies. The unit developed does two things: one, it educates teachers and students on a number of strategies to use in reading comprehension, whether or not the student is a struggling reader, and two, it uses fables and fairy tales to pique students' interest and imagination as well as open up room for discussion on character and moral education.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
1. INTRODUCTION	5
Statement of the Problem	5
Purpose of the Project	6
Chapter Summary	6
2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	8
Historical Background	9
Current Theories	12
Learning From Text	13
Oral Language	15
Think Alouds	16
Increased Indexing	18
Classroom Applications	19
Chapter Summary	24
3. METHOD	26
Target Population	26
Project Goals	27
Peer Assessment	27
Chapter Summary	27
4. OVERVIEW OF PURPOSE	29
5. DISCUSSION	78
Contribution of the Project	78
Limitations of the Project	79
Recommendations for Future Study	80
Chapter Summary	80
REFERENCES	82

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension has been an important topic of discussion for many years, and it continues to concern both teachers and parents. There are many different research based strategies that provide effective solutions for students who struggle with reading comprehension, yet these strategies are ever changing and improving. By an examination of the numerous possibilities for effective teaching of reading comprehension, one can identify a few strategies that could be effective for many struggling readers. The strategies discussed in this research project were chosen based on the research available and the success rates of the strategies. “Direct instruction in strategies is a necessary prerequisite for awareness of the comprehension process” (Barton & Sawyer, 2003, p. 336). Although not all strategies can be reviewed here, many of the more successful strategies are examined.

Statement of the Problem

It is difficult for many beginner readers to comprehend what they read. Often, they are frustrated by the typical question and answer format that is provided after a passage is read, or they do not read about a topic that piques their interest. Research shows that students can be taught reading strategies, and direct instruction with the strategies will improve their performances on tests of recall and reading comprehension (Dole, Brown, & Trathen, 1996; Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 1991; Pressley, Johnson, Symons, McGoldrick, & Kurita, 1989; all cited in Janzen, 2003). Also, Janzen reported

that these students arrive at a richer understanding of text meaning and develop a more positive attitude toward reading by the utilization of comprehension strategies. In order for students to better understand what they read, they should be provided with new comprehension strategies that are available for use in elementary classrooms. “The ultimate goal of reading is not to read isolated words, but to understand what has been read” (Nation & Angell, 2006, p. 77). If reading for meaning is the goal for both students and teachers, more emphasis should be placed on the teaching of successful reading comprehension strategies.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project will be to design a curricular unit that can be used by early elementary teachers to teach students strategies to aid them in reading comprehension; in addition, character education will be included in the reading unit. The author of this project intends to show that, through the use of Aesop’s Fables and other parables, students will be able to learn new comprehension strategies and discuss the moral lessons present within the text. This author will analyze and interpret the findings about successful reading comprehension strategies for struggling readers and discuss the importance of these results. Also, based on the literature, the author will demonstrate in a curricular unit a few of the successful reading comprehension strategies that can be used to assist beginner readers.

Chapter Summary

It is this researcher’s position that, through the teaching of reading comprehension strategies, students will be able to more successfully read and comprehend specific text. Numerous strategies will be introduced and examined within this project in order to

provide both teachers and parents with guidelines to follow when they teach students about reading comprehension. It is important that students recognize the use of different strategies so that they can self-monitor their reading for successful comprehension. Also, it is the researcher's intention to develop a curricular unit for elementary school teachers to use within the classroom. The goal of the curricular unit will be to introduce a few reading comprehension strategies with the use of Aesop's fables to discuss comprehension and moral lessons found within the text. With the use of Aesop's fables and other parables, the researcher believes students can be taught strategies to aid in comprehension, and the discussion can revolve around the lessons being taught within the story. Many of the lessons are those with which the students can closely relate and, therefore, they can assist with comprehension. In the following Chapter 2, the review of literature, this author will present some of the research found that pertains to reading comprehension and strategies to aid with comprehension. In Chapter 3, the author will discuss the methods to be used in order to help teachers become aware of what the reading comprehension strategies are and how to use them successfully.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this review of literature, the author will analyze and interpret the numerous findings about the use of successful reading comprehension strategies for struggling readers. For this project, the author will develop a curricular unit. There are countless studies written on the issue of reading comprehension. It has become an issue in which both teachers and students seek to understand the many ways to improve upon students' comprehension of written text. "There is general, sustained agreement that comprehension instruction is a central component in the language arts curriculum (Duffy, Roehler, & Mason, 1984; Durkin, 1983; Graves, Juel, & Graves, 2001; Pressley, 1998; Roehler & Duffy, 1991)" (Barton & Sawyer, 2003, p. 334). It is this author's goal to analyze and interpret results made about successful reading comprehension strategies for struggling readers and discuss the importance of these findings. Also, the author will develop a curricular unit for teachers to use in the classroom that will highlight many of the strategies reviewed.

Barton and Sawyer (2003), both teachers in Rhode Island, reported that the act of comprehension is by nature so sophisticated that no single instructional method can be sufficient for all readers to be successful with all texts in all learning situations. Because of this situation, many different reading comprehension strategies are used within the classroom today, yet some have been found to be more effective, especially for struggling readers. Faced with new strategies that are reported continuously, teachers and students

are constantly challenged with new and creative possibilities. Liang, Peterson, and Graves (2005) cited Tracy and Morrow (2002) and stated that “reading comprehension is an enormously complex task and the job of preparing young readers to be successful at reading comprehension is equally multifaceted” (p. 387).

In this review of literature, the author will address some of the research studies conducted to provide information on successful reading strategies for struggling readers. In the following section, the historical development of reading comprehension within the schools is discussed, as well as the multiple studies that portray the different aspects of reading comprehension that have been popular for researchers.

Historical Development

Historically, reading comprehension has been an important part of the educational process. Janzen (2003) reported that, in the last 15 years, reading strategies have become an important focus of research in the field of reading pedagogy. However, there are different opinions as to how reading comprehension should be taught and assessed. Historically, the development of reading comprehension strategies has followed closely with the development of reading comprehension assessments.

Sarroub, Loukia, and Pearson (1998) discussed the history of reading comprehension assessment and included pertinent information about the historical development of reading comprehension. In order to examine this historical development, it is appropriate to review the changes in reading comprehension assessment. Sarroub et al. reported that, sometimes, the changes in the views of reading process are due to what legislators and policymakers want, and that they have been responsible for many of the transformations in the reading pedagogical practices. The

first attempts to index reading ability by the measurement of students' comprehension date back to World War I. Sarroub et al. cited Thorndike in his 1918 piece "Reading as Reasoning" in which Thorndike characterized what goes on in the mind of the reader to produce the answers in response to questions about what he/she has read. The need to understand the "phenomenological act of comprehension" (p. 3) has driven researchers to discern new and better ways to understand reading comprehension.

According to Sarroub et al. (1998), in the 1970s, there were three facets of reading comprehension that were important: (a) standardized, multiple choice tests; (b) criterion-referenced assessments of specific skills; and (c) informal classroom assessments of comprehension. The purpose of this type of testing was to assess students' achievement in comparison to other students nation wide. In the 1980s, the approach turned toward reliance on resources such as: (a) prior knowledge, (b) environmental clues, (c) the text itself, and (d) the key players involved in the text itself. Here, reading was thought to be a reflective study. According to Sarroub et al., it was during this time that teachers felt the need for their students to perform well on standardized tests. "In other words, kids get better scores but are not better readers" (p. 5).

By the late 1980s, reading comprehension tests began to include multiple choice questions that included: (a) more than one correct answer, (b) longer text passages, and (c) open ended questions. In this way, tests were used to encourage reflection and interactive learning. Sarroub et al. (1998) termed this the "Second Revolution in Reading Assessment" (p. 6). At this time, there was a rediscovery of Vgotsky's (1986, as cited in Sarroub et al.) ideas about learning. Cognitively motivated teaching

approaches became popular. Students took more responsibility for their learning by teaching one another, and the writing process was linked to the social nature of reading and understanding by interaction with other students. The idea of social living and community, as important to how students learned, became vogue. In addition to this way of teaching, reading comprehension was demonstrated, along with other assessments, in the format of a portfolio. According to their study, the portfolio type of assessment was important for two reasons: “(1) students were to be evaluated on what they actually did in the classroom, and (2) both teachers and students could hold positions of power as they became key payers in the evaluation process” (p. 7). Sarroub et al. reported that, currently, the field of reading comprehension has shifted to accommodate political influences that reflect conservative criticism.

Along with the history of reading comprehension assessments, it is important to recognize other historical views. Caccamise and Snyder (2005), in a recent study, maintained that, over time, the focus of most reading comprehension studies has been focused on the analysis of language as an object. They stated,

The breakthrough toward process inquiry has come relatively recently with efforts in artificial intelligence systems that model natural language, as well as from techniques for the simulation of higher order cognitive processes, leading to psychological process models of comprehension. The goal has been to create a model that captures the flexible, fluid nature of human meaning construction, taking into account all of the variables that impact meaning construction. (p. 7)

Also, Caccamise and Snyder reported that, historically, the classic comprehension models looked at learning from text as a passive activity in which the reader takes facts to add to his/her long term memory, which were most likely out of context. There was no attempt to connect material with any existing knowledge. According to Caccamise and Snyder, one of the most well referenced theories of reading comprehension was provided by

Kintsch (1998), and whose theories are the dominant theories presented by the National Reading Panel (2000, both cited in Caccamise & Snyder). They believe that most researchers, who are interested in reading comprehension, use Kintsch's model as a beginning point for their studies. In Kintsch's theory of reading comprehension, both knowledge and experience play a part in the development of a mental representation of the text and, therefore, a representational format must be able to manage both. Caccamise and Snyder concluded that a decade or more of reading comprehension and assessments show that there is still a problem with how students are able to comprehend text and how to remedy this nationwide problem.

Along with the research of the history of reading and reading comprehension, also, there are numerous current theories of reading comprehension that have been studied. In the next section, many of these current theories and strategies are discussed.

Current Theories

Teachers and students realize that reading comprehension is an enormously complicated task and, therefore, the idea of being successful at reading comprehension is a very large undertaking (Liang et al., 2005). Migyanka, Policastro, and Lui (2006) cited Zimmermann and Hutchins (2003) and stated, "reading words without understanding the meaning is just idle babble. If children do not unlock the meaning they will never read well or enjoy reading" (p. 172). There are numerous research studies written on the different approaches to teach reading comprehension. In this section, some highlights of the important findings are discussed.

Learning From Text

Liang et al. (2005) suggested there are four types of reading comprehension instruction: (a) foster learning from text, (b) teach comprehension strategies, (c) promote higher order thinking, and (d) teach for understanding. For their research study, Liang et al. focused on strategy learning from text, and more specifically reviewed the use of Scaffolded Reading Experience (SRE), an instructional framework, to investigate the progress of comprehension of literature. Liang et al. cited Graves and Graves (2003) and noted that this instructional framework can be described as “helping students complete tasks they could not otherwise complete, [and aiding] students by helping them to better complete a task, to complete a task with less stress or in less time, or to learn more fully than they would have otherwise” (p. 389). Also, Liang et al. reported that the SREs in their study consisted of: (a) prereading, (b) during reading, and (c) postreading activities. Liang et al. demonstrated that by, beginning with background knowledge, preteaching the concepts of the story being read, building vocabulary, and motivating students, comprehension and enthusiasm are strengthened. The results from their study showed that students who used the SRE “demonstrated superior ability in using the higher-order thinking skills emphasized in the unit lessons” (p. 389), and use of the SRE facilitated students’ comprehension of text.

In another research study conducted by Cragg and Nation (2006), students were assessed to determine whether there was a relationship between poor reading comprehension and the written language. Cragg and Nation defined poor comprehenders as students, who were adequate at reading accuracy and fluency, but were poor at reading comprehension and oral comprehension. These researchers maintained that many

students, who are poor comprehenders, are overlooked and not identified with learning disabilities because their satisfactory reading accuracy skills mask the difficulty with comprehension (Nation, 2005; Nation, Clarke, Marshall, & Durand, 2004; both cited in Cragg & Nation). The researchers investigated both the written and compositional aspects of the writing process in poor comprehenders. According to Nation and Snowling (1998, as cited in Cragg & Nation), poor comprehenders are good at decoding nonwords, and their reading accuracy is within age appropriate levels. Also, poor comprehenders are good at phonological processing skills (Cain, Oakhill, & Bryant, 2000; Nation et al., 2004; both cited in Cragg & Nation). One question asked by these researchers was whether poor comprehenders demonstrated age appropriate spelling levels. Cragg and Nation cited a research study conducted by Nation et al. in which it was observed that

many children selected on the basis of poor reading comprehension showed impairments on a range of tasks tapping receptive language. For example, their listening comprehension was poor and they showed relative weaknesses in vocabulary knowledge. Some poor comprehenders also experienced expressive language difficulties with, for example, planning and formulating expressions of intent. (pp. 57-58)

Cragg and Nation found a relationship between individual differences in reading and language comprehension and the ability to write and recall well structured stories. “We found no correlation between spelling and indices of narrative competence” (p. 67). In addition, the poor comprehenders’ stories contained: (a) less content, (b) fewer main ideas, and (c) less structure and organization in both written and oral examples. Cragg and Nation cited Oakhill (1983) who reported that students with reading comprehension problems are less proficient at elaboration of text and are less likely to get the main idea

of a sentence. Although Cragg and Nation did not discuss remedies for the problem of poor comprehension, their findings demonstrated relevant results and ideas.

In Nation and Angell's (2006) study of learning how to comprehend text and learning to read, the authors explained that "to understand text, words need to be recognized and their meaning accessed, relevant background knowledge needs to be activated, and inferences must be generated as information is integrated during the course of reading" (pp. 77-78). In this study, poor comprehenders were defined as students who showed word level reading skills that were age appropriate, but whose reading comprehension was substantially below average. According to Nation and Angell, there are serious misguided opinions that phonics and the knowledge of the language in print are optional strategies. They noted that there is interdependence between reading the written word and comprehending the language. Nation and Angell cited Perfetti (1985) who reported that, if a student cannot accurately and fluently read words, his or her level of comprehension would be compromised. Also, they cited Yuill and Oakhill (1991) and Nation and Snowling (1997) who found that approximately 10% of elementary age students are poor comprehenders and, often, these students go unnoticed by their teachers. The task of learning to comprehend reading can be summarized as learning to understand the written language as well as understanding the spoken language (Perfetti, Landi, & Oakhill, 2005, as cited in Nation and Angell).

Oral Language

Nation and Angell (2006) identified three areas in which poor comprehenders fail to understand text: (a) text level processes, (b) oral language weaknesses, and (c) memory. First, text level processes refer to difficulty in making inferences, monitoring

comprehension, and poor appreciation of story structure. Next, oral language weakness is the difficulty with understanding relative oral vocabulary. Nation and Angell reported that “a number of studies have revealed relative weaknesses in oral vocabulary (Stothard & Hulme, 1992; Nation & Snowling, 1998) and in learning new vocabulary from context (Cain et al., 2003) in some, but not all children with poor reading comprehension” (p. 82). Also discussed was the problem with memory, that is, whether poor comprehenders have difficulties with reading and language comprehension due to poor memory. Nation and Angell concluded that it is difficult for poor comprehenders to retrieve verbal information that negatively impacts their ability to successfully comprehend text. In conclusion, Nation and Angell emphasized that: (a) a large proportion of students who experience difficulty with reading comprehension are overlooked in schools, (b) comprehension is a very complicated subject that requires skills such as recognizing words and forming coherent models of text, and (c) that strategies to foster reading comprehension for students can be emphasized in interventions designed to improve oral language.

Think Aloud

In another study, conducted by Migyanka, Policastro, and Lui (2006), it was found that reading comprehension depends upon the students’ ability to monitor and control their own comprehension in order to successfully understand text. They reported that the *think aloud* is one strategy that struggling readers can use to improve comprehension. “One of the most important components to determine the success of the think aloud is the teacher’s ability to model and facilitate the think aloud procedure” (p. 171). Migyanka et al. reported that children, who are good readers, use seven keys

successfully and effortlessly to make meaning of written text. Based on these seven keys (Zimmermann & Hutchins, 2003, as cited in Migyanka et al.), students need to: (a) create mental pictures of text, (b) activate background knowledge, (c) ask questions about comprehension, (d) make inferences, (e) realize the main part of the story, (f) synthesize information, and (g) use fix-up strategies. According to Wilhelm (2001, as cited in Migyanka et al.), a think aloud strategy provides students with the ability to hear what the process is inside the head of a successful reader and how he or she monitors reading to improve reading comprehension. Fountas and Pinnell (1996, as cited in Migyanka et al.) described good readers as students who develop a network of strategies that allows them to understand information from different sources. This information is put into three different categories: (a) meaning cues, (b) structural cues, and (c) visual cues. “It is not the words that are important but rather the thought processes children use to figure out new words while deriving meaning from the text” (p. 173). The think aloud strategy provides a framework for teachers to help struggling readers create meaning out of text. It is important to note that students must be taught metacomprehension skills that will assist them to know how to self-monitor reading and to determine whether comprehension takes place during reading. The use of a think aloud helps a student to: (a) develop the ability to use background knowledge; (b) make predictions about the text; (c) revise those predictions as they gain more information from the text; (d) develop images based on what he/she is reading while; continuously, (e) they check their comprehension. According to Migyanka et al., with the use of the think aloud strategy, students who struggle with reading comprehension can become more successful with their understanding of the text.

Increased Indexing

Glenberg, Gutierrez, Levin, Japuntich, and Kschak (2004) detailed another of the many reading strategies that are useful for struggling readers. Glenberg et al. proposed that, when children begin to learn the spoken language, it is in a context that is greatly indexed. “When these children start to learn the written language, there is little explicit learning of the connection between the symbol and its meaning” (p. 2). The purpose of their study was to determine whether increased indexing could enhance young readers’ performance. To better understand the design of the research study, Glenberg et al. explained the Indexical Hypothesis. In this hypothesis, Sleaberg (1999, 1987, as cited in Glenberg et al.) theorized that the amodal, abstract, and arbitrary (AAA) symbols of language, or written word, become meaningful by stimulation of the content of the sentence. “First, words and phrases are indexed to objects in the environment or to perceptual symbols; second, affordances are derived from the objects; third, the affordances are combined as directed by syntax, to produce a coherent simulation” (p. 3). For this study, the researchers provided the students with actual objects to manipulate during and after the texts were being read. Also, some of the students were asked to imagine the story in their mind while it was read. The findings from the Glenberg et al. study suggested that, with the use of manipulation and imagined activities, children can better comprehend written words within a story. Glenberg et al. noted that additional research is needed to establish that manipulation leads to long term maintenance of successful reading comprehension.

Classroom Applications

Based on the information provided thus far, it seems appropriate to discuss some of the practical classroom applications and strategies that the many researchers suggested for use in the classroom to assist in reading comprehension for struggling readers. What do good teachers of reading comprehension do? This remains an important question for discussion by both parents and teachers. According to Frey (2006), good teachers employ numerous explicit teaching techniques to assist struggling readers. She wrote that direct instruction “must involve both the procedure and the purpose of the strategy if students are to understand how the particular strategy can solve comprehension problems” (p. 1). Frey cited the members of the National Reading Panel (NICHD; 2000a), who reported that reading comprehension should include teacher modeling and supportive guidance in order for students to understand the strategies needed to comprehend text. Also, good teachers use think alouds in order to demonstrate metacognition. Frey cited Baker and Brown (1984) who described the role of metacognition as “the ability to reflect on one’s own activities while reading” (p. 1). Good teachers facilitate peer and social learning through partner talk. Termed *transactional strategies instruction*, the partner talk provides students with an opportunity to apply strategies to their text and discuss out loud their reason for doing so.

Barton and Sawyer (2003) described effective methods to help readers deepen their understanding of the comprehension process. After the conduct of their research study, Barton and Sawyer identified several strategies worth describing “in hopes of assisting other elementary teachers in their efforts to deepen young students’

understanding about the comprehension process” (p. 335). They focused on six instructional touchstones,

1. repeated exposure to different types of writing. Barton and Sawyer cited Fisher, Flood, and Lapp (1999), and Snow et al. (1998) who found that elementary readers exposure to many different types of text prepares them to deal with more complicated text and more complex issues in the future;
2. reader/text connections. Connecting what the readers already know about a topic helps them to comprehend the text and make a personal connection;
3. focused student response, “Talking, writing, and drawing help readers reflect about what they have read and share their insights with others” (p. 336);
4. direct instruction in the use of comprehension strategies. Barton and Sawyer cited Alexander and Jetton (2000), Bradsford et al. (1999), and Paris and Jacobs (1984) who reported that readers must decide about which strategies to use, depending on the difficulty of the text;
5. visual structures to support comprehension. Visual structure helps students distinguish important events from relatively trivial ones; and
6. awareness of the comprehension process. “Knowledge about thinking includes declarative knowledge (knowing which comprehension strategy to use in a give situation), procedural knowledge (knowing how to

successfully employ a strategy), and conditional knowledge (knowing the purpose of a strategy and when to employ it)” (p. 338).

In this list of six instructional touchstones, Barton and Sawyer identified 10 essential comprehension strategies to utilize with students who struggle with reading comprehension: (a) locate details, (b) sequence, (c) compare and contrast, (d) summarize, (e) envision character change, (f) draw conclusions, (g) determine cause and effect, (h) make predictions, (i) make thematic connections, and lastly (j) take multiple perspectives. In their conclusion, Barton and Sawyer wrote, “The creative instruction students receive in learning how to comprehend during elementary school will accrue over time in heightened reasoning abilities as they make their way through the grades to high school and beyond” (p. 346).

Liang et al. (2005) reported the use of the Scaffolded Reading Experience (SRE) within the classroom as an important strategy for struggling readers to use for reading comprehension. Their study provided much support for the effectiveness of the SRE in the facilitation of students’ comprehension of text. The central concept of the SRE is scaffolding, which was defined by Graves and Graves (2003, as cited in Liang et al.) as “helping students complete tasks they could not otherwise complete, [and aiding] students by helping them to better complete a task, to complete a task with less stress or in less time, or to learn more fully than they would have otherwise” (pp. 389-390). A SRE consists of two phases, a planning phase and an implementation phase. During the planning phase, the teacher considers: (a) the student’s progress, (b) the selection being read, and (c) the purpose of reading the selection. Based on these three factors, the teacher then develops activities (e.g., implementation phase), either prereading, during

reading, or post reading strategies, to help the student successfully read the selection. Liang et al. explained the prereading activities as: (a) relate the reading to the students' lives; (b) motivate, activate and build background knowledge; (c) provide text specific knowledge; (d) preteach vocabulary; (e) preteach concepts; (f) prequestion, predict and set direction; and (g) suggest strategies. The reading activities include: (a) silent reading, (b) reading to students, (c) supported reading, (d) oral reading by students, and (e) modifications of the text. The postreading activities or strategies include: (a) questioning, (b) discussing, (c) writing, (d) use of drama, (e) artistic and nonverbal activities, (f) application and outreach activities, (g) build connections, and (h) reteach. In conclusion, with use of the SRE, students involved in this particular study were able to successfully comprehend the given text.

As with previous studies, Nation and Angell (2006) reported on reading strategies to assist readers with their comprehension of text. They argued that it is important to distinguish between comprehension and the product of comprehension. The ability to reflect critically is an end goal of teaching literacy, and if a student has failed to understand a text, strategies based on literacy reflection will not be of much help. For understanding, it is critical to show which aspect of reading comprehension a student finds difficult, and well targeted interventions should be put to use. "Having observed that many poor comprehenders are poor at making inferences, Yuill and Oakhill (1991) reasoned that significant and sustained improvements in comprehension would only come about if an intervention programme focused beyond the single word" (p. 85). As cited by Nation and Angell, Yuill and Oakhill described an intervention program designed to improve inferencing abilities with training based on comprehension exercises and rapid

decoding. At the end of a 4 week session, the study group exposed to the inference training made significantly more progress in reading comprehension than the control groups. Nation and Angell reported that students need to learn to engage with the text being read and to care whether it makes sense. “Clearly, the ability to reflect critically on a text is an end goal of literacy teaching, but if a child has failed to understand a text, strategies based on literary reflection are not going to help” (p. 85). Unique to Nation and Angell’s study is the thought that, although the word recognition component of reading comprehension is specific to reading, many of the skills needed to comprehend text are shared with spoken language skills. Therefore, they believe strategies to improve reading comprehension should be grounded in interventions designed to improve oral language as well.

Migyanka et al. (2006) reported that the development of student literacy hinges upon their comprehension of text. They studied the effects of using the strategy of a think aloud in order to aid in comprehension of text. They cited Zimmermann and Hutchins (2003), who noted that students who are good readers use seven keys effortlessly and fluidly to make meaning and comprehension of a given text. These seven comprehension strategies are: (a) create mental images, (b) use background knowledge, (c) ask questions, (d) make inferences, (e) determine the most important ideas or themes, (f) synthesize information, and (g) use fix up strategies. Also, Migyanka et al. cited Wilhelm (2001) and stated “teachers can support literacy development by introducing children to quality literature and using the seven key strategies to promote the love for reading as students interact with and make meaning of the text” (p. 172). Migyanka et al. used the think aloud strategy to work with the students. The process was based on a

number of steps. First, the teacher set the purpose for reading the story and discussed the think aloud strategy being used. Second, the teacher activated the students' background knowledge that pertained to the story. Here the teacher previewed the book. Third, the students predicted what they thought might happen within the story. Fourth, any unfamiliar vocabulary was discussed and defined. Fifth, students were given the freedom to think, connect, and confirm what they thought. The students were encouraged to underline and highlight phrases or words to help them to identify the use of strategies. "Teachers need to listen carefully to students' responses to text, teach when and how to select appropriate comprehension strategies, determine students' abilities, and adapt the method to meet the needs and abilities unique to students" (p. 177).

Glenberg et al. (2004) proposed that, when children begin to learn the spoken language, it is in a context that is indexed and when these same children learn the written language, there is little explicit learning about the connection between the symbol and its meaning. They decided to assess the efficiency of a manipulation procedure to ensure the indexing of text. What they found was that the use of manipulatives and imagined manipulatives greatly enhanced students' reading comprehension for both their memory and their ability to derive inferences. This suggested that, with manipulation and imagined activities, students can better comprehend written words within a story. Glenberg et al. noted that additional research is needed to establish that manipulation leads to long term maintenance.

Chapter Summary

The historical background of reading comprehension, some current theories, and how these theories can be used in the classroom were presented in this chapter. It is

important to recognize that there are numerous ways that reading comprehension can be addressed and remedied for struggling readers. Further, it is critical that teachers appreciate the necessity to look deeper for the students who struggle with their comprehension. The studies reviewed in this chapter looked at: (a) learning from text and types of comprehension instruction; (b) poor comprehenders' problems with recall; (c) oral language and content; (d) improved oral language, recognizing words and forming coherent models of text; (e) think alouds; and (f) increased indexing. An attempt to develop a model to assist both elementary school teachers and students with effective strategies to help struggling readers will be detailed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3

METHOD

The purpose of this project was to focus on several reading strategies that are useful in teaching students to better comprehend what they read. Through this project, the researcher has learned about the problem that teachers have in order to recognize students who struggle with their reading comprehension. Once the teacher recognizes a student who needs assistance with comprehension, the teacher might be unfamiliar with some of the very useful strategies available. This problem became an important issue to research because of the discussions within many local elementary schools about struggling readers and the need to know effective strategies to help them. Within this project, many different possibilities were presented in order to help inform teachers about the variety of strategies that are available

Target Population

This project was designed for elementary school teachers to use with beginning readers who struggle with reading comprehension. Also, the project included lessons about values and morals, which will be appropriate for any reader who is learning to make connections with a given text. Teachers, who are unsuccessful with the strategies they use currently in the classroom, might be interested in the use of this project to learn about new strategies to use with their beginner readers.

Project Goals

The researcher had many goals for this project. One goal was to support the strategies discussed with specific classroom applications for elementary school teachers to use within their classroom to engage in reading comprehension skills. Another goal was for teachers to be able to utilize scaffolding within their reading units (SRE) and initiate prereading activities. Improved inferencing abilities and being engaged in the text helps students better comprehend what they read and, therefore, became an integral part of this project. Additionally, another goal was to explain a think aloud and design a lesson for teachers to feel confident in teaching students the use of this strategy. Lastly, it was important to show that the use of Aesop's fables and other parables can facilitate discussion about the moral of the story and formulate a connection for the reader. This, in turn, will assist readers with comprehension because of the connection with the text. Each strategy was briefly detailed within the curricular unit and specific lesson plans were developed to insure each strategy is being reviewed.

Peer Assessment

After completion of the curricular unit, the author asked five elementary school teachers to review the information and strategies provided and provide informal feedback in regard to additions and or deletions. From this feedback, the author made adjustments to the curricular unit.

Chapter Summary

After much research on the subject of reading comprehension, the author of this project used the knowledge gained to provide teachers several effective strategies that are most helpful within the classroom. The many goals for this project are geared toward

understanding these strategies and to help teachers become aware of what the strategies are and how to use them successfully. In Chapter 4, the author provided a curricular unit and, more specifically, lessons that illustrated the practical uses of the strategies presented. In addition to a number of strategies shown, the curricular unit in Chapter 4 focused on the use of Aesop's fables and other parables and fairy tales to assist students with comprehension by the use of story themes to which they can relate.

Chapter 4

INTRODUCTION/OVERVIEW OF PURPOSE

This project was initiated in order to help teachers in early elementary classrooms assess and teach students many new strategies to aid in reading comprehension in an interesting way. The unit developed does two things: one, it educates teachers and students on a number of strategies to use in reading comprehension, whether or not the student is a struggling reader, and two, it uses fables and fairy tales to pique students' interest and imagination as well as open up room for discussion on character and moral education. The researcher chose to develop the lesson for whole class instruction because so many of the literacy lessons are written for ability grouped students. All of these lessons have been created so that students of all levels can participate and be challenged in their different strengths and learning abilities. The unit was developed for second grade level readers, but can be modified for most early elementary classrooms.

An important part of this unit is the assessment of students' actual use and understanding of the comprehension strategies. As shown in the research, it can be difficult for teachers to pick up on a student who is struggling with reading comprehension because it is unrelated to fluency and vocabulary.

The unit is divided into three parts, each part sampling from a different genre of folklore. Aesop's fables are taught and read for the majority of the unit because of their rich use of moral teachings. There are two lessons to be covered each week for a total of a six-week unit plan. This project covers many of the Colorado Model Content Standards

for reading and writing, as well as character education. The following is the developed product, a unit plan based on reading strategies to help beginning readers better comprehend text.

Reading Comprehension Weekly Organizer

Week 1: **AESOP'S FABLES**

Lesson 1: Introduction to Aesop's Fables and discussion of fairy and folk tales.

“The Boy Who Cried Wolf”

Lesson 2: Examine Vocabulary

“The Tortoise and the Hare”

Week 2: **AESOP'S FABLES**

Lesson 3: What is special about our town? State?

“City Mouse and Country Mouse”

Lesson 4: What are you good at? Favor coupons.

“The Lion and The Mouse”

Week 3: **FOLK TALES**

Lesson 5: Discuss fairy tales, and introduce Hans Christian Anderson

“The Emperor's New Clothes”

Lesson 6: Finding a “true” princess

“The Princess and The Pea”

Week 4: **FOLK TALES**

Lesson 7: Introduce The Brothers Grimm

“The Fisherman and His Wife”

Lesson 8: Keeping promises

“The Frog King”

Week 5: **FOLK TALES**

Lesson 9: Discuss and report on folk tales from other cultures

Week 6: **WRITING FABLE**

Lesson 11: Final lesson will be to write and publish a fable.

Comprehension Strategies Good Readers Use

Prereading

- Background knowledge
- Preteach vocabulary
- Picture walk

During reading

- Create mental picture
- Ask questions
- Predictions (drawing on background knowledge by making an educated guess) and draw conclusions

Post reading

- Main part of story
- Partner talk
- Skim story for details
- Talk, write, draw
- Main characters
- Locate details
- Sequence
- Compare and contrast
- Inferences
- Summarize
- Cause and effect (problem and solution)
- Theme connections
- Multiple perspectives

Think-aloud

Reflection

Teacher Assessment

Date:

Students' Name	Strategies Using Proficiently	Strategies to Work on
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		

Teacher Information Sheet

About Aesop:

Aesop lived in Greece in the early sixth century. He was captured during the war and would tell stories and tales while in captivity during negotiations. The fables have come to be used for a variety of purposes. While Aesop used them to make witty points to solve problems and reveal human truths, over time many of the stories were used in the education of children to open up the moral domain for discussion about behavior and values in the classroom.

About Fables:

Fables are moral tales, often involving animals that represent people. They reveal human experiences and show conflicts over issues. They are usually concise and short stories. They also usually indicate a moral lesson or satirize human conduct.

About Fairy Tales:

Fairy Tales are folk stories about real-life problems, usually with magical events, transformations, and royal characters. Fairy Tales are often told in an optimistic, ordinary, casual tone and have happy endings.

About Folk Tales:

Folk tales are fairy tales and fables that have been retold within a culture for generations and are well known through repeated storytelling. Both fairy tales and fables are considered fiction. Because the tales are set in any time, they seem almost timeless and placeless. They carry common themes, such as reward of good and punishment of evil.

Hans Christian Anderson:

He was born in Denmark to a very poor mother and father about 200 years ago. He was very interested in theater and poetry as a young boy. He began writing plays when he was young, but no one liked his plays. He eventually went to school where he studied to become a writer. He then wrote tales about people who had unfortunate lives. Eventually, people started enjoying his tales, and they began to be published in many, many different languages and countries. They were different from many fairy tales because they were humorous, and often did not end happily.

Brothers Grimm:

Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm were from Germany (early 1800's). They were both teachers, librarians and lexicographers, but it was their commitment to collecting German tales that would leave an indelible mark on the world. The brothers wanted to write stories that would help preserve traditional German folktales of their time. As they began writing the stories, they also became accidental entertainers. Many villages wanted to watch the Brother's Grimm come and tell their tales. Most of them were quite unpredictable and cruel stories. Some of their stories that you might have heard of are "Little Red Riding Hood", "Hansel and Gretel", and "Jack and The Bean Stalk". The two Brothers Grimm

fairy tales that will be covered in this unit are a little less known. First, is “The Fisherman and His Wife” and second, is “The Frog King”.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Reading Self-evaluation

1. What kind of reader are you?

2. I mostly like to read
fact (nonfiction) or fiction (imaginary).

3. Choosing a just right book is

4. I like to read by myself with a friend.

5. To remember a story, I
draw it. tell it. imagine it.

or _____

6. I mostly read out loud listen to stories read silently.

Lesson 1

Date:

Lesson 1: Aesop's Fables

Introduction of Aesop's Fables

Focus on "The Boy Who Cried Wolf"

Instructional Group: Second grade readers

Duration: 55 minutes of a literacy block

Transition: Students will begin lesson on the floor where they can sit comfortably and listen to the story and discuss background knowledge. Students will return to desks to work on post-reading activity.

Pre-assessment: This lesson will help the teacher find out how much students already know about fables and fairytales. Prior to reading the book, have an open discussion with the students about folklore. In a comfortable place, talk about known fairy tales, fables, movies, books, poems, characters and settings, etc.

Learner Outcomes: At the end of this lesson, students will

- begin to understand ideas of fairytales and fables.
- examine new vocabulary from story.
- have a concrete idea of where the unit is headed.

Colorado Standards Addressed: Colorado Content Standards for Reading and Writing
Standard 1: Students read and understand a variety of materials.

By the end of second grade, students will be early/fluent readers with strategies used independently to gain meaning from print at the second grade level. These strategies will prepare them for reading at higher levels.

- gain meaning from a variety of print, such as lists, letters, rhymes, poems, stories, and expository text.
- use a variety of comprehension strategies before, during, and after reading.
- use and integrate background knowledge, experience, and context to construct meaning.

Standard 2: Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences.

- generate topics through prewriting activities (for example, brainstorming, webbing, mapping, drawing, K-W-L charts, group discussion).

Standard 3: Students write and speak using conventional grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

- know and use standard, age-appropriate spelling, grammar, and word usage.
- write legibly.

Standard 6: Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience.

- identify the elements of plot, character, and setting in a favorite story.
- read, respond to, and discuss a variety of literature such as folk tales, legends, myths, fiction, rhymes and poems, non-fiction, and content-area reading.

Materials needed: Dry erase board, copy of “The Boy Who Cried Wolf”, plain, thick white paper (construction paper) for activity, markers or colored pencils, copy of “Notes for Teacher about Aesop’s Fables”

Anticipatory Set: Explain to the students that a new unit is beginning that is going to cover Aesop’s Fables and a few other fairytales. Within the unit, many activities will be taught and discussed which will help students develop new strategies to aid in reading comprehension. At this time, ask students about what they already know about fables and fairy tales. Can they name any? Who wrote them? Are they fiction or fact? Write ideas and brainstorm on board. Read aloud any missed information from “Notes for Teacher about Aesop’s Fables”. At this time, it is important to discuss how a fable has a “moral to the story”. Discuss what the moral of the story means to the reader. Review any unknown vocabulary from the story, “The Boy Who Cried Wolf”.

Teaching the Lesson:

Input: The teacher will read the story “The Boy Who Cried Wolf” aloud to the students as they sit on the carpet. Before teacher begins to read, ask students to try to figure out the “moral of the story” while listening. Before reading the ending, ask students to make predictions. Make sure the student can identify why they are making such a prediction.

Model: Come up with a prediction based on what has been read so far. Are there parts of the story the students neglected to notice?

Guided Practice: After reading the story and discussing the moral (Liars are not believed even when they are telling the truth), explain activity to students.

Model: Take out a piece of the construction paper and draw a picture of the “boy” in the story. Write the word “WANTED” across the top. Have the students come up with a short explanation (or summary) to describe what the boy did wrong in the story. Ask students to volunteer some ideas at this time. If time allows, have students draw first in pencil and then go over in marker. You could have students add AGE: DATE: EYES: etc. to make the poster look more like a real WANTED poster. Students should write at least three sentences about the boy and the story.

Guided Practice: Have students return to their desks. Pass out the paper and have each student work on their own “WANTED” poster.

Check For Understanding: Review some of the “summaries” to make sure students are retelling the story properly. If there is extra time, have students read and show their posters.

Differentiated Learning Needs: Students may work with partners if summarizing is difficult. Some students might enjoy rewriting the ending of the story to change the outcome of the story. This could be a journal entry or a take home lesson.

Conclusion: This is a creative way to have students retell a story. They are able to use drawing skills and creativity to develop a “WANTED” poster, and at the same time practice summarizing the story. Be sure that students are aware that retelling or

summarizing is one way to help reading comprehension. Another strategy is to have them visualize the characters in the story...in this case the “boy”.

Reflection: Reflect on how the lesson went. Are the students ready to move on? Did they have enough time to finish their posters? What would change for next time?

Lesson 2

Date:

Lesson 2: Aesop's Fables

Focus on "The Tortoise and The Hare"

Instructional Group: Second grade readers

Duration: 55 Minutes of a literacy block

Transition: Students will begin lesson on the floor where they can sit comfortably and listen to the story and discuss background knowledge. Students will return to desks to work on post-reading activity.

Pre-assessment: Review for a few minutes lesson 1. At this point, students should remember some important qualities about fables and fairytales. Students should also be able to figure out what the moral of the story is with the second example of a fable. Students need to be able to pick out the beginning, middle, and ending of the story (or the important parts of the story). As a strategy, this is also considered sequencing the story.

Learner Outcomes: At the end of this lesson, students will

- know what a storyboard is.
- understand the word bragging.
- be able to explain the moral of the story.
- be able to pick out the beginning, middle and end of the story (sequencing).

Colorado Standards Addressed: Colorado Content Standards for Reading and Writing Standard 1: Students read and understand a variety of materials.

By the end of second grade, students will be early/fluent readers with strategies used independently to gain meaning from print at the second grade level. These strategies will prepare them for reading at higher levels.

- gain meaning from a variety of print, such as lists, letters, rhymes, poems, stories, and expository text.
- use a variety of comprehension strategies before, during, and after reading.
- use and integrate background knowledge, experience, and context to construct meaning.

Standard 2: Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences.

- generate topics through prewriting activities (for example, brainstorming, webbing, mapping, drawing, K-W-L charts, group discussion).

Standard 3: Students write and speak using conventional grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

- know and use standard, age-appropriate spelling, grammar, and word usage.
- write legibly.

Standard 6: Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience.

- identify the elements of plot, character, and setting in a favorite story.
- read, respond to, and discuss a variety of literature such as folk tales, legends, myths, fiction, rhymes and poems, non-fiction, and content-area reading.

Materials needed: Teacher will need to make copies of the play “The Tortoise and the Hare” (provided here), large 11x17 paper, markers or crayons, and pencils.

Anticipatory Set: The reason for this lesson is to have students think about the important parts of a story. The students should be able to see that something happens first, second, third, etc. By doing this exercise, students will be able to write down, in order, what happens in the story. At this time, the teacher should review any unknown vocabulary from the story. Teacher can discuss the differences between a hare and a tortoise. Which is the faster animal? How many students think the hare will win? How many of the students have been in a race themselves? Discuss.

Teaching the Lesson:

The teacher will have to pick students to read certain parts of the play aloud to the class. The teacher could be the Narrator 1. The teacher needs to select a Narrator 2, Hare, Mouse, Frog, Horse, Snake, Tortoise, Cheering Squad 1, and Cheering Squad 2. From here, the teacher will begin reading the story. After the story is read, ask...

Why didn't the other animals want to race with Hare? Why did Tortoise win the race? What do you think “slow and steady wins the race” means? Do you think that telling a story is a good way to teach people a lesson?

Input: Show some examples from the story of how the hare is bragging. What is the moral of the story? (Slow and steady wins the race) Discuss what the moral means. What are some other examples of how slow and steady might be beneficial? Schoolwork, cleaning, building something, etc.

Model: Discuss or even write on the board the events that take place during the story. (i.e. First, hare challenges tortoise to a race. Second, tortoise begins training for the race. Third, the race begins. Forth, hare stops to take a nap. Fifth, tortoise passes hare while he is napping. Sixth, tortoise wins the race!)

Guided Practice: Before passing out the paper and dismissing students to begin their work. Explain to class what a storyboard is and what it can be used for. Many people use a storyboard to help explain the order of events in a story. A storyboard can also be used to come up with multiple endings or to change events around in a story. A storyboard creates a visual “sequence” of events that tell the story.

Model: Have students go back to their desks. They may work with a partner on this exercise. This might help students to bounce ideas off one another. Pass out paper, but before students begin, have them write the list of events they are going to illustrate. Have them write the events as a list. (i.e. 1., 2., 3., etc.)

Guided Practice: Students fold their papers into six different sections and then unfold so that there are creases where each event will be drawn. Have them number the squares across 1., 2., 3., 4., etc. Students are to create their own storyboard based on the story “The Tortoise and The Hare”. Students should fill each square with a drawing of the “important event” using first pencil and then color. Each square should be completely colored in. No white paper showing through.

Check For Understanding: As the teacher moves around the room, make sure the students are writing down only the most important events and that they are in the correct order. Students should have at least four events and no more than six.

Differentiated Learning Needs: Students who need help with finding the most important events could work from a list of events provided by the teacher. The student would then number the events as they took place. From that list, they would begin their storyboard. For a challenge, students can change the ending of the story and draw a new conclusion on their storyboard. The student would then have to explain how the new ending affects the rest of the story and possibly the moral. The teacher could also have students use different animals to represent the “fast” and “slow” characters.

Conclusion: Review a few of the students’ work in front of the class. Make sure students have the order of events correct. Bridge the vocabulary, first, second, third...with words like beginning, middle, and end. Explain to students that another strategy to help with reading comprehension is to list the main events of a story. This would be a good time to have students write in their journals or literacy folders a list of the strategies that they have covered so far. The teacher should also start a list that can later be copied and passed out at the end of the unit “Comprehension Strategies Good Readers Use” (provided).

Reflection: Reflect on how the lesson went. Are the students ready to move on? Did they have enough time to finish their storyboards? What would be different for next time? Were students challenged?

The Tortoise and the Hare

Characters

Narrator 1

Narrator 2

Hare

Mouse

Frog

Horse

Snake

Tortoise

Cheering Squad 1(several students)

Cheering Squad 2 (remaining students)

Narrator 1: One sunny day in the forest, Mouse, Frog, Snake, and Horse were sitting around talking.

Narrator 2: All of a sudden, Hare ran up to them. He jogged in place as he spoke to the other animals.

Hare: I feel like running a race. Who would like to race with me? How about you Mouse?

Mouse: No, not me. I cannot scurry along fast enough to beat you!

Hare: You are right. How about you Frog?

Frog: No, not me. I cannot hop along fast enough to beat you!

Hare: You are right. How about you Horse?

Horse: No, not me. I cannot gallop along fast enough to beat you!

Hare: You are right. How about you Snake?

Snake: No, not me. I cannot sssslither along fast enough to beat you!

Hare: You are right. I am the fastest animal around! I have never been beaten in a race.

Narrator 1: At that moment, Tortoise appeared. He was walking very slowly toward the group.

Tortoise: I will race with you.

Narrator 2: The other animals stared at Tortoise. Then Hare burst out laughing.

Hare: You? You must be joking! You are so slow!

Narrator 1: The other animals laughed too. How could tortoise ever beat Hare?

Tortoise: I can beat you.

Hare: No, you can't.

Tortoise: Yes, I can.

Hare: No, you can't.

Tortoise: Yes, I can!

Hare: Well, I hate to see you make a fool of yourself, but OK.

Tortoise: All right then. Let us begin.

Narrator 2: Hare turned toward the other animals.

Hare: Help us out, please.

Mouse: On your marks

Narrator 1: Tortoise and Hare lined up side by side.

Snake: Get sssssset

Narrator 2: Tortoise and Hare crouched down. They were ready to run!

Frog: Go!

Cheering squad 1: Go Tortoise!

Cheering squad 2: Go Hare!

Narrator 1: Tortoise started moving very slowly.

Narrator 2: Hare took off quickly, leaving Tortoise and the other animals behind. Horse looked at Tortoise.

Horse: You have to move a little faster if you want to win.

Tortoise: This is as fast as I can go! Step by step. Step by step.

Narrator 1: Hare was very far ahead now. He decided to take a little nap.

Hare: That Tortoise will never catch up to me. When I wake up, I will make it to the finish line in plenty of time!

Narrator 2: Hare lay down and went to sleep.

Narrator 1: While Hare slept, Tortoise caught up with him. He kept going and slowly moved past Hare.

Narrator 2: The other animals saw this. They ran over to Hare and tried to wake him up.

Mouse: Hare!

Frog: Wake up!

Snake: Tortoissssse issssssss beating you!

Narrator 1: Hare stirred. Finally he was awake.

Hare: Huh? What? What is going on?

Horse: Tortoise is ahead of you. Get going!

Hare: I have plenty of time! Please, let me nap!

Narrator 2: The other animals shrugged. Hare would not listen to them.

Mouse: Fine. Rest then.

Snake: Let usssssss go catch up with Tortoisssssssse.

Frog: Hop to it.

Horse: Giddy-yap.

Narrator 1: The animals ran to catch up with Tortoise. They watched as he crossed the finish line.

Narrator 2: Mouse patted Tortoise on his back.

Mouse: Well done!

Frog: Great job!

Snake: Congratulationssssssssss

Horse: Good going!

Narrator 1: Meanwhile, Hare had woken up. He looked at his watch and started off toward the finish line.

Narrator 2: Hare was out of breath when he caught up to the other animals. Then he saw that Tortoise had won the race. Hare spoke to Tortoise.

Hare: How did you beat me?

Tortoise: Well, it's a little secret of mine.

Hare: Oh, come on. You can tell us.

Snake: Yessssssssss, pleassssssssse do.

Frog: What's the scoop?

Mouse: We want to know.

Horse: What is the secret?

Tortoise: I learned this lesson from wise old Grandfather Tortoise. As you move from place to place, slow and steady wins the race.

Hare: How about another try? One more race. I know I can beat you this time.

Tortoise: Maybe tomorrow. Right now I must go to the pond. A duck is waiting for me there. He wants to see who is the fastest swimmer.

Mouse: May we come along?

Tortoise: Of course.

Narrator 1: All the animals followed Tortoise, even Hare.

Narrator 2: As they walked they chanted the lesson Tortoise had just taught them.

All: As you move from place to place,
Slow and steady wins the race!

The End

Lesson 3

Date:

Lesson 3: Aesop's Fables

Focus on "Town Mouse and Country Mouse"

Instructional Group: Second grade readers

Duration: 55 minutes of a literacy block

Transition: Students will begin lesson on the floor where they can sit comfortably and listen to the story and discuss background knowledge. Students will return to desks to work on post-reading activity.

Pre-assessment: The teacher should talk about the differences between living in the city and living in the country. "Where do we live?" "What is unique about our town or city?" "Have any of you ever visited a friend that lives far away? How was their home or city different from yours?" List some of the student's ideas on the board.

Learner Outcomes: At the end of this lesson students will

- understand some of the differences between living in the country versus living in the city.
- recognize the new vocabulary from the story.
- be able to discuss the moral of the story.

Colorado Standards Addressed: Colorado Content Standards for Reading and Writing
Standard 1: Students read and understand a variety of materials.

By the end of second grade, students will be early/fluent readers with strategies used independently to gain meaning from print at the second grade level. These strategies will prepare them for reading at higher levels.

- gain meaning from a variety of print, such as lists, letters, rhymes, poems, stories, and expository text.
- use a variety of comprehension strategies before, during, and after reading.
- use and integrate background knowledge, experience, and context to construct meaning.

Standard 2: Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences.

- generate topics through prewriting activities (for example, brainstorming, webbing, mapping, drawing, K-W-L charts, group discussion).

Standard 3: Students write and speak using conventional grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

- know and use standard, age-appropriate spelling, grammar, and word usage.
- write legibly.

Standard 6: Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience.

- identify the elements of plot, character, and setting in a favorite story.
- read, respond to, and discuss a variety of literature such as folk tales, legends, myths, fiction, rhymes and poems, non-fiction, and content-area reading.

Materials needed: Comparison chart (included), copy of the fable, “Town Mouse and Country Mouse” (one copy is rewritten by Jan Brett), ideally the teacher will have five or six copies of the story around for the students to “skim”, literacy journal or blank sheet of paper.

Anticipatory Set: This lesson is going to make the class think about what they like or dislike about where they live or what the strengths/weaknesses are about their community. This would be a good time to help students realize that Aesop enjoyed using animals to portray human issues. “Why do you think he told so many of his stories with an animal point of view or with animal main characters?” Before the teacher begins to read the story, be sure to cover any unknown vocabulary.

Teaching the Lesson:

Input: The teacher will read the fable, “Town Mouse and Country Mouse” retold by Jan Brett. Be sure to answer questions or comments during the story. It is important to model how to answer your own questions as a reader during reading. The teacher can talk about the two strategies to work on today. Skimming the story to look for ideas and comparing and contrasting parts of the story. (In this case, the city life to the country life.) Both of these strategies are done after the student is finished reading the story. (post-reading strategies)

Guided Practice: After reading the entire story, ask students if they know what the moral of the story might be? (There is no place like home, or different strokes for different folks.) “What were some of the problems the city mouse had? What were some of the problems the country mouse had?” Explain activity to students.

Model: Have students return to their desks. Pass out the Comparison sheet. Depending on how well the students comprehend at this point, this could either be an independent exercise or a group exercise. Have students compare town living (city) to country living. What are some differences about living in town and the country? Be sure students understand how important it is to go back within the text to find some answers. This is one strategy the class will be focusing on today. (Skim text after reading to find details.) Another strategy is to compare and contrast ideas in a story.

Guided Practice: In their journals or blank piece of paper, have students work independently to plan a dinner menu or picnic menu for some friends visiting from out of town. What are some unique things about where they live or their family that would be different from someone else’s? This should be written in paragraph form using complete sentences.

Check For Understanding: Are students coming up with different menus unique to them? Ask students what strategies they are using to come up with their ideas. Make sure students understand the difference between skimming and rereading.

Differentiated Learning Needs: If students have a difficult time with the journal entry, they can draw the dinner menu or picnic. If students need more challenging activities, they can discuss on paper more differences than just food the two places have. They could explain the differences in clothing, social activities, etc.

Conclusion: To conclude this lesson, have some of the students share their menus. Discuss how they are unique. Also review the strategies used and add them to the list of “Comprehension Strategies Good Readers Use”.

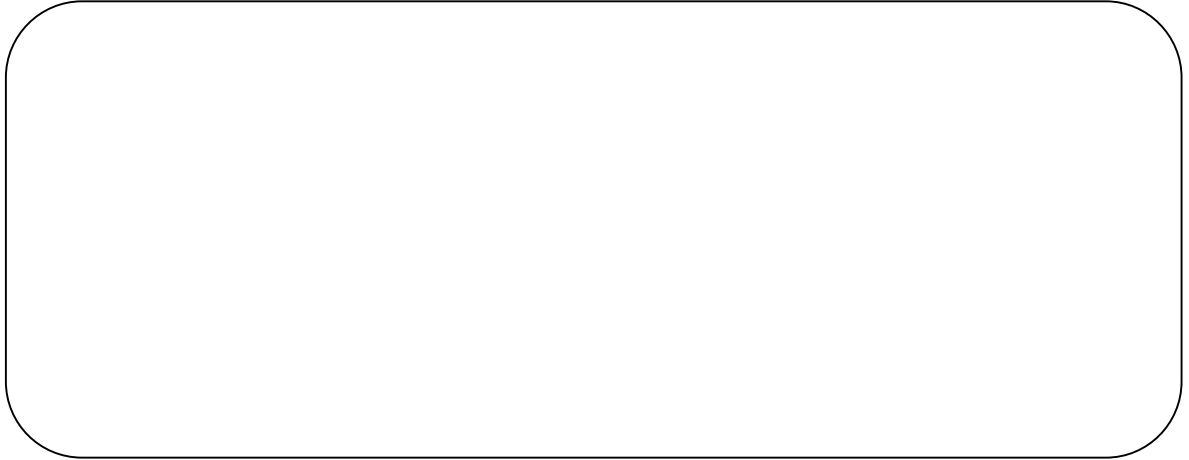
Reflection: How did students enjoy the activities? Were they able to compare and contrast living areas? Were they able to understand and recognize the moral of the story? Was there enough time allowed for the lesson?

Name: _____

Title of story: _____

Comparison Sheet

Similarities:



Differences:



Lesson 4

Date:

Lesson 4: Aesop's Fable

Focus on "The Lion and The Mouse"

Instructional Group: Second grade readers

Duration: 55 minutes of a literacy block

Transition: Students will begin lesson on the floor where they can sit comfortably and listen to the story and discuss background knowledge. Students will return to desks to work on post-reading activity.

Pre-assessment: Begin by sparking background knowledge. Talk about doing favors and helping others out and discuss how a mouse could possibly help a lion. For this lesson, the teacher is going to be focusing on some prereading and during reading strategies. Try to find a copy of the fable that has pictures.

Learner Outcomes: By the end of this lesson, students will

- practice creating mental pictures.
- make a favor coupon.
- be able to discuss things they are good at.

Colorado Standards Addressed: Colorado Content Standards for Reading and Writing
Standard 1: Students read and understand a variety of materials.

By the end of second grade, students will be early/fluent readers with strategies used independently to gain meaning from print at the second grade level. These strategies will prepare them for reading at higher levels.

- gain meaning from a variety of print, such as lists, letters, rhymes, poems, stories, and expository text.
- use a variety of comprehension strategies before, during, and after reading.
- use and integrate background knowledge, experience, and context to construct meaning.

Standard 2: Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences.

- generate topics through prewriting activities (for example, brainstorming, webbing, mapping, drawing, K-W-L charts, group discussion).

Standard 3: Students write and speak using conventional grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

- know and use standard, age-appropriate spelling, grammar, and word usage.
- write legibly.

Standard 6: Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience.

- identify the elements of plot, character, and setting in a favorite story.
- read, respond to, and discuss a variety of literature such as folk tales, legends, myths, fiction, rhymes and poems, non-fiction, and content-area reading.

Materials needed: favor coupon sheet, copy of fable, “The Lion and The Mouse”.

Anticipatory Set: Explain to the students that they need to close their eyes while the story is being read. When they use this strategy on their own, students will need to periodically stop reading, close their eyes, and try to visualize what is going on in the story. This is the first of two strategies taught during this lesson. The second is to have the students make predictions about the story. By reading the title, and possibly looking at a picture, ask the students if they would like to make predictions about what might happen to the mouse and the lion. The teacher may need to do a picture walk to get more predictions.

Teaching the Lesson:

Input: Once the teacher is finished with the predictions, begin reading the fable. Be sure to stop frequently to have students “visualize” what is going on in the story. Ask a few of the students to explain or describe their visual.

Model: The teacher can model this by discussing her/his own visual.

Guided Practice: Have students stay on the carpet while discussing the fable. What is the moral of the story? (Even the smallest friends can do big favors.) Talk about doing favors for others. Discuss things that the students are good at and explain that a favor is often offering someone help with something you are good at.

Model: Talk about an example of a favor a child did for the teacher, or that the teacher did for someone “bigger”. The teacher needs to use something that he/she is good at as an example.

Guided Practice: Students can go back to their desks and start brainstorming about some things they are good at. Pass out favor coupons. Each student can fill in a few coupons, cut them out and staple them together to make a booklet.

Check For Understanding: Were students able to recognize the moral of the story? Make sure they are coming up with appropriate favors. (i.e. “I am good at washing the dishes, so I will write...This coupon is worth one evening of washing dishes.” Or “I am good at math, so this coupon is for my little brother worth one math tutoring lesson”.) Were students able to visualize events in the story? Make predictions? Did any of their predictions come true?

Differentiated Learning Needs: This can be done by just discussing some favors students have done for others. The teacher could write some of these favors down and have a “favor wall” in the classroom where students can see how they help others. As a more challenging activity, students can replace the animals and rewrite the story with the new animals and different outcome.

Conclusion: Review the two strategies used in the lesson. Make sure students add the strategies to their list of strategies. The teacher can begin to ask students which strategies are working for them better than others. Review the moral of the story. By this time, students should be familiar with the principles of a fable.

Reflection: Was there enough time for the lesson? Was everyone engaged and challenged? What would change about the lesson next time?

Lesson 5

Date:

Lesson 5: Fairy Tales

Introduction of Hans Christian Anderson

Focus on “The Emperor’s New Clothes”

Instructional Group: Second grade readers

Duration: 55 minutes of a literacy block

Transition: Students will begin lesson on the floor where they can sit comfortably and listen to the story and discuss background knowledge. Students will return to desks to work on post-reading activity.

Pre-assessment: Now that the class has studied Aesop’s fables for two weeks, the teacher will move on to read and introduce a few new fairy tales. Two Hans Christian Anderson and two Brothers Grimm fairy tales will be discussed.

Learner Outcomes: At the end of this lesson, students will

- be familiar with Hans Christian Anderson.
- identify the main characters, as well as the good and bad characters.
- explain the moral of the story.

Colorado Standards Addressed: Colorado Content Standards for Reading and Writing
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- gain meaning from a variety of print, such as lists, letters, rhymes, poems, stories, and expository text.
- use a variety of comprehension strategies before, during, and after reading.
- use and integrate background knowledge, experience, and context to construct meaning.

Standard 2: Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences.

- generate topics through prewriting activities (for example, brainstorming, webbing, mapping, drawing, K-W-L charts, group discussion).

Standard 3: Students write and speak using conventional grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

- know and use standard, age-appropriate spelling, grammar, and word usage.
- write legibly.

Standard 6: Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience.

- identify the elements of plot, character, and setting in a favorite story.
- read, respond to, and discuss a variety of literature such as folk tales, legends, myths, fiction, rhymes and poems, non-fiction, and content-area reading.

Materials needed: Teacher will need enough copies of the story for the students to buddy read. Students will be designing an outfit for the Emperor, so there needs to be construction paper, buttons, lace, sequins, etc., glue, and white board.

Anticipatory Set: The teacher needs to talk a bit about Hans Christian Anderson. He was born in Denmark to a very poor mother and father about 200 years ago. He was very interested in theater and poetry as a young boy. He began writing plays when he was young, but no one liked his plays. He eventually went to school where he studied to become a writer. He then wrote tales about people who had unfortunate lives. Eventually, people started enjoying his tales, and they began to be published in many, many different languages and countries. They were different from many fairy tales because they were humorous, and often did not end happily. Discuss all of the unknown vocabulary words from the story. Before dismissing students for buddy reading, let them know they are going to have to write whom the main characters are from the story, and who the good and bad characters are.

Teaching the Lesson:

Input: Ask students to pick a partner, or assign partners and buddy read “The Emperor’s New Clothes”.

Model: Remind students of the strategies to decode unknown words. Move around the room to make sure students are on task. Review some of the other strategies for reading comprehension

Guided Practice: As students are finishing reading, have them write down in their literacy journal or on a blank sheet of paper, the main characters, good characters and bad characters.

Model: Review the main characters. Explain to the students that listing the main characters in a story is one reading strategy to help with comprehension. At this time, the moral of the story should be discussed. (Vanity is foolish, or don’t judge a book by its cover.) Talk about some things the Emperor could have done differently to have a different outcome in the story. Why was it so important to him to have nice clothes? Did it make the townspeople like him more? Did it make him a better Emperor?

Guided Practice: Have students return to desks, and pass out art supplies. On a piece of construction paper, have students design a “real” outfit for the Emperor. It could be a modern day outfit or one from long ago. The teacher could have some examples of clothes kings/queens used to wear, or clothes men/women leaders wear today from books and pictures.

Check For Understanding: Were students able to write the main character and good and bad characters in their journal? Go around the room while they are working on the clothing and see what they have to say about the moral of the story.

Differentiated Learning Needs: If students cannot buddy read, be sure to either have a book on tape, movie version, or read aloud.

Conclusion: Review the new vocabulary words from the story and add the new strategy to the list of “Comprehension Strategies Good Readers Use”. (Identifying main characters)

Reflection: Did the students enjoy making an outfit for the Emperor? Was there enough time allowed to finish their work? What would be changed next time?

Lesson 6

Date:

Lesson 6: Hans Christian Anderson Fairy Tales

Focus on “The Princess and The Pea”

Instructional Group: Second grade readers

Duration: 55 minutes of a literacy block

Transition: Students will begin lesson on the floor where they can sit comfortably and listen to the story and discuss background knowledge. Students will return to desks to work on post-reading activity.

Pre-assessment: This is the second Hans Christian Anderson fairy tale to study. Discuss “The Princess and The Pea”. Has anyone heard of the story? Show the students the book and see if they have any predictions about the story. Review any unknown vocabulary words.

Learner Outcomes: At the end of this lesson, students will

- be able to recognize the problem and the solution of the story.
- be able to discuss the moral of the story.
- recognize new vocabulary words.

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- use a variety of comprehension strategies before, during, and after reading.
- use and integrate background knowledge, experience, and context to construct meaning.

Standard 2: Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences.

- generate topics through prewriting activities (for example, brainstorming, webbing, mapping, drawing, K-W-L charts, group discussion).

Standard 3: Students write and speak using conventional grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

- know and use standard, age-appropriate spelling, grammar, and word usage.
- write legibly.

Standard 6: Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience.

- identify the elements of plot, character, and setting in a favorite story.
- read, respond to, and discuss a variety of literature such as folk tales, legends, myths, fiction, rhymes and poems, non-fiction, and content-area reading.

Materials needed: A copy of “The Princess and the Pea”, problem and solution sheet.

Anticipatory Set: Talk about how all interesting fiction stories have a problem and a solution. The strategy to focus on in this lesson will be cause and effect, or problem/solution. This is a strategy students will use after they have completed the story. Discuss some qualities of a princess to get students’ background knowledge rolling. What kind of lifestyle are princesses used to living? How are they usually treated?

Teaching the Lesson:

Input: Read out loud the copy of “The Princess and The Pea”. Be sure to answer any questions the students might have during reading. This story could also be read by taking turns reading with the students.

Model: Review the story. Ask questions about the main events and characters.

Guided Practice: Students are going to fill out a paper that discusses the problem and solution in the story. Review what these parts of the story are as a group. The problem is that the Queen cannot find a “real” princess for her son. The solution is that she decides to put a pea underneath the mattress to test the young lady, and the young lady passes the test!

Model: Send students back to their desks and pass out problem/ solution paper. Once students have finished problem/ solution paper, have the students pretend that he/she is a principal of a school. The problem is that he/she cannot find any “real” teachers to work in the school. The “principal” needs to come up with a test to find a “real” teacher. What will the solution be?

Guided Practice: For example, “As the principal, I am looking for a teacher who is very strict, doesn’t let the students have any fun, and can read 10 books in one day!” Remind students how silly the solution in the book really is. Can they come up with some bizarre solutions as well? Ask students to write ideas in their literacy journal.

Check For Understanding: Make sure that students understand the problem and solution of “The Princess and The Pea”. Explain that it is a reading comprehension strategy that helps students think more closely about the story. Check to see if students could come up with a problem/ solution of his/ her own.

Differentiated Learning Needs: As a challenging exercise, students can pick a quote from the story and write about or discuss how it relates to the problem/solution of the story. Students could also pretend that they are something other than the principal, (i.e. what they want to be when they grow up) and do a similar exercise with problem/solution.

Conclusion: Have a few of the students read what they have written. Discuss some of the solutions the students came up with. Review the strategies discussed so far and add the new one to their “Comprehension Strategies Good Readers Use” list.

Reflection: Did the students enjoy the lesson? What could be done differently next time? What are some thoughts about the lesson?

Problem/ Solution

Name: _____

Title of story: _____

The problem in this story is _____

The solution to the problem is _____

Draw a picture explaining the solution.



Lesson 7

Date:

Lesson 7: The Brothers Grimm Fairy Tales

Focus on “The Fisherman and His Wife”

Instructional Group: Second grade readers

Duration: 55 minutes of a literacy block

Transition: Students will begin lesson on the floor where they can sit comfortably and listen to the story and discuss background knowledge. Students will return to desks to work on post-reading activity.

Pre-assessment: This is a good place to review what the students learned about Aesop and Hans Christian Anderson. What kind of stories did they write? Who were their characters? Did they write about happy endings?

Learner Outcomes: At the end of this lesson, students will

- know a bit about the Brothers Grimm.
- be familiar with a “think aloud”.
- identify with some new strategies for reading comprehension.

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Standard 1: Students read and understand a variety of materials.

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- gain meaning from a variety of print, such as lists, letters, rhymes, poems, stories, and expository text.
- use a variety of comprehension strategies before, during, and after reading.
- use and integrate background knowledge, experience, and context to construct meaning.

Standard 2: Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences.

- generate topics through prewriting activities (for example, brainstorming, webbing, mapping, drawing, K-W-L charts, group discussion).

Standard 3: Students write and speak using conventional grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

- know and use standard, age-appropriate spelling, grammar, and word usage.
- write legibly.

Standard 6: Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience.

- identify the elements of plot, character, and setting in a favorite story.
- read, respond to, and discuss a variety of literature such as folk tales, legends, myths, fiction, rhymes and poems, non-fiction, and content-area reading.

Materials needed: A copy of “The Fisherman and His Wife” (Eric Carle has a great version), literacy journal or blank piece of paper.

Anticipatory Set: The teacher will begin talking about the brothers Grimm.

Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm were from Germany (early 1800’s). They were both teachers, librarians and lexicographers, but it was their commitment to collecting German tales that would leave an indelible mark on the world. The brothers wanted to write stories that would help preserve traditional German folktales of their time. As they began writing the stories, they also became accidental entertainers. Many villages wanted to watch the Brothers Grimm tell their tales. Most of them were quite unpredictable and cruel stories. Some of their stories that you might have heard of are “Little Red Riding Hood”, “Hansel and Gretel”, and “Jack and The Bean Stalk”. The two Brother’s Grimm fairy tales that will be covered in this unit are a little less known. First, is “The Fisherman and His Wife” and second, is “The Frog King”. In this lesson, the teacher will do a “think aloud”. This strategy is to show students what good readers do to aid in their comprehension.

Teaching the Lesson:

Input: Begin the lesson by looking at the book. Talk about the title, cover picture, and what a fisherman does for work. If the teacher can make a connection with his/her own life, talk about that as well. “Skim” the story for any unknown vocabulary words. The teacher may need to look up a word or two in the dictionary and take note of its meaning. Next, do a picture walk. Notice how the fisherman seems to be working very hard, and the wife doesn’t do anything except go from a small house to a bigger, and bigger house. At the end, they are both back in the same house. The teacher thinks aloud, “Maybe it is a story about a man and woman who move around a lot. Hmm, there is a goldfish in a couple of the pictures. I wonder if he can talk? I wonder if he is a friend with the fisherman? Etc.”

Model: Now, read the story out loud from front to back. As the teacher reads, stop and self check comprehension and make a prediction about what might happen next. All of this should be done as if the teacher is thinking it all in his/her head. Reread a section if needed. Are there any questions the teacher might have about the text? i.e. Why does the wife never seem happy with what she has? Why does the fisherman keep going back to the fish?

Guided Practice: When the story is over, the teacher should model a few of the postreading strategies. Summarize the story. The teacher can pretend he/she is telling his/her best friend about a really good story. Finally take out a piece of paper and draw a picture of the magical fish, etc. Make a connection to the story. i.e. “I remember one time going fishing with my brother. We caught a few really small fish, and my dad made me throw them back in the water. We had a really great day.”

Model: To check the student’s comprehension of the story, have them pull out a piece of paper or their literacy journal. The teacher should write on the board, “three wishes”. At this point, the teacher can come up with three wishes he would ask upon meeting a magical fish. Talk about the three. Have students go back to their desks and come up with three of their own wishes. Read a few out loud. Talk about who would benefit from the wishes.

Guided Practice: After the discussion of wishes and the students have recognized whom the wishes are for, have the students come up with three new wishes. One should be for themselves, one for someone they know, and one for others in the world around them. Hopefully students will be more aware of the needs of the world the second time around.

Check For Understanding: What is the theme of the fairy tale? (Material things don't make you happy, or you shouldn't be greedy...you might just lose it all, or people are more important than "things".) What were the things the wife wanted from the fish? What were the wife's wishes? Where do you think the fish went at the end of the story? Why did the fisherman and his wife return to their first house?

Differentiated Learning Needs: The "think aloud" process is beneficial for all reading levels, but some students may need assistance coming up with wishes. Students could work in pairs. A challenging exercise is to have students come up with a "theme connection". Have students compare the theme or moral of this story to another story or fairy tale they come up with. Students could look through the basket of other fairy tales to find one that discusses greed.

Conclusion: Do the students have questions about the "think aloud" process? Do they think they could follow that process on their own? Discuss the strategies used to help with comprehension. Have students get out their own lists and see if the teacher forgot to use any of the strategies learned previously. Ask students to read aloud some of their new wishes.

Reflection: Did the students enjoy the story? Did they understand the moral of the story? Were they able to change the wishes to fit the parameters? Was that meaningful for them? What are some things that could be changed for next time?

Lesson 8

Date:

Lesson 8: The Brothers Grimm Fairy tales

Focus on “The Frog King”

Instructional Group: Second grade readers

Duration: 55 minutes of a literacy block

Transition: Students will begin lesson on the floor where they can sit comfortably and listen to the story and discuss background knowledge. Students will return to desks to work on post-reading activity.

Pre-assessment: This story has many, many different versions. The most popular is the Brothers’ Grimm version. Is anyone familiar with the story? Thinking back on the other fairy tales that have been read to the class, will this story be a “real story”? Could a frog really be a king? Would a princess and a frog be friends in real life?

Learner Outcomes: At the end of this lesson, students will

- identify the Brothers’ Grimm story of “The Frog King”.
- be able to relate story to a promise that was made in their own life.
- be able to identify the main characters.

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- use a variety of comprehension strategies before, during, and after reading.
- use and integrate background knowledge, experience, and context to construct meaning.

Standard 2: Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences.

- generate topics through prewriting activities (for example, brainstorming, webbing, mapping, drawing, K-W-L charts, group discussion).

Standard 3: Students write and speak using conventional grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

- know and use standard, age-appropriate spelling, grammar, and word usage.
- write legibly.

Standard 6: Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience.

- identify the elements of plot, character, and setting in a favorite story.
- read, respond to, and discuss a variety of literature such as folk tales, legends, myths, fiction, rhymes and poems, non-fiction, and content-area reading.

Materials needed: The teacher needs to find a movie version of “The Frog Prince” or “The Frog King”, materials needed to make puppets; construction paper, straws or popsicle sticks (fat ones), markers, scissors, sequins, and glue.

Anticipatory Set: Review any vocabulary that might be new to the students. Discuss some predictions of the story. Ask if any of the students have a frog or if they have ever touched a frog. What do they feel like? Are they soft and cuddly, etc.? Ask students to close their eyes and imagine what a frog King might look like . . . crown? jewels? clothes?

Teaching the Lesson:

Input: During the viewing of the fairy tale, remind students to think about the promise that the princess makes to the frog. Can they make a connection in their own life about a promise? Did the princess intend to keep her promise?

Model: Once the story is read, review the main parts of the story. What happened at the beginning, middle, and end? Who were the main characters? Did any of the predictions come true? Explain to students that they will be making a puppet of their favorite character. After discussing the main characters, they should have a better idea of which one to choose. The teacher can show the students the supplies and a model of what they will be making. Hopefully there will be at least one of each main character in the story made. The bodies and heads are glued onto the popsicle stick to make a small hand held puppet.

Guided Practice: As students finish making their puppets, have them begin to retell the story to the teacher using the voice of the puppet. They could retell the story in the point of view of their character.

Model: To model the retelling of the story, the teacher can ask a few of the students to come up to the front of the class and lead them in a short puppet show of the story.

Check For Understanding: Ask other groups of students to come up and retell the story in their point of view. If the class has extra time, a bed, carriage, and well can be created to help with the story telling. Make sure the students emphasize the “promise” and the way the king says, “Promises made in a time of need must be kept”.

Differentiated Learning Needs: For a challenging extension, students can write about a promise they made or that someone made to them that was difficult to keep. They can also draw a picture of how they felt when this happened to them.

Conclusion: Review the strategies. Let students know that listing the main characters and discussing the beginning, middle, and end of a story are both strategies to assist in reading comprehension.

Reflection: How did the puppets turn out? Did the students enjoy turning the movie into a play? Were they able to use their previously taught strategies to help comprehend the story? What would be done differently next time?

Lesson 9

Date:

Lesson 9: Folk tales from other cultures

Instructional Group: Second grade readers

Duration: 55 minutes of a literacy block

Transition: Because this is one of the final lessons, the students will mainly work independently or with a partner at their desks.

Pre-assessment: Students will begin next week writing their own fable, so it is important that students are aware of the parts of a fable/fairy tale. Review some of the fable and fairy tales that have been read to the class and discuss characters, problem and solution, and beginning, middle, and end. Discuss the similarities of all of the stories read so far.

Learner Outcomes: At the end of this lesson, students will

- be able to name a few of their favorite fables and fairy tales.
- be able to use strategies taught to help with reading comprehension.
- be able to work with a partner productively.

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- use a variety of comprehension strategies before, during, and after reading.
- use and integrate background knowledge, experience, and context to construct meaning.

Standard 2: Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences.

- generate topics through prewriting activities (for example, brainstorming, webbing, mapping, drawing, K-W-L charts, group discussion).

Standard 3: Students write and speak using conventional grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

- know and use standard, age-appropriate spelling, grammar, and word usage.
- write legibly.

Standard 6: Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience.

- identify the elements of plot, character, and setting in a favorite story.
- read, respond to, and discuss a variety of literature such as folk tales, legends, myths, fiction, rhymes and poems, non-fiction, and content-area reading.

Materials needed: At the beginning of the unit, it is important for the teacher to go to the library and check out as many fable and fairy tale books as possible. They should be available for students to read in the classroom during reading times throughout the unit.

The teacher needs to also check out fables and fairy tales from different cultures. There are dozens to choose from. Teachers should choose some from the different cultures represented in the classroom. There should also be a few books on tape, picture books, chapter books, and short videos. Because these types of stories often use difficult vocabulary, be sure there are books that students can read independently.

Anticipatory Set: Let students know that they can either work alone, or with a partner to pick out a fairy tale book or story from the classroom library to give a report on to the rest of the class. Students should be able to find a book that they can read and comprehend independently. This may require using books on tape.

Teaching the Lesson:

Input: Once students are paired with a classmate, have them pick out a story. Review the strategies that help them comprehend their reading. Let students know that they will have to talk about their story to the class. They will have to recommend the book if they liked it, and explain why others should read it. If they didn't like it, they need to explain why. What are some details from the story?

Model: The teacher needs to give an example of a "report" to the class. The report does not have to be written, but encourage students to write down a few important points to cover, (i.e. "I think everyone should read this book because it is full of interesting characters, like Jasmine). I especially like the part when the lion became friends with the monkey because they normally wouldn't be friends. The ending is happy because they both find their families."

Guided Practice: If students are working in pairs, encourage them to practice what each is going to say before they get up in front of the class. Give students about 35-40 minutes to come up with their "report". This lesson might take two days to finish, depending on how well students read and write. If students don't get finished in one day, have them write the report in their journal so they can read it the next day to the class.

Check For Understanding: Were students able to pull out the main parts and some important details of the story? Were they able to describe the main characters? Could they say why they liked or disliked the story? All of these questions will help the teacher to know if students are ready to start writing their own stories. Be sure students have their list of strategies available while they are reading and reporting to remind them what good readers do. Students can work in small groups if the teacher predicts problems for some of the students.

Conclusion: This is a fun way for students to pick out the type of story they prefer. Teachers will also be able to assess students' comprehension just by listening to their "retell".

Reflection: Were students able to read and comprehend independently? Was there enough time to finish reports? What would be done differently next time?

Folktales from around the world

(This is a very small listing of the many, many wonderful tales written.)

Japanese

The Two Frogs
The Stone Cutter
The Tongue-Cut Sparrow

African American

Three Fast Men
The Weasel's Mother
The Peacemakers
The Crane's Reward
Why There is Day and Night
The Tortoise and the Eagle

Norwegian

Bear and Fox
Thumbie
The Cock and Hen
The Pancake
Farmer Windie

China

The Four Dragons
The Bright Pearl
The Jeweled Sea

Russia

The Wise Little Girl
Seven Simeons
Baba Yaga
Father Frost

Mexico

The Moon Was at a Fiesta
Uncle Snake
The Twenty-five Mixtec Cats
A Mayan Life
The Rabbit Throws Out His Sandal
The Jaguar and the Little Skunk

Native American

Red Shield and Running Wolf
Falling Star
Father of Indian Corn

Lesson 10

Date:

Lesson 10: Final Project: Writing a Fable

Instructional Group: Second grade readers

Duration: 55 minutes of a literacy block, three to four sessions of literacy to finish paper.

Transition: Students should be free to work wherever they can be most creative. Students will be working independently for this final lesson.

Pre-assessment: Students should be familiar with the writing process and have a writing checklist available for them to start their story. Because students have been exposed to a number of morals and themes, they should be able to come up with a few on their own. This is a great opportunity to discuss some ideas before getting started. “What type of message would you like to share in your story?”

Learner Outcomes: At the end of this lesson, students will

- be able to successfully write a fable.
- be able to illustrate a few important details from their fable.
- be able to discuss the moral of their fable.
- read aloud fable to the class.
- recognize which strategies they used throughout the unit to help with reading comprehension.

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- gain meaning from a variety of print, such as lists, letters, rhymes, poems, stories, and expository text.
- use a variety of comprehension strategies before, during, and after reading.
- use and integrate background knowledge, experience, and context to construct meaning.

Standard 2: Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences.

- generate topics through prewriting activities (for example, brainstorming, webbing, mapping, drawing, K-W-L charts, group discussion).
- write a first draft with the necessary components for a specific genre.
- revise draft content
- edit revised draft using resources.
- proofread final draft
- present final copy according to purpose.

Standard 3: Students write and speak using conventional grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

- know and use standard, age-appropriate spelling, grammar, and word usage.

-write legibly.

Standard 6: Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience.

-identify the elements of plot, character, and setting in a favorite story.

-read, respond to, and discuss a variety of literature such as folk tales, legends, myths, fiction, rhymes and poems, non-fiction, and content-area reading.

Materials needed: Students should have a copy of a writing checklist (included if needed) and the writing process (also included if needed), and a copy of “Create Your Own Fable” sheet. Students should have paper to write a first draft, with room for revisions, and then a final draft paper or small book. Students should also have crayons, markers, or colored pencils for their illustrations.

Anticipatory Set: The teacher may want to show an example of a written original fable written by a student. Discuss the parts to a story. Discuss what a fable usually includes. Moral? Animals? Happy ending? What were the few fables that were read a few weeks ago? Brainstorm some ideas about morals from the students’ lives.

Teaching the Lesson:

Input: After discussing the different morals students want to write about, ask, “How can you show some of these examples in a story?” Remind them that fables often use animals in place of people, but the animals act like humans. Have students think about some of the examples from their own lives that could aid in the discussion. Once the students have had enough time to brainstorm ideas, they should be ready to start writing. Ask them if they can think of fun animals to help represent the story. There are examples of morals created by students included.

Model: Use the “Create Your Own Fable” sheet, and have students come up with some ideas and write them down on the paper. The class can work together on a story that can be used as a starting example. Tell students not to worry about spelling in the first draft.

Guided Practice: Let students begin their writing process. Review with each student independently before they start writing their first draft. Discuss characters, setting, problem, solution, etc. Also make sure the story explains the moral they came up with.

Check For Understanding: Are students able to come up with exciting stories on their own? Check to make sure students have the important parts to their story before they start writing. (Characters, setting, problem, solution) Make sure the moral of the story is decided before they begin writing.

Differentiated Learning Needs: The story can be dictated if a student is struggling with spelling or writing. Teacher may need to write popular words on the board to help students with spelling.

Conclusion: Make a copy of everyone’s final stories and turn them into an anthology of fables! Keep it in the classroom library for everyone to look at.

Reflection: Were students able to complete the stories? Did they enjoy coming up with ideas and morals on their own?

Example of a fable written by a student

The Rain Forest, the Animals and the Bulldozer

By Charlie Goal

Once there was a green rain forest with lots of animals. The rain forest animals were very happy because they had lots of food.

But one day the animals heard a sound and became scared. They found where the sound was coming from. It was coming from a bulldozer that was knocking down the trees.

The person driving the bulldozer was named John. He thought, "If I knock down all the trees, I will have no oxygen and no air." So John stopped. He got out of the bulldozer and said, "I will never ride this bulldozer again because I am destroying nature." And he went in his car and he went home.

A month later, John went back to the rain forest. The animals were happy. They went over to John and hugged him.

Moral: Be nice to nature and it will be nice to you.

Examples of students' chosen morals

Don't make promises you can't keep
You don't have to be an animal to help an animal
A person is never better than another person
Good deeds make even better things happen
Never play a practical joke
Treat others the way you would want to be treated
Don't use drugs
Never give up
You can become nicer by learning from good examples
Be nice to nature and it will be nice to you
One good thing leads to another
If you are nice to others, others will be nice to you
Don't be selfish
You can't keep doing the same thing forever
If you do something good for someone, you will be paid back
Treat nature kindly
Face your fears

Assessment

Date: _____

Final assessment

Students name: _____

Place a check mark for each strategy the student is using independently, a minus if the student needs additional work, and an x mark if the student does not show any knowledge of the strategy.

- 1. Background knowledge
- 2. Preview vocabulary
- 3. Picture walk
- 4. Create mental picture
- 5. Ask questions
- 6. Predictions and drawing conclusions
- 7. Summarizing
- 8. Sequencing
- 9. Compare and contrast
- 10. Main characters
- 11. Main parts of a story
- 12. Multiple perspectives
- 13. Locate details
- 14. Talk, write and draw
- 15. reflect

Notes:

The Writing Process

1. Prewriting
2. Writing
3. Sharing with a friend
4. Revising (make changes and complete checklist)
5. Editing with an adult
6. Publishing

Writing Checklist

- I webbed my story.
- My story has a beginning, middle, and ending.
- My story has characters, a setting, and an event or problem.
- I used correct punctuation and appropriate capitals.
- I wrote all the sounds I heard.
- I checked my frequent words.
- I read my story to a friend.
- My friend listened, asked questions, and gave comments.
- I changed or added details.
- I edited with a teacher.

You are ready to publish!

Teacher Survey

Name: _____

Date: _____

Evaluation of Reading Comprehension Unit

Please use this scale to evaluate to following unit plan:

1=strongly agree 2=agree 3=not sure 4=disagree 5=strongly disagree

1. Unit meets curriculum standards for literacy and writing for lower elementary. _____
2. This unit details all strategies discussed as “Strategies Good Readers Use”. _____
3. This unit is easy to understand and follow. _____
4. This unit takes into account many different types of learners. _____
5. The needs of all abilities can be met with this unit. _____
6. Lesson plans meet stated objectives. _____

Please answer the following questions about the unit in short answer format.

1. Would you consider implementing this unit in your classroom? Why or why not?

2. What do you see are the strengths of this unit?

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

With the research done for this project, the author hopes to provide teachers with interesting ideas to assist in teaching reading comprehension for beginner readers. The unit plan included in Chapter 4 demonstrates and discusses many strategies that are helpful for students who are struggling with their reading comprehension, and the unit plan includes new methods by which to teach the strategies.

Contributions of the Project

After completing the project, the author of this study was able to reflect on the usefulness, success, and effectiveness of the developed unit plan that addressed the original stated issue throughout the paper on reading comprehension. The unit that was developed discusses many of the important strategies that teachers of elementary students should be using in their classroom to facilitate better reading comprehension. By undertaking the strategies discussed, current teachers can help beginner struggling readers understand the important steps they can take to improve reading comprehension.

The author realized that there are many beginner readers “slipping through the cracks” that are struggling with reading comprehension, and that it is important to recognize that strong readers do not necessarily make strong reading comprehenders. The unit developed is also a guide for teachers to recognize students who read fluently, yet struggle with comprehension. The author received a great deal of feedback from fellow colleagues that assisted in the conclusion of this applied project. All of the

teachers who were asked to review the unit plan are highly respected and veteran teachers from the Jefferson County School District. The feedback provided by these teachers was predominately positive and very informative. Many of the teachers expressed how much fun the unit would be for the students. They also commented on the adaptability and cohesiveness of the unit. Two of the evaluations noted that the unit would work well within their social studies curriculum. One teacher noted that the unit contains meaningful activities that match the strategies that needed to be reviewed. One second grade teacher felt that by second grade, it would be nice if students were doing more of the reading themselves. All of the teachers that reviewed the unit believed they would use parts, or the entire unit in their classroom to assist with reading comprehension. Many of the evaluations noted the thoroughness of the use of strategies and how helpful they could be to their students.

Limitations to the Project

There were a few significant limitations to this project. One limitation for the author was the number of teachers that were able to actually teach some of the lessons in the unit within their classroom. Because of the time of year, many teachers who were asked to review the unit had finished teaching the fairy tale unit that most teachers cover in the middle of the second grade year. Another limitation to the project was the number of strategies that could be covered. There are many more strategies that have been researched and reviewed by a number of different scholars, yet the author of this study chose to discuss only the most effective. There are other strategies that could possibly work better for different types of learners. A final limitation in developing the unit plan was the goal of teaching the unit to the entire class, rather than to smaller ability based

reading groups. It was important to the author to keep the reading material at a “just right” level for second grade, which required a lot of read alouds instead of independent reading.

Recommendations for Future Study

Further studies involving reading comprehension could be done as the students continue their way through elementary school to see how effective and user friendly the comprehension strategies discussed in this research are for them. It would be interesting to see how successful reading comprehension affects vocabulary use, fluency, and attitudes about literacy. It would also be interesting to study how differences in background knowledge can affect reading comprehension.

One recommendation for future study was to add some follow-up activities with each strategy to ensure that the skills were comprehended. By reviewing each strategy one more time at the end of the unit, the evaluator believed the students would have a better change of remembering them all. Another recommendation was to carry the strategies into more subject areas in order to build a comprehension base that goes beyond literacy.

Summary

This research project was developed to assist early elementary teachers with information on a number of reading comprehension strategies that can help beginner readers. With the unit included in Chapter 4, teachers have access to a full reading unit that focuses on each strategy, while also introducing character education opportunities. It was the authors’ purpose to provide teachers with a list of successful strategies that are important for students to use in their reading, and also be able to show some interesting

ways to teach the strategies using moral stories and whole class learning. The author has realized that some teachers may only need to focus on the strategies the class is not familiar with, or strategies that have not previously been taught. Providing teachers with useful information to help struggling readers and making reading more enjoyable for their students accomplishes the author's purpose of the research project. Hopefully, readers of this applied project will walk away with gained knowledge that will help their students to read and comprehend successfully.

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