

# Read Aloud Strategies for Grades K-3

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Listening to stories is an essential part of the reading-language arts program. There are many reasons for reading and telling stories to children. Reading aloud to children with fluency and enjoyment makes reading seem an easy and desired goal to reach. Listening to stories expands children's abilities to think and comprehend, which leads to the development of critical thinking skills in reading. Learning to listen intently and to make specific responses encourages remembering.

Some stories are for telling, some for reading, and some for a combination of reading and telling. Simple stories with a direct sequence of plot incidents, such as folktales or marginers tales, are best for storytelling. Others, with vivid vocabulary and words that express a certain mood or exact meaning, need to be read to children to help them form mental images. Books with excellent illustrations are good to read and show to children.

Regardless of how a story is brought to children, careful preparation is necessary. A story must be shared with children by reading and rereading it, telling and retelling it. Only then can children listen with confidence and pleasure.

This template is designed to provide everything a primary grade teacher needs to help students to develop critical thinking skills through listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities. A sample lesson is provided on pages 8 and 9 for using this template. The template should be copied so that the teacher has one for each chosen story. Before using the lesson, teachers should pencil in details for the story they wish to present. Then review it so that it appears comfortable and natural. The sharing of literature should be a joyful, enriching time for students and teachers alike.

In order for teachers to use this template with ease, the following techniques are explained below:

## **MOTIVATION**

Children will become excited and involved in the story immediately if the teacher provides a few minutes for motivation. A picture of something related to the story may be shown or a few questions may be used to tap children's prior knowledge and experiences. Use of puppets or felt board characters can become wonderful motivators as you begin the story.

## **READINESS**

In order for children to listen, comprehend, and enjoy a new story, the specific comprehension objective must be explained and difficult vocabulary must be introduced. For example: The teacher may introduce students to the concept of cause/effect, by setting up a series of dominoes. When the first domino is pushed, the teacher asks, "What caused the line of dominoes to fall over? What was the effect of pushing the first one?"

Another easy way to introduce a new critical thinking skill is to show a picture or have students imagine a picture in their minds and ask questions. For example, imagine a picture in your mind of a group of children laughing and playing in an area of the playground and one boy sitting alone on a bench. "What inference can you make about the children who are playing?" (They are having a good time.) "What inference can you make about the boy sitting on the bench?" (He is not happy.) Why do you think he is feeling that way? (He is sick; he is tired; he is being punished; the other children rejected him.)

## **VOCABULARY TO BE INTRODUCED**

Introduction of vocabulary should be a quick and easy step before the story is read. The goal is to expose children to new vocabulary, not to burden the children with difficult words. Children should be able to tell the meaning of the word by listening to the sentence, but if they can't guess the meaning, a definition may be given. If the chosen story contains too many new vocabulary words, the teacher may tell parts of the story or substitute easier words for some of the difficult words.

## **FIRST READING**

When reading aloud a story for the first time, teachers should refrain from showing all the pictures. One or two pictures may be shown at the beginning of the story to help children understand the main characters and setting, but the main purpose of reading aloud will be defeated if children can guess the answers to the questions by looking at the pictures rather than by listening to the content of the story. Therefore, it is usually better to tell the story without pictures the first time. Later, after children have thought about the story, formulating pictures in their minds of the characters and events, and the discussion has ended, the story may be read again, this time showing all the pictures. A new discussion may follow, where children may compare their own mental images with the illustrator's pictures. In addition, the teacher may have a table in the classroom where books that have been read aloud may be displayed. Pre-reading students and beginning readers may go to this table to 'read' them independently or with a partner by telling the story out loud while looking at each picture. This is an easy and valuable way to encourage oral language development. More able readers may begin reading these books independently and sharing them with each other.

## **DIRECT AND INDIRECT QUESTIONING**

Each story should be divided into short sections so that children may listen for a purpose. Prior to reading a section of the story, the teacher should tell the children what they will be listening to find out – the indirect question. For example, if reading the story Goldilocks and the Three Bears, the teacher would say, "Listen to learn the cause or reason why the three bears went for a walk in the woods and for other causes and effects." After that section is read aloud, the teacher would stop and ask the direct question, "What was the cause or reason why the three bears went for a walk in the woods?" This question is precisely worded to match the indirect question so that students will be expecting the very question that they listened for. After the students have responded to that direct question, the teacher continues reading after a new indirect question has been asked (see page 3 for more questioning techniques for the comprehension objective, cause and effect). At the end of the lesson, additional questions may be asked to extend the children's thinking into other cognitive areas.

## QUESTIONING TECHNIQUES

### **1. Stating Details, Facts, and Information**

Who did it?  
What did he do?  
Where did he go?  
How did he do it?

### **2. Telling the Sequence of Events**

What was the first thing that happened?  
What happened next? What did they do after . . . ?  
What did they do before . . . ?

### **3. Making Inferences**

What can you infer about . . . ?  
Why? What makes you think . . . ?  
Why might you suspect that . . . ?  
What clues are you given about . . . ?

### **4. Identifying Cause and Effect Relationships**

What caused this to happen?  
What was the reason for this happening?  
Why? What was the result of . . . ?  
What was the effect of . . . ?  
As a result of . . . , what happened?

### **5. Predicting Outcomes**

What do you predict will happen? Why?  
What do you think will happen? Why?  
What do you foresee?  
What do you anticipate?  
Why might you predict that?

### **6. Making Comparisons**

How are . . . and . . . alike?  
How are they different?  
How does this compare with . . . ?  
In comparison with . . . , how is this different?  
What are the similarities? What are the differences?  
Which is the largest (smallest, newest, bravest, etc.)?

**7. Determining Main Ideas**

(In teaching Main Ideas, the teacher must give a clue, to avoid guessing on the part of students.)

The main idea of this part of the story tells . . .

What is this main idea?

The most important idea tells what the main character did.

The main idea tells what happened at the beginning of the story.

Who will state this main idea in a sentence? Now shorten the sentence to a title (or headline).

**8. Recognizing and Solving Problems**

(Identifying and evaluating problems)

What difficulty was there in . . . ?

What problem had to be solved before . . . ?

What handicap did the main character have to overcome?

(Analyzing solution)

What better way . . . ?

What would you have done to solve the problem of . . . ?

How did the main character overcome . . . ?

**9. Recognizing Word Imagery (Identifying descriptive language)**

What colorful words create a picture in your mind of . . . ?

What word pictures give an image of . . . ?

What vivid descriptions make this story so interesting?

What sensory details give a mental picture of . . . ?

What descriptions appeal to your sense of sight, hearing, smell, touch, taste?

What imagery is used to make this scene come alive?

## **EXTENSION ACTIVITIES**

Several extension ideas should be given at the end of each directed listening lesson. They are to stretch students' thinking and to integrate the use of literature into other areas of the curriculum. Extension ideas may be teacher-directed activities, group or homework projects, or independent classroom follow-ups for students. Extension ideas range from simple to complex. Activities may include art projects, simulated games, role-playing, or cooking experiences.

### Written Extension Activities

Writing activities may be done in a variety of ways. Kindergarten or pre-writers at any age may dictate their ideas to a teacher, older student or adult helper. Then they may learn to read what they have dictated. Beginning writers may need to use ideas given during class discussion, what is written on the board, or use sentence strips. More able writers may begin writing on their own using the writing process. In addition the class may work together to compose a new ending, other stories, poems, letters, etc.

### Extension through Puppet and Felt-Talk Theatre

At the end of each lesson, the students and teacher may create puppets of the characters in the story and settings. These may be kept in zip lock bags for use many times. An enriching experience for the students is to retell the story using the puppets. It expands their vocabulary and enhances their oral activity as a whole class, small group, pairs, or individuals.

## **TIME MANAGEMENT**

Each plan is to be completed in 10-12 minutes. The teacher should spend three minutes for Motivation, Readiness, and Vocabulary Introduction. The reading aloud should take 3-4 minutes. The Direct Questions should take 3-4 minutes. The teacher should be aware of the time when reading aloud and should use the Read and Tell Technique if time is running short. The lesson is intended to be fast-paced to keep students alert and involved with the instruction. If the teacher wishes to cover the book faster, parts of the book can be consolidated and read together.