

Shared reading

Shared reading is an essential component of the daily literacy programme. It allows for a high degree of interaction and is a great way for teachers to help students to increase their understanding of themselves as text users. It's an effective approach, which can be used with both large groups and small groups to develop students' strategies and their knowledge of how written texts work (see page 27).

When a teacher reads to students, the students participate as active listeners. In shared reading, the teacher and the students read a text together. The teacher leads the reading, and the students follow with their eyes, actively listening, and join in as they become familiar with words, phrases, or concepts. All the participants need to be able to see the text, which is usually enlarged. The teacher's support enables the students to behave like readers and enjoy the text even though they may not yet be able to read it comfortably on their own.

Shared reading conveys messages about the joys of reading. It also provides a supportive instructional setting in which teachers can systematically and purposefully:

- develop positive attitudes towards reading;
- model fluent, expressive reading;
- deliberately teach specific strategies for reading;
- develop students' awareness of visual and phonological information;
- teach specific vocabulary and identify particular word features;
- build students' understanding of text forms and structures;

³³ *The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig* by E. Trivizas

- encourage thoughtful and personal responses, including critical responses, to text;
- develop a sense of community in the classroom;
- expose students to a wide range of texts.

Shared reading provides a secure learning environment that can and should be enjoyed by all children. It can open up new worlds for children and motivate them in mastering the skills they will need to become successful learners.

Thompson, Thornley, and McIlwrick, 1997, page 2

The same text can be used several times in successive shared reading sessions, with a different focus each time to meet new goals. As the students become familiar with the text, they gradually take more responsibility for reading it themselves.

Students for whom English is a new language can participate confidently in shared reading. They attend to the illustrations, diagrams, and photographs while hearing the language used in an enjoyable and authentic context.

Shared reading provides opportunities for teachers to observe how their students interact with texts. It also allows teachers to plan purposeful ways to develop students' use of the sources of information in text (see pages 28–31) in a supportive context. It's an ideal setting in which to introduce and reinforce information about the conventions of print (see page 33), about strategies for solving unknown words, and about sound patterns in spoken language (see pages 32–37) or spelling patterns in written language (see pages 144–148). Refer also to the sections on shared reading in the Ministry of Education's *Ready to Read Teacher Support Material*).

Choosing texts

A wide range of different types of text should be selected for shared reading. Each text should be chosen to suit one or more specific instructional purposes. From the beginning years, the range should include non-fiction. Shared reading can also incorporate handmade texts, poems, songs, pieces from magazines, and articles from newspapers – perhaps enlarged for use on the overhead projector. An overhead projector can also be used to display the menus, web pages, and icons that enable readers to navigate electronic texts on the Internet.

Shared reading sessions

A shared reading session may last as long as twenty minutes, depending on the purposes, the time of day, and the students' interest. Alternatively, it may be a brief session, simply to savour a favourite text or to reread something that captures the moment.

Introducing the text

A text should be introduced in a way that builds eagerness and a sense of anticipation. Keeping the introduction brief helps the students to relate the text to their experience and to predict something of its meaning and structure. The purpose for reading the text should be shared with the students.

Reading the text

The first reading should focus on the students' enjoyment and understanding of the text. With texts that have a catchy rhythm and repetitive pattern, the students can



be encouraged to join in on the first reading. Teachers often engage learners by pausing and asking them to predict what may happen next or to share their responses briefly.

In subsequent readings, the teacher can focus on specific features or learning strategies that they have identified for teaching or reinforcement with the group. This could involve writing words on the whiteboard to explore spelling patterns or letter-sound relationships. (A masking device may be used to isolate letters, words, or parts of words.) Or the focus could be on features of layout, such as bold headings, and on helping the students to find out how to use these features in their reading and their writing. Another focus could be on close reading of a particular passage to help the students identify the main points or the words that indicate a particular character's point of view.

All the children loved *Clickety-Clack Cicada*.³⁴ They recognised the insect as soon as I put the poem card on the easel, and they shuddered and giggled about the way cicadas cling to you. The alliteration and rhythm helped my two newly arrived children to join in the reading.

I used the mask to reinforce the contraction of "don't", to teach the letter blend "cl", and to demonstrate the different sounds of "c" within the word "cicada". The children thought of other examples of the blend "cl", including "class", "clean", "clap", and "clever". I'll draw the children's attention to the spelling of "circle" and "centre" when we're doing maths and look for opportunities in guided and shared reading to draw children's attention to the different sounds of "c".

We also focused on the difference, in the poem, between the quiet night and the noisy day. We'll read and talk about other insect and animal poems, and we'll build up a collection of words and phrases for the children to use in their own writing.

Teacher, year 1 class



³⁴ *Clickety-Clack Cicada* by J. Brasell

Following up

Shared reading texts should be made available after the reading so that the students can enjoy them independently. Small groups can use enlarged texts and charts (or audio versions if these are available) to replicate the shared reading experience. The students can take turns to lead the group in reading, using a pointer.

Some texts lend themselves to further activities, depending on the teacher's objectives. Activities might include:

- shared writing modelled on the text;
- word-level work, such as listing words that have the same rime;
- retelling the story to a small group;
- dramatising episodes of the story;
- improvising music to accompany a dramatisation of the story.

Simply hearing the text again, possibly at a listening post, may be the most appropriate follow-up.