DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 092 887 CS 001 151

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TITLE Aiding Secondary Subject Teachers in Guiding Reading Growth.
PUB DATE Sep 73
NOTE 19p.; Paper presented at the International Reading Association Far-West Rocky Mountain Regional Conference (Victoria, B.C., September 1973)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *Content Reading; Critical Reading; Reading; *Reading Development; Reading Improvement; *Reading Instruction; Reading Programs; *Reading Skills; Secondary Grades; *Teaching Techniques

ABSTRACT

Described in this paper is a technique for reading instruction at the secondary level which emphasizes paragraph-passage examination and is intended to fit into any content teacher's daily work. The technique described provides occasion to establish purpose in reading-study assignments, utilize experience and previous background to develop meaning, introduce new vocabulary, determine word meaning from context, intensify levels of comprehension from literal to evaluative, examine semantic and literary nuances, and study paragraph structure and internal paragraph relationships. Three different kinds of passages, chosen principally for their illustrative value rather than for any direct practical transfer to a particular classroom, are presented. Passage one briefly describes New York City; suggestions for teacher use include discussing general background relative to the passage, use of questioning to facilitate understanding, and identifying the main idea. Passage two is a social studies passage and is presented to demonstrate multiple word skills and demonstrate a shift from literal to critical reading. The third passage presented is the opening lines from "Dandelion Wine" and is intended to serve as an example of introducing a story and as an exercise in entry to imaginative language. (WR)

AIDING SECONDARY SUBJECT TEACHERS IN GUIDING READING GROWTH

For the purposes of this discussion, perhaps we can accept the assumption that secondary reading improvement is best accomplished in the subject-matter classroom, the subject teacher recognizing this responsibility. The basic premise is hardly arguable, its rationale having long been established in the literature of reading, this despite the conclusion reached by Walter Hill in his recent survey of secondary reading over three decades.

> "The apathy of the secondary content teacher toward reading efforts has been cited for three decades! Perhaps the content teacher of today is more aware of the generalized nature of reading deficiency among secondary students and even sympathetic toward efforts of improvement -- as long as they are not personally responsible for this help. The problem is complex involving issues of occupational selection, preservice indoctrination, ego defensiveness, curricular traditions and professional training among others." (Walter Hill, "Characteristics of Secondary Reading: 1940-70," in READING: THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE. Twentieth Yearbook of the National Reading Conference. Frank P. Greene (ed.). Milwaukee, Wisconsin: The National Reading Conference, 1971. pp. 20-29. p. 27)

I maintain that any successful content teacher not only is aware of the importance of reading for his students, of the reading implications of the content, of the general reading competency of his pupils but that he also possesses the skills necessary to provide satisfactory reading guidance to all his pupils within that subject matter. Granted, he may not be aware of

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this special capability or comfortable in its exercise; he may not, in fact, be convinced that reading improvement for his students is any way separable from successful content mastery. For, correlatively, if students are mastering the subject matter, then they must be applying the reading skills ingredient to that mastery. Certainly only the content teacher has the experience and insight to provide guidance for this particular content; no reading specialist, however insightful and dedicated, can acquire the sophisticated entry skills of every subject matter -- the principles, the "way of thinking" unique to that content.

Accepting, then, that the successful content teacher is actually a successful reading teacher of that content, what viewpoints does he accept and what techniques does he apply? Briefly let us examine some of the procedures commonly recommended by reading professionals.

As well as anyone, Olive Niles has summed up the specific skills goals common to the study of printed materials in any content area. ("Reading Skills Common to the Content Areas," in FUSING READING SKILLS AND CONTENT, H. A. Robinson and E. L. Thomas (eds.), Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association, 1969, pp. 1-16) She subdivides the reading act into broad, interdependent parts extending from word skills

through the ranges of comprehension from literal understanding to the evaluation and assimilation of meaning. More specifically, she recommends continual development and reinforcement of certain related skills of particular importance: the ability to survey material, set purposes for reading, and determine an appropriate technique for the reading of any given piece of material; the ability to handle graphic and illustrative materials; and the ability to locate, comprehend, and combine information from a variety of library resources.

Other reading commentators have made similar recommendations, extending or refining the application of basic skills according to the observed need of the moment. Marksheffee, for example, wisely advocates that the content teacher obtain a reasonably accurate idea of each student's reading level and provide each student with reading materials at his own instructional level. ("A Framework for Improvement," Ibid., pp. 127-135). Herber and his students have formalized instruction of reading in the content classroom through the "structured overview" and the use of "Reading and Reasoning Guides," both based on the essential formulation of clear objectives on the part of the teacher. (Herber, Harold L. TEACHING READING IN THE CONTENT AREAS. Englewood Cliffs, N.J. Prentice Hall,

1970; Herber, Harold L. and Peter L. Janders, Research in Reading in the Content Areas: First Year Reports. Syracuse, N.Y.; Syracuse University, 1969). A variety of authors, including Olson and Ames, have recommended the application of the Directed Reading Lesson as a practical vehicle for combining content and reading objectives. (Olson, Arthur V. & Ames, Wilbur S. Teaching Reading Skills in Secondary School. Toronto: Intext, 1972.) Thomas and Robinson have assembled a singularly practical guide for reading improvement in every classroom. (Thomas, Ellen L. & H. Alan Robinson. Improving Reading in Every Class. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1972.)

While subscribing to all the principles and procedures advocated above, this particular task needs something quite specific, immediately applicable, with reasonable expectation of observable success. I gather strands from all of the above in an attempt to provide such a specific technique which every teacher may employ to integrate content and the various skills suggested, which will capitalize on the content teacher's unique capabilities, enhance reading and content fulfillment without dilution of that content. In other words, teaching both subject matter and its related reading skills without divorcing one from the other.

In short and to be demonstrated more fully, every

subject teacher can find opportunity, as need dictates and time permits, to examine the instructional materials which the student is expected to study independently. The teacher may select a passage -- a few sentences, a full paragraph, if necessary a longer passage -- and analyze it extensively, point out difficulties or challenging features, and provide his students both purpose and attack for continuing individual study.

Yet, and this is undoubtedly the major objection, every subject teacher's class time is already filled. Indeed, the reality of every classroom is the repetitive cycle of half-finished tasks and unfulfilled objectives. It is a commonplace to blame the elementary school for inadequate pupil readiness, to maintain that reading should have been mastered in the earlier years. Two points, however, must be kept in mind. Reading ability is not static; it must improve as the individual grows and his school objectives become more complex. The very nature of the developmental process assumes that reading mastery is never reached, each stage of any person's growth providing new reading challenges. As well, as cognitive demands in subject areas increase, so the ability to think with these new printed materials must be intensified.

The technique which follows is consistent with normal classroom conditions and can be adapted to the moment by any alert concerned teacher. It requires no

special skills; it does not negate essential content; it permits considerable latitude in application. At the same time, it includes a range of vital skill experiences for all pupils. It provides occasion to:

1. Establish purpose in reading-study assignments;
2. Utilize experience and previous background to develop meaning;
3. Introduce new vocabulary;
4. Determine word meaning from context;
5. Intensify levels of comprehension from literal to evaluative;
6. Examine semantic and literary nuances;
7. Study paragraph structure and internal paragraph relationships.

Moreover, its flexibility permits extended or limited time allotments according to the needs of the students, the difficulty of the material, and the time limitations of the period.

For demonstration purposes, I have selected three different kinds of passages, chosen principally for their illustrative value rather than for any direct practical transfer to a particular classroom. Each will be treated differently to emphasize the flexibility of the technique.

Passage 1

To the visitor from the hinterland who lands in

mid-town Manhattan, the impression is one of confusion, noise, dirt, and monumental indifference. "Is this," he asks, "the celebrated Mecca that annually draws businessmen, students, job-seekers, and tourists from every corner of the globe?" If he swiftly decides that "It's a nice place to visit, but ..." he has failed to find New York's open sesame. The jade expert can find an emperor's collection of carvings in the Jade Room of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The artist can leisurely study a rare volume of William Blake's etchings in one of the specialized rooms of the Main Library, or walk for years through the endless public and private galleries. The chess player finds his friends at the Marshall Chess Club, the tired businessman his excitement at the Copa, the historian his archives at the Butler Library, the Orientalist his confreres at Asia House. But New York's magic door will open only if the visitor arrives with a key.

Step I: In the analysis which follows, many will recognize the pattern of the Directed Reading Lesson, a standard elementary-grade approach to reading instruction. Here the teacher initiates brief discussion of general background relative to the passage in order to arouse interest and encourage motivation. In this case, some discussion could focus on the characteristics of huge metropolitan centers, knowledge about New York City in particular, and any personal familiarity students may have with the city.

Step II: Through questioning, words or terms which are unknown or doubtful to any, even one of the students are identified. (Normally in the DRL, difficult or unfamiliar proper nouns are automatically listed on the chalkboard and defined by the teacher. Presumably "Manhattan" should be readily recognized. For purposes of this study, "Mecca" is not immediately defined.)

The objective here is not primarily to develop new vocabulary but rather to gain immediate entry to understanding. Since in his normal reading a student will usually guess at the meaning of an unfamiliar word, we improve the probability of "intelligent guessing" through awareness of the clues to meaning implanted in the context. It deserves to be noted that most new words which occur rarely in continuous prose and which would have little enduring use for the student should be identified for the moment, noted or recorded only at the interest of the student or if special characteristics make extended application in other situations possible.

It is probable that the following words will be unfamiliar to many of the students:

hinterland	monumental	Mecca
open sesame	jade	etchings
archives	Orientalist	confreres

a. The words should be clarified sequentially as far as possible, two questions usually eliciting basic

information: Does anyone know the meaning of _____ (this word)? Is there anything in the sentence which gives a clue to the meaning, or helps you understand the word? Both questions should be pursued, the second providing guidance for slower, more deliberate students. In the case of "hinterland", some students will be able to provide an intelligent guess because of its parallel with "Manhattan".

b. "Monumental" should be easily identified from the text through resemblance to its cognate, "monument", which the students will probably associate with size rather than significance.

c. "Mecca" is the key word in the passage, doubly important for its governance of the main idea of the paragraph as for the metaphor which controls the main idea. From past experience, some students will be able to identify Mecca as the holy city of Mohammed, toward which every devout Moslem turns in prayer thrice daily and journeys in pilgrimage at least once in his lifetime. At this stage, it is important to elicit from the students the identification of Moslems and Arabs, not categorically but commonly so. This relationship becomes vital when investigating the meaning of "open sesame". Although most readers will immediately recognize the term and its source, strangely, the majority of junior and senior secondary students are unfamiliar with it. Most will

associate "sesame" with the popular children's television show but not one in five will be familiar with the Arabian Nights, or specifically the robber's cave which munificently responded to Ali Baba's command. Again, in passing, it is some kind of indictment of modern curricula that so few students are able to appreciate allusion to once-popular, even traditional, lore, particularly the ancient fables and scripture. ("Mecca, in its generic use as a "goal for pilgrims" ought to be recorded by the pupils.)

d. Most of the other words have clues in the context to guide intelligent guessing and, even if an exact definition is immediately forthcoming, the teacher should lead pupils through a search for the passage meaning of each word, that is, its sense whether semantic or connotative within the sentence. For example, "jade" emerges because of its setting with "emperor", "carving", and "Metropolitan Museum"; "etchings" ought to be something an artist does; "archives" something unique to a historian; "Orientalist" is echoed and clarified in "Asia House". Perhaps "confreres" may not succumb so easily but who else might be likely to haunt such esoteric spots as one's "colleagues" - in the more familiar English usage.

Step III: Once Mecca and sesame have been related, almost imperatively the alert reader ought -- but, no, at

least to be guided by his alert teacher -- to fit the "key" into the "magic door". And, not surprisingly, once this sustained image, metaphor, or allusion is clear, so too is the total passage. Because all the writer, good public relations man that he is, has said is that in visiting New York, know what you wish to savor or else be bored. The controlling metaphor, sustained through the passage from "Mecca" to "key", has twofold value: not only is it essential to the main idea but students get a rare reading thrill from recognizing and appreciating it.

Step IV: Because -- and now glance back knowingly at the paragraph -- there is but a single significant idea conveyed. The lengthy mid-portion ("The jade expert ... Asia House.") is strictly illustrative, only supplementary detail designed supposedly to inforce an idea but actually interrupting two elements in the metaphor which controls meaning. And the meaning extracted has been basically the literal meaning, the main idea, what the author is saying. Its significance, however, is artfully garbed -- nay, disguised -- in terminology which may baffle the casual reader.

Passage II

Selections for study may serve to illustrate several skills although only one may be emphasized. The

following social studies paragraph, for example, lends itself to two functions: (1) demonstration of multiple word skills; and (2) at a very simple level, an almost stylistically designed shift from literal to critical reading.

> All museum adepts are familiar with examples of ostrakoi, the oyster-shells used for balloting. As a matter of fact, these "oystershells" are usually shards of pottery, conveniently glazed to enable the voter to express his wishes in writing. In the Agora a great number of these have come to light, bearing the thrilling name, Themistocles. Into rival jars were dropped the ballots for or against his banishment. On account of the huge vote taken on that memorable day, it was to be expected that many ostrakoi would be found, but the interest of this collection is that a number of these ballots are inscribed in an identical handwriting. There is nothing mysterious about it? The Boss was on the job, then as now. He prepared these ballots and voters cast them -- no doubt for the consideration of an obol or two. The ballot box was stuffed. How is the glory of the American boss diminished! A vile imitation, he. His methods as old as Time!

(Q—K)

I. Let us quickly examine the word-study potential.

a. The proper names Agora and Themistocles, probably recognizable by the students from previous encounter, should be noted directly. The significance of the adjective "thrilling" ought to be enlightened in the process. Why "thrilling"? Because of the dramatic sound of the name itself or of the exploits of the person

behind the name?

b. Few passages permit the opportunity to contrast the two uses of italics or underscoring. Both are evident here: "ostrakoi, because a foreign word; identical, for the sake of emphasis. (Underscoring the full sentence further in the paragraph is a ready example of overuse or misuse of the device.)

c. Another set may be noted in "adepts," "shards," and "glazed," to some extent guessable through context or illustrative clues.

d. "Ostrakoi" itself is not only self-defined through the accompanying appositive but its synonymous use, "oystershell" is enhanced through the writer's use of quotation marks. Thereafter, assuming that the attentive reader has noted the similarity, the two words are used interchangeably. In fact, "ballot" becomes their equal. No reader who has followed the development of the main idea will have any difficulty attaching meaning to "obol". The dictionary should be unnecessary. The teacher however can reinforce the use of context clues by assisting the recognition.

e. In the final sentences, "diminished" and "vile" could be difficult, not necessarily in isolation or denotatively, but because they are employed ironically. From past experience, however, I find that the words are scarcely noticed in actual reading because the full

meaning of the passage has already become apparent.

II. Not surprisingly -- as is the case here -- once all the vocabulary difficulties of a passage are clarified, so too the total meaning of the writer is often apparent. This particular passage, however, lends itself to another, perhaps parallel level of analysis --- a study of organization and development, a valuable skill for students to learn and one that is normally enjoyable, as discovery, for both students and teacher.

Most teachers today are familiar with the Bloom Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, the separate categories permitting varied application. In applying the Bloom categories to levels of reading comprehension, I have chosen to re-order them. (It should be emphasized that these categories are hardly necessary for the average student but are useful for any teacher's instructional repertory.)

Knowledge -- basic information
Interpretation -- translation, literal understanding
Analysis -- minute scrutiny of uses and relationships
Synthesis -- forming conclusions, insights
Application -- using in a new context
Evaluation -- judging; responding positively or negatively.

Assuming that the reader accepts the categories, it should be evident that movement through each stop parallels the supposed advancement from literal to interpretive to critical or assimilative reading.

The passage we are examining can hardly be considered inordinately complex; in fact, it is artfully contrived, almost designed as a reading exercise. The "knowledge" bits are first noted and assembled: the facts and definitions of the two opening sentences. Interpretation becomes a global process, accompanying or subsequent to the analysis which occurs as each sentence adds its new layer of meaning. The interesting aspect of this paragraph is the underlined sentence, The ballot box was stuffed, which the writer boldly emphasizes. This is viewed as the synthesis step, a conclusion which the careful reader has probably sub-consciously reached. The final two sentences, again a case of over-writing hardly necessary for most readers, offer both application and evaluation steps. In retrospect, then, the passage affords interesting insights to the reading process, a kind of attack to be applied to more difficult materials, which unpracticed readers need.

Passage III

> Douglas Spaulding, twelve, freshly wakened, let summer idle him on its early-morning stream. Lying in this third-story cupola bedroom, he felt the tall power it gave him,

> riding high in the June wind, the grandest tower in town. At night, when the trees washed together, he flashed his gaze like a beacon from this lighthouse in all directions over swarming seas of elm and oak and maple.

For a final and different kind of example, let us look at these opening lines from Ray Bradbury's Dandelion Wine. Bradbury has been very much a favorite in recent years, particularly for his science fiction. This popularity alone often dwarfs his other appealing and highly imaginative writing. I see an examination of these few lines, only three sentences, serving two purposes: (1) as introduction to the reading of the story, developing background, setting, igniting curiosity; and (2) as an exercise in entry to imaginative language. Let us study the passage wholly through the use of hierarchical questions (assuming that the thoughtful reader will avail himself of the guidance implicit in succeeding questions).

1. What are the basic facts presented in these lines? Who is spoken of? How old is he? Where is he? What is his physical position? What is he doing? What does he see? What time of year is it? With these, we have the literal statement of the passage.

2. On a higher, or deeper level -- What is Douglas's mood or attitude? What particular time of the year might

it be? Yes, June, but any uniquely personal part of June? How do you conclude such? What kind of boy is Douglas? Moody? Imaginative? A solitary? What is the basis, the clues in the context, for such a judgment?

3. More specifically about some of the terms Bradbury employs -- What is a "cupola"? A "cupola bedroom"? Where in the country might you find such? Why? What was their use? Are there other clues in the passage to support your view? Note the verb ("idle") in the first sentence. Is it an unusual verb, or perhaps an unusual use of the word? How would we normally use the verb "idle"? If, then, a motor idles, what quality is implied, a quality reflected further in the passage ("power")? How does this reflect on your earlier view of Douglas's attitude or mood, the particular time of year it may be?

4. If we accept the possibility of the setting being coastal, what particular significance can you now attach to the language (words) used in the final sentence? ("washed", "beacon," "lighthouse," "swarming seas") Collected together, how does this idea, this picture in your mind (image) fit some of the earlier terms and identifications you have made (power, tower, idle, etc.)?

5. What can you predict or imagine might happen to Douglas as this story continues?

It has not been necessary to use any technical terms to elicit the total impact of these lines. Yet the student in considering, and not necessarily answering these questions, has gained real insight into the use, the variety, and the power of imaginative language. Hopefully, he may even be eager to read the story!

Concluding Remarks

The passages studied above are only models, selected in part because they are eminently demonstrable, partly because they fall within the ken of this writer. Such paragraph-passage examination, indeed, is possible with any material -- science, art, industrial arts, home economics, physical education, mathematics -- particularly when viewed through the eyes of the person most familiar with the material, the subject-matter teacher.

The technique can fit comfortably into any content teacher's daily work, contracting into a five-minute exercise which helps establish purpose for continuing study while simultaneously providing insight into some of the pecularities, whether stylistic or content, of the material to be studied. It may as easily be extended to a longer period for more elaborate scrutiny of deeper meanings, word tone, or literary devices which mask -- or reveal -- significance.

Ideally, I see a teacher using the technique rather casually toward the conclusion of a class period, remarking to the students: "Let's glance briefly at this section of material to be studied for tomorrow. It's not really very difficult but there are some unusual paragraph arrangements ... or ... some interesting word uses ... or ... a different writing technique which we haven't encountered before ... or ... you need to sort through the ideas to distinguish what is essential from what is merely illustrative."

Nor need the paragraph or passage be intricate. A few minutes spent in demonstrating through adroit leading questions the transitional elements which link sentence to sentence or paragraph to paragraph may make a notable difference in the life of a student. It is the kind of thoughtful, leisurely classroom sharing and interaction which enriches content learning, establishes clear direction for continuing study and, most of all, realizes the supportive guidance of the concerned teacher.