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ABSTRACT
                Focusing on thinking skills, this guide, developed by
the educators at the Emily Griffith Opportunity School, is designed
to help employees to understand more and understand better what they
read and to solve problems based on that understanding. The guide is
designed for approximately 15-20 hours of instruction for low- to
midlevel readers. It is organized in three parts. Part I offers
strategies for solving common reading problems as well as strategies
for forming good reading habits. Part II contains short activities
for employees to practice their reading and thinking skills (with an
answer key). Part III contains an alphabetical list of vocabulary
words, a list of resources, and a practice page for readers to make
notes or comments on the guide. Each lesson consists of the following
key areas: topic, background, objective, facilitator instructions,
materials, student activity, critical thinking discussion, more
practice, and vocabulary. Contains 11 references. (KC)

A GUIDE TO READING COMPREHENSION AND CRITICAL THINKING

Teresa Falagrady, M.A.

Emily Griffith Opportunity School
1250 Welton Street
Denver, Colorado 80204

May 9, 1994

A GUIDE TO READING COMPREHENSION AND CRITICAL THINKING

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Teresa Falagrady

May 9, 1994

INTRODUCTION
TO
THE WORKPLACE LITERACY PROJECT

This module was developed by educators from Emily Griffith Opportunity School as part of a National Workplace Education grant funded by the U.S. Department of Education. A cooperative effort between the business and education communities, the program was designed specifically to enhance employees' literacy skills.

Direct benefits to the workforce include improved morale and motivation, self-esteem, team work, and promotional opportunities.

We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of our partners. In addition we recognize all of the students who participated in classes and who provided us with invaluable feedback for strengthening future classes.

We hope partnerships such as these will provide the catalyst for developing new or continued on-site educational opportunities.

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Reading

What is reading, exactly? Reading is one of those words that is hard to describe. For some, it's looking at a series of letters together. For others. it's pronouncing words; yet for others, reading is *understanding* what is read. Perhaps reading should be called "understanding" *because* not only is reading seeing letters, pronouncing sounds, and putting words together, it is *knowing* or *understanding* <u>what</u> those words mean <u>when put together</u>.

When I asked this question of two of my colleagues, their answers varied. For Pam, reading is "Decoding messages. It's looking at written text and knowing what it means." For Mary, reading is more. "Reading is a lot of emotion. Reading fills me with all the emotions of the words."

It occurs to me that reading is challenging for *anyone* to describe -- proficient and non-proficient readers alike. It seems that in opinions about reading, the difference is associated more with the *heart* than with the mind. For proficient readers, reading evokes a pleasurable emotion; for the non-proficient reader, it often produces anxiety.

We read for two purposes -- pleasure and information. Our understanding or *comprehension* of what we read depends on <u>what</u> we read and what we *already know* about the subject (*background knowledge*). For instance, if we're reading a mystery novel (and we're mystery fans), we are reading for pleasure. We understand what the words "say" because we've brought all our prior mystery-novel knowledge to this particular reading. The words *make sense* to us, and we enjoy them.

On the other hand, if we're reading a detailed report on a new work procedure, we may not understand it as well as we do the mystery novel. We

may need to read it more slowly and carefully. Why? Although it's possible that the writing may be poor, it's more likely because we're unfamiliar with some or all of the report's vocabulary. We're unsure how the words go together. We might have limited or no prior knowledge about the subject. Therefore, our comprehension lessens, and our reading speed or *fluency*, decreases.

There are many causes of poor comprehension. Some of these include lack of background knowledge, lack of focus (oftentimes due to a distracting environment), and lack of focus on the *meaning* behind the words rather than on accurate pronunciation. Also, oftentimes, readers do not monitor themselves as they read, or perhaps they have no interest in what they're reading.

Virtually no job exists today where reading is not a requirement. Employees read every day. They read signs, information boards, computer screens, and applications. They read procedure and safety manuals, telephone messages, letters, flyers, and memos. Hardly a day goes by without being bombarded by text. Yet, for many American workers, reading is difficult. Many American workers who are otherwise capable at their jobs, often hide their reading inadequacies. To admit that one cannot read oftentimes means being ostracized from coworkers and ineligible for promotions.

What, then, do we do about this common workplace problem? Offering on-site classes using work-related *meaningful* material is a start.

Critical Thinking

Just as there are many reasons for poor reading comprehension, there are several contributors to poor critical thinking. For example, an employee might lack motivation and initiative, he may fear punishment or ostracizing, or perhaps he is not a risk-taker.

Critical thinking demands that we ask questions -- questions that provoke thought. It's a complex activity, and like anything we want to improve, it takes practice.

The purpose of this guide is to help employees -- regardless their position -- **to understand more and understand better** what they read. To do this, the guide will focus on **thinking** activities. That is, it will provide employees with strategies for ensuring that what they read, they understand. It's not merely *seeing* the words; it's *understanding* the words based on the reader's background knowledge of the subject. Part of understanding or comprehending is thinking *critically*.

This guide is designed to help employees *think* about what they've read AND about *what the words mean to them* so they know what action to take in a given situation; in short, it's about people making <u>informed</u> decisions -- not only on the job, but in their daily lives.

<u>Guide Format</u>

The Guide is designed for approximately 15-20 hours of instruction, depending on ability of students, length of the critical thinking discussion, and use of extension activities. It is aimed at low- to mid-level readers and is divided into three parts.

> **Part I** offers strategies for solving common reading problems, as well as strategies for forming good reading habits
>
> **Part II** contains short activities for employees to practice their reading and thinking skills; also includes an answer key
>
> **Part III** contains an alphabetical list of vocabulary words that appear throughout the Guide that may be unfamiliar to some readers; a list of resources; and a practice page for readers to jot down any notes, questions, or comments they might have as they progress through the Guide

The format of each lesson contains the following key areas: TOPIC, BACKGROUND, OBJECTIVE, FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS, MATERIALS, STUDENT ACTIVITY, CRITICAL THINKING DISCUSSION, MORE PRACTICE, and VOCABULARY. Each is explained below.

TOPIC: the main focus of a particular day's lesson

BACKGROUND: any additional information about the topic that would increase the reader's understanding

OBJECTIVE: the outcome(s) expected of the employees at the end of the lesson

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS: directions (if any) for the facilitator regarding the day's lesson; includes flipchart directions

MATERIALS: the handouts that are needed for the day's lesson

STUDENT ACTIVITY: a hands-on activity/ies for employees' practice; can be done independently, in pairs, small groups, or with the whole group (**NOTE:** a *suggested* grouping, such as "*independent*," "*paired*," or "*whole group*" follows each activity and is labeled in this way: *(FORMAT: independent)*

CRITICAL THINKING DISCUSSION: questions to guide employees toward self-reflection (suggested format: whole group)

MORE PRACTICE: additional activity suggestions for employees to practice in class or at home to help them reinforce their learning

VOCABULARY: a listing of words that appear in the lesson itself. Since vocabulary contributes to reading proficiency, it is recommended that the words be introduced and discussed prior to each lesson so that readers will be able to understand the lessons more fully. (**NOTE:** *Other vocabulary words found in **Part I** are also included in the alphabetical list in the back. *Since the word *text* is used frequently, it might be helpful to students to understand the meaning prior to beginning this guide.)

There are many ways to teach reading and a variety of activities for doing so. Although I have highlighted only *some* activities, it is my hope that this guide will enable all readers, native- and non-native English speakers alike, to become less intimidated by the printed word, to learn and to apply new strategies for overcoming their reading challenges, and simply, to enjoy reading more.

T.F.

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READING STRATEGIES

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PART I

HERE ARE SOME COMMONLY-ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT READING PROBLEMS, FOLLOWED BY A STRATEGY FOR SOLVING THEM.

■   *How can I understand what I read if I don't know some of the vocabulary words?*

Strategy:

Use the *context*. *Context* means the words that surround the vocabulary word you're having trouble with. This could mean a few words that appear before and after the troublesome word. Or, it could mean a sentence or two that precedes the word, **and** the sentence where the word itself appears.

Many times, using the context helps us to make a *good guess* about a word. If, however, we run across several vocabulary words before we've read even a few pages, chances are the text is too difficult. (See page 18, the **5-finger Rule**)

■   *How can I remember what I read?*

Strategy:

Need to (or want to) remember what you read? Frequently, unless we can identify with the main character or subject, we'll forget what we're reading. We have a tendency to forget, especially, if the text concerns a subject we know little or nothing about, or one which we care nothing about.

PART I

If you want to remember what you read, try this . . .

- Take notes about what you're reading. (<u>Example</u>: *"I agree with this."* *"What does this mean?"* *"Remember this."* etc.) You can use a notebook or jot down your thoughts in the margin.

- Discuss what you read with someone.

- If possible, find something in common with the subject, main character, etc. In other words, apply it to your own life and interests.

- Underline or highlight words, phrases, or sentences that may help you remember the plot, character, main idea, etc.

■ *How do I keep my mind from wandering when I'm reading?*

<u>**Strategy:**</u>

If your mind frequently wanders as you read, you'll be glad to know that this happens to most people! As adults, we have may responsibilities, so, of course, our minds will have a tendency to wander sometimes. This can occur not only when we read, but when we talk or write.

There's no magic formula for preventing your mind from wandering, other than to simply *concentrate*. Try to clear your mind of all other thoughts and focus only on the words in front of you. This may mean that you need to find a quiet place, or set aside a particular time when you know that you won't be disturbed.

PART I

■ *How do I comprehend something that doesn't interest me?*

Strategy:

Do you frequently have a hard time understanding what you read? Again, at times, proficient readers do, too. Why? often, it's because we don't have any *background knowledge* about the subject. For example, read the text below. Ask yourself questions about the text as you read it.

The subject of file input/output in Turbo C is a rich and complex one. In this chapter we've only covered the highlights, but you probably have enough of a head start to finish the exploration of files on you own.

We've shown that there are two main families of file-handling functions: standard I/O and system-level I/O. Standard I/O can deal with data in a larger variety of ways, but system I/O is generally more efficient. In standard I/O we showed examples of the four ways to handle data: as characters, as strings, as formatted data in the style of PRINTF ( ), and as fixed-length records or blocks. We saw that the first three of these ways store data -- whether text or numbers -- as ASCII characters. The fourth way, record I/O, causes numerical data to be stored in binary format.

reprinted from <u>C++ Programming</u>

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Did you enjoy reading this text? Did you understand it? Did you understand some of the vocabulary words like *I/O, strings,* or *binary*? If you didn't understand this text, chances are you are not familiar with computer programming. Even proficient readers may have difficulty understanding this text because they may not have any or only limited knowledge about the subject.

How do you build up your background knowledge? One way is to find a book or article or even ask someone about the particular topic you want to know more about. Ask questions about the subject. What common words are associated with the subject? What are some other resources you can consult about the subject?

■ *How do I keep from going back and rereading?*

Strategy

Do you find yourself returning to the same words you just read a minute ago? Here are some possible reasons . . .

1. You're not focusing on the text at hand -- in which case you need to go back and reread.

2. You lack the background knowledge necessary to understand the text -- you'll need to familiarize yourself with the subject so that when you read about it again, you'll be able to grasp the meaning much better.

3. You're reading a text that's too difficult for you. Unless you intentionally want to increase your vocabulary by learning new words, you'll be frustrated reading a text that's too difficult for you. Initially, choose a text that's easy for you to understand, yet not so easy that it bores you!

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■   *How can I read faster?*

Strategy

Try not to read word for word; it slows you down. For example, read the following short paragraph:

Many	students	are	surprised	when
the	teacher	tells	them	to	read
faster.	But	they	soon	find	out
that	they	understand	more	that	way.

reprinted from Reading Power

Was this hard for you? Many people find this difficult to read because the words are separated. Did you concentrate primarily on *pronouncing the individual words*? Or, did you try to group words together and read in sections?

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PART I

Look at the same passage below. This time groups of words are circled. Now read the circled groups.

Many students are surprised when the teacher tells them to read faster. But they soon find out that they understand more that way.

Were you able to read this more quickly? Even if the words are separated, you *still* can group words together. When you read in groups of words, you're able to make more sense of them, and therefore, read faster.

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READING STRATEGIES FOR FORMING GOOD READING HABITS

Pre-reading Strategies

<u>Before</u> you begin to read any text, try using these pre-reading strategies:

➤ What can you predict about the text in front of you? Think about the following . . .

• Notice any boldface, special markings, or accompanying pictures (including photographs, charts, etc.) that might give you a clue about what you are about to read.

• Scan important information first. This might include chapter headings, the "TO/FROM/SUBJECT" part of a memo, or even a summary.

• Think about the subject of the text. Do you know something about it that might help you to comprehend it better?

• Look for the person's name who wrote the text. Have you ever read anything by him or her before? If so, will knowing who wrote it help you to predict what the text will be about?

PART I

During - reading Strategies

Even as we read, it's helpful to ask questions and to reread if necessary in order to strengthen our reading.

* At one point, stop reading. Ask yourself (or discuss with someone else) what you've just read.

* Reread unclear sentences. Even good readers do this.

* Focus on what you're reading! One of the reasons we need to reread is because we're merely *looking* at the words, not bringing meaning *to* those words.

* As you read, create a picture in your mind about what you're reading. Sometimes it's easier to make more sense of the text this way.

* Suppose you came to the sentence "*The main problem we face is irregular orders.*" and you weren't sure what the word *irregular* meant. Make a guess! -- a good one -- <u>based on what you read before that sentence</u>. Or, you might want to go ahead and continue reading the next sentence as a way of giving you an idea about the meaning of *irregular*.

Try <u>substituting</u> another word -- for what you *think* "*irregular*" means. (Perhaps "up and down"?) Then, go back and substitute this word for *irregular*. Ask yourself: "Does my substitute word *make sense* in the sentence?" If your answer is *yes*, chances are you've just discovered the meaning of *irregular* on your own! This word, in fact, *does* mean *not consistent, not regular, or up and down*!

By substituting a word that *make sense* for the word you don't understand and not just guessing *any* word, you are able to monitor your own comprehension. You'll become more independent in your reading, and thus, more confident.

PART I

FOR MORE DURING-READING PRACTICE . . .

While you read, do these 2 things:

1. Place a "   " in the margin if you understand what you're reading.

2. Place a "?" in the margin if you *don't* understand what you're reading.

For the parts with the "   ," explain to yourself *in your own words*, what you *do* understand. Look back at the text if necessary.

For the parts with the "?" . . .

a. Read again the parts you did not understand. Rereading often helps comprehension. If you now understand something that was previously unclear, change your "?" to a "   ."

b. If the text still remains unclear, try to pinpoint what is causing the problem. Is it a word? A phrase or a sentence?

c. Try to think of something you might do to help yourself understand. (Example: As yourself: *"Do the words remind me of something else that I know about?" "Can I make more sense of the text by looking at an accompanying picture or graph -- if there is one --?" "Can I make a good guess and substitute another word for the word I don't know -- a word that makes sense in the sentence?"*)

Again, if your strategy works, change your "?" to a "   ."

d. Finally, try to explain to yourself those ideas that you still don't understand. (Example: *"I still don't understand what the procedure for evacuating the building is."*) Discuss these ideas that you don't understand with someone. Bounce ideas back and forth. Frequently, by discussing what you don't understand with someone else, you're able to sort through your ideas.

PART I

<u>Post</u>-reading Strategies

As a way to find out whether you've understood what you've just read, discuss it with a co-worker, friend, or family member. Ask him to ask you some questions about what you've just read. Some questions your partner might want to ask you are . . .

- "What person/people were involved?"

- "What happened?"

- "Are you affected by this text?"

Of course, it's not always possible to "practice" with someone, especially in a work environment. However, you can practice alone at home with the Sunday newspaper or a book you've been reading, etc.

READING & THINKING ACTIVITIES

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PART II

<u>TOPIC</u>:	**Reading Survey**
<u>BACKGROUND</u>:	Sometimes it's helpful to spend some time thinking about your attitude about reading, as well as your reading habits. This survey helps you to do just that. This is <u>not</u> a test, and there are no right or wrong answers. You can finish it in about 15 minutes.
<u>OBJECTIVE</u>:	To help you and the instructor learn what you think about <u>reading</u>; also, to determine your reading habits -- as a way of providing a foundation for future lessons
<u>MATERIALS</u>:	2 - page survey
<u>STUDENT ACTIVITY</u>:	Take a few minutes to complete the survey on the next two pages. (*FORMAT: independent*)
<u>CRITICAL THINKING DISCUSSION</u>:	What did you learn about your attitudes and/or habits about reading? Did your answers reflect the questions asked, or did you perhaps, misread the question.
<u>MORE PRACTICE</u>:	Talk to other employees, friends, or family members about this survey. Do their opinions reflect yours? Are there any noticeable patterns? (<u>Example</u>: if some of your family members' answers and your answers are the same/similar, perhaps you could attribute your reading strengths or weaknesses to your family's influence).

<u>VOCABULARY</u>:	survey, foundation, reflect, misread, attribute

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READING SURVEY

Name _____ Date _____

1. Do you like to read? _____

2. Who taught you to read?

3. Do you read books? _____ magazines? _____ newspapers? _____

4. Give the names of some books, magazines, and/or newspapers you have at home.

5. Does your job require reading? _____ What kind?

6. What are some of your favorite books?

7. How do you decide which books you'll read?

8. Do you ever read on break or at home for pleasure? _____ How often?

9. What are your hobbies/what do you like to do in your free time?

10. Name some movies you've liked best.

11. Do you read a book if you have seen the movie or TV program based on it? _____

PART II

12. Have you ever read a book because a family member or a friend said it was good? _____

13. Do you like to have someone read to you? _____

14. When you are reading, and you come to something you don't know, what do you do?

15. Regarding question #14, do you ever do anything else?

16. If you knew someone was having trouble reading, how would you help that person?

17. Why do people read?

18. What does someone have to do to be a good reader?

19. Do you have a library card? _____

20. Who are your favorite authors?

21. What kind of stories do you like?

22. Do you think you're a good reader? _____ Why?

23. What would you like to improve about your reading?

PART II

TOPIC: Previewing and Predicting

BACKGROUND: Frequently, it's useful to 1) look at (or **preview**) the
                    pictures that often accompany text as a way toward
                    comprehending what you're about to read; then, 2)
                    make a guess (or **predict**) what you think the text will
                    be about based on the picture

OBJECTIVE: To become aware of and get into the habit of using
                    previewing and predicting strategies for understanding
                    text

MATERIALS: Pictures

STUDENT
ACTIVITY: Look carefully at each picture on the next page. If you
                    saw these pictures in a department newsletter -- with
                    a story next to them, what would the pictures "tell"
                    you? What would you guess the article to be about?
                    Use the spaces next to each picture to make your
                    predictions.
                    (*FORMAT: pairs*)

CRITICAL
THINKING
DISCUSSION: Why are graphics such as photos, graphs -- even
                    cartoons -- important to understanding the text? Do
                    you sometimes ignore accompanying graphics?
                    Why/why not?
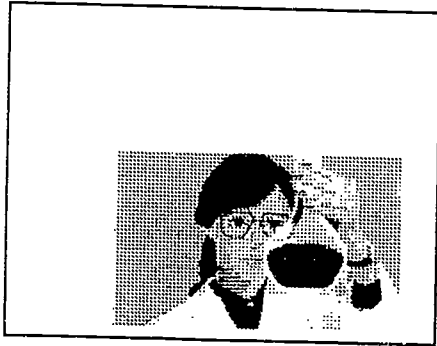
MORE PRACTICE: Look for a work-related text that includes graphics.
                    Photocopy only the pictures. Bring these handouts to
                    class and ask others to preview and predict each other's
                    pictures.

VOCABULARY: previewing, predicting, accompany, ignore

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PART II

Pictures for Previewing and Predicting

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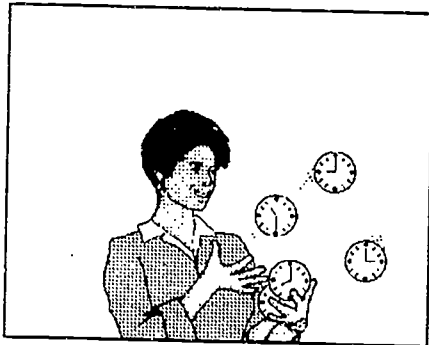
PART II

TOPIC:	**5-finger rule**
BACKGROUND:	Originally used as a tool for elementary school children, it can be easily adapted to the adult learner. You can begin on any page of any given text.
OBJECTIVE:	To determine whether a text is too difficult for you
MATERIALS:	"Retrain for What?" text

STUDENT ACTIVITY:

1. Begin reading the text on the next page.

2. As you come to words you don't understand, extend one finger on one hand.

3. If by the time you get to the bottom of the page and you have all fingers extended, the text is probably too difficult for you.
   (*FORMAT: independent*)

CRITICAL THINKING DISCUSSION:

Did you come across five words that you didn't know? If so, did you abandon the text? What if you were unfamiliar with the words, but it was necessary for you to understand what you were reading? Should you continue reading? What reading strategy would you use to help you understand this kind of text better?

MORE PRACTICE:

Bring to class a newspaper or magazine article. Determine whether or not the text is too difficult for you by using the 5-finger rule. Try to bring two or more samples from different sections of the paper/magazine. (Example: editorial, entertainment, sports, etc.).

VOCABULARY: adapted, extend, abandon

Text for
"5-finger Rule"

Retrain for What?

Reality intruded on the toyshop of Clintonomics last week. The President had barely rolled out a proposal to spend $100 million to retrain workers dislocated by NAFTA when the Labor Department reported that such retraining doesn't work.

The report -- assessing a longstanding $200 million annual program that helps manufacturing workers whose jobs vanished to foreign trade -- concluded that only 19 percent of the "retrained" workers found jobs that demanded their new skills and paid at less 80 percent of their former wages; 20 percent remained jobless; most of the rest sank into low-wage slots that they occupied for just eight months.

Yet, the transformative power of retraining has become such an article of faith for the Administration -- especially for Labor Secretary Robert Reich, with his vision of reskilled "symbolic analysts" flourishing in the Workplace of the Future -- that officials quickly discounted the unhappy news: a flawed program, bad planning, or "entitlement" than genuine retraining. And Bobby's still in the basement mixing up the really comprehensive medicine that will cure America's surplus labor problem through training.

reprinted from <u>The Nation</u>

PART II

TOPIC: **KWL**

BACKGROUND: KWL means "What do I already **K**now" about the subject I'm reading? "What do I **W**ant to know about the subject?" and "What did I **L**earn about the subject?"

OBJECTIVE: To be able to monitor your own comprehension by using this as a pre- and post-reading strategy

FACILITATOR   On a flipchart draw three columns. In the first
INSTRUCTIONS: column, write **K**; in the second column, write **W**; in the third column, write **L**. Fill in columns with employees' answers

MATERIALS: "Bond Basics" text

STUDENT   First, scan, (don't read) the text on the next page. Are
ACTIVITY: there boldface print or italics, a summary, a picture, etc., that might help you to understand what the text is about? If so, use highlights to ask yourself,
  * "What do I already **know** about this subject?"
  * "What do I **want** to know about or what do I think I'll find out about the subject?"

After you have answered these questions, <u>read</u> the text. When you've finished, ask yourself,
  * "What did I **learn**?"

As you write, call out your answers to the facilitator so he or she can write them on the flipchart.
(*FORMAT: independent*)

PART II

CRITICAL
THINKING
DISCUSSION:
    Did you already know something about the subject? How were you able to determine that? Based on that knowledge, did the text seem easier to comprehend? What if you didn't know anything about the subject? How can asking yourself "What did I learn" help you to understand the text more clearly?

MORE PRACTICE:
    To promote further understanding about a particular topic that you don't fully understand, bring more information about it to class. (Example: Ask a co-worker or find a newspaper article, book, or brochure about the topic. Use the **KWL** strategy to help you understand the information).

VOCABULARY:
    pre, post, monitor, scan, boldface, italics

PART II

Text for
KWL

Bond Basics

The *face value* of a bond is fixed at the time it is purchased. It is the amount a bondholder can count on getting in cash on the date the bond matures, which could be anywhere from one year to 100 years, depending on the particular bond.

The *market value* -- the price at which you can sell a bond any time before maturity -- is profoundly affected by changes in interest rates. These rates are driven by expectations about the course of inflation. The longer the amount of time until a bond comes due, the more vulnerable it is to these expectations on a day-to-day basis.

reprinted from <u>Bottom Line Personal</u>

| What do I **Know** about this subject (before I read it)? | What do I **Want** to know about this subject (as I read it)? | What did I **Learn** about this subject (after I read it)? |

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PART II

TOPIC: **Cloze**

BACKGROUND: A term from psychology, "cloze" refers to a person's tendency to complete a familiar but unfinished pattern.

OBJECTIVE: To determine how well you comprehend a given text when part of the text is missing

MATERIALS: "The hospital . . . " text

STUDENT ACTIVITY: Read the text on the next page. Notice the blanks with numbers in them -- like these -- (___(1)___), (___(2)___) and so on. As you read the text, fill in the blank with a word that makes sense to you.
(*FORMAT: pairs*)

CRITICAL THINKING DISCUSSION: Was this easy or difficult? Why? How did you determine what word went in the blank? Did you find more than one answer to fit the blank? Why do you think the first sentence did not include any blanks?

MORE PRACTICE: Bring a sample text from the workplace. This could be a memo or safety procedure, etc. Cross out about every fifth word and put a blank. Do not omit any words form the first sentence. Exchange papers and fill in each other's blanks. Discuss.

VOCABULARY: cloze, psychology, tendency, omit

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PART II

Text for
Cloze

The hospital is a very task-oriented workplace. Much needs to get (1)___ and there are many levels of jobs and supervisors to make sure the ___(2)___ get done. "Do this" and "Do ___(3)___," "Get me this" and "___(4)___ care of that" are commonly heard. All day long, people ___(5)___ giving orders to other people, telling others to (6)___ something. And often, the ___(7)___ are delivered with urgency. It is not just "Do something," but "Do it ___(8)___!"

In ___(9)___ situations with lots of people giving ___(10)___, communication may not follow normal rules of politeness. It is common for hospital workers to ___(11)___ about being bossed around by ___(12)___ else. ___(13)___, they feel that they are not treated politely and with ___(14)___. Part of this is the result of the urgency that characterizes hospitals: there is ___(15)___ to be done, and it must be ___(16)___ now. So people may skip saying "Please," or ___(17)___ may be too blunt or too demanding in the ways they ___(18)___ language.

reprinted from <u>Straight Talk</u>

<u>Vocabulary:</u>   task-oriented, urgency

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PART II

TOPIC:	**Find the Main Idea**
BACKGROUND:	Finding a text's "bottom line" or main idea helps the reader put all of the information together .
OBJECTIVE:	To find the primary message in a given text
FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS:	Write down the students' answers on a flipchart.
MATERIALS:	"Many employees complain . . . " (Text #1)
STUDENT ACTIVITY:	Read Text #1 on the next page. When you have finished, answer the following questions.

1. What is the main idea of this text?

2. How did you find it?
   (*FORMAT: independent, followed by small groups*)

CRITICAL THINKING DISCUSSION:	When are you consciously trying to find the main point of the text? What word(s) do you look for to find the main idea? Why is it important to find the main idea when we read <u>any</u> text?
MORE PRACTICE:	"All hourly and non-exempt employees" (Text #2) Repeat the activity above with this text.

VOCABULARY:	primary, consciously, non-exempt

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PART II

Text #1 for
Finding the Main Idea

Many employees complain that they are never sure exactly what they are supposed to be doing. Sometimes they even argue that managers are purposefully unclear about the directions so they have reason to fault workers whenever it's convenient. The same employees often claim that their performance is only recognized if they make a mistake; they argue that they can't get better because they never know when they are doing something right. It doesn't matter if the complaints are accurate or not; if employees feel they are adrift in their responsibilities, there is no chance they will be efficient and productive with their time.

The best way to avoid this confusion is to be as clear as possible about what you want. Take the time to explain what you expect; ask questions to make sure the worker understands what's expected; ask the worker if he has any questions or suggestions. As strange as it sounds, improving a worker's performance often means nothing more than clearly expressing your expectations. Most employees want definite direction.

reprinted from Straight Talk

VOCABULARY: purposefully, claim, adrift, efficient, productive, expressing

*What's the **main idea** of this text?*

1. Employees feel that they get recognized only if they make a mistake.

2. Many employees feel that they're not clear about what their job responsibilities are.

3. One way for employees to improve their performance is to express their expectations of the job.

4. Employees must learn to ask questions at work.

CRITICAL THINKING DISCUSSION: How can asking questions about one's job help clear up any confusion about what's expected of him or her on the job?

36   Answers on page 46

PART II

<div align="center">

Text #2 for
Finding the Main Idea

</div>

As hourly or non-exempt employees, you must keep track of the hours you've worked. If you need to make any changes to your timecards, you must do so up to the end of the pay period only. Your supervisor must then review and approve this. You will be paid only for the hours listed on your timecard.

Occasionally, it's necessary to leave the building for personal reasons. When this occurs, you must sign out at the time you leave and sign in at the time you return.

Employees are expected to work their assigned hours and should not sign in before their assigned time. Employees should also sign out when they have completed their work shift. The only exception to this is in specially-approved cases. Employees who disregard this requirement will be subject to discipline. Any exceptions must be authorized by an employee's immediate supervisor or department head. Employees should round the total number of hours they've worked to the nearest quarter hour. For example, if you've worked a total of 36 hours and 10 minutes, round this to 36.25 (quarter hour).

Employees are responsible for recording their own time only. Falsifying another employee's time or signing in or out for another employee may result in immediate release from employment for all employees involved.

VOCABULARY: non-exempt, assigned, disregard, subject to, exceptions, round, falsifying

<div align="center">

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</div>

PART II

*What's the **main idea** of this text?*

1. Many jobs require employees to punch in and out daily.

2. Employees are expected to work their assigned hours and must sign in and out.

3. A manual timekeeping system makes it easy for employees to keep a record of the time they have worked.

4. Only non-exempt employees are required to keep track of the time they have worked.

CRITICAL THINKING DISCUSSION: How can asking questions about one's job help clear up any confusion about what's expected of him or her on the job?

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PART II

<u>TOPIC</u>:	**Using a Graphic to Comprehend Text**
<u>BACKGROUND</u>:	Sometimes when we read a memo, a work procedure, or a letter, some sort of graphic accompanies the text. Often, it's necessary to "read" the graphic along with the text.
<u>OBJECTIVE</u>:	To be able to understand pertinent information by using text and a graphic
<u>FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS</u>:	On a flipchart page, draw a graph similar to the one on the page after next. Use the actual graph on the next page for the activity below.
<u>MATERIALS</u>:	"X-ray" graph
<u>STUDENT ACTIVITY</u>:	Look at the graph on the page after next and answer the following questions. Once you've finished, pick a partner and compare answers.

1. How many units were ordered in June?

2. How many fewer units were ordered in August than in June?

3. In which month were the highest units ordered?
   (*FORMAT: independent, followed by*
   pairs)

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PART II

|	
<u>CRITICAL</u> <u>THINKING</u> <u>DISCUSSION</u>:	How did you find the answers to the previous questions? How do you use a chart? What kind of information does a chart tell you? What two factors are involved? How can graphs, charts, or pictures help you when you're reading? How did another person in this class find the information -- the same way you did? If not, how did he do it? Is there more than one way to find this information?
<u>MORE PRACTICE</u>:	Write three more questions that correspond to the graph.

<u>VOCABULARY</u>:	graphic, accompanies, pertinent, graph, similar, compare, factors, correspond

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PART II

Graph and text for
Using a Graphic
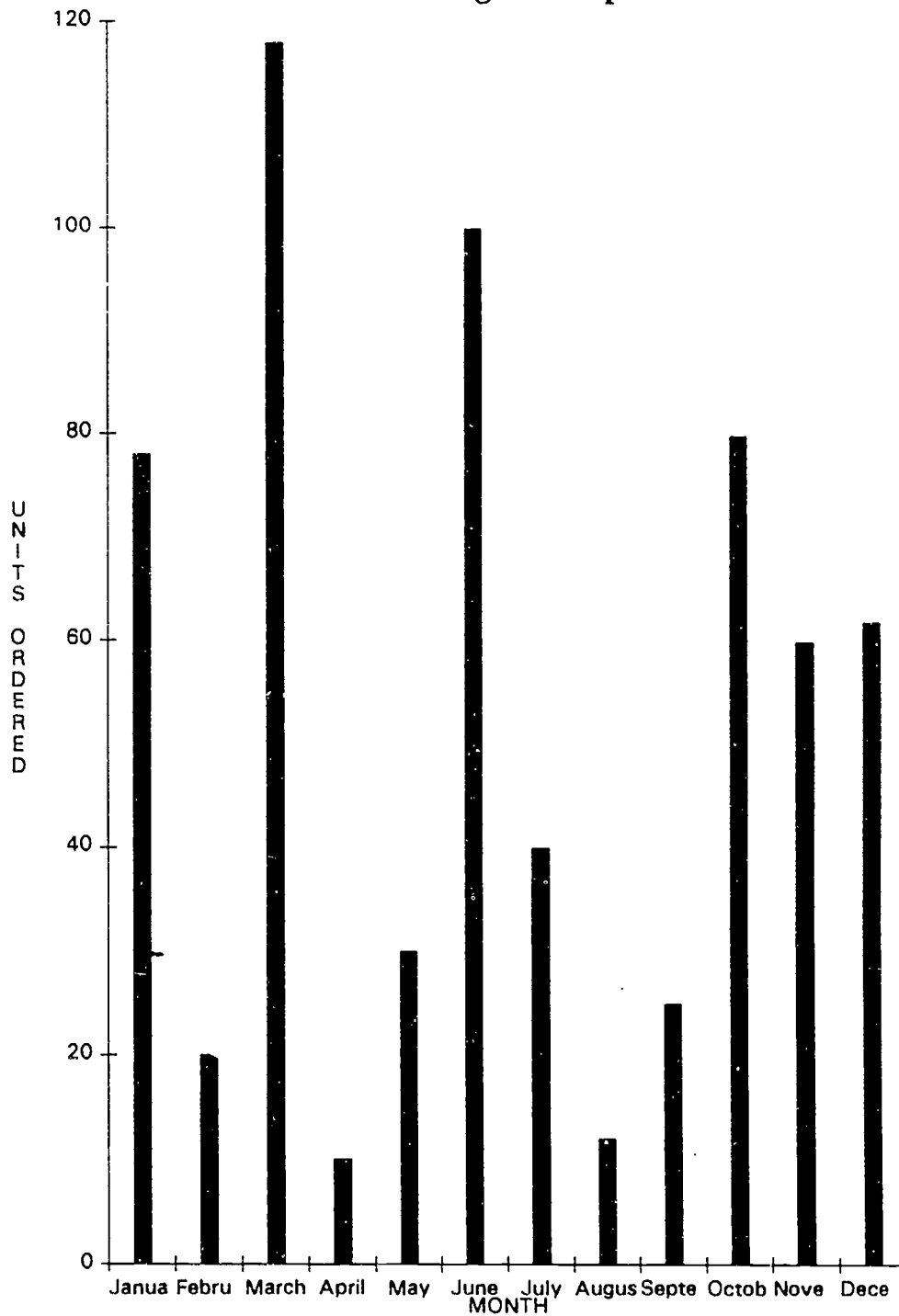
reprinted from <u>Communicating at Work</u>

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PART II

TOPIC: **Drawing Conclusions**

BACKGROUND: To draw a conclusion means to "read between the lines." In other words, the message in the text isn't always directly stated.

OBJECTIVE: To be able to read a given text and from an opinion or judgment based on what you conclude from the words

MATERIALS: "Smoking" text

STUDENT
ACTIVITY   Read the text on the next page and answer the questions. Then, pick a partner and compare answers. (*FORMAT: independent, followed by pairs*)

CRITICAL
THINKING
DISCUSSION: Can you think of other instances where you read something and the information wasn't directly stated? What word(s) enabled you to find the message "between the lines?"

VOCABULARY: drawing, conclusions, directly, instances, enabled

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PART II

Text for
Drawing Conclusions

<u>Smoking</u>

In keeping with our home office's ban on smoking inside the building, smoking will no longer be permitted inside any of our facilities. Employees and visitors are welcome to use the common areas on the east and north sides of the Towers if they wish to smoke.

Also, due to the popularity of our lunchtime *Brown-bag Workshops*, especially the "Quite Smoking Now" ones, we will be offering them quarterly. As in the past, the company will award $50 to any employee who quits smoking for a **three-month minimum** period.

Look for flyers in the cafeteria or ask your supervisor for more information.

Due to the limited number of seats, <u>you must sign-up at least three days in advance</u>. Sign-up with Jane in the marketing department.

<u>VOCABULARY</u>:   ban, permitted, quarterly

What conclusion can you draw from the text above?

You can conclude that

A.   All employees want to quit smoking.

B.   The home office is encouraging no smoking.

C.   Every employee has taken the Brown-Bag Workshop.

<u>CRITICAL</u>   Practice drawing your own conclusions in real-life
<u>THINKING</u>   situations. (<u>Example</u>: Watch the evening news. What
<u>DISCUSSION</u>:   conclusions can you draw for each story?)

<p align="right">Answers on page 46</p>

PART II

TOPIC: **Sequencing Information**

BACKGROUND: Sequencing means to put the information in order --
to be able to understand the whole text.

OBJECTIVE: To be able to find necessary information among words
and numbers, and to put the information in order

MATERIALS: "VCR" text

STUDENT
ACTIVITY: Read the text on the next page and answer the questions
that follow. Then, pick a partner and compare
answers.
(FORMAT: independent, followed by pairs)

CRITICAL
THINKING
DISCUSSION: When you read a text that requires you to follow
directions in a particular order, what can you do to
ensure that you understand the text? If you don't
understand a particular step, what should you do to
understand it?

MORE PRACTICE: Create or find a short text like this with words and
numbers. Write three True/False questions. Answer
each other's questions.

VOCABULARY: sequencing

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PART II

Text for
Sequencing Information

<u>Setting the Current Time</u>

---

1. Make sure the VCR POWER is ON. The ■ appears on the display.

2. Press TV/VCR button on the remote control unit to VCR. VCR appears on the display.

3. Press CLOCK SET button. The day of the week indicator will flash.

4. Press SET (+) button repeatedly until the correct day is indicated. (Example: WED)

5. Press SELECT button. The hours indicator will flash.

6. Press SET (+) button repeatedly until the correct hour is indicated. (Example: PM5)

7. Press SELECT button. The minutes indicator will flash.

8. Press SET (+) button repeatedly until the correct minute is indicated. (Example: 40)

9. Press ENTER button. Now, the clock time will start. Although seconds are not displayed, they begin counting at 00 when you press ENTER button.

* When unplugging the AC-cord, or power failure, "--:--" flashes on the display.

* If the display shows an abnormal reading or no reading, unplug the power cord for a few seconds. Then, plug it back in.

<u>VOCABULARY</u>: display, indicator, indicated

PART II

*Check your sequencing ability by placing a **T** in the blank if the statement is true and an **F** if the statement is false.*

1. _____ The Power button must be turned on first.

2. _____ The next step after turning on the power is to press the SET (+) button until the correct day is indicated.

3. _____ You press the ENTER button after each setting.

4. _____ Step number 6 tells you how to set the correct hour.

5. _____ When "--:--" flashes, you know that you have set the time correctly.

PART II

TOPIC: **5 W's and H**

BACKGROUND: Originally used as a strategy for understanding newspaper articles, it aids in understanding non-newspaper texts as well

OBJECTIVE: To be able to use key "questioning" words as a means to understanding what you read

FACILITATOR
INSTRUCTIONS: On a flipchart page, write **Who, What, Where, When, Why,** and **How** -- <u>vertically</u>. As employees call out answers, write those answers next to the appropriate **W/H** word.

MATERIALS: "Memo" (Text #1)

STUDENT
ACTIVITY: Read the text on the page after next. Every few sentences or so, ask yourself questions using the **W** and **H** words on the flipchart. (<u>Example</u>: **Who** is this story/article/memo about?) Sometimes it's not possible to answer all of the **W/H** questions, but you should be able to remember most of them. Use the blanks on the page 40 to guide you.) (*FORMAT: small groups*)

CRITICAL
THINKING
DISCUSSION: What were your answers to the **W/H** questions? Were you able to answer all of the questions from the **W/H** format? If not, why? Did these **W/H** words increase your understanding of the text? Did some people come up with different answers? If so, how were you able to determine *which* answer was the best one? What's a good way to find answers to **W/H** questions when there's a lot of detail in the text?

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PART II

MORE PRACTICE: Bring to class a company/departmental newsletter. Choose an article and write **W/H** questions for it. Ask other students to find the answers.

Practice your understanding of a more detailed text by reading "Employee Education Program . . ." (page 40) and answering True/False to the **W/H** questions.

VOCABULARY: aids, vertically

PART II

Memo

Date: February 18, 1994

To: All Staff

From: Patricia Reed, Store Manager

Subject: Store's mailing list

Thank you all for helping to get all of our sales flyers out on time. We mailed over 3,000 flyers! One question I have is how many of these addresses are still current? Do all of the people who received our flyers still live at those addresses, or are we actually sending flyers to over 3,000 different people?

During a random check, I noticed duplicate labels for people who have the same last name but different first names at the same address. I also noticed duplicates for the same names at two different addressees.

Labor, supplies, and postage are costly. I would like to meet with all of you to get your input on how to streamline. In addition, I'd like to update our mailing list before our next mailing.

Please plan to meet in the conference room on March 3, at 9:00 a.m. We'll brainstorm!

VOCABULARY: duplicate, streamline, brainstorm

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PART II

Who _____

_____

_____

What _____

_____

_____

Where _____

_____

_____

When _____

_____

_____

Why _____

_____

_____

How _____

_____

_____

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PART II

Text #2 for
5 W's and H

Employee Education Program (EEP).

As part of employee development, we have an Employee Education Program to assist full-time and part-time employees with the cost of tuition.

Full-time employees are eligible to apply for tuition reimbursement up to $1000/year maximum; part-time employees are eligible for up to $500/year maximum. The following amounts will be reimbursed upon successful completion of the courses and receipt of the following grades.

UNDERGRADUATE	GRADUATE
A = 100%	A = 100%
B = 100%	B = 90%
C = 80%	C or below = 0%

Pass/Fail courses will be reimbursed as 80% Pass, 0% Fail.

NOTE: All employees must obtain course approval from their department manager before enrolling in a class.

VOCABULARY: tuition, eligible, reimbursement, receipt, undergraduate, graduate, enrolling

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A GUIDE TO READING COMPREHENSION AND CRITICAL THINKING   41

PART II

Check your comprehension of the above text by placing a T in the blank if the statement is true, and an F in the blank if the statement is false.

1. _____ Only full-time employees are eligible for tuition reimbursement. **(Who)**

2. _____ Employees who enroll in a graduate-level course and receive a "B" will receive 100% tuition reimbursement. **(What)**

3. _____ Department managers must give permission to their employees to attend a class before the employees enroll. **(How)**

4. _____ The maximum amount of tuition that will be reimbursed to full-time employees is $1000 every 6 months. **(When)**

5. _____ If you enroll in a "Pass/Fail" course and receive a "Pass," you will be reimbursed 80%. **(Why)**

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PART II

TOPIC: Fry Readability Scale

BACKGROUND: This is a quick and simple formula that was developed
                    by Edward Fry in the late 60s. Two factors are used
                    to predict the difficulty of the reading material:
                    <u>sentence length</u> and <u>words used</u>. Sentence length is
                    determined by the total number of syllables in the
                    passage.

                    As you become a better reader and increase our
                    background knowledge and vocabulary, it may interest
                    you to know the approximate grade level (readability)
                    of a given text. You can try this formula on any text.

OBJECTIVE: To determine the approximate grade level of a given
                    text

FACILITATOR   Ask employees to bring in any text that contains at
INSTRUCTIONS: least 300 words.

MATERIALS: Your own text

STUDENT   1. Randomly select <u>three</u> sample passages from your
ACTIVITY: text.

                    2. Count out exactly 100 words from each passage --
                        starting at the beginning of the sentence. (Count
                        all words, initials, and numbers.)

                    3. Count the number of sentences in each 100-word
                        passage.

5ɔ

PART II

4. Count the number of syllables in each 100-word passage.

5. Count the total number of sentences (from all three sets of 100 words.)

6. Count the total number of syllables (from all three sets of 100 words.)

7. Now divide the total number of sentence by 3 (for the 3 passages you counted.)

8. Do the same for the total number of syllables.

Your answers will reflect the <u>average</u> number of sentences and syllables. Now use the graph on the next page to determine the approximate grade level of you text. (*FORMAT: pairs*)

CRITICAL THINKING DISCUSSION: How can knowing the readability of a certain text help your reading fluency? (**Note:** supervisors, managers, and/or marketing/human resources personnel might find this reading formula useful when writing company manuals, brochures, reports, etc.)

MORE PRACTICE: Bring to class a variety of texts (<u>Example</u>: a newsletter article, a memo, etc.) Determine the text's readability according to the Fry formula.

VOCABULARY: formula, predict, syllables, passage, readability, initials, brochures, scale

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Graph for Estimating Readability

GRAPH FOR ESTIMATING READABILITY

Number of syllables per 100 words
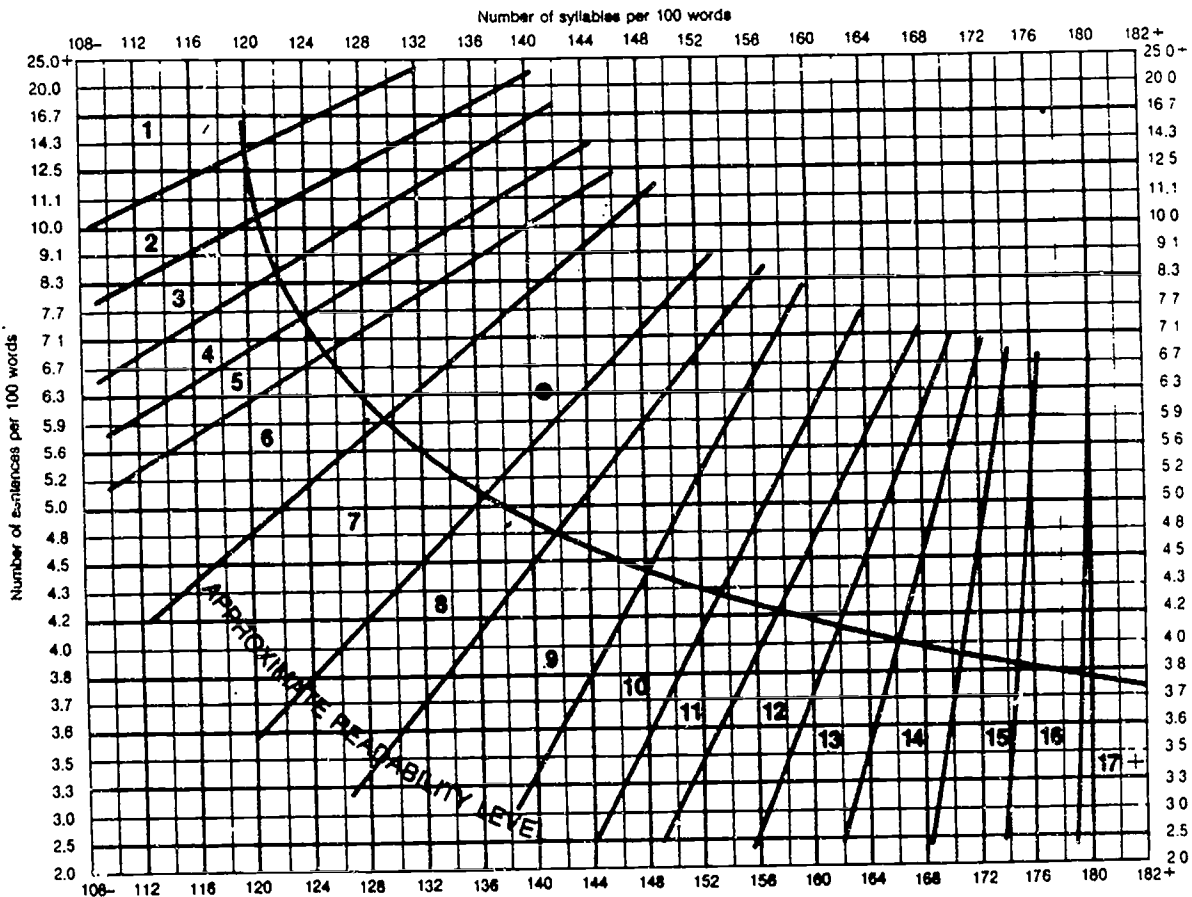
The point on the graph above represents a seventh-level sample containing 141 syllables and 6.3 sentences.

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PART II

ANSWERS

Page 24:

Cloze (Answers may slightly vary; more than one answer possible.)

1.	done	10.	orders
2.	jobs	11.	complain
3.	that	12.	someone
4.	take	13.	Frequently
5.	are	14.	respect
6.	do	15.	much
7.	orders	16.	done
8.	now	17.	they
9.	these	18	use

Page 26:

Main Idea (Text #1)

Answer: **3**

Page 28:

Main Idea (Text #2)

Answer: **2**

Page 31:

Using a Graphic to Comprehend Text

1.   approximately **90**

2.   approximately **80**

3.   March   56

PART II

Page 33:

Drawing Conclusions

Answer: B

Page 39:

5W's and H (Text #1)
(More than one answer possible)

Who: **Patricia Reed**

What: **Mailing list**

Where: **Conference Room**

When: **March 3, 9:00a.m.**

Why: **to brainstorm how
            to cut costs**

How: **together, as a group**

Page 42:

5W's and H (Text #2)

1.   F
2.   F
3.   T
4.   F
5.   T

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VOCABULARY BUILDER
AND
RESOURCES

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PART III

VOCABULARY BUILDER

Alphabetical list of words used in Guide

MORE PRACTICE: Can you remember the meaning of these words? If not, the number that follows each word below refers to the page where the word first appeared. Go back and reread the sentence or paragraph with the word in it. Now can you remember the meaning?

5ვ

PART III

A GUIDE TO READING COMPREHENSION AND CRITICAL THINKING

PART III

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PART III

ON YOUR OWN

Notes/Comments/Questions

PART III

RESOURCES

For more information on reading and critical thinking, the following materials are noteworthy:

Barnes, Martha J., Sr., Ed., <u>Reading and Critical Thinking</u>, Contemporary Books, 1788.

Leslie, Lauren & Caldwell, Joanne, <u>Qualitative Reading Inventory</u>, Harper Collins Publishers, 1990.

Mikulecky, Beatrice S. & Jeffries, Linda, <u>Reading Power</u>, Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1986.

Vacca, Richard T. & Vacca, Jo Anne L., <u>Content Area Reading</u>, Little, Brown and Company, 1986.

SOURCES USED IN THIS GUIDE

<u>Bottom Line Personal</u> (magazine)

<u>The C++ Programming Language</u>. Bjarne Stroustrup, 1993.

<u>Communications at Work</u>. Ronald B. Adler, 1983.

<u>The Nation</u> (magazine)

<u>Reading Power</u>. Beatrice S. Mikulecky & Linda Jeffries, 1986.

Straight Talk: Communicating in Health Care Settings The Hospitals of New Mexico and the Department of English, New Mexico State University, 1992.

<u>Write to the Top: Writing for Corporate Success</u>. Deborah Dumaine, 1989.

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