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ABSTRACT

Intended for use by secondary school teachers in all subject areas, this booklet provides practical information, classroom activities and strategies for the instructor who wants to incorporate reading instruction into a particular content area. Following an introductory chapter that emphasizes the need for reading skills in contemporary society and the secondary school teacher's strategic position for preparing students for the world of work, the booklet offers specific chapters on (1) vocabulary development; (2) reading in the content areas; (3) incorporating reading into lesson planning; (4) using questions to develop critical reading; (5) reading and study skills, such as outlining, note-taking, and study methods; (6) guiding teenage reading choices; and (7) other reading activities, including reading newspapers (especially the sports pages), junk mail, and television-related material. The booklet also contains some concluding remarks and a bibliography. (NKA)

LUCY FUCHS

Lucy Fuchs is chairperson of the Division of Education at St. Leo College, a small private institution in Florida. She teaches courses in reading, language arts, and children's literature. Before teaching at the college level, she taught 15 years at all levels of elementary and secondary school.

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Series Editor, Derek L. Burleson

Teaching Reading in the Secondary School

by
Lucy Fuchs

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Who Me? Teach Reading!

Students straggle into my EDU 336 class, "Reading in Middle and Secondary Schools." Many are wearing jogging shoes and shorts. Others are loaded down with literature or science textbooks. One is carrying a portfolio of her paintings. None of them are in my class by choice.

These are students who plan to become secondary teachers. They look forward with enthusiasm to spending their days teaching science or math, or business education, or music and art, or perhaps physical education. They know from watching television and reading newspapers and news magazines that many secondary school students are deficient in reading. But they don't think they will ever have to teach reading. Somebody else will take care of that. It is not their problem.

Their problem, for the moment, is simply that they are required to take this reading course. They come in reluctantly, hoping at the least that they won't be bored. Very few expect, or even hope, to be enlightened. To them, reading is something that one teaches in grades one, two, and three. After that one only uses reading to learn about other subjects; one does not teach it.

The situation is only slightly different for inservice secondary teachers, who are required to take a reading course if they want to be recertified. They also are enthusiastic about teaching their particular subjects. They know, however, that many of their students need

improvement in reading if they are to master the course content. They just wish that someone else would do it, or that elementary teachers had done a better job. They are mistaken.

Secondary teachers are the ideal persons to teach reading in their own subject matter, particularly those reading skills that are germane to their subject. Ultimately, students' grasp of subject matter depends on their ability to read well. Rightly or wrongly, our schools are places in which most learning still depends on the printed page. The student who cannot read well is truly handicapped.

A few statistics will make this more evident. Some estimates are that as many as one-third of students are deficient in reading skills. The reading levels in a typical tenth-grade class are likely to range from fifth grade to beyond college. Thus no secondary teacher can afford to ignore either the reading level of students or the reading skills required for the subject matter.

In spite of all the hullabaloo that television viewing is replacing reading or that only a small percentage of persons frequent the public library, the United States is still a highly literate society that requires a very large amount of reading every day. Certain professions require hours of daily reading. Most office work requires the reading of reports and the preparation of more reports to be read. Other occupations require the reading of instructions for using new products — often very technical instructions. This is true even in manual, but frequently lucrative, occupations such as plumbing and auto mechanics.

Secondary teachers must prepare both those students going directly into the work world with its diverse reading needs and those who will go on to college where reading requirements are intensified. But beyond the need for reading in the world of work and higher education, there is reading for life enrichment. As in school, non-readers in life are truly handicapped. Without reading they will not be able to share in what is still one of the most enjoyable and enriching of life's experiences.

In this fastback, I shall describe a variety of activities that any secondary teacher can use or adapt to improve reading in any subject. Yes, we all can and must teach reading.

Vocabulary Development

Increasing the size of one's vocabulary is not only necessary for one's general education, it also influences how one processes new material and even how one perceives the world. Most intelligence and aptitude tests are largely vocabulary tests. Students who wish to do well on the SAT or ACT college entrance tests would do well to increase their vocabulary. The student who wants to understand and appreciate the world's great literature will need a large vocabulary.

One's vocabulary grows with reading. Yet to read well, one must have a large vocabulary. Reading and vocabulary are reciprocal; they are self-feeding. Students who are "hooked on reading" frequently have a huge vocabulary and it is constantly growing. The vocabulary of those who do little reading remains stagnant.

To help students increase their vocabularies does not mean simply assigning a number of words each day to look up in the dictionary. Looking up a word in the dictionary and writing down its definition does not mean that the student really understands the word. Any English teacher is aware of this. A student writing a theme may try to impress the teacher by looking up a big word in the dictionary to replace a more common word. Although the dictionary definition appears to convey what the student wants to say, without knowing the nuances of the word the student's effort often comes out as ludicrous.

New words are better "caught" than taught, that is, introducing them in the course of reading, class presentation, discussion, and conversation. The true meaning of a word becomes clear only when a student has heard, read, and used the word many times.

There are many ways besides reading and dictionary study that secondary teachers can use to help students learn new words. Some suggestions follow:

1. Teachers usually introduce new words related to their subject matter, but they also can increase students' vocabulary by using new words in their everyday conversations with students about various aspects of school life. For example, "I was *devastated* by the news that the basketball team lost last night." or "Don't be so *rambunctious*!" or "Your behavior in the cafeteria was *appalling*."

2. Teachers can clip news items and post them on a bulletin board, underlining words that students are not likely to know. Then ask students to make an intelligent guess about the meaning of the word based on the context in which it is used. If they cannot figure out the meaning from context, then let them use the dictionary.

3. Many teachers use a word-for-the-day to build vocabulary. They write the word on the board, have students look it up in the dictionary, and then use it in a sentence. But don't stop there; find occasions to use the word in daily lessons and in other contexts. For example, if the word-for-the-day is *astute*, the teacher can comment that a student's perceptive remarks in a class discussion were an "*astute* response." Through repetition in a variety of contexts, words will become the students' own.

4. Many words in the English language are derived from the same root. For example, the word *mortician* has the same root as *mortal, moribund, morgue*, and even *mortgage*. By pointing out to students that whole families of words are derived from different roots, they can usually get some idea of the meaning of a new word if they see it has a similar root. A useful book that gives good examples and exercises for words with Latin and Greek roots is *Words People Use* by Audrey Roth and Oliver Camacho.

5. Of course, secondary teachers will need to spend a lot of time teaching the specialized vocabulary of their subject. Each subject has

its own terminology, which students must learn in order to grasp basic concepts. This is particularly true in the sciences. Before teaching a lesson, put the new words on the board or a more permanent wall chart. Pronounce the words and have the students repeat them. Even though the textbook defines the words, reinforce them with your own examples or illustrations. Ask students to do the same. Review the new words frequently until the students have made them their own. Insist that students call things by their correct names. When giving a quiz, include some items that require students to use the new words and insist on correct spelling. Even after moving on to a new unit, occasionally review the new words to keep them in the students' active vocabulary.

Reading in the Content Areas

In elementary school, much of the reading that students do both in reading class and in their recreational reading is narrative writing, usually stories. Such writing moves along sequentially with a beginning, a middle, and an end. The characters and situations are described, something happens, and the situation is resolved. The writer draws the reader into the characters and events to create an emotional response.

As students reach secondary school, their reading assignments increasingly are in textbooks and other nonfiction works. Here the writing sequence becomes one of logical progression. A situation or concept is presented. Then supporting reasons or examples are given, leading to a logical conclusion.

The textbook or nonfiction writer usually is not seeking an emotional response. Rather, through descriptions and explanations, the writer is attempting to reach the reader inteliectually.

The secondary school teacher cannot assume that students who are proficient in reading narrative material will also do well with textbook material. They are different kinds of reading requiring different skills. Students have to be taught specific techniques for nonfiction reading. Following are a few suggestions for improving reading in texts and other nonfiction materials.

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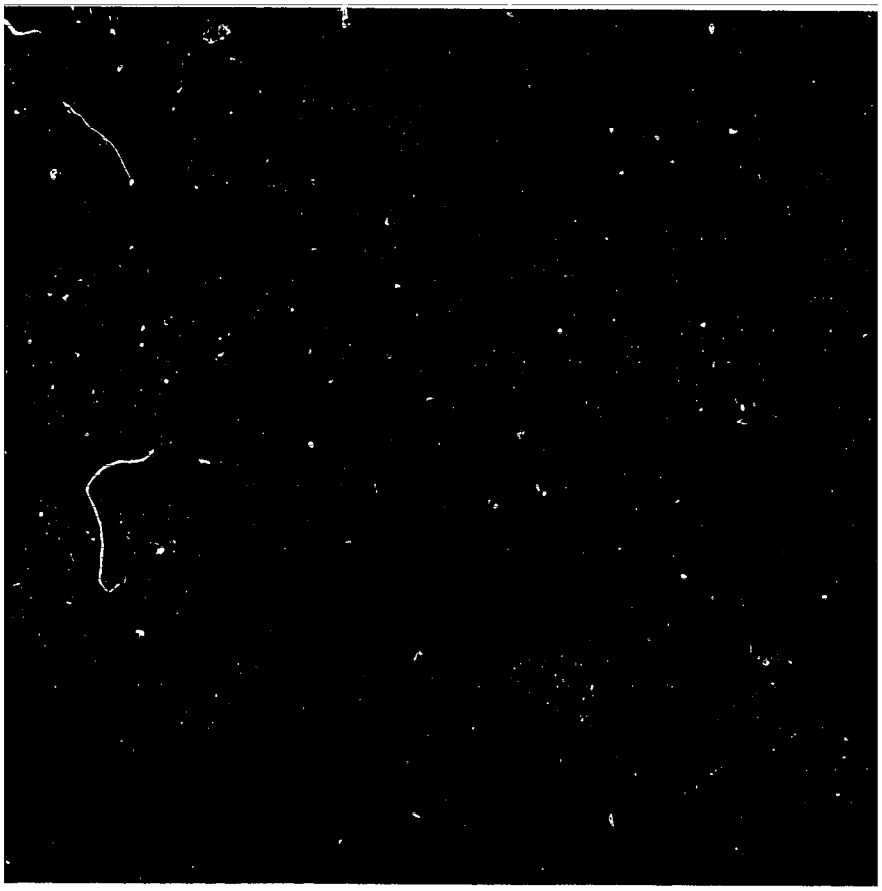
directions in a lab manual in science or a recipe in home economics requires careful reading of specific words.

3. Students tend to think that anything on a printed page is true or at least based on facts. If students are to become critical readers, they should be encouraged to question where the information comes from. Is it fact or merely the author's opinion? The teacher might ask, "Where do you think this historian got his information?" "How did the scientist arrive at this conclusion?" "Do you think that this writer is biased?" or "Does he speak from a limited viewpoint?" In social studies classes, editorials and syndicated political columns from the newspaper are good sources to use to help students distinguish between fact and opinion.

4. Students should know that they have to vary the speed at which they read depending on the nature of the material. For example, in math each word of a word problem is important, requiring deliberate and careful reading of each word. To enjoy poetry requires time to savor the imagery conjured up by the poet's words. Legal contracts should not be read fast. Ignoring the nuances of legal language could well cost you dearly. On the other hand, fiction can be read fast. A good story often is best read in one sitting. When reading familiar material such as reviewing a chapter in a textbook for a test, one can skim, looking for the main points covered in class lectures and discussions. As students' reading load increases in secondary school, improving their reading speed becomes a worthwhile goal, but not if comprehension and enjoyment are sacrificed in the process. Every



large fund of information is necessary if one wants to read the sports page intelligently. Teachers should capitalize on this fact with those students whose one claim to fame is their sports knowledge.

By calling students' attention to the writing style of the sports page, teachers can provide examples of yet another kind of reading. Following are some activities centered on the sports page:

1. Have students compile a list of words sports writers use to indicate that one team beat another. The list might include such words as "killed," "slaughtered," "stomped," or "annihilated." Then ask why

of reading. The same is true of line or bar graphs. Some students do not know how to read them. The teacher must provide explicit instructions: "Put your finger on 1975 on the left side of your chart. Now move it over to the month of April. There you will see the amount of rainfall for the month of April in 1975. Now can you tell us the amount of rainfall for the month of June in 1975? How about June of 1976?" This level of explicitness is sometimes necessary if students are to get full benefit of the textbook's graphics.

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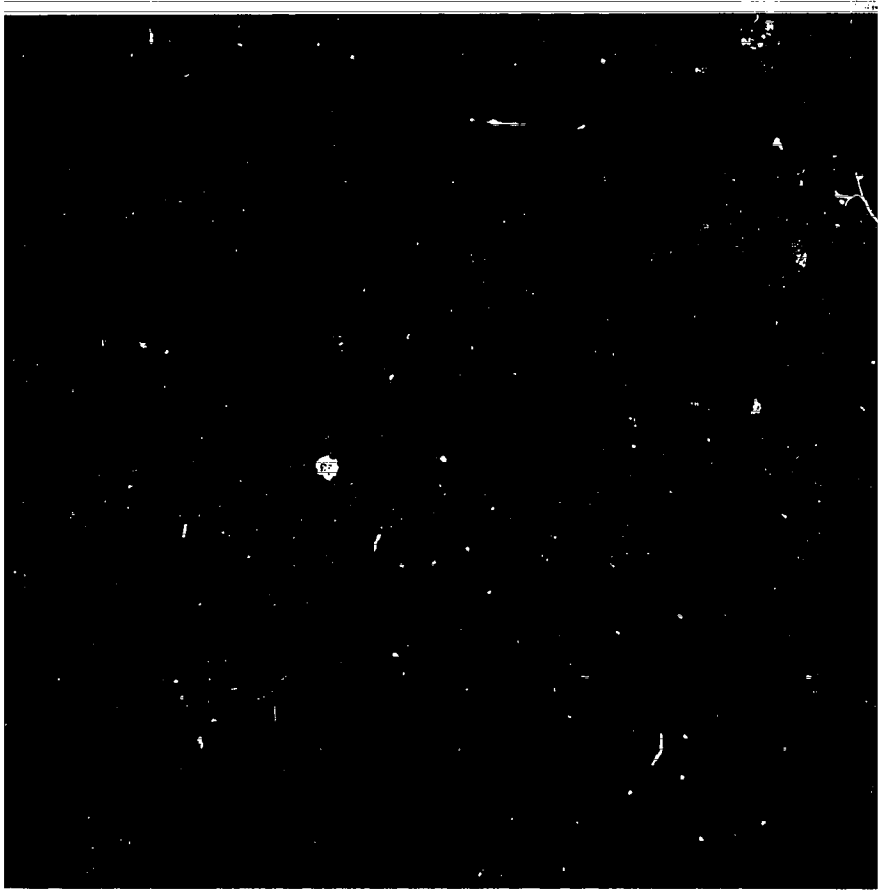

Writers of promotion copy are very skillful. Students should become aware of their techniques so they can make informed judgments about what is being offered.

Whether the junk mail is for a product to buy, a magazine to subscribe to, or an appeal for donations to support some cause, the writer uses certain common appeals. Some of these appeals are along the following lines:

1. Guilt. "Because of the way this particular group has been treated historically, you owe it to them to help."

g Reading into Lesson Planning

opportunities for secondary teachers to integrate
ssons. However, these opportunities must be an-
son planning. For illustrative purposes, let's con-
ı needed for teaching a lesson about the Industrial
ial studies class.

assumes that the students probably know precious
trial Revolution. They most likely do know some
ssociated with the American Revolution such as
s ride to warn the militiamen that the British were
Vashington leading his troops during the cold win-
. Some of them may know something about the
especially the use of the guillotine to behead the
evolutions with their battles and bloodshed were
dustrial Revolution. This revolution had no wars,
/ had bloodshed. What is important for students
evolution totally changed the world. So the teacher
eaching this lesson the students will have to be

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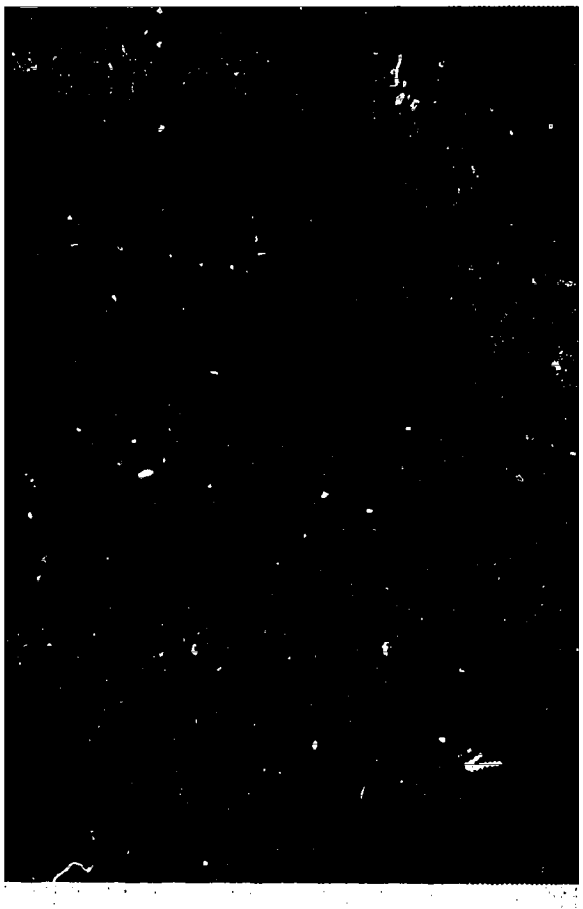
ses them as a hook for hanging on new informa-
ndation for the new information usually requires
vocabulary and definitely some new concepts.



ı books, a teacher can suggest a book related to
presented. The teacher who loves reading will
to recommend on whatever the subject of the

In the case of the Industrial Revolution the teacher starts by discussing the word *revolution*. "What is a revolution?" Students' typical response is, "A war to take over the government." Then the teacher asks, "What then does it mean when a wheel makes a revolution, or makes so many revolutions per minute?" Students will begin to see that a revolution is not just a war or a takeover of government but also a complete change. It is not necessarily anything hostile; it is simply a changeover.

Moving on to explain the word *industrial*, a word that brings to mind factories and mass-production, the teacher may need to remind the students of the way things were before the Industrial Revolution in such areas as transportation, household equipment, and communication.

As the teacher presents these concepts, new words are introduced. Here it is important for the teacher to show that in addition to their dictionary definitions, words also have connotative meanings with emotional characteristics attached to them. For example, for most people *industrial* implies something big, heavy, impersonal, standardized, or mass produced. By contrast, the word *homemade* implies something made with care, with mother's touch. It also can mean no uniformity, no two items alike, or no consistency of quality.

Time spent in preparation of the lesson is well worth the effort. By being prepared for the new concepts and words they will encounter in their text assignments, students will comprehend what they read. Without comprehension there is no reading.

Using Questions to Develop Critical Reading

Asking questions is the essence of teaching. Famous teachers of the world have always asked lots of questions. For example, Socrates never gave his students information directly; he drew it out of them by asking repeated questions.

There are many kinds of questions and many ways of asking them. (See fastback 194 *Teaching and the Art of Questioning.*) Research on teachers' questioning techniques reveals that most questions teachers ask are of a factual nature, requiring only a one-word response or a short answer. Further, research shows that teachers do not allow students time to think when responding to a question. And teachers tend to ask questions of certain students — those whose hands are up and whom they know will usually have the correct answer.

There is a place for rapid-fire questions and quick responses when reviewing essential facts in a lesson. Yet we know that recalling isolated bits of information does not indicate that students understand the major concepts of the lesson. If the purpose of questioning is to improve students' thinking, better questions are needed, questions that will force students to think, to make inferences, to make judgments. And such questions require more time to prepare and more time for students to respond to them.

These kinds of questions require students to read carefully not only to understand the words and sentences but also to get into the writer's thought pattern. For example, when reading a social studies text the teacher may ask a student to respond to such questions as: Is this account one-sided? Is it giving the whole story? What might some other group think of this? Whose viewpoint is being expressed here? Where did this author get his information? Is this information generally accepted? By whom is it accepted? In examining the author's choice of words, the teacher might ask: Are the author's words heavily emotional? Would the article have the same impact if the author had used other words? Why do you think he chose what he did? The question, "Where is he coming from?" is a good one for students to use to find out if the author has an axe to grind.

By writing such questions on the board prior to giving a reading assignment, students are alerted that they must read critically and not just for information. And by giving students time to think about the questions and even time to discuss them with a neighbor before opening up discussion, students will be able to give thoughtful responses. But we must give them more time if we want them to think.

Reading and Study Skills

In secondary school almost every subject requires increasing amounts of reading. Yet even when students do their reading assignments and are attentive in class, many do not do well on tests. The reason is that they simply have never learned basic study skills that could help them master the subject matter. For example, many students do not know how to outline. Or they may not know how to take notes during lectures or when given a reading assignment. Either they try to write down everything, or they make only a few notations that do not really help them.

These skills are tools for learning. They need to be taught and practiced. Every teacher has a responsibility to see that students know and use the skills. The time to do this is at the beginning of a course – before students fall into a pattern of failure.

Outlining

Often students see outlining as a chore, a time-consuming exercise with little payoff. The teacher should take the time to show students that outlining material is a way to help them to remember it and to see the various ideas in perspective. The essence of outlining is categorizing and prioritizing. Good outlining requires that the student first see the material as a whole and then look for its parts or subsections.

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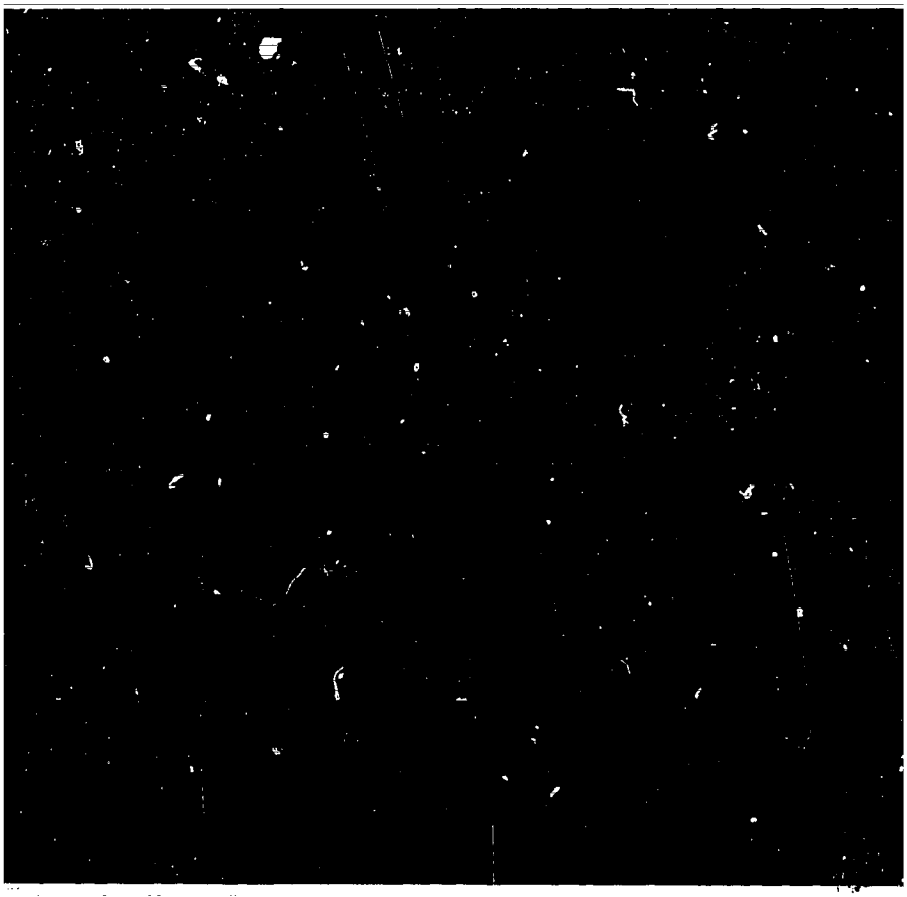

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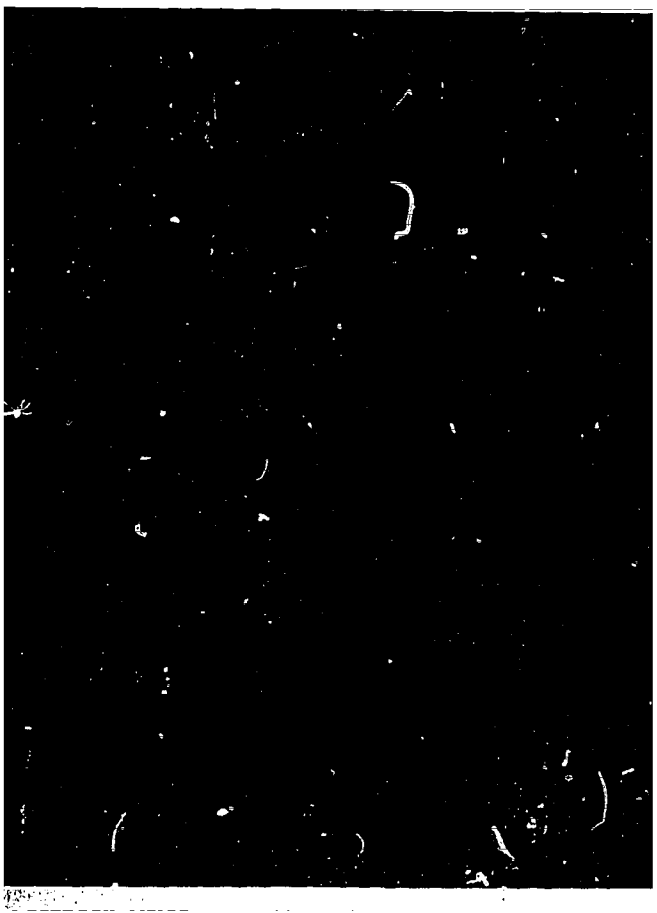
141. Magnet Schools: An Approach to Voluntary

Following the introductory lesson, the teacher sl
dents to do this sort of outlining by themselves on
or section of a chapter. Then check their outlines t
they have identified the main ideas and major suppor
practice, students can then make further subdivisions

Note-taking

Many college students will tell you they have deve
systems of taking notes and claim that no one taught
at the secondary school level it is often helpful to giv
directed practice in taking notes. Eventually they wi
ever methods they are taught, but they need to be sh
method.

Students should understand that note-taking is not
ing dictation. Many students try to take down too mu
become discouraged because they cannot keep up w
Explain that they must take down only the most impo
phrases, cue words, and key examples. One way to d
the students a duplicated list of important words and
order in which they will occur in the lecture or read
for the day. The list of words and phrases should hav
spaces between them so students can write in the imp
tion. If an important definition of a new word is given
the teacher should slow down and repeat it so that stu
time to write it down. When giving an example, the



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alert the students that they don't need to write down all the details, just a word or two that will help them remember it.

Another way to prepare students for note-taking is to write important words or phrases on the chalkboard or an overhead projector while lecturing, sometimes underlining key words. By underlining, the teacher alerts the students that they would do well to underline their notes, too.

Study Methods

The SQ3R method has proved to be effective when studying material that has not been previously taught in class. SQ3R is an acronym for Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review. The SQ3R method has the following steps:

- **S** – The student surveys the entire passage by reading it quickly.
- **Q** – The student writes out questions he should be able to answer.
- **R1** – The student reads the passage carefully.
- **R2** – The student recites to answer questions he has previously asked.
- **R3** – The student reviews the parts about which he was not able to answer questions.

This method does not work for everyone in every situation, but some elements of it are very helpful. For instance, the survey, looking over a whole section first before reading it carefully, is an effective technique when reading magazines and newspapers. One goes over the whole issue quickly, reading major headlines and leads to stories. Then one goes back and reads in detail those parts one wants to spend more time on. Also, asking oneself questions in either written or mental form is helpful. In fact, self-questioning is the most useful of the study skills since it most closely resembles test-taking. But even if not preparing for a test, self-questioning is helpful because it forces students to think about what they are reading.

A variation of the SQ3R method that students can use during study time in class is to have each of them prepare questions on an assigned

reading and then ask another student to answer. Or, if the teacher were to ask only one question on a section, ask students what it likely would be. Then let them compare their questions. This forces students to concentrate on the main idea rather than less important details.

Guiding Teenage Reading Choices

Many secondary students complain about those subjects that require a large amount of reading. "So many pages!" they moan. "I hate literature!" some will say. But these young people don't hate to read; they like to read and do read. What they resist are school assignments requiring large amounts of reading.

The best proof that teenagers are avid readers is simply to look at the sales of young adult paperback books. These books are bought by the teenagers themselves. And since they choose them themselves, they will certainly read them and then pass them on to their friends. Later, when these books are dog-eared and the pages are falling out, they may well read them a second time. Millions of copies of these books are sold; obviously they appeal to young people.

The books that come under the category of "young adult" have become enormously popular in recent years. These books deal with particular problem areas of young people's lives. Their authors have become so popular that young people will read everything they publish.

For example, Judy Blume is a favorite author among children from about third grade up. Her *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing* delights most third- and fourth-graders; they believe that they have found an author who really understands them. In *Are You There, God? It's Me, Margaret*, she deals with the onset of puberty in a girl and with her

religious questions. For boys she wrote *Then, Again, Maybe I Won't*, which many girls read, too. Her other books treat such problems as death in a family, divorce, sibling rivalry, conflicts between parents and children, and, in *Forever*, a first love affair in which sex is graphically presented along with instructions for birth control.

Another author whose books are very popular, selling in the millions, is Paul Zindel. He won fame among youth with *Pigman*, which deals with loneliness and the need for friends. In *My Darling, My Hamburger* he handles the controversial topic of abortion. In this book his characters are like the students you would find in any high school. His other books have unusual, even zany characters. But his style of writing and his apparent understanding of adolescents' hopes and fears appeal to many young people.

Other books that have great student appeal (some of which have even been banned in some places) include *Go Ask Alice*, the anonymous diary of a drug addict; *A Hero Ain't Nothing but a Sandwich* by Alice Childress, another story of a drug addict; and Robert Cormier's books, including *I Am the Cheese, The Chocolate War, The Bumblebee Flies Anyway*, and others.

Some young people like books by Lois Duncan, who creates situations that skirt the edges of the occult. There are whole series of books on the occult and whole series of romance books for girls. The romance books are formula written and highly exaggerated, with or without sex; but girls like them, as do their mothers.

Teachers should go to bookstores occasionally to see what is available in the young adult category. Also pay attention to the paperback books that students carry from class to class, and sometimes read surreptitiously in class. If teachers know what students are reading, they will have a better insight into students' interests. And by knowing what students *will* read, teachers will be in a better position to guide their reading.

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the front page of three or four
what is most important. Or com-
the same story covered on tele-

front page with an editorial on
e.

3. Read various columnists regularly over a period of time and identify the viewpoint on political issues and world affairs.

4. Identify the elements in the graphics used to illustrate stories and discuss their effectiveness.

5. Use the weekly food sections as a resource for discussions on nutrition, food costs and budgeting, and menu planning.

6. Analyze political cartoons and decide whether you agree with the cartoonist's point of view.

7. Read and discuss letters to the editor expressing opposing views on an issue. Then write your own letter to the editor.

8. Read a movie review and compare it with your own opinion of the movie after seeing it.

For other suggestions on using newspapers in the classroom, see fastback 149 *Teaching with Newspapers: The Living Curriculum*.

Reading the Sports Page

One section of the newspaper (the only section read by some boys) that provides some novel reading experience is the sports page. But some special skills are needed to read the sports page. For one thing, sports writers have a special vocabulary and a truncated style that even native speakers of English find unintelligible until they are initiated into the sports milieu. Consider this passage from a sports page of the *Tampa Tribune*:

> Garber retired Reynolds and Davey Lopes on groundouts to earn his 18th save. Bob Horner drove in Rafael Ramirez with the winning run on a sacrifice fly in the seventh inning as the Braves salvaged the third game of the series against Houston. (18 August 1986)

To understand this passage one needs to know who the players Garber, Reynolds, Lopes, Horner, and Ramirez are; what teams are playing, since in one case the team name is given (Braves) and in the other only the city is given (Houston); and the meaning of such terms as "save," "groundouts," and "sacrifice fly." The sports enthusiast knows all the players and teams and the special vocabulary that goes with the sport and assumes that everyone else does. Actually, a rather

large fund of information is necessary if one wants to read the sports page intelligently. Teachers should capitalize on this fact with those students whose one claim to fame is their sports knowledge.

By calling students' attention to the writing style of the sports page, teachers can provide examples of yet another kind of reading. Following are some activities centered on the sports page:

1. Have students compile a list of words sports writers use to indicate that one team beat another. The list might include such words as "killed," "slaughtered," "stomped," or "annihilated." Then ask why writers use such vivid and exaggerated terms to convey that the team won. What emotional effect do such terms have on the reader?
2. Have students compare the breezy style of the sports page with that of the business section, the arts section, or the editorial page. Why is the tone different? What purposes are writers of various sections trying to achieve with the reader?
3. Ask students to follow a sports columnist for a week or two to see if they can detect any bias in the writing; for example, showing favoritism for certain teams or picking on a particular coach.
4. Have students compare the space given to various sports. Does one sport dominate? Do local or national sports receive more coverage? What about women's sports?

The sports page presents interesting lessons in reading and writing for all students. And for those students who read only the sports page, a teacher can use that interest to encourage them to expand their reading to sports books and eventually to other kinds of books.

Using Junk Mail

A unique and fun way to teach critical reading skills is to save up all that junk mail you receive for about a month and have students read and analyze it.

First ask students to identify all of the techniques used in such mail to attract and hold the reader's attention. These might include the blurb on the envelope tempting the reader to see what is inside, the use of color or underlining to emphasize key words, the use of short paragraphs and simple direct sentences, and the repetition of key ideas.

Writers of promotion copy are very skillful. Students should become aware of their techniques so they can make informed judgments about what is being offered.

Whether the junk mail is for a product to buy, a magazine to subscribe to, or an appeal for donations to support some cause, the writer uses certain common appeals. Some of these appeals are along the following lines:

1. Guilt. "Because of the way this particular group has been treated historically, you owe it to them to help."
2. Compassion. "If you don't send a donation, this child (photograph) may die of malnutrition."
3. Snobbery. "You are among a select few who is receiving this special offer."
4. Greed. "Send us five dollars and you could quickly earn five thousand dollars."
5. Patriotism. "If you do not support us on this, the American way of life we know and love may well disappear."

Having students analyze the appeals in junk mail is not to say that one should not order a product or give a contribution to a worthy organization. Rather, what is important is that students base their decisions on rational thinking, not simply on an emotional appeal.

Television and Reading

Many teachers think of television as their enemy. They know the statistics about the huge amounts of time students spend watching TV — time that could be devoted to schoolwork *and* reading. However, this alleged enemy can become a teacher's friend and a friend of reading.

Most movies on television and even made-for-TV movies are based on books. Encourage students to read the book and compare it with the movie. They are different literary forms, but each has its own strengths. Books are able to give much deeper insights into the thoughts and motivations of the characters, but the color and action of the movie enlivens the story. Even for movies or documentaries

that are not based on books, a teacher can suggest a book related to the themes or issues presented. The teacher who loves reading will always have a book to recommend on whatever the subject of the discussion.

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Conclusion

Secondary teachers traditionally have been the bridge that spans the gap between the basic skills of elementary school and the subject specializations of college. In between, however, is an area that is strictly their own. They must develop in students the skills pertaining to particular subject matter. These are the reading skills peculiar to science, history, or literature. These are the words and concepts students need to master content. These are the study skills that will help students learn how to learn. This is what the secondary teacher can do better than anyone else.

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