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Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from Teaching Reading Across the Day, Grades K-8.

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# What Research Says

## About Read-Aloud Lessons

Interactive read-aloud lessons help readers to

- ➔ improve their language and literacy skills (Mol et al., 2008; Whitehurst et al., 1994; Whitehurst et al., 1999);
- ➔ develop an understanding of fluent reading as you read aloud with expression (Flood et al., 2005);
- ➔ develop comprehension as you offer students opportunities to apply strategies, check for understanding, and observe your thinking about the text. For example, one experimental study showed significant effects on students' ability to retell the story (Baker et al., 2020), while others demonstrated more detailed recounting and depth of understanding (Fisher et al., 2004; Hickman et al., 2004; Santoro et al., 2008);
- ➔ become more active in text-based discussions, constructing meaning of the text, and critiquing the ideas of their classmates (Beck et al., 2020);
- ➔ sharpen conversation skills as children have brief conversations with a partner and longer post-reading conversations with groups or the whole class (Worthy et al., 2012);
- ➔ get hooked on certain authors, topics, or series and increase motivation to read (Fisher et al., 2004; Gambrell et al., 1993; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001);
- ➔ celebrate examples of powerful writing, which will inspire and immerse students in exceptional writing craft when you guide children to notice and infer the authors' intentions (Beard, 1991; Fisher et al., 2004; Griffith, 2010);
- ➔ build community and strengthen relationships in the classroom as students learn from each other's ideas and share their own (Barrentine, 1996; Rizzuto & Steiner, 2022);
- ➔ expand oral language (Sulzby & Teale, 2003), improve vocabulary as students practice strategies for figuring out word meanings (Christ & Chu, 2018), and learn words through explicit teaching and exposure to rich vocabulary (Baker et al., 2020); and
- ➔ learn about themselves and their world (Bishop, 1990; Coelho, 2012; O'Neil, 2010; Rivera & Oliveira, 2021).

## *Structure and Timing:* Read-Aloud Lessons

You can do a read-aloud lesson with the whole class or with a small group of students. Whole-class lessons are usually longer (+/-20 minutes), while small-group lessons are both shorter and focused on a smaller selection of text (+/-10 minutes). As you plan, remember that the total lesson time includes you reading aloud as well as any pauses you make to think aloud, define a vocabulary word, or have students actively practice or respond. You can also tag on a conversation at the end of a read-aloud lesson as children discuss the book in pairs, groups, or as a whole class (see Chapter 11: Conversation Lessons). Keep an eye on the time, and if the lesson you planned is running long or student engagement seems to be waning, end the lesson and return to the text and your plans at another time.

Read-aloud lessons go like this:

### **1. Establish a Focus** (1 minute)

Consider how you'll introduce the text to entice and interest your readers. Connect what you'll read about in this text to what they've learned elsewhere—this might be a content connection to social studies or science, it might be a connection to the type of reading work you're practicing (such as looking for themes in fables), or it could connect to something timely (such as a holiday or an upcoming field trip). Let students know why you chose this book for them and what they'll be learning and practicing as you read together.

### **2. Read Aloud and Engage** (7–15 minutes):

Read aloud the text (or a portion of a longer text) with expression and interest. Pause your reading at the places you've planned to think aloud or prompt

students. Also remember that in a read-aloud lesson, you're the only one who is holding a copy of the text, so if there are illustrations, photographs, or text features, you might hold the book up or slide it under a document camera so students can see.

### **3. Clarify the Takeaways** (1 minute)

Offer a quick recap of some of what the students learned—about strategies, content, vocabulary—that they should remember and take with them to their independent reading, content studies, writing about reading, or conversations.

## Responsive Teaching: Read-Aloud Lessons

You'll choose a text and plan ahead, but you won't know how your students will respond to your prompts and questions until the lesson is underway. Listen in and observe as students turn and talk or act, and take a peek at their stop-and-jots when you have them write about the reading. Based on what you hear or see, be ready to respond with support. You may need to switch gears and offer a strategy you hadn't planned to teach, do a quick demonstration or think aloud to support students' practice, or change your prompt or question. See Table 3.3 for examples.

**Table 3.3 Example Language Frames, Responses, and Prompts to Teach Responsively During Read-Aloud Lessons**

If You Hear or Observe . . .	Then You Might Say . . .
Students are quiet, fumbling, or frozen after a turn-and-talk or stop-and-jot prompt.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Readers come back together, please. I think my prompt wasn't clear. [Rephrase prompt.] Does that help? Or should I reread so you can think about the text with that question in mind?</li></ul>
What students write or talk about in response to a prompt or question doesn't align well with the text.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ I'm noticing a bit of confusion based on what you're saying/writing. I'm going to reread so we can consider that question again.</li></ul>
Students react emotionally (laughing, gasping, showing expressions on their faces) during the reading.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ I can tell you all are thinking about this just like I am!</li><li>▶ I know, right? Terrifying!</li><li>▶ I was surprised about that, too. Let's keep reading to see what else we can learn.</li></ul>
Students could use support taking turns, or one student seems to dominate the conversation during turn and talks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ I'm going to assign you to be Partner A and Partner B. [Point to each partnership so the assignments are clear.] This time, Partner A is going to go first and share their thought, and then Partner B is going to respond. Next time, we'll switch.</li></ul>

### If You Hear or Observe . . .

Students are writing furiously in response to a stop-and-jot prompt.

Students responded meaningfully to your prompt (during a turn and talk or stop and jot).

### Then You Might Say . . .

▶ I am going to get back to reading but I can see you have a lot to say. Take another moment to finish up your thought.

▶ Before I start reading again, I'd like to share what I heard/saw from [name].

