

Building Fluency with Readers Theatre

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What is Fluency?

- Automaticity
- Rate
- Accuracy
- Prosody
- Intonation
- Expression
- Comprehension?



What People Might Not Know About Fluency

- Fluency is not just related to reading paragraphs, chapters, and other texts.
- Fluency involves every process and sub-process of reading:
 - Letters
 - Letter sounds
 - Word patterns
 - Words
 - Vocabulary



Why Care About Fluency?

- Fluency is linked to overall reading ability
 - Improved comprehension
 - Improved vocabulary
 - Increased ability to remember what is read

What Happens with Lack of Fluency?

Let's see:



Once many years ago a fiddler came
to the village. He stood in the village
square and played and sang until the
people came to listen and to dance. A
jolly butcher danced with the milkmaid.
A small boy skipped through the crowd
with his dog nipping at his heels and
yapping loudly. After the fiddler
stopped, the people tossed coins into his
hat and brought him milk and cookies
for his trouble. It had been a long weary
day and the fiddler was glad of a rest in
this pleasant village.

Prosody (Phrasing)

- “I wanted spring. to come I / went out. to find that corner. // I walked. Down the path / in the woods. until // I came to / a corner. I went around the corner. to see // if spring was on. // the other side

-versus-

- “I wanted spring to come. I went out to find that corner. I walked down the path in the woods until I came to a corner. I went around the corner to see if spring was on the other side.”

Intonation/Expression

- “Give me my bone.”
- “Give me my bone!”
- “Give me my bone!”
- **“GIVE ME MY BONE!”**



Ideas for Improving Fluency

- Model fluent reading (read aloud!)
- Speed games (letter games, word games, phrase games)
- Guided repeated oral reading
 - Student/adult reading
 - Choral reading
 - Partner reading
 - Tape-assisted reading
 - Readers' Theatre
- Go along with development

What is Readers Theatre?

- A way to present text in a dramatic way through oral reading.
- Text is the most important element. Students read from scripts, telling the audience that the text is central, not the characters or stage.
- Scripts are usually adapted from original works.
- Students can adapt any reading to an RT script.

How Does RT Differ from Plays?

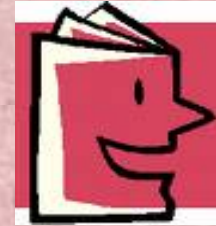
- Students do not memorize lines.
- Students always read from scripts.
- Costumes are minimal, if used at all.
- No stage necessary.
- Can be created from ANY reading source and for ANY level of reader.

How Does RT Help Fluency?

- Research on repeated reading:
 - Repeated reading helps students gain
 - Accuracy
 - Rate
 - Prosody
 - Expressiveness
 - Comprehension

(Dowhower, 1989; Young, 1996)

Using Texts to Create RT Scripts



- Read through text with students.
- Identify the number of students who will be performing the reading.
- Help students decide what characters/parts there should be.
- Help students divide the text into the desired number of parts based on what's going on in the story.
- Students should highlight their parts as you work to divide the script.
- When completed, students should write the name of the character(s) on the front page of the script.

Increase or Decrease the Number of Parts

- Narrator or storyteller
 - There can be no narrator or many narrators.
- Helpers
 - There can be no helpers or many helpers.
- Characters
 - Characters can play one or several parts.
 - Characters can also act as narrators.

Including the Rest of the Class

- Audience participation
 - Echoing the helpers
 - Cue cards with directions to be read and followed
- Reluctant students
 - Begin engaging reluctant-to-read students by assigning them a helper role where they need not read.
 - As students gain more confidence in this role, gradually switch to having them read the helper cards, then assigning a simple role, and so on.

Movement in RT

- Characters stay in their places in RT.
- If characters are not “on stage” they can turn BTA (Back to Audience) until it is time to come on stage. Then they turn to face the audience.
- Characters give the illusion of movement by moving in place (miming)

Costumes/Props in RT

- Costumes or props should simply give the illusion of characters or situations.
- Costumes are “on hand” items.
- Students could make simple costumes out of classroom supplies.
- Easy costumes include
 - Hats
 - Scarves
 - Necklaces

Ideas for Script Management

- Scripts can be put into folders with brass fasteners.
- Scripts can be hand held, or students can use music stands to hold their scripts while they read.
- Double-siding scripts is not a good idea. Young students get very confused when turning pages.
- Make sure the font of the script is large enough for students to read.



Good Web Sites for RT

- http://www.busyteacherscafe.com/units/readers_theater.htm
- <http://www.aaronshep.com/rt/RTE.html>
- <http://www.teachingheart.net/readerstheater.htm>



Books about RT



- *Introduction to Readers Theatre: A Guide to Classroom Performance*, Gerald Ratliff.
- *Readers Theatre for Beginning Readers*, Suzanne Barchers
- *Fifty Fabulous Fables: Beginning Readers Theatre*, Suzanne Barchers
- *Readers Theatre in the Middle School and Junior High Classroom*, Lois Walker
- *Readers Theatre for American History*, Anthony Fredericks
- *Around the World Through Holidays: Cross Curricular Readers Theatre*, Carol Peterson

Searching for RT

- Not one “right way” to spell it. You can look up:
 - Reader’s Theater
 - Reader’s Theatre
 - Readers Theater
 - Readers Theatre
 - Readers’ Theater
 - Readers’ Theatre

