

Before, During, and After Reading Complex Texts

(Adapted from *Scaffolding Language, Scaffolding Learning*, Pauline Gibbons)

Our additions or modifications are ***bolded and italicized***.

Before-reading activities

One way of understanding the purpose of these activities is to see them as representing “bridges” between the learner and the text they are going to read. Barriers to reading are those linguistic, cultural, and conceptual difficulties that you have identified in your own close reading of text. The bridges are the interventions that occur through the scaffolding you provide, enabling students to get over these potential hurdles. Before-reading activities aim to do the following:

- Develop knowledge in relation to the *overall* meaning of the text (not every unknown word),
- Prepare students for potential language, cultural, and conceptual difficulties
- Remind students of what they already know (activate prior knowledge)
- Support students to make predictions about the text
- ***Give students a purpose for reading***

As schema theory suggests, if students come to the text with a sense of what they will be reading about, reading becomes a much easier task because they have more resources to draw on. They will be less dependent on the words on the page and will be able to minimize the disadvantage of having less than native-like (***and academic***) proficiency in the language. Because learners will have some sense of the overall meaning of the text, they are likely to be able to comprehend more linguistically challenging language than they might otherwise be able to comprehend. It has been found, for example, that EL learners who heard a story initially in their mother tongue better understood unfamiliar language structure of the story when it was later in English. The text can therefore also serve the purpose of extending learners’ linguistic abilities by providing models of new but comprehensible language.

During-reading activities

Once students have some idea of the genre and content of what they will be reading, it is time for the reading itself.

During-reading activities aim to do the following. They:

- model good reading strategies and make explicit what mature readers do unconsciously
 - engage readers actively with the text, ***by collaboratively answering text dependent questions (text dependent questions Resource #1)***.
 - help learners understand how to read more effectively.
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After-reading activities

These activities are based on the assumption that students are already familiar with the text and no longer have basic comprehension difficulties in reading it. The activities use the text as a springboard for new learning and may fulfill any of these major purposes:

1. To use the now-familiar text as a basis for specific language study, such as to focus on a **language feature: organizational structure**, grammar, vocabulary, idiom, or phonemic or phonetic knowledge that occurs in the text.
2. To allow students an opportunity to respond to what they have read, such as through ***written response to an essential question about the text, and/or*** art or drama activities.
3. To focus students more deeply on the information in the text, for example, by using information transfer activities that represent the information in a different form (e.g., a timeline or a diagram).