

Comprehension in the Upper Elementary Grades

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Agenda

- Role of comprehension in reading and assessment
- Description of 'Just Right Books'
- A look at comprehension requirements in different reading levels
- Application to Because of Winn Dixie
- Facilitated Book Club Discussion
- Reflection and Wrap Up

Reading is making meaning from print

In order to do that we need to be able to:

- Decode words
- Read words in phrases with expression, using punctuation as cues
- Understand the text

Just Right Books

When a student is reading a just right book she still has a lot of work to do at that level, BUT she can practice that work independently with feedback from her teacher.

Independent Reading

When students are reading independently in class and for homework, they should have a specific reading strategy or two that they are practicing. In the upper grades most students are working on practicing strategies around comprehension.

Sample Reading Strategy

When asked to talk about the importance of a part of a story to the whole, I use what I know about story structure to name what part of the story it is: the setting? The problem?

I can also think about how the part is important to the whole story. If it is the setting, for example, I think "How is this particular setting important to the story?"



Comprehension requirements increase as students read harder and harder books



BANDS OF READING LEVELS in Fiction

CHEAT SHEET for Parents

If your child is reading books like the Junie B. Jones Series, The Marvin Redpost Series or the Rainbow Fairy's Series, here are some areas where your reader can focus.

K-L-M

- **Plot**

Problem → Solution

I want a bike → I get a bike

That is, the plot is very simple. The character makes multiple attempts to solve the problem, but they usually get what they want. Also when reading in a series at this level, readers should start to figure out the predictable plot structure of each book in the series. For example, in the Rainbow Series books they always find the fairy at the beginning, they always battle the goblins and they are always successful in the end.

- **Character**

Readers need to be able to identify how the main character's feelings change across the book. There is not an internal change, but feelings change.

Readers also should be reading a lot of books in the series at this level so that they can accumulate a lot of information about the main character. That is, they should carry the information they learned about the character in one book to the next book. The supportive structure of books at this level is that the characters do not change across the series. They are the same in each book.

- **Central Problem**

Goes throughout book

Keep the problem in mind as you read

- **Tricky**

Unknown words → use the context to figure out the meaning of unknown words

If your child is reading books like *Ramona*, The Amber Brown Series, The Fudge Series, Geronimo Stilton

N-O-P-Q

- **Plot** Problem → Resolution I want a bike → I learn how to be a good friend
 More than 1 problem Issues around plot (poverty, loss, family issues)

Readers at this level have a lot more work to do. The plot structure is more complicated because mostly characters do not get what they want and social issues are also beginning to be related to the struggles of the character. Also there may not be one clear problem, but instead multiple issues that the character struggles with.

- **Character**

Now characters are changing internally from the beginning to the end of the book. Readers can predict when and how this will happen. Readers also have to figure out the kind of people their characters' are because the books no longer tell them explicitly.

- **Tricky** Phrases (figurative language)

The tricky parts are figurative language. That is, readers get stuck on or miss figurative language because they can read the words but they don't take the time to figure out the meaning.

If your child is reading books like *Because of Winn Dixie*, *Skylark*, and *Tiger Rising*, *The Percy Jackson Series*

R-S-T (added difficulties)

- **Plot** Multiple plot lines

Now the reader has to handle multiple plot lines, how to keep track of them and has to figure out how to read when a book is told from multiple perspectives.

- **Character** Minor characters matter more

Now the reader has to get to know the minor character as well as the main character. The reader has to figure out who the minor character is and why they are in the book. They have to figure out how the book would be different if that character was not there.

- **Tricky** Pages may not make sense (rereading does not help....reading on to try to solve)

- **Setting** Plays a role in the story

(act as another character, mimic the feelings of the character, cause of a problem, connected to the problem)

Readers have to pay attention to the setting because it is now playing a major role in the story. The reader has to figure out what the role is and how the setting is effecting the story.

- **Symbolism & Metaphor**

Symbolism and metaphor are introduced and repeated throughout the story. Readers have to figure out what objects or ideas might stand for something else. In these books there is a lot of repetition so readers have many opportunities to notice metaphor.

If your child is reading books like *The BFG*, *Tangerine*, or *Number the Stars*, *Harry Potter Series*

U-V

- **Plot** "Tragic injustices" Plot does *not* follow the Disney plot line. Things are *not* always good at the end.
Stories continue to be layered with multiple social issues.

Reader need to predict differently in this level due to the plot changes. There are also multiple problems and solutions that are connected to different themes.

- **Character** Many characters change (not just the main character)
Ex: *Tangerine* (main characters parents change, his brother changes)

Readers need to be able to recognize that the characters in these books are complex. It is hard to pin down exactly who this character is. Sometimes the character may seem one way, and other times they may seem totally different.

- **Tricky** As a reader you may have a sense something is going on, but may not quite understand what it is.
You have to 'hold onto it' & read on to figure out what it is.
You should have Ohhh...that's what that was! or Ohhh...now I get it! moments as you read forward.
- **Tricky** Lots of metaphor/symbolism with multiple possible meanings.
Big events or featured objects often stand for something else.
Ex: A landslide represents the feelings of the family and the town.

Which detail from the story best demonstrates the relationship between ____ and ____? (Choose two characters.)

How do ____'s actions affect ____? (Choose two characters or one character and a problem in the story.)

Reflections

What is this making you think about your child's comprehension work?

Questions

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