

Down the Read Aloud Road to Better Writing

--Pam Grote

Why do teachers read aloud?

They read aloud to:

- Open up new worlds to students.
- Integrate across the curriculum—science, history, music, math.
- Create excitement for reading and writing.
- Introduce structural writing concepts.
- Have fun—for all involved!

“If the teacher reads aloud from quality literary works every day for at least 20 minutes (and preferably a half hour), the student’s writing ability will be enhanced in five specific ways:

1. His vocabulary will increase in word count and in comprehension.
2. His ability to distinguish between subtle shades of meanings will improve.
3. His sentence structure will gain in sophistication and complexity.
4. He will gain a sense of structure and organization.
5. He will gain a motive for writing.” –Carol Gay, *“Reading Aloud and Learning to Write”*

1. Vocabulary Increase

2. Subtle Shades of Meaning

3. Sentence Structure Sophistication

4. Organization and Structure

5. Motive for Writing

What should teachers read aloud?

Novels, short stories, picture books, poetry, magazine articles, newspaper articles, non-fiction, biographies, autobiographies, speeches, historical documents. Choose books above their independent reading level* and at their listening level**.

- *Independent reading level is the level at which the student read fluently with 90% (or higher) comprehension and 95% word recognition.
- ** Listening level is the level at which students adequately comprehend material that is read by the teacher.

What does reading aloud to students allow the teacher to do?

It allows him/her to :

- Model fluent and expressive reading.
- Think Aloud.
- Model the reading process.
- Review text structure.
- Make connections and interactions with other texts.

Interactive Read Alouds

Teachers should plan ahead for interactive read alouds.

- Choose the text, and pre-read it.
- Plan the work to be done within the book.
 - a. Plan places in the text to “think aloud.”
 - b. Model readers’ predictions.
 - c. Re-read sections to show that good readers reread to regain comprehension.
 - d. Choose sections to model vocabulary choice, sentence structure, organization, character development.
- Plan sections where students and their neighbors share their thoughts.

Glorious Read Alouds

Novels, picture books, short stories, poetry

It is unreasonable to expect children to learn to do something they've never seen or heard. They need to hear the rhythms of poetry and the patterns of literary prose even (and especially) when they are too young to read it themselves. Listening to read alouds develops auding ability—the process of hearing, listening to, recognizing, and understanding written language.

“The flow of written language read aloud introduces phrasing, structures, vocabulary, and figures of speech beyond the language a child speaks and hears spoken around him.” ---Carol Gay

From read alouds, a child comes to realize what literature is and what writing offers him: an opportunity to describe, define, and better understand the world around him. And that world created by God, was ***spoken*** into being. In ***words***.

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Our duty—our *joy*--is to teach our students to use words rightly and excellently to communicate truth, beauty, and goodness in rich, winsome, engaging ways. Read alouds will show them how.