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Becoming an Efficient Reader

“Reading is
a basic tool in
the living of
a good life.”

- Joseph Addison

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will expose you to authentic reading texts and develop your reading and comprehension skills. By reading a variety of texts in English and using these texts for various purposes, you will develop the ability to adopt effective strategies for reading and comprehending texts. As reading across disciplines is gaining significance these days, a few texts from other disciplines have also been chosen. The texts selected for reading will develop skills such as inferring, interpreting, analyzing, critical thinking, skimming, scanning, and predicting.

In addition, the chapter will also help you understand how to develop reading skills in students. It will offer a variety of techniques, activities, and practical strategies for developing the reading skills of elementary and secondary level learners.

PART I DEVELOPING READING STRATEGIES AND TECHNIQUES

As this chapter is on developing reading skills, let us begin by reading an interesting text.

Read the text given below and respond to the following questions:

1. Identify the text type.
2. Who do you think wrote this piece?
3. How are Malia and Sasha related to the writer?
4. When was this letter written – before the writer occupied the post or afterwards?

Dear Malia and Sasha,

I know that you've both had a lot of fun these last two years on the campaign trail, going to picnics and parades and state fairs, eating all sorts of junk food your mother and I probably shouldn't have let you have. But I also know that it hasn't always been easy for you and Mom, and that as excited as you both are about that new Puppy, it doesn't

make up for all the time we've been apart. I know how much I've missed these past two years, and today I want to tell you a little more about why I decided to take our family on this journey.

When I was a young man, I thought life was all about me—about how I'd make my way in the world, become successful, and get the things I want. But then the two of you came into my world with all your curiosity and mischief and those smiles that never fail to fill my heart and light up my day. And suddenly, all my big plans for myself didn't seem so important anymore. I soon found that the greatest joy in my life was the joy I saw in yours. And I realized that my own life wouldn't count for much unless I was able to ensure that you had every opportunity for happiness and fulfillment in yours. In the end girls, that's why I ran for President; because of what I want for you and for every child in this nation.

I want all our children to go to schools worthy of their potential—schools that challenge them, inspire them, and instill in them a sense of wonder about the world around them. I want them to have the chance to go to college—even if their parents aren't rich. And I want them to get good jobs: jobs that pay well and give them benefits like health care, jobs that let them spend time with their own kids and retire with dignity.

I want us to push the boundaries of discovery so that you'll live to see new technologies and inventions that improve our lives and make our planet cleaner and safer. And I want us to push our own human boundaries to reach beyond the divides of race and region, gender and religion that keep us from seeing the best in each other.

These are the things I want for you—to grow up in a world with no limits on your dreams and no achievements beyond your reach, and to grow into compassionate, committed women who will help build that world. And I want every child to have the same chances to learn and dream and grow and thrive that you girls have. That's why I've taken our family on this great adventure.

I am so proud of both of you. I love you more than you can ever know. And I am grateful every day for your patience, poise, grace, and humor as we prepare to start our new life together in the White House.

Love
Dad

(This is an extract from the letter written by the President of America, Barack Obama to his daughters.
Source: <http://parade.com/60038/linzlowe/barack-obama-a-letter-to-my-daughters-2/>)

Read the text again, discuss the following questions in small groups, and present your responses to the class.

1. How did Obama's daughters change his view of the world?
2. What does Obama want for all the children?
3. Why did Obama write this letter to his daughters?
4. How do you feel when you read this letter?
5. Which line appeals to you the most in this letter?

Reading strategies

When you read the passage above, did you read aloud, or silently? If you had read aloud, you would have strained yourself, taken a lot of time, and also disturbed people around you. Also, you may not

have comprehended the passage fully. If you do not comprehend the passage, you cannot answer the questions, cannot participate in the discussions, cannot interact with the text, and cannot share your thoughts and reactions on the text. In other words, reading without comprehension is not reading at all!

On the other hand, if you had read the passage silently, your comprehension level would have been greater. As a result, you would be in a better position to answer the given questions and perform all the activities suggested.

Hence, if you are reading a text for comprehension, you should read silently. Silent reading of a text enables better comprehension.

What does comprehension of a text involve?

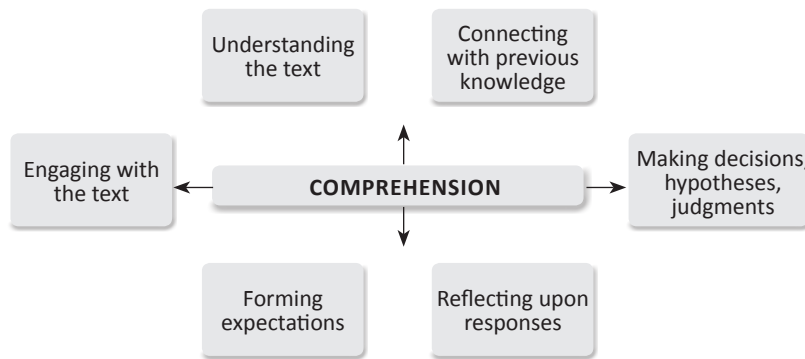


Fig. 1.1: Reading for comprehension

Comprehending a text involves an active search for meaning using a wide range of cognitive and linguistic abilities. Hence, comprehension is an active, complex process.

Background/previous knowledge plays an important role in reading. This is also called 'schemata' which means the scheme of previous knowledge already possessed by the readers. It refers to the knowledge of all kinds – general, linguistic, semantic, grammatical, and cultural.

The following strategies will help you in activating your background knowledge about a text or a topic. These are also called pre-reading strategies.

Strategies to activate your prior knowledge

Brainstorming: Here, you need to examine the title of the text you are about to read. Then list all the information that comes to your mind about this title, and use these pieces of information to recall and understand the material.

Group discussions: Group discussions will help you to discover what you bring to your reading, what your fellow readers bring to the reading, as well as share each others' experiences. If you find that they have new background information, you can ask for more information from them.

Concept or mind mapping: This is a type of brainstorming where you place the title or subject as the main idea, then develop a 'mind map' around it.

Pre-questions: Before you read, you can write out a series of questions you expect to be answered while reading. For E.g., questions like – 'What is this text likely to be about?', 'Who may be the characters involved in this story?', 'Where does it happen?', 'What are the examples related to this?', 'How do I describe this?' – will help you to organize your thoughts before you read a text.

Visual aids: Pictures and other visual material can activate your prior knowledge. Use the internet to search for pictures related to your title or topic to give you visual images of what you are about to read.

Reading strategies techniques

Here are some strategies/techniques for improving your comprehension skills.

- Skim: Read for the brief idea or overview.
- Scan: Read for specific details or a specific reason.
- KWL: Determine what you know about the topic, what you want to know, and what you learned.
- Rewrite in a different format, for E.g., rewrite an article in letter or list form.
- Illustrate: If you think you're a visual learner, sketch images or an info-graphic related to what you read.
- Skip, if you don't understand a word or section, keep reading ahead. Come back to the section or word again and try to figure out the meaning. Use a dictionary if necessary.
- Look for headings, subtitles and keywords.
- Write the questions: As you read, think about which questions you might find in a test or quiz. Write them down and answer them, or quiz a friend.
- Read out loud: Children read out loud when they first start reading, you can too. Get comfortable hearing your English voice pronunciation
- Create timelines or charts: Reorganize what you read in a different format.
- Rewrite in a different tense.
- Summarize or retell: You can do this by writing a letter to a friend, writing a blog post or just starting a conversation on this topic.
- Keep a vocabulary journal.

Use some of the strategies listed above while reading the following passages. Also, answer the questions given after the passage.

Passage 1

The Selfish Giant

Every afternoon, as they were coming from school, the children used to go and play in the Giant's garden.

It was a large lovely garden, with soft green grass. Here and there over the grass stood beautiful flowers like stars, and there were twelve peach-trees that in the spring-time broke out into delicate blossoms of pink and pearl, and in the autumn bore rich fruit. The birds sat on the trees and sang so sweetly that the children used to stop their games in order to listen to them. 'How happy we are here!' they cried to each other.

One day the Giant came back. He had been to visit his friend the Cornish ogre, and had stayed with him for seven years. After the seven years were over he had said all that he had to say, for his conversation was limited, and he determined to return to his own castle. When he arrived he saw the children playing in the garden.

‘What are you doing here?’ he cried in a very gruff voice, and the children ran away. ‘My own garden is my own garden,’ said the Giant; ‘any one can understand that, and I will allow nobody to play in it but myself.’ So he built a high wall all round it, and put up a notice-board.

TRESPASSERS

WILL BE

PROSECUTED

He was a very selfish Giant.

(Taken from Oscar Wilde’s short story “The Selfish Giant”)

Which of the following sentences are true (T) and which are false (F)? Write T or F.

- 1. The children were not happy to play in the large, lovely garden. ()
- 2. The Giant came back to his castle after seven years. ()
- 3. The Giant was very annoyed to find the children playing in his garden. ()

Find words in the passage which mean the opposite of:

- 1. poor
- 2. hard
- 3. adult
- 4. plenty

Passage 2

A Sonnet for my Incomparable Mother

I often contemplate my childhood, Mom.
I am a mother now, and so I know
Hard work is mixed together with the fun;
You learned that when you raised me long ago.
I think of all the things you gave to me:
Sacrifice, devotion, love and tears.
Your heart, your mind, your energy and soul-
All these you spent on me throughout the years.
You loved me with a never-failing love
You gave me strength and sweet security,
And then you did the hardest thing of all:
You let me separate and set me free.
Every day, I try my best to be
A mother like the mom you were to me.

Read the poem again and answer the following questions:

1. Which word in the poem means the following:
 - i. great love and loyalty:
 - ii. protection:
2. What qualities has the poet imbibed from her mother?
3. 'You let me separate and let me free.' – What does this line mean?
4. Who do you admire the most in your life? Why?
5. Discuss the poem with your friends keeping the following points in your mind:
 - i. What the poem is about
 - ii. Why I like it/do not like it
 - iii. What the poem means to me
 - iv. What the poem reminds me of

Now ponder the questions provided below.

1. What strategies did you use before you read the above texts?
2. What techniques did you use while reading the texts?
3. Were these strategies/techniques useful in understanding the texts?

Reading – Text types

A text is any piece of spoken or written communication. A piece of writing such as an email, a letter, a poem, a recipe, writing on a webpage, a blog, or an advertisement is called a text. It is important for us to recognize different text types in order to comprehend what we read.

The following are some of the different types of texts we generally read:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| • Advertisements | • Newspapers |
| • Recipes | • Legal documents |
| • Sign posts | • Travel brochures |
| • Wrappers | • Websites |
| • Jokes | • Articles |
| • Maps | • Magazines |
| • Notices and pamphlets | |

The list is not exhaustive. All these can be called texts.

The following are some of the texts we read and write in our daily life. Identify the text types. Write the features of each text type, the purpose of the text and possible readers of such texts.

I

An elderly gentleman with a hearing problem goes to an audiologist, who fits him with hearing aids. A month later, the man returns to the doctor for a check-up. 'Your hearing is almost perfect,' the doctor remarks; 'your family must be really pleased you can hear again.'

'Oh, I haven't told them yet,' the gentleman replies, 'I just sit around and listen to their conversations. I've changed my will three times so far!'

II

I was born into a middle-class Tamil family in the island town of Rameswaram in erstwhile Madras city. My father, Jainulabdeen, had neither much formal education nor much wealth; despite these disadvantages, he possessed great innate wisdom and a true generosity of spirit. He had an ideal helpmate in my mother, Ashiamma. I do not recall the exact number of people she fed everyday, but I am quite certain that far more outsiders ate with us than all the members of our own family put together.

III

Cultural sensitivity

Sir,

In his article "In a class of their own" (September 28), the author has beautifully portrayed how racism is deeply rooted in our society and is often a result of biases in upbringing and a skewed sense of superiority. Even Nelson Mandela, in his book *Long Walk to Freedom*, pointed out instances where even mixed-race people wanted to be branded as superior owing to their skin colour. The author also points to the more important fact that such misconceptions can be mended through exposure to cultural plurality. In a world which is increasingly becoming globalized, we interact with people from cultures significantly different from ours. Tolerance, thus, becomes critical to sustaining this globalized world.

S. Agarwal, Delhi

IV

A long time ago there was a peacock with a lovely voice and beautiful feathers. Every day, he strutted in front of all the other animals. He liked to show off his beautiful feathers. The other animals always admired his beauty.

However, one day, the animals were tired of him because he was too proud, and they ran away from him. The peacock shouted for them. He shouted and shouted all day long. He cried, "Come back! Come back!" But the animals did not come back. Soon he began to lose his wonderful voice.

Days went by. The peacock stopped shouting. He was heartbroken and his voice was gone. A monkey saw the sad peacock and smiled. He told the other animals how sad the peacock was. Soon they all decided to come back. The peacock was overjoyed! However, he was no longer proud. His voice was never heard again.

V

Sathish,

Bundh today. No shops open in the town.

I'll return your notes which I photocopied, tomorrow.

Remember tomorrow practical exam at 9 (not at 10).

Sooraj

12/11-11.30

VI

VETERAN KANNADA WRITER ANANTHAMURTHY PASSES AWAY

Bangalore, Aug 22, 2014, PTI: Jnanpith award winner U R Ananthamurthy, who strode the Kannada literary world like a colossus with his path-breaking works, died of multiple health complications at a private hospital here today.

Ananthamurthy, rated as one of the best writers in the country who won acclaims from critics and fans alike, breathed his last this evening, 10 days after he was hospitalised with fever and infection, the doctor attending on him said.

In his several decades of literary life, he has won the Padma Bhushan in 1998, Jnanpith award in 1994 and the state Rajyothsava award in 1984.

His nomination for the 2013 Man Booker International Prize brought him to the attention of a Western audience. He was also the Vice-Chancellor of Mahatma Gandhi University in Kerala during the late 1980s.

82-year old Ananthamurthy is survived by his wife Esther, a son and a daughter.

VII

OPPORTUNITIES GALORE

This is the third and final reminder for articles for our college magazine. Awake, arise, invoke the 'Muses' and exercise your creative genius.

Last date for submission of articles-28 September 2015

Sd/-

(Editor)

12 September 2015

VIII

C S M COLLEGE OF ARTS AND COMMERCE
PUNE

10 August 2015

Dear Parent,

An extraordinary meeting of the PTA will be convened in the conference hall of the college on Saturday, 16th August 2015 at 4 p.m. The main issue to be discussed, is the mobilization of funds to complete the construction of the auditorium. We solicit your esteemed presence and valuable suggestions.

Yours faithfully,

Sd/-

K Thange

(Teacher secretary)

IX

From: Savitha Kumari <savi18@gmail.com>
To: ravirie@gmail.com

Date: Tuesday, Sept 29, 2015 at 10:54 A.M
Subject: Thank you and Goodbye

Dear friends,

It is my last month after two wonderful years with the Black and Blue Company.

After an exciting and memorable journey, I am bidding adieu to this post to pursue my career in teaching. It has been rewarding to work with such a vibrant group of people.

I wish to thank you for all the special moments I shared with you; to have received help, care, encouragement and appreciation. Not only the professional relations, but to have known some of you personally has been so enriching. I have been fortunate enough to have met some of the best people in my work experience, and I hope to use all that I learnt in my future career. Over the past two years, you have taught me more than I could ever ask for. The relationships I've built overtime is something I will hold close to my heart.

I am extremely saddened that I won't be seeing much of you anymore, but I pray we meet in future and share those happy times together, again!

Please keep in touch with me on 9824562654 or me.savi92@gmail.com. If I haven't added you on Facebook, please find my link here – <https://www.facebook.com/me.savisavi>

"It's time to say Goodbye, but I think goodbyes are sad and I'd much rather say hello. 'Hello' to a new adventure."

Once again, a big Thank You to everybody. It has been unforgettable.

Please keep in touch.

*Warm regards
Savitha*

X

Bangalore
13 October 2014

Dear Ravi

Let me introduce myself a little through this letter that I'm addressing you in today's 'writing' class. I recently graduated with double major in HR and Marketing from Mount Carmel College. I swore to myself, along with my friends, that I'd never go back there as I had already spent five years of my life there. But fate has it that I return to my beloved college. I'm now appointed there as an Assistant Professor in French. I'll be starting to teach French very soon.

Oh, by the way, I've studied French for the past four years and I recently gave my DALFCI exam with the French Education Ministry. In the meanwhile, I also worked at the Consulate General of France in Bangalore and currently I freelance and write blogs for a Montreal based Canadian company.

I've never studied English academically as such but my love for this beautiful language made me think I can probably teach it one day. I love teaching, you see...

Well, that is a little peek into my life. Looking forward to meaningful interactions and happy learning experience.

*With my warm regards
Smitha*

XI

16th January 1948

I did not expect I would be able to speak to you today but you will be pleased to learn that if anything, my voice is less feeble today than yesterday. I cannot explain it except for the grace of God. I have never felt so well on the fourth day of a fast in the past. If all of you continue to participate in the process of self-purification, I shall probably have the strength to speak to you till the end. I am in no hurry to break the fast. Hurry would spoil matters. I do not want anyone to come and tell me that things have been set right while the process is incomplete. If Delhi becomes peaceful in the real sense of the term, it will have its repercussions all over the country. I have no wish to live unless peace reigns in the two Dominions.

(Source: <http://www.mkgandhi.org/swmgandhi/chap07.htm>)

I. Match the numbers with the text-types.

| Number | Text type | Answer |
|--------|-------------------------------------|--------|
| I | email | |
| II | Diary | |
| III | Note | |
| IV | A personal letter | |
| V | Joke | |
| VI | Newspaper report | |
| VII | Extract from an autobiography | |
| VIII | Letter to the editor of a newspaper | |
| IX | Circular | |
| X | Story | |
| XI | Notice | |

2. Write down the features of each of the above text types. Tick the appropriate column.

| Features | Text type(s) | Any other special characteristics |
|--|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| Length of the text – short | | |
| Language used – formal | | |
| Language used – informal | | |
| Has a title | | |
| Words and phrases are used, not grammatically correct full sentences | | |
| Past tense form is used | | |
| Use of persuasive language | | |
| Attractive layout | | |
| Fixed format | | |
| Punch line is important | | |
| Reader is a prospective employer | | |
| Readers are general public | | |
| Purpose of the text is to give information | | |
| Purpose is to attract the customers | | |
| Purpose is to entertain | | |

The texts you have read just now differ in style, language and many other aspects like tone, form, sentence construction, choice of vocabulary, etc. A good reader should have an awareness of the text type, its purpose and the special features.

Reading across disciplines

Do you remember the mathematics, science or social science lessons you have read in your secondary or higher secondary classes? Was it easy for you to read those lessons in English or difficult? If you found it difficult to read such content-specific subjects in English, can you list down the reasons? What did you find difficult to read in such texts?

Read the passages (1–4) and decide the following:

1. Where is this extract from? Is it from a science, mathematics or social studies textbook?
2. How did you decide that it was from one of these subjects?
3. Write down a few comprehension questions on the passage that you would like the class to answer.

Passage 1

Life in the Prehistoric Period

Human beings first appeared on earth about 40,000 years ago. Scientists believe that they evolved or developed from hominids. Hominids were not human beings but they shared similar characteristics to humans. They could walk, stand erect, and knew the art of making fire. They do not exist anymore, but they lived on earth for thousands of years.

When human beings appeared, they learnt how to adapt to their challenging environment. They knew how to hunt and how useful fire was. They had learnt all these from their early predecessors – the hominids.

(Did you notice the use of past tense forms? How many sentences are in passive voice? Write them down). Find out the meanings of new words from a dictionary.

Passage 2

The Story of the Buddha

Siddhartha, also known as Gautama, the founder of Buddhism, was born about 2,500 years ago. This was a time of rapid change in the lives of people. Some kings in the mahajanapadas were growing more powerful. New cities were developing, and life was changing in the villages as well. Many thinkers were trying to understand these changes in society. They also wanted to try and find out the true meaning of life.

Buddha belonged to a small gana known as the Sakya gana, and was a kshatriya. When he was a young man, he left the comforts of his home in search of knowledge. He wandered for several years, meeting and holding discussions with other thinkers. He finally decided to find his own path to realization, and meditated for days on end under a peepal tree at Bodh Gaya in Bihar, where he attained enlightenment. After that, he was known as the Buddha or the Wise One. He then went to Sarnath, near Varanasi, where he taught for the first time. He spent the rest of his life travelling on foot, going from place to place, teaching people, till he passed away at Kusinara.

The Buddha taught that life is full of suffering and unhappiness. This is caused because we have cravings and desires (which often cannot be fulfilled). Sometimes, even if we get what we want, we are not satisfied, and want even more (or want other things). The Buddha described this as thirst or tanha. He taught that this constant craving could be removed by following moderation in everything.

He also taught people to be kind, and to respect the lives of others, including animals. He believed that the results of our actions (called karma), whether good or bad, affect us both in this life and the next. Buddha taught in the language of the ordinary people, Prakrit, so that everybody could understand his message.

He also encouraged people to think for themselves rather than to simply accept what he said. Let us see how he did this.

Here is a famous story about Buddha.

Once there was a woman named Kisagotami, whose son had died. She was so sad that she roamed through the streets of the city carrying the child with her, asking for help to bring him back to life. A

kind man took her to the Buddha. The Buddha said: 'Bring me a handful of mustard seeds, and I will bring your child back to life.' Kisagotami was overjoyed and started off at once, but the Buddha gently stopped her and added: 'The seeds must come from the house of a family where nobody has died.'

Kisagotami went from door to door, but wherever she went, she found out that someone or the other — father, mother, sister, brother, husband, wife, child, uncle, aunt, grandfather, grandmother, had died.

(Source: <http://www.ncert.nic.in/ncerts/l/fess107.pdf>)

Passage 3

Predecessor and Successor

Given any natural number, you can add 1 to that number and get the next number, that is, you get its successor.

The successor of 16 is $16 + 1 = 17$, that of 19 is $19 + 1 = 20$ and so on. The number 16 comes before 17, we say that the predecessor of 17 is $17 - 1 = 16$, the predecessor of 20 is $20 - 1 = 19$, and so on.

The number 3 has a predecessor and a successor. What about 2? The successor is 3 and the predecessor is 1. Does 1 have both a successor and a predecessor?

Whole Numbers

We have seen that the number 1 has no predecessor in natural numbers. To the collection of natural numbers we add zero as the predecessor for 1. The natural numbers along with zero form the collection of whole numbers.

In your previous classes you have learnt to perform all the basic operations like addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division of numbers. You also know how to apply them to problems. Let us try them on a number line. Before we proceed, let us find out what a number line is!

The Number Line

Draw a line. Mark a point on it. Label it 0. Mark a second point to the right of 0. Label it 1. The distance between these points labelled as 0 and 1 is called unit distance. On this line, mark a point to the right of 1 and at unit distance from 1 and label it 2. In this way go on labelling points at unit distances as 3, 4, 5, ... on the line. You can go to any whole number on the right in this manner. This is a number line for the whole numbers.

- What is the distance between the points 2 and 4? Certainly, it is 2 units.
- Can you tell the distance between the points 2 and 6, between 2 and 7?
- What is the distance between the points 2 and 4? Certainly, it is 2 units.
- Can you tell the distance between the points 2 and 6, between 2 and 7?

On the number line, you will see that the number 7 is on the right of 4. This number 7 is greater than 4, i.e., $7 > 4$. The number 8, lies on the right of 6 and $8 > 6$. These observations help us to say that, out of any two whole numbers, the number on the right of the other number is the greater number. We can also say that whole number on left is the smaller number. For E.g., $4 < 9$; 4 is on the left of 9. Similarly, $12 > 5$; 12 is to the right of 5.

- What can you say about 10 and 20?
- Mark 30, 12, 18 on the number line. Which number is at the farthest left?

- Can you say from 1005 and 9756, which number would be on the right relative to the other number?
- Place the successor of 12 and the predecessor of 7 on the number line

(Source: <http://www.ncert.nic.in/ncerts/l/femh102.pdf>)

Addition on the number line

Addition of whole numbers can be shown on the number line. Let us see the addition of 3 and 4. Start from 3. Since we add 4 to this number, so we make 4 jumps to the right; from 3 to 4, 4 to 5, 5 to 6 and 6 to 7, as shown above. The tip of the last arrow in the fourth jump is at 7. The sum of 3 and 4 is 7, i.e., $3 + 4 = 7$.

Passage 4

Nutrition

Organisms need energy to live and grow. This energy is obtained from food. Any substance that can be broken down by chemical processes in the body of an organism to give energy is called food.

The process by which food is taken in by an organism and used by its body is called nutrition.

There are two main modes of nutrition: (a) autotrophic; and (b) heterotrophic.

Autotrophic nutrition

Green plants make their own food through a process called photosynthesis.

The mode of nutrition through which an organism makes its own food is called autotrophic nutrition. Organisms that follow the autotrophic mode of nutrition are called autotrophs.



ACTIVITY

Aim: to show that only green plants can photosynthesize

Materials needed: a leaf with two colours, a beaker, beaker stand, bunsen burner, water, test tube, alcohol, and iodine solution

Method

1. Place a beaker, about three-fourth full of water, on a stand and boil the water.
2. Place the leaf in this water for about two minutes to soften the leaf.
3. Take the leaf out and put it in a test tube with three-fourth alcohol.
4. Place this test tube in very hot water for about ten minutes. As the alcohol warms up, it will remove chlorophyll from the leaf and make it almost colourless.
5. Take the leaf out and add four drops of iodine solution on its surface.

Observation: On adding the iodine solution, the colourless portion shows no change, whereas the green portion turns blue-black.

Conclusion: Starch is present only in the green area of the leaf. Thus, only green leaves can photosynthesise and make food.

A close look at the above texts reveals that the language used is special to each subject. As a student, you are required to read and comprehend such texts, interpret the meanings, distinguish between facts

and opinions, and employ other higher-order skills. Hence, it is not sufficient if you read texts only on general topics or texts such as biographies of famous people, stories, and such narratives in the classroom. You need to be trained in the reading of content-specific subjects. You need to learn the processes, strategies and techniques of reading such texts for different purposes such as for gathering information, for logical deduction, for critical analysis, etc. Reading such academic texts helps you become familiar with the vocabulary/register of the content subjects and raises your awareness of syntactical features of those content-specific subjects. Such readings also develop your Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), and the vocabulary required for academic studies.

Who is a good reader?

A good reader possesses the following qualities:

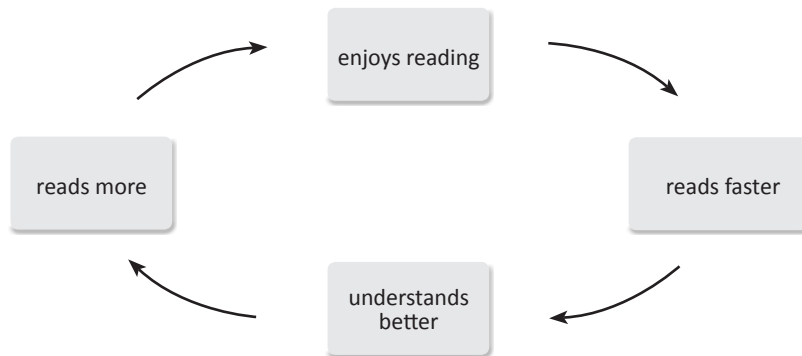


Fig. 1.2: Qualities of a good reader

A good reader has a positive attitude towards reading, both in his/her first language, as well as in English. A self-motivated reader enjoys reading and is able to sustain his/her interest in reading for a longer time. A good reader reads with moderate speed and understands the text better.

As reading is a complex, cognitive activity, you must strive to acquire these higher-level skills and become an efficient reader.

PART II TEACHING READING

Reading is an interaction between the text and the reader. The aim of reading, as you know, is comprehension. Comprehension is the very essence of reading. It is a process through which the reader draws information from the text based on:

- his/her knowledge;
- purpose of reading;
- nature of the text; and
- the context in which it is read.

There are many factors that affect children's reading comprehension. First of all, children need to develop phonological awareness (information about the sound structure of words in memory) while and before they learn to read. The greater the phonological awareness, the more successful is the word reading skill.

The second important factor is the orthographic awareness. It refers to the awareness of letter combination or patterns. Another factor that affects reading comprehension is the knowledge of the

vocabulary. The depth and breadth of a reader's vocabulary has a definite say on his/her reading comprehension. Understanding the meanings of words in isolation and as they occur in the text is a very important factor in comprehension.

Micro-skills of reading

Munby (1998) distinguishes the following micro-skills of reading:

- Recognising the script of a language
- Deducing meaning and use of unfamiliar lexical words
- Understanding explicitly stated information
- Understanding information not explicitly stated
- Understanding conceptual meaning
- Understanding relations with a sentence
- Understanding relations between parts of a text
- Understanding cohesion between parts of text through cohesive devices
- Interpreting text by going outside it
- Identifying main or important points in a text
- Distinguishing the main idea from supporting details
- Extracting salient details to summarise the text
- Using basic reference skills
- Skimming
- Scanning
- Transcoding information to diagrammatic display

Students need to acquire these micro-skills of reading in order to become fluent readers. As a teacher, you need to provide enough support to your students by selecting appropriate methods and techniques of reading that are relevant to the needs and levels of learners, suitability of the text, and its contents.

Reading speed and reading comprehension

Try reading the following passage slowly word by word.

Once/ some/ mice/ were/ living/ in/ a/ certain/ house./ They/ were/ very/ much/ afraid/ of/ a/ cat,/ for/ it/ killed/ and/ ate/ many/ of/ them./ They/ held/ a/ meeting/ to/ decide/ how/ to/ get/ rid/ of/ the/ nasty/ cat./ One/ mouse/ said/ that/ they/ should/ leave/ the/ house./ Another/ said/ that/ they/ should/ not/ come/ out/ of/ their/ holes./ Then/ a/ young/ mouse/ stood/ up/ and/ said,/ "Why/ not/ tie/ a/ bell/ around/ the/ cat's/ neck?/ We/ can/ hear/ it/ coming/ and/ get/ easily/ out/ of/ its/ way."/ All/ the/ mice/ cheered./ "What/ a/ good/ plan!"/ Now/ an/ old/ mouse/ stood/ up/ and/ said,/ "The/ plan/ is/ no/ doubt/ very/ good./ But/ who/ will/ bell/ the/ cat?"/ No/ mouse/ came/ forward/ to/ do/ it./ Suddenly/ the/ cat/ appeared/ and/ the/ mice/ ran/ into/ their/ holes./

Were you able to comprehend the passage? Is this how you read different texts?

Obviously your answer will be a definite NO.

Let's try it the other way round now.

Try to read the following passage as fast as you can:

Solomon was a famous king. He was known for his wisdom. One day, the Queen of Sheba came to meet him. She asked him to solve a problem.

She showed him two flower pots. The flowers of one plant were real. The flowers of the other were made of silk. She asked the king which was real.

The king looked at the flowers in the pots. Both looked alike. He then had an idea. He opened the window. Some bees flew in and settled on the real flowers. Then Solomon knew the answer. The Queen praised Solomon for his intelligence.

Reading fast without comprehension is also not a good practice. You must maintain a moderate speed while reading for comprehension.

Reading speed refers to the rate at which words are read. By improving reading speed, students are able to see longer stretches of language with each fixation of the eye while reading. This helps them fix the unknown vocabulary in a context and enables them to attain general understanding of the passage. If a student is really slow in speed, by the time he/she comes to the last part of the passage, he would have forgotten the first part. Hence, a student who is slow in his reading speed is also poor in reading comprehension.

The table below draws a comparison between a poor reader and a good reader.

Table 1.1: Poor and good readers

| Speed | | Poor reader | Good reader |
|---------|--|---|---|
| Slow | Slow reading speed is desirable when the material is difficult and/or high comprehension is required. | 90 - 125 words per minute (wpm) 80 – 90% comprehension | 200 – 300 wpm 80 – 90% comprehension |
| Average | Average reading speed is used for everyday reading of newspapers, magazines, and easier textbooks. | 150 – 180 wpm, 70% comprehension | 250 – 500 wpm, 70% comprehension |
| Fast | Skimming (reading quickly to get an overall meaning) is used when the highest rate is desired. Comprehension is intentionally lower. | Cannot skim | 800 wpm, 50% comprehension |

Faulty reading habits

If children develop wrong reading habits, these will affect their reading speed as well as reading comprehension. The following are some of the faulty reading habits.

- Reading word by word: Reading every word in a sentence will slow down the process of reading and this could be a frustrating experience.
- Finger pointing: Some readers use their fingers to point at every word they read. This habit should be avoided, as it slows down the reading speed.

- Vocalisation and sub-vocalisation: Producing sounds with the voice and saying words inaudibly are common habits among slow readers. These are the main reasons why people read slowly and have trouble improving their reading speed.
- Regression: Regression is the process of going back and re-reading text that you have already read. In order to improve your reading speed, it is important to avoid regression.

As teachers, you need to take proper care while training our students to develop good reading habits.

Reading aloud and silent reading

As discussed earlier, we should encourage students to read texts silently as fast as possible because most of the readings that we do in real life are reading for comprehension or silent reading. When we read newspapers, books, messages, posters, etc, we read silently. However, in the classroom reading aloud becomes important when the teacher's aim is to correct the students' pronunciation and develop fluency. The table below shows the differences between reading aloud and silent reading.

Table 1.2: Differences between reading aloud and silent reading

| | Reading aloud | Silent reading |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| What? | Articulating, speaking and pronouncing the words in print | Done silently |
| How? | Every word is read | Not every word is read as we read for comprehension |
| Why? | To develop pronunciation and fluency | To develop comprehension |
| Concentration | Low – divided between reading and speaking | High – focused only on reading |
| Speed | Slow | Faster |
| Useful as a classroom practice | i. To correct student's pronunciation ii. To develop fluency in reading iii. To help students discover how writing is associated with the spoken language | i. To increase comprehension ii. To prepare students to become efficient readers |

Designing pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading activities

We have seen in detail the skills involved in reading comprehension and ways of developing reading comprehension. When students come to higher classes, they should have attained the following skills and strategies:

- They should have obtained sufficient mastery over word recognition and decoding skills.
- They should have mastered a fairly good deal of vocabulary.
- They should have sufficient exposure to different types of texts.
- They should have learnt the use of some reading strategies and skills.
- They should have built a fairly good deal of background knowledge.

We shall now see, how we can go about planning a lesson for a higher primary class wherein we can teach all the strategies and skills of reading to our students.

Let us say we want to teach our students a prose passage. We can do it by dividing a lesson into three stages, namely pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading stages.

Table 1.3: Stage I: Pre-reading stage

| Functions | Types of activity | Sample exercises |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To help students activate their background knowledge To prepare learners for the text they are going to read To set a purpose for reading To determine strategies to teach unfamiliar vocabulary or concepts | Presenting new vocabulary in the text, giving a brief introduction to the text, giving guiding questions, brainstorming, group discussions, mind mapping | <p>Find meanings of unfamiliar key words from a dictionary</p> <p>Show photos/pictures or films related to the topic, predict from the title, what the story is about</p> |

Table 1.4: Stage II: While-reading stage

| Functions | Types of activity | Sample exercises |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To get students engaged in the reading process To encourage active and reflective thinking To help students process and interpret the text | Scan, skim, reassemble jumbled sentences and texts, think of a suitable title, jig-saw reading, locate a key sentence/paragraph, complete a chart, questioning, note-making, summarising, using graphic organizers | Read the texts and match the headings to the appropriate paragraph, put the following bits together to make the end of Jill's story |

Table 1.5: Stage III: Post-reading stage

| Functions | Types of activity | Sample exercises |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To check understanding of the text To review the text To assess students' understanding To develop other language skills such as speaking, writing | Role play, dramatisation, information transfer exercise, read and write a report/review/letter/essay, project work | <p>Read the text, discuss in small groups and present your responses to the class</p> <p>Watch a TV programme related to the theme of the text and talk about it in the next class</p> <p>Prepare a newspaper page/class magazine</p> |

A few strategies and activities that can be used at various stages for teaching a prose piece have been listed above. Depending on the levels of your learners and the texts chosen, you can design similar activities to develop their reading and comprehension skills.

Let us conclude this chapter by reading a case study on developing reading habits.

Developing reading habits: Classroom practices

The following is an extract from a teacher development unit prepared by the TESS INDIA (Open University, UK) for elementary school English teachers. Read the case study given to know how an elementary English teacher tries to develop good reading habits among children.

Case Study I

Nandini develops enjoyable reading routines

Nandini teaches Class III in an elementary school. She really wanted her students to become voluntary readers – read how she went about this.

I had spent lot of time teaching my students reading skills and have a small collection of books in my classroom library. But I noticed that my students associated reading with drills and tests rather than doing it for enjoyment. I therefore took the following steps:

- I read to them aloud: I began to read aloud to my students just for pleasure every day. When I did this, there were no drills and tests to follow. This made them associate reading with enjoyment.
- I talk to parents: During the parent/teacher meetings I talked to my students' parents about the benefits of reading. As many of the parents could not read themselves, I asked them to ask their children to talk to them about what they read in school. However, I discovered that a few parents could read in English and invited them into the classroom to read aloud to the students themselves.
- I have a daily reading routine: I wanted my students to read for pleasure for at least 20 minutes every day. I knew that if they could choose books that interested them, they would be more likely to read voluntarily. With the busy teaching schedule, it was a challenge to carve out 20 minutes for independent reading, but I felt it was a priority. The reading period was generally quiet, but a little talk and movement was acceptable. Initially the students used to close their books immediately after hearing the school bell – but as they started getting interested in reading, they didn't want to stop.
- I monitor students' reading habits: I developed a simple system to keep track of students' reading. I kept a weekly reading log in which students recorded the date, the title of their book, and number of minutes spent on reading each day of the week.
- I try to be a role model: When my students first began to participate in the independent reading period, I would circulate among them to see what they were doing and to help them if necessary. As they became more able to read on their own, I decided to read independently in the classroom as well, as a way of modelling this practice to my students.
- I encourage a system of reading buddies: I decided to pair students so that the ones who were less interested in reading could be inspired by the more enthusiastic ones. In my class there was a girl named Ritu who was usually very quiet, but who seemed to be enjoying taking turns to read out loud and discussing the accompanying pictures with her reading buddy.
- I talk to my students about books: I make an effort to talk to the students about what I am reading and what they are reading. I praise their efforts and achievements in reading in English.

(Source: TESS INDIA Open Educational Resource, www.openuniversity.ac.uk)



- Do you like the reading routines developed by Nandini? Why/Why not?
- What do you do to help your children cultivate good reading habits?
- Do you think you can follow some of the routines mentioned in the case study in an elementary school?

YOUR TURN!

TEST YOUR READING LEVEL

This test evaluates how well you understand what you read in English. You have **15 minutes** to do this test. You must stop after 15 minutes. There are 20 questions.

For each question, choose the answer which is **closest in meaning to the original sentence**.

E.g.,

The following question is an example only.

Leena has a white cat and a black cat.

- a. She has one cat.
- b. Leena's cat is black and white.
- c. Leena has two cats.
- d. Leena likes brown cats.

Answer: c

1. A dog is bigger than a mouse, but smaller than an elephant.
 - a. A dog is smaller than a mouse.
 - b. A dog is very big.
 - c. A dog is the biggest.
 - d. An elephant is bigger than a dog.
2. Rani is Indian, but Michelle isn't; she's American.
 - a. Michelle isn't American.
 - b. Rani isn't American.
 - c. Michelle is American.
 - d. Rani and Michelle aren't Indians.
3. He is the oldest man in the world.
 - a. He is not as old as my grandmother.
 - b. Many men are older.
 - c. There are no older men anywhere.
 - d. He's older than some other men.
4. You can't come without a ticket.
 - a. You can come if you have a ticket.
 - b. You mustn't go with a ticket.
 - c. You don't need a ticket to come.
 - d. You cannot buy a ticket outside.
5. Shashi is looking after the children.
 - a. She can see the children.
 - b. She is taking care of the children.
 - c. She is looking at the children.
 - d. The children are in front of her.
6. They only have one car for the family.
 - a. They only like cars.
 - b. They do not like any other cars.
 - c. They do not have two cars.
 - d. They have a big family.
7. What does Shaziya like?
 - a. What are her favourite things?
 - b. How is she?
 - c. Does she look like Rehana?
 - d. Does she like Rehana?
8. He hopes to go home, but he may go to work.
 - a. He'll be at home before the office.
 - b. It is possible that he will go to work.
 - c. He's allowed to go to work.
 - d. He always goes home after work.
9. I want you to clean the car when you come back.
 - a. You want to clean it.
 - b. We will clean it together.
 - c. I don't want you to forget to clean it.
 - d. I want to clean the car.

10. He used to smoke cigarettes.
 a. He is used to cigarettes.
 b. He smoked before, but he doesn't now.
 c. He usually smokes cigarettes.
 d. He used two cigarettes.
11. Shall I take you to the station?
 a. Would you like me to take you to the station?
 b. Must I take you?
 c. Will it be necessary to take you there?
 d. Did I take you before?
12. They should talk more slowly.
 a. They talk too quickly.
 b. They would like to talk more slowly.
 c. They might have slower talks.
 d. Talking is not fast.
13. Jacintha remembered to phone the doctor.
 a. She remembered phoning the doctor.
 b. Jacintha forgot to remember to phone.
 c. She didn't forget to phone the doctor.
 d. She remembered that she phoned her.
14. Annapoorna has lived nearly 115 years.
 a. She was very old.
 b. She is very old.
 c. She died when she was nearly 115.
 d. Annapoorna has many more years.
15. She can hardly see it.
 a. She sees very hard.
 b. She is hard with it.
 c. She cannot see it very well.
 d. It is hard to see her.
16. Rehana had her house painted white yesterday.
 a. She had to paint her house white yesterday.
 b. Her house was not blue last week.
 c. They painted her house white for her yesterday.
 d. She painted her house yesterday.
17. Either teacher knows the answer.
 a. No teachers know the answer.
 b. Both teachers know the answer.
 c. All the teachers know the answer.
 d. Any teacher can answer.
18. I'd rather be a millionaire.
 a. I've been a millionaire.
 b. I'd better be a millionaire.
 c. I'd prefer to be a millionaire.
 d. You have more millions than me.
19. You don't have to do this test.
 a. You can choose not to do this test.
 b. You mustn't do it.
 c. You can't do this test.
 d. You have no desire to do it.
20. If Shashidhar had come, he would have won.
 a. If he hadn't won, he'd have come.
 b. Shashidhar didn't win because he didn't come.
 c. When Shashidhar came, he always won.
 d. He didn't come, but he won anyway.

REPORT CARD

Score (approximate) in Points

| If your score was: | Your level in reading (comprehension) is: |
|--------------------|---|
| 4-7 points | Level 1 |
| 8-11 points | Level 2 |
| 12-15 points | Level 3 |
| 16-19 points | Level 4 |
| 20 points | Level 5 |

*Note that these points are approximate. Level 1 is Basic and Level 5 is Advanced.