

Table of Contents

Introduction	7
Chapter 1: The Research	15
Chapter 2: Learning Area Reading	31
Chapter 3: Characteristics of a Good Reader	47
Chapter 4: Reading Strategies	59
Learning Walls	62
Sorts	66
Think Alouds	68
KWL Charts	69
Anticipation Guides	71
PIC	72
3-2-1 Strategy	73
RAFT	74
Graphic Organisers	75
Column Notes	76
QAR	77
Visual Reading Guides	79
Vocabulary/Concept Maps	80
Questioning the Author	84
Reciprocal Teaching	84
ABC Brainstorming	85
Signal Words	86
SCAMPER	90
SQ3R Reading Strategy	91
DRTA	93
Flipbook	93

Chapter 5: Teaching the Strategies	95
Chapter 6: Conclusion	123
Appendix	129
Good Reader Bookmarks	130
Wordo Grid	131
KWL Chart	132
KWWL Chart	133
KWHL Chart	134
KWGL Chart	135
Anticipation Guide	136
PIC Form	137
3-2-1 page	138
RAFT Planning Sheet	139
Character Wheel Graphic Organiser	140
Nonfiction Reading Pyramid Graphic Organiser	141
Short Story Graphic Organiser	142
Column Notes (Two-Column)	143
Column Notes (Three-Column)	144
QAR – Question-Answer Relationship (Sample)	145
Visual Reading Guides	146
RIDER and AIDE Bookmarks	148
Reciprocal Teaching	149
ABC Brainstorming	150
SCAMPER Form	151
Maths Sort (Sample)	152
Chapter Map Study Guide	155
Specific Text Features Check List	156
Paired Reading and Questioning	157
Paired Reading and Questioning Notes	158
My Personal Action Plan	159
Glossary	161
Bibliography	165

Introduction

A Personal Note	7
Helping Struggling Readers	8
My Experience with Middle Years Readers	10

Reading is probably the most difficult task
we ask the brain to undertake.

— *David Sousa*

A Personal Note

I was not trained as a reading teacher. I was an English major who became an English teacher. Being a teacher was something I wanted to do since I was a little girl. (I had four younger brothers who let me “pretend” that I was their teacher.) After graduating from college, my plan was simple: I wanted to teach the subject I loved and instil that same love into the hearts and minds of all my students. I dreamed of making the classic books, plays and poetry come alive for them as they always had for me. I was going to share my passion and inspire students to love and appreciate literature as part of their lives.

When I finally became a “real” teacher, I had the biggest shock of my life. Not only were many of my students unenthusiastic about both school and my English class, but some of them couldn’t even read! It had never occurred to me that I would get students who would be struggling readers or even non-readers. I thought that all children learned to read in Foundation Year and Year 1 – at least by the time they were out of primary school! How could I be getting kids this age who couldn’t even read? I was trained to be an English teacher; I wasn’t trained to be a reading teacher.

Even worse, I found that some students could “read” and pronounce the words in their assignments, but when we discussed the content, it was as if they had never done the reading. It was painfully clear to me that some of my so-called “best” readers were only “word-callers”! They could recognise the words, but they struggled (or failed) to extract meaning from what they had read.

I had some serious questions:

- *How could I teach students to appreciate literary content when they couldn’t read even a short story or a simple poem – let alone an entire book?*
- *What could I do to help these students develop the reading skills they needed in order to deal with life?*

This book is a compilation of the ideas and strategies collected from many sources over many years, organised in a way that busy teachers will find useful. Since there is no one “best way” to teach reading (or anything else for that matter), tailor these techniques to your curriculum, your students and your teaching style.

Sharon Faber

Helping Struggling Readers

For many teachers, teaching strategies are intuitive and based simply on the need to cope with day-to-day challenges in the classroom. (*The "strategy" evolves as the day evolves.*) Therefore, if a student cannot read, the teacher develops a strategy to deal with the situation. The teacher might "cover" by making the textbook or content come alive for the entire class, so that the non-readers' lack of reading skill is irrelevant. Teachers make sure that students learn the important basic content but are rarely able (or trained) to address the fundamental issue at hand:

If students cannot read, they cannot learn independently.

Many teachers use reading strategies without realising what they are doing. Every time a teacher breaks down a textbook into manageable units, highlights the features of a textbook or provides specific content-related vocabulary from a textbook, that teacher is introducing valuable reading strategies.

Of course teachers recognise that most students who cannot read are very smart in many other ways. They can recite every word verbatim from their favourite movies or songs and are quite surprisingly skilled at imitating their teachers' facial expressions, voices and mannerisms. The students are not lacking in intelligence, so teachers assign projects, group work, graphic organisers, videos or anything they can think of to help the students learn using modalities other than reading.

In this way, many well-meaning teachers unknowingly set their struggling readers up for future failure by doing two things:

- Not dealing with the problems for students in their own classroom
- Allowing students with reading disabilities to move forward to the next teacher (*who may not care if they cannot read*)

Today, everyone is so concerned about state and national standards, standardised tests and how students score, that teachers, pressured and preoccupied with students reaching standards and showing improvement, often forget that students who do not score well **may be under performing because they cannot read the questions on the test – not because they were not familiar with the material.**

INTRODUCTION

All teachers—in **all** learning areas—must adopt the attitude that any child who comes into their class with a reading disability is their responsibility. Teachers must show students how to use thinking and reading strategies that will enable them to comprehend the content as well as the individual words. They must model the thinking processes they use when reading for content so students can learn by example. Teachers must encourage students to think about how great writers, historians, scientists and mathematicians process information and arrive at conclusions.

If you are worried that this practice will inhibit individual student creativity, I say, “SO WHAT?” Don’t you remember what it was like in student teaching when you were forced to do those extensive lesson plans? We knew that “real teachers” wrote notes in a little box in a plan book, but we had to write full lesson plans so we could learn every step of the process. This process forced us to think carefully about every step in the teaching process and choose specific strategies that would work best for each different type of content or lesson. In teaching reading to middle years students, as well as teaching student teachers, creativity comes only after mastering the fundamentals. Learning to read is a process, and content is the vehicle teachers use to drive that process toward creativity and comprehension.

Good teachers have been teaching reading strategies in their learning areas for many years without realising what they were doing. Good teachers have always shown their students the way textbooks are put together in their subjects and how to use the features in their texts. They give their students specific vocabulary critical to the content; they focus on the major concepts needed to understand specific subjects. Every time these good teachers use one of these instructional activities, they are teaching their students to use reading strategies.

In How to Teach Reading When You’re Not a Reading Teacher, my goal is to make middle years teachers aware of which reading strategies they already use, then introduce additional strategies they can incorporate into any learning area. Using current research on teaching reading and how students learn, the practical approach presented here is focused primarily on teaching reading to 10- through 14-year-olds. Middle years teachers know that in order to teach middle years students they must understand their physical, intellectual, emotional and social development. But, before we get to specific reading research, I’d like to make a few observations about middle years kids.



DID YOU KNOW?

Researcher Benjamin Bloom says that 13 is the most critical age for students because of hormones, peer pressures and social forces.

My Experience with Middle Years Readers

After I had been teaching a few years, I began to be able to identify my students' reading ability as early as the first day of school, and I could do this without their ever having to open a book! Based on my experience, I have developed a theory that I think may be true on the first day of school for all middle years teachers. I call it "The Three Reading Groups Theory."

My "scientific method" (remember, I am an English teacher) was to hypothesise that my students generally fell into three groups. I based these groups on where the students chose to sit on the first day of school before I made my seating chart. Think about your classes and see if this description fits your students.

Kids Who Choose the Desks in the Front of the Room

The kids who choose to sit in the front of the room come from homes where parents value education and school success. These are the kids who have been read to, whose homes are stocked with magazines, books and newspapers, and who have been on vacations with their families. Their parents have taught them the rules of school, such as:

- *sit up front*
- *laugh at the teacher's jokes*
- *do your homework*
- *don't make crude noises in public*
- *act like you like the teacher*
- *raise your hand before you answer a question.*

INTRODUCTION

These kids come to school and know that it is important! In fact, these are the kids who always say things like, “I love school; I love to learn; you are my favourite teacher.”

*In teacher terms, these students are “reading ready”, and I call them **Red Birds**. (By the way, most teachers fit in this category when they take graduate courses.)*

Kids Who Choose the Desks in the Middle of the Room

The kids who choose to sit in the middle of the room are almost as delightful as the Red Birds up front. The only real difference I have found with the kids in the middle is that they also choose to do only as much work or to behave only as well as will keep teachers off their cases.

These kids tend to be realists who know they have to go to school because that’s what kids do – and it’s the law. They come every day to see their friends, they do the required work at a minimal level and they behave right to the limits of their teachers’ tolerance levels.

*Most students are in this middle group, and in teacher terms, they are “almost reading ready”. I call this middle group the **Blue Birds**.*

Kids Who Choose the Desks in the Back of the Room

As we all know, the further back you go in your class (or in a staff meeting), the more at-risk the kids (teachers) become. The kids who choose these seats want to be invisible. They wear coats and hoods on their heads in 30-degree heat. They wish they could disappear into the back wall and they don’t want you to mess with them.

Many of these kids have attitude problems. Their body language often says it all! Their heads are on their desks, or they are slouched over their desks with their legs stretched out. Their faces reflect their boredom. By the time they have reached the middle years, for many of these kids, it isn’t “I cannot read,” it has become “I will not read.”

These kids have to save face at all costs. No wonder some of them have become discipline problems. School has not been a good place for them to be, and for any

HOW TO TEACH READING ... WHEN YOU'RE NOT A READING TEACHER

number of reasons (many of them out of our control), they have decided that they will just stay in school until they are old enough to drop out.

*In teacher terms, they are “not reading ready”. They are at a high risk of failure and are probably struggling, or non-readers. I call these unfortunate kids in the back of the room **Could Become Jailbirds**. North American prisons are full of people who dropped out of school. Sadly, some of these kids have the potential to become one of those statistics.*

Year after year, I saw these same three reading groups in my classes. I did everything I could to make my class a successful experience for all of them. As I worked closely with these kids, I realised that at different times, there were struggling readers in all three groups. My students’ ability to read depended on the text they were reading. Even my good readers struggled when they read difficult or unknown text. (I still remember how I hated my statistics book in college and how hard I struggled to make sense out of all that gibberish!) I found that many of my students – although they could already read at varying levels – also needed to be taught specifically what they were doing as they read successfully, so they could help themselves later when the text became more difficult.

There are many explanations for why some kids cannot read by the time they are in the middle years. But one of the reasons is often that when they were taught to read in primary school, they were not ready to learn the skills. Just like their teachers, students are all very different. They come in all shapes and sizes and, especially in the case of middle years students, they are at a difficult time in their lives.

Middle years teachers must take them where they are developmentally (physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially) and help them become the best learners they can be. **It is important to teach reading strategies intentionally.**

If teachers truly believe that they make a difference – *and I do* – then teaching students reading skills and strategies must become an important part of instruction in every learning area. *This book is my way of sharing ideas that I have collected on how middle years teachers can accomplish this awesome task.*