**Shared Reading with Older Children**

By: Arleen Mariotti

The benefits of reading aloud have been well established. Reading aloud to children increases their knowledge of the world, their vocabulary, their familiarity with written language, and develops their concepts of print and interest in reading. As teachers, we should find numerous opportunities throughout the day to read aloud to our children and do this every day.

Shared reading is more than just reading aloud, though. It is a collaborative learning activity that engages children, is interactive, encourages analytic talk and higher order thinking, and is far more valuable than simply reading without providing opportunities for questions and discussion. Finally, it is an instructional approach in which the teacher explicitly models the strategies and skills of proficient readers.

Shared reading has generally been considered an instructional strategy to be used with young children. The model was built from the research which indicated that storybook reading is a critical factor in the reading development of young children. Shared reading with very young children is a time for telling a story and may include echo reading, choral reading, or oral cloze reading (teacher reads and then pauses for students to fill in and say words in the story). There may be questioning and discussion, dramatization, retellings, a review of story elements and story illustration by the children.

With older readers, shared reading utilizes many of the same features but may use materials that include short stories, poetry, newspaper or magazine articles, and portions of chapter books. The overall purpose of shared reading remains the same: to develop interest, vocabulary and concepts, background knowledge, and reading strategies/skills.

**Preparation Guidelines**

Make sure you preview the material before you read it to children. Scan it to get a sense of its content before you start reading aloud. This helps you spot areas you may want to shorten, take out completely, or expand upon.

Think about your students- their ages, developmental levels, interests- and your goal for reading the material to them. Preplan stopping points and the questions you will ask (or comments you will make) at those points.

Choose material to read that you like or are interested in. It is hard to read a book you don't enjoy with enthusiasm, especially a long one. Your dislike will show if you read aloud books that you don’t like.

Plan to read orally and interact with the students for 10-15 minutes daily. Then allow time for independent, group or buddy reading and follow-up activities.
Starting Off

All the students should be able to see the reading material. You can use digitized books or e-books projected onto a surface or you might transmit the image through a document camera or video projector. If the reading material is short, such as a news article, you can simply show the article and picture (if available) and then post the reading in a prominent place in your classroom.

Some teachers like to provide copies of the material to each student. In this case, you will need class copies of the book or reading material.

Make sure the children can see you by sitting slightly above their eye level and do not begin until everyone has settled down and is looking directly at you.

Establish the mood as it’s an important factor in listening. You might even adjust the lighting or play music to enhance the mood of the story.

Now you’re ready to begin:

Read the title. Ask children what they think the story will be about. Discuss what they know about the topic. Ask them to make predictions based on the title and cover illustration or accompanying picture. If the material is nonfiction, ask them what they know about the topic and what words they might encounter in the reading.

Introduce the author and illustrator. Read the author’s bio. If you’ve previously read another book by the author remind them by saying something like: Does anyone remember another book we’ve read by this author? Remember how much we enjoyed reading _______? Let’s read this one and see if we like it as well as ______.

You might talk about the genre (fiction, nonfiction, folk tale, myth, mystery, science fiction, fable) but don’t dwell on it.

Shared readings can begin with a 'picture walk' in which you guide students through a preview of the reading material. As you display the pages, try to ask questions to elicit words and phrases that are used in the text. You don’t want to give away the ending, so don’t reveal all the pages! With chapter books and nonfiction, you might not have many pictures, so just show the front and back covers and read aloud the back cover to get students ready.

Set a purpose for listening and signal that the reading will begin by saying something like: While I read aloud, you should listen for ...

During Reading

Use lots of expression. If there’s dialogue, you might use different voices to denote the different characters.

Adjust the pace of your reading to fit the story. During a suspenseful part, slow down, draw your words out.

Read at a moderate pace, not too fast. If there are illustrations or photographs, provide time for children to look and enjoy them.
Be enthusiastic.

Answer children’s questions as they occur. The number of times you stop to explain new words or elaborate is up to you. But, remember: stopping too often to go into detail can weaken the narrative’s impact.

Move your finger or pointer under each line or, at minimum, to the beginning of each line. Do this even if you’re using a digital projector, displaying the book through a document camera, computer or on an IWB (interactive white board). If students are following along in their own copy as you read aloud, always announce a new page number.

Discuss the illustrations and how they relate to the story.

Keep in mind that children can look bored or restless and still be listening. Some children need to be moving around or fidgeting with something. The real question is: are they following the story?

After Reading

Give children time to reflect and think about the reading.

Sometimes a book will lead to conversations afterwards, sometimes not. Play it by ear. Either way is fine.

Return to your purpose for reading. If you asked them to listen so they could discuss the story elements, then start discussion by reviewing the story plot, characters, etc.

Ask them to describe their favorite part and why it was their favorite (or most interesting fact).

Ask questions and give information after the read aloud. Questions and elaborations should help children:

1. understand the meanings of unfamiliar words
2. make connections to self, text, and world.
3. interpret the meaning of the book
4. clarify difficult concepts.

Ask questions to encourage children to think about the reading. With fiction they may discuss why events happened the way they did; why people in the story behaved in a certain way; what they might have done the same or differently and why. Help children make connections between the events in the story and their own lives.

With nonfiction, you might discuss how the information relates to their experiences, or how the information is different from or adds to what they already know.

Any activity that asks students to reflect, make connections with the story, and reinforce their understanding is highly encouraged. Allowing students to discuss the reading with their peers is particularly effective. Here are some group strategies:
- Have the students write a summary of the reading. Students share, compare, and discuss their individual summaries in a small group to develop a team summary.
- Student groups or pairs write headlines that capture the main idea of the reading.
- Groups create or complete a graphic organizer or foldable that summarizes the reading.
- Students can write a mini-book or picture book summarizing the main ideas found in a text.
- Groups complete an A to Z review by writing words that begin with each letter of the alphabet related to the reading (alphaboxes, Morrison & Wlodarczyk, 2009)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Groups can role play a TV or radio reporter, and give a “live” report.
- They can create a poster or postcard illustrating important points or favorite parts.
- They can use creative think-alouds (Morgan & York, 2009) which is a form of role play that helps students see multiple perspectives. Morgan and York suggest three core questions for students to explore from their character’s viewpoint: Who am I?, What are my experiences in life?, and How did I choose to solve the problem in the story? You might add additional questions, such as: Why did I act the way I did?, and What effect did my actions have on others? Creative think-alouds can be used with fiction or nonfiction.

Shared reading can be a valuable strategy for you to use with older/struggling readers as they will simultaneously hear an expert reader and develop their comprehension skills. Besides, everyone enjoys being read to—no matter what our age!

References


