The Common Core Lesson Book K–5

Working with Increasingly Complex Literature, Informational Text, and Foundational Reading Skills

Gretchen Owocki

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I wish to express my gratitude to the people who have most influenced the writing of this book:

The graduate students at Saginaw Valley State University for providing so many outstanding examples of teaching at its best.

Melissa Kaczmarek for sending teaching strategies and writing mojo.

Emilia Owocki, Lucia Rumery, and Reagan Wood for the many instances of inspiration.

Kate Montgomery for the always-magnificent eye.

For David and our little Emilia

* * *

And for four teachers:

Kae Hartford,
for eyes that merrily twinkled in response to anything from students giving their best to a request for the meaning of a colorful term. You took time to enjoy the phenomenon of childhood in your classroom. I believe your magic had every one of your students believing he or she was your favorite.

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for guiding students to see that The Odyssey and Death Be Not Proud could actually be understood and enjoyed. You gave your students a reading confidence that opened doors to lifelong learning.

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for tackling content that would be challenging to teach, but that would endure. The ideas you brought to Albion changed my worldview forever.

Yetta Goodman,
for helping me find a lasting lens for viewing children and their learning.

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Kate Montgomery for the always-magnificent eye.
Everywhere we turn, conversations about the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are at hand. National conferences are providing sessions; state departments are holding meetings; books and journal articles are being published; blogs are buzzing; websites are popping up; and teachers are sharing ideas. For the first time ever, schools across the United States are expected to use a common set of literacy standards to guide assessment and instruction—and educators and school leaders are grappling with the implications. Many are examining their existing practices in light of the new standards and are beginning to make curricular and instructional overhauls. They have analyzed how the new standards align with the existing standards, and are working with the new elements they feel need their attention first. Others are wondering whether it is enough to simply be aware of the new standards—and for the most part to continue with or gently tweak existing practices. Others, admittedly, have never paid much attention to standards and are wondering if there is a reason to pay attention now. Some educators are concerned that new standards—regardless of how they’re used—may not have much positive impact on student learning; after all, good teaching is good teaching regardless of the standards we have. And there are others who fear that because standards are quite often linked with standardized testing, teachers will feel compelled to place an emphasis on test preparation rather than on fostering broadly meaningful literacy. Clearly, the issues are complex.

Some Options

Within such complexity, we could approach the adoption of the standards in a number of ways. We could sit tight until we have more information regarding how the new standardized assessments will play out, or until we know exactly what our state offices will be recommending regarding curriculum development. But this might leave our kids out of something that is potentially important. After all, there are many educators across the country fervently discussing how to use the standards to make our instruction better: more engaging, more connected to students’ lives, and more in touch with
their needs as learners. And watching from the sidelines would imply that we have nothing to contribute.

So another possible response is to get focused and assess and teach what we think the standards developers must have intended. Schools could quickly scramble to provide professional development opportunities and teachers could look for ideas to develop instruction in areas they deem not strong enough. But such efforts don’t necessarily involve a system for nurturing a balanced or manageable approach that’s based on solid evidence, planning, and discussion.

Yet another option is for educators to come together and start looking for curricular programs that advertise “comprehensive” and “research-based” ways to meet the Common Core standards. But we are teaching in an era in which research evidence has confirmed that the teacher—not the program—is the most important variable in student achievement (Brown 2010–2011; Cunningham and Allington 2011; Wong and Wong 2010).

The Places We Could Go

At the crossroads created by the Common Core State Standards, there are many paths we could take. I suggest avoiding paths that cast educators as secondary decision makers or that offer quick solutions or packages. This crossroads provides an opportunity for educators to pave new paths with fresh and critical conversations about teaching and learning.

As we shape the new system and work within it, we must not lose sight of meaningful teaching and learning. There are concerns that CCSS progression might be too narrow, too prescriptive, and too detached from life in schools to allow for a positive impact. After all, meaningful teaching can only take shape in response to real children in real classrooms. So from the start we must take hold of these standards, use them as a guide rather than a formula, and supplement them, all in ways that have research support and that maintain students’ engagement and deep learning.

Within the new system, we can still provide opportunities for students to participate in multiple forms of reading in multiple text environments. We can still offer them choice, and opportunities to experience the pleasure of reading text they see as good. We need not let standards or standardized testing take away from what we do well in classrooms or compel us to change our teaching so that students spend their school days practicing for tests, studying isolated skills, or sitting hunched over piles of work.

But as we consider the new standards, the time is ripe for improvement. The time is ripe to consider ways to shift and alter our practices, and to weed
out practices that are not conducive to meaningful learning. More than ever, we must find ways to connect students with texts that they can read and that motivate them to want to read more. We must home in on carefully selected formative assessments that allow us to understand what each child needs in order to grow as a reader. We must implement instructional practices that foster deep and engaged reading. And we must take the responsibility of differentiating our instruction to ensure that each student receives well-tailored, responsive support.

Organization of the Book

The goal of *The Common Core Lesson Book* is to support K–5 teachers as they provide authentic, meaning-based, differentiated instruction related to the Common Core standards in the area of English language arts. The English Language Arts Standards are organized into six categories:

- Reading: Literature
- Reading: Informational Text
- Reading: Foundational Skills
- Writing
- Speaking and Listening
- Language

*The Common Core Lesson Book* offers a set of teaching strategies related to the first three categories: (1) Reading: Literature; (2) Reading: Informational Text; (3) Foundational Skills for Reading. The book is organized into three parts, one for each of these categories.

**Part 1—Instructional Strategies for Reading: Literature**

The Reading: Literature standards offer a focus for literature-based instruction with fiction, drama, and poetry. As shown in Table A, there are nine anchor standards for the literature category. Part 1 is organized into nine sections, one per anchor standard. Each section begins with a chart showing the specific grade-level competencies designated for the anchor at hand, followed by a comprehensive set of instructional strategies related to that standard. The strategies are organized into three categories: demonstration, collaborative engagement, and independent application.
Table A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Anchor Standards for Reading: Literature K–5</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Key Ideas and Details</strong></td>
<td>1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Craft and Structure</strong></td>
<td>4. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.</td>
<td>53</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.</td>
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<td>6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Integration of Knowledge and Ideas</strong></td>
<td>7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.</td>
<td>112</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8. NOT APPLICABLE TO THE LITERATURE CATEGORY.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.</td>
<td></td>
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<td><strong>Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity</strong></td>
<td>10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.</td>
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</table>

**Part 2—Instructional Strategies for Reading: Informational Text**

Part 2 focuses on reading informational text. The Reading: Informational Text standards offer a focus for literature-based instruction with nonfiction. As shown in Table B, there are ten anchor standards for informational text. The Informational Text standards directly match the standards for Literature, except that anchor 8 is designated as not applicable to the Literature category.

Paralleling the format of Part 1, Part 2 is organized into ten sections, one per anchor standard. As in Part 1, each section in Part 2 begins with a chart showing the specific grade-level competencies designated for the anchor standard at hand, followed by a comprehensive set of instructional strategies related to that standard. The strategies are organized into three categories: demonstration, collaborative engagement, and independent application.
### Part 3—Instructional Strategies for Reading: Foundational Skills

Part 3 focuses on foundational skills for reading. The Reading: Foundational Skills category offers a focus for instruction in skills and strategies related to decoding. As shown in Table C, this category has four overarching skill areas.

Part 3 is organized into four sections, one per skill area. Each section in Part 3 begins with a chart showing the specific grade-level competencies designated for the skill area at hand, followed by a comprehensive set of instructional strategies related to that skill. The strategies are organized into three categories: demonstration, collaborative engagement, and independent application.
## The Approach

*The Common Core Lesson Book* is designed to support differentiated instruction. Rather than presenting instructional strategies for one grade level at a time, the K–5 range is approached collectively for each standard. This allows teachers to examine a range of strategies and choose those that best match their students’ needs. For example, some second-grade students may benefit from temporarily working on some Common Core competencies that are suggested for kindergarten and first-grade; or the whole class may benefit from working with these standards as a review early in the year. Others may benefit from working beyond the grade-level recommendations. The book is designed so that when planning instruction, teachers can consider the K–5 range, selecting and adapting according to their particular students’ needs. Teachers working in intervention or Response to Intervention settings can select experiences that are particularly well matched with the needs of their small groups.

## The Types of Instruction

Rather than providing a “curriculum” to follow, *The Common Core Lesson Book* provides a comprehensive framework of strategies for enhancing a

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<td>2. Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds (phonemes).</td>
<td>320</td>
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<td><strong>Phonics and Word Recognition</strong></td>
<td>3. Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.</td>
<td>340</td>
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<td><strong>Fluency</strong></td>
<td>4. Kindergarten: Read emergent-reader texts with purpose and understanding. Grades 1-5: Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.</td>
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curriculum that is already in place. For each standard/skill area, three types of experience are suggested:

- demonstration
- collaborative engagement
- independent application

This layout makes it possible to implement an approach of demonstrating various techniques for reading, exploring, and discussing text—and then encouraging a gradual takeover of responsibility by the students.

**Demonstration**

Teacher guidance is high during the demonstration phase, with the teacher leading the discussion and laying out explicit strategies and expectations for reading and interpreting text. Demonstration on a topic may take just one or two sessions but then be used again as students need further support.

Each demonstration section includes a general lesson that can be used with small groups or the whole class throughout the year. The lessons serve to build a common language for conversation and group activity. Along with a general lesson, most of the demonstration sections also include one or two lessons designed for intensifying the instruction. These lessons set students up to use the strategies in a guided situation with heavy teacher support. For example, Anchor 1 is focused on close reading. The general lesson is presented first, with the teacher demonstrating. This is followed by two lessons for intensifying the instruction. The lessons for intensifying the instruction focus on student monitoring and inferring, both of which are critical components of close reading. The students do the reading as the teacher observes and supports. All demonstration and intensifying lessons may be implemented with small groups (including intervention-based groups) or the whole class.

**Collaborative Engagement**

Guidance is still high in the collaborative engagement phase, but with more allowance and encouragement for students to take responsibility for their own thinking and discussion. Typically one or two days are planned for collaborative engagement, with the teacher returning to this phase as students demonstrate a need.

In the collaborative engagement sections you will find ideas for supporting group activity and conversation in relation to the concepts taught in the demonstration phase. As with the demonstration sections, the collaborative engagement sections come with starter prompts to help get conversations
and activities started in meaningful directions. The prompts require that students not only talk but also use other forms of activity (viewing, drawing, labeling, mapping, reading back through the text) to complete an assignment together. At any time during this collaborative engagement phase of instruction, the teacher may come back to the demonstration phase to provide further support.

**Independent Application**

In the independent application phase, students work independently or with peers with much less teacher guidance, the expectation being that the strategies and concepts have been internalized. In the independent application sections, ideas are provided for supporting ongoing reading and writing experiences that will help students further explore and internalize the concepts you are teaching. It is here that students will individually or collaboratively demonstrate their knowledge in relation to the standards, and you will find numerous opportunities for assessment as well as for providing over-the-shoulder support. At any time during this independent application phase of instruction, you may come back to the demonstration phase to provide further guidance.

**The Role of the Teacher**

Working effectively with the standards requires the critical understanding that the teacher—not the standard or the program—is the most important variable affecting student achievement (Cunningham and Allington 2011; Wong and Wong 2010). A set of goals or materials is only as good as the instruction associated with it. The teacher makes the decisions that create the effective classroom; the teacher knows the children, their strengths, their experiences, and their needs; and the teacher can use this knowledge to create the climate, culture, and curriculum for meaningful learning.

Over the past several decades, our field has accumulated a wide body of knowledge that helps teachers and teaching teams make effective decisions, and we are just beginning to consider the implications in terms of Common Core instruction. Table D shows the characteristics of classrooms considered effective in supporting literacy (synthesized by Cunningham and Allington 2011 and Wong and Wong 2010), with implications for informing Common Core instruction. You can use the chart as a tool for evaluating areas that might warrant further development in your classroom or school.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Characteristics of Effective Classrooms</th>
<th>Implications for Common Core Instruction</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Literacy instruction is balanced to include the various aspects of reading and writing (Cunningham and Allington 2011).</td>
<td>The Common Core standards emphasize a broad range of competencies including reading of narrative text, reading of informational text, using skills and processes for decoding, and writing in multiple genres. Plan to balance your instruction across all of these areas.</td>
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<td>Children do extensive reading and writing throughout the day (Cunningham and Allington 2011).</td>
<td>Plan for students to spend as much time as possible during the literacy block engaged in actual reading and writing rather than in peripheral tasks that might emphasize only one standard or skill at a time. Skill practice can be helpful, but should not consume the literacy block. In addition to extensive reading and writing during the literacy block, also plan for reading and writing throughout the day, particularly as it supports content area learning.</td>
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<td>Science and social studies maintain an important place in the school day and are integrated with reading and writing (Cunningham and Allington 2011).</td>
<td>Do not cut science and social studies time to lengthen the literacy block. Instead, use the Common Core literacy standards when planning content area instruction. Such integration across content areas is a way to use time efficiently, and helps ensure that careful attention is paid to children's vocabulary development, to their skill negotiating content area reading material, and to their capacity for using reading and writing as tools for learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Literacy instruction emphasizes meaningful communication and higher-level thinking skills (Cunningham and Allington 2011).</td>
<td>When teaching toward Common Core standards, plan for the students' activity to always be in relation to meaningful acts of reading, writing, and communicating. Rather than teaching a skill or strategy “just” so children will learn to demonstrate competency with it, teach so they can actually use the skill or strategy to support meaningful activity. Keep in mind that different children come to your classroom with different funds of knowledge. What is considered meaningful varies across children, classrooms, and communities.</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Literacy skills are taught explicitly, and support is provided as children use the skills in reading and writing (Cunningham and Allington 2011).</td>
<td>Plan times for explicit instruction through whole-class, small-group, and one-on-one demonstration. The Common Core standards provide guidance for determining the skills to teach but the children's actual demonstrations of knowledge should inform the specifics of instruction.</td>
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</tbody>
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Table D (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of Effective Classrooms</th>
<th>Implications for Common Core Instruction</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole-class, small-group, and individual settings are used for instruction. Groups are flexible, depending on children’s needs. Instruction is provided so that mastery for all students is achievable (Cunningham and Allington 2011; Wong and Wong 2010).</td>
<td>Determine the settings in which the different standards are most meaningfully taught and explored: whole class, small group, and individual. Use formative assessment to determine where individual students’ needs lie, and group the students accordingly.</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>A wide range of materials (rather than one program or set of materials) is used to support instruction (Cunningham and Allington 2011).</td>
<td>Don’t be afraid to make professional decisions. Standards and materials purported to help meet them are most useful when teachers understand that they have the authority to teach beyond them; to spend lots of time with some and explore others to a lesser extent; and to determine which are most appropriate for emphasis at any given time. Closely adhering to only one program or set of materials does not allow for such decision making.</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The class is well managed so that high-quality instruction and learning can occur; students show high levels of engagement (Cunningham and Allington 2011; Wong and Wong 2010).</td>
<td>Implement clearly defined procedures and routines in which you guide students through a rich set of reading and writing experiences each day. Make true engagement possible by ensuring that classroom literacy experiences take into account student backgrounds and interests; allow for choice and agency; and seem meaningful and important. To hold children’s attention, the texts available for reading should be accessible, with all of the children able to find material at their independent and instructional reading levels.</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher holds high and positive expectations for student achievement (Wong and Wong 2010).</td>
<td>Approach teaching as if all students “can.” Differentiate instruction so that all students find classroom experiences challenging but achievable, providing extra support for those who are progressing more slowly.</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Transforming Your Teaching

I created this book because of my desire to participate in the national conversation about teaching practices that has emerged in relation to the Common Core. I wanted to offer encouragement to stay grounded in meaningful instruction, as well as offer a set of strategies to be implemented in the interest of meaningful reading and writing.

But along the way, I really hoped for something more. I really hoped that through reading and exploring the ideas in this book, you would see with more certainty than ever that creating and adapting your own effective lessons and instructional designs, with standards as a guide, is within your reach. To create this book, I did little more than match strategies with standards in a way that would offer choices and possibilities for differentiation in terms of how the standards might be taught and explored. I adapted and fine-tuned in ways that I thought would honor the intent of the standards, and at the same time respect the fact that children are only five, six, seven, eight, nine, and ten years old only once in their lives. In this enchanting period they should experience deep satisfaction and pleasure in reading in the social environment of the classroom. I wanted to create opportunities that children would want to engage in, putting meaningful reading, writing, and inquiry at the core.

You can do the same. You can use and adjust the structure offered here to create your own lasting lessons and to continually add and adapt teaching strategies you know will have meaning to your students. To do this, you do not need to turn your attention away from your existing curriculum or from the literature you may be using—but don’t be afraid to steer yourself, to step beyond scripts and programs, and to use your professional knowledge. Collaborate with your colleagues; talk about connections between your teaching and your objectives; and most important, talk about what keeps your students engaged with learning. Our task is, and always will be, to watch our students and to set the school-based learning process in motion through their interests and experiences.
### KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

#### ANCHOR 1

**English Language Arts Standards  Reading: Informational Text**

**Anchor 1**: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

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<tr>
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<th>First</th>
<th>Second</th>
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<td></td>
<td>With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.</td>
<td>Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.</td>
<td>Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.</td>
<td>Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.</td>
<td>Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Demonstration**: 153

**Collaborative Engagement**: 163

**Independent Application**: 165
Decision Tree for
Reading: Informational Text ANCHOR 1

Do my students need focused instruction in relation to Reading Anchor 1?

Anchor 1 requires that students read closely, determining what the text says explicitly and making logical inferences. (Refer to your grade-level standards for specific details.)

When some or all of your students could use support in this area, it is recommended that you start the process by implementing three types of instruction in sequence over the course of about a week:

- **Demonstration**
  - Page 153
- **Collaborative Engagement**
  - Page 163
- **Independent Application**
  - Page 165

The initial demonstration requires just one session (to be repeated as needed), leaving one or two days for collaborative engagement and one or two days to begin the independent applications, which become ongoing as you choose. If you find during any phase of the instruction that some or all of your students could use intensified support, it is recommended that you move to the lessons for intensifying the instruction.

Do my students need intensified support with monitoring?

Monitoring is a comprehension strategy that involves considering the purpose of the reading event and then keeping close track of meaning to ensure that the purpose is being met. Students who need intensified support with monitoring are those who often come away from their reading not having fully met a purpose or showing partial understanding as demonstrated through retellings, conversation, and answering planned sets of questions. See page 161.

Do my students need intensified support with inferring?

Close reading requires not only determining what the text says explicitly, but also inferring. Inferring is a comprehension strategy that involves drawing conclusions about content using textual information as well as prior knowledge. Lessons related to inferring can be useful for all students, but particularly for those whose responses to text often reflect lower-level thinking or little interpretation beyond what is on the page. See page 162.
Demonstration

Anchor 1 requires that students *read closely*, determining what the text says explicitly and making logical inferences. Close reading involves reading for deep understanding. The goal is to enable an interpretation or explanation that includes the details as well as the bigger ideas.

When working with close reading of informational text, we must keep in mind that our *purpose* has a strong influence on *what* and *how* we read. Sometimes we need to pay close attention to detail, as when looking for a critical piece of information or seeking to answer a specific question; but sometimes we are looking for general information or ideas, and we find that skimming is sufficient; and other times we need not read the actual text at all to meet our goals for the event; just the pictures suffice. How we read—or how we *should* read—depends on the purpose we set. Considering *purpose* is an important part of close reading.

The present lesson is designed to help you demonstrate what close reading of informational text looks like and to build a common language to support group activity in relation to this standard. The lesson may be implemented several times, using a different text each time.

1. **Choose the text.** Use material that relates to your content-area curriculum or text that reflects a topic in which your students have expressed interest. If you use a textbook, be sure to supplement your instruction in the area of close reading with a variety of engaging informational books, articles, and Web-based information. This will help your students see the many different contexts in which close reading is warranted.

2. **Introduce the text and the concept.** Let students know that you will be showing them ways of engaging in a process of *reading closely to meet your purpose* and that they will then be expected to do this on their own and in groups. Clearly articulate the purpose of the reading event. Is the purpose to gain broad knowledge on a topic? Is it to answer a specific question? Is it to learn how to do something? Is it to learn about a story from the past? In light of your established purpose, show how you preview the text features such as tables of contents, illustrations, subheads, and the index to locate the parts you want to read. For example:

   - “This website has all kinds of information about dinosaurs, but our focus is on learning about the fossil record. So I’m going to use *fossil record* as a search term and then read that part closely.”
• “There is a lot of information about moths in this article, but we are focused on learning how physical characteristics help an organism survive. We’ll use the subheads to find that section and discuss/take notes about that part.”

• “We have been learning about stories from the past. This is a biography. We want to learn all we can about this story so it makes sense to closely read the whole text, knowing that some parts will be more important than others.”

3. Demonstrate and discuss the concept. Read the text aloud, showing students how you stay focused on your purpose. Demonstrate how you track meaning, monitor your understandings, and think through any questions you may have, all in light of your purpose. Let them “see” your thinking processes, and encourage them to do the same types of deep thinking as they read independently. Figure RIT 1.1 offers some prompts to support the process.
READING ANCHOR 1:
Prompts to Support Teacher-Led Demonstration and Discussion

Kindergarten and First Grade
Our goal is to learn about ________. We are going to read this part closely so that we can talk through what the author is teaching about that. (As you read, you may help your students attend to detail by pausing and encouraging them to “think this through” and “picture this in your mind.”)

I had a question about _________. Did you have any questions? (You may write the questions to help make the process concrete, and then show how you read with the purpose of answering them. You may document questions and answers using Figure RIT 1.2.)

We are reading to learn about _________. After we read, I will ask you to record one important thing the author taught about that. You may draw or write. Pay close attention because your work will be a tool for sharing what you are learning with other people. (Figure RIT 1.3 provides a template.)

Second and Third Grades
What is our purpose for reading this? What questions do we have?
Let’s work together to track what the author taught in this part. How does that relate to our purpose? (Figures RIT 1.2 and 1.3 provide templates for documentation.)

We are going to read closely to map out a set of who, what, where, when, why, how questions and answers. This is a way to help you focus on key issues during your reading and to think back through the key information. (Figure RIT 1.4 provides a template for documentation.)

Fourth and Fifth Grades
What is our purpose for reading this? Let’s work together to track the important ideas in relation to our purpose. What evidence or examples does the author use to support these ideas? Are there any specific words we might quote to help us explain? (Figures RIT 1.5 and RIT 1.6 provide templates for recording observations and sharing information with others.)
## Question and Answer Chart

Name: __________________________________________ Date: _____________________
Title: _____________________________________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What I Wonder</th>
<th>What I Have Learned</th>
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Figure RIT 1.3

I Read Closely!

Name: __________________________________________ Date: _____________________
Title: _____________________________________________________________________

Here is something important the author taught.
Tell about an interesting piece of information you found in this text.

Share three details or examples the author uses in relation to the information.

•

•

•

Share a quotation from the text that relates to the information.
Evidence from Informational Text

In one sentence, summarize a key argument, opinion, or piece of information presented by the author.

What specific information/details/examples does the author present in relation to this argument, opinion, or piece of information?

- 
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- 
- 
- 

Monitoring is a comprehension strategy that involves considering the purpose of the reading and then keeping close track of meaning to ensure that the purpose is being met.

1. To develop student awareness of monitoring, select challenging material related to a content-area topic you are exploring. Choose literature that won’t be just an easy read but will require that students consider and reflect, getting a conscious feel for what close reading entails. Each student needs a copy of the text.

2. Work with the students to set a purpose for the reading. For example, if you want them to answer a set of questions, review it first. If you are reading for general information or to understand a whole text (such as a biography), make that clear. If you are reading to inform work on a project, discuss the information that needs to be obtained.

Let students know that they will be trying out monitoring as a reading strategy and that when we monitor with informational text, we do so with a specific purpose in mind.

3. Introduce the text. Read a portion aloud, demonstrating how you think through the key ideas and details in light of your purpose. Rather than recounting every detail, show how you think through the gist. If you are pursuing answers to specific questions, show how answers are found:
   • by looking at one place in the text
   • by piecing together different parts
   • by using some information from the text and some from our own knowledge base

When complexities or confusions arise, show ways to persevere. Strategies for persevering include rereading, rethinking, questioning, using illustrations, using text features, thinking aloud, and discussing the content when a peer or adult is available.

4. After you have demonstrated, turn the responsibility over to the students. Help them consider their purpose, and then read short segments and retell the gist in relation to that purpose. If the retelling is sufficient, move on. If not, guide the students to reread.

For English Learners

When monitoring with informational text, English learners often need support with word meanings and syntax. Allow time for rereading portions of text and retelling the gist with support. Use gesture, movement, illustrations, and conversation to help clarify meaning. If it is helpful, students can write meanings in their first language (sticky notes work well) as a scaffold for pulling and holding the ideas together.

5. Continue instruction with students who have not yet developed effective monitoring.
INFERRING THE INSTRUCTION
Inferring

Inferring is a comprehension strategy that involves drawing conclusions about content using close reading of textual information as well as prior knowledge.

1. To develop student awareness of inferring, choose a text for demonstration that requires some “reading between the lines” or interpretation beyond what the author states directly in order to fully appreciate the content.

2. Introduce the text and read a portion aloud, pointing out and discussing the process of inferring. Following are some key questions to guide the process:
   - What do we think might happen next? What evidence leads us to think so?
   - What can we infer about this individual? How do we know this?
   - What can we infer are this person’s reasons for making this decision?
   - What would happen if . . . ?
   - What does this probably mean? What evidence in the text supports that?
   - Why do you think the author (illustrator) included this?

For English Learners

Provide support enabling English learners to engage in higher-order discussion. When working with inferring, write the term on the board, and help students with its pronunciation. Show its meaning with simple examples such as “Infer how this person feels” or “Infer what would happen if . . . .” Refer back to the written term as you use it, to help students identify it within your stream of speech. English learners need not master conventional English before exploring high-level concepts written in English. From the start, they should be engaged in discussions that foster comprehension of complex material and require higher-level thinking (Gersten et al. 2007).

3. Provide follow-up lessons for small groups as needed.
Collaborative Engagement

1. **Choose the literature and the reading context.** Choose a piece of informational text, or a text set, that is relevant to a current content-area study in your classroom. Determine whether to read aloud or provide copies for students to read independently. Different discussion groups may use different texts as long as the class is focused on the same general content (such as *water, endangered species, females in history, celebrations*).

2. **Arrange for students to read or listen to the text.** Before reading, help students articulate the purpose. Are they seeking to collect information on a specific topic; answer a set of questions; learn how to do something; enjoy a good historical account of an event? They should focus their attention accordingly and prepare to come to the group with ideas for discussion. Figure RIT 1.9 provides a suggested set of starter prompts and activities to facilitate close reading. If you are having students do the reading, be sure to provide support for those who may struggle with the material.

3. **Hold the meetings.** Arrange for the students to come together in groups to discuss the content as assigned.

4. **Arrange a follow-up discussion.** When all groups are working from the same text, or focusing on similar content, organize for a whole-class discussion as a follow-up to the group activity.

---

**Figure RIT 1.9**

**READING ANCHOR 1:**
Prompts to Support Student-Led Group Discussion

**Kindergarten and First Grade**

- Sitting together in a group, each student draws a picture to show something important the author taught in relation to the established purpose for reading. Students include as many details as possible. (Students sit together to promote informal dialogue about the text.) Each student then describes his or her work to the other members of the group. Discussion is encouraged.

- Students turn through the pages of the text and talk through the concepts the author taught, discussing any questions they have. Together, they choose one interesting concept and using large chart paper they create an illustration that shows the details. The illustration must be labeled.

(continues)
Students turn through the pages of a text set looking for answers to one or two questions the class has discussed with teacher guidance. For example, “What do birds eat?” “What is their habitat?” “What are the types of homes people live in?” They draw or write to record a response. Figure RIT 1.3 may be used.

Second and Third Grades

Students work together on large chart paper to create a picture showing each of the following: who, what, where, when, why, and how. (Figure RIT 1.4 provides a template that may be enlarged.)

Students turn through the pages of a text set looking for answers to one or two questions the class has discussed with teacher guidance. For example, “What natural resources are found in our state?” “How do people help improve the environment?” They use sticky notes to web a group response, placing the question in the middle and parts of the answer in the spokes.

Fourth and Fifth Grades

Students map a set of who, what, where, when, why, and how questions and answers to check and build their understanding. (Figure RIT 1.4 provides a template.)

Students find quotations to represent who, what, where, when, why, and how. They record the information on a key feature map. (Figure RIT 1.4 provides a template.)

Students find an illustration that gives important information in relation to the purpose that has been set for the reading. Together, they write a bulleted list of important details to notice, based on information the illustrator has provided.

Students talk through a text (or section) by responding to the question “What is this about?” The group creates a twenty-word response that includes as much information as possible.

Students respond to a set of questions posed by the teacher.

Students turn through the pages of a text set looking for answers to one or two questions the class has discussed with teacher guidance. For example, “What role does mimicry play in animal survival?” “How is mimicry different from and similar to camouflage?” Students use sticky notes to map a response. For a descriptive structure, a web with spokes works well. For compare and contrast, two columns work well. For a sequence of events, the pieces may be placed in a linear array.

Groups prepare to share with the class the most pertinent information from a portion of the text. They mark details and examples with sticky notes, writing down points that will help explain the key information. They also mark specific quotations (no more than a sentence or two) to help explain the information.
Independent Application

Independent Reading

Research evidence is clear: the more time students spend reading, the higher their reading achievement (Anderson, Fielding, and Wilson 1988). Independent reading is a planned event that is scheduled on a regular basis (three to five days per week). The goals are for students to deeply engage with content and to read extensively.

Students benefit most when independent reading time is carefully planned and monitored. Reutzel, Jones, and Newman (2010) offer some recommendations. First, have an appropriate set of materials always ready for use. This prevents students from spending too much of their time selecting material. You can have bins of content-area books from which children may choose (it’s okay to mix social studies, science, and math), or students may read from a particular collection focused on a particular topic.

Second, make your expectations clear. Close reading can be encouraged by familiarizing students with the general procedures you expect and then monitoring their activity to be sure they are following through. To get started, work with your students to create a chart that shows the key processes you want them to follow. For example:

- Set a purpose.
- Preview.
- Read.
- Review your purpose.

Demonstrate the process, and provide opportunities for follow-up discussion regarding student use of the strategy.

Third, plan for students to engage in brief forms of response during or after each session. Having students write or orally share their thinking has been found to help keep them on task. Along these same lines, it can also be helpful to conference with students (Reutzel, Jones, and Newman 2010). This can be accomplished through brief over-the-shoulder conversations asking students to read a short section or tell you about what they are reading.

Response Journals

Response journals are notebooks in which students record their thoughts about a text that has been read or listened to. The journals can be used daily, or every so often, by all members of the class. They may be used to support independent reading or other reading experiences.
To get started, provide each student with a notebook. Let students know that the journal will be a place for recording key information and thoughts about their reading. At the end of independent reading sessions, partner-reading sessions, or whole-class read-alouds, allow students time to draw, write, and reflect in the response journal. Demonstrate the process first, as students might not have a good idea of what to write until they see the possibilities. It can be tempting to ask that they jot down the main ideas from a text, and you may sometimes want to do that to be sure they are getting the gist, but there are many other useful forms of response to nonfiction that will also provide indicators of comprehension:

- Write one word that was important to your reading today.
- Write one sentence that shows what was important in your reading today.
- Write a fact or piece of information about one part that would be interesting to discuss with a partner or group.
- Sketch one part you found to be interesting. Use captions or labels to show what is happening.
- Write your opinion about this book or section. Use ideas from the text to support your thinking.
- Write down what you think are the main ideas.
- Write about a connection you made to the book.
- Write about a connection between this book and another book.

Provide opportunities for students to share their journals with you or with a partner. You can respond by writing to the student on a sticky note placed on the appropriate page or arrange time for partners to respond to one another in this manner. Providing regular opportunities for sharing shows students that their work is valued and that the expectation for close reading is always present. It also provides an opportunity for students to build knowledge together.

**Interactive Journals**

Interactive journals are notebooks in which students participate in short written conversations about what they are reading. The journals may be used any time two or more students (or even all students in the class) are reading the same text. Interactive journals encourage close reading by involving students in a cycle of reading manageable sections of text, generating questions together, and responding briefly through writing. To introduce the process,
provide each student with a notebook, showing where to write or draw, and where to leave room for a peer to respond. Let students know that the journals will be a place for sharing ideas about their reading.

1. Instruct student-teams to decide on a selected amount of text to read closely and to then be prepared to exchange their thoughts in writing. To get the written conversations started, the students can brainstorm some generic prompts or you can offer your own. For example:
   - Choose one word that represents an important concept.
   - Choose one sentence that represents what you think is the most important concept in this section.
   - Given our purpose, what have we learned so far?
   - What did the author teach in this section?
   - What do you think will happen next?
   - What do the visuals on page ______ tell us?

Peers can use these generic prompts as conversation starters but may generate their own more tailored prompts along the way. Allow flexibility so that they may tailor their prompts to their own interests and questions in relation to the text.

2. At the agreed-upon stopping point, students write their responses and then trade journals to respond to the partner. They may exchange journals two or three times during a reading session, deciding on new prompts and stopping points as they go.

Stop-and-Chats

Stop-and-chats are a framework for students to read and then stop at a designated point to discuss the content with a partner. They may be used any time two or more (even thirty) students are reading the same text. The process encourages close reading by setting up students to read with a specific purpose in mind and fostering conversations related to that purpose. When possible, pair English learners with experienced English speakers. The English learners will benefit from the low-risk context for using language to express ideas about manageable segments of text.

1. Student teams place a marker at an agreed-upon stopping point. Upon reaching this point, they exchange their thoughts about what they have read so far and then place the marker at the next agreed-upon stopping point in preparation for another chat. To get the
conversations started, you and the students can brainstorm some generic prompts, or you can offer your own. For example:

- Given our purpose, what have we learned so far?
- What is this part about?
- What did the author teach in this section?
- What do you think will happen next?
- Is there a word that is either important or confusing?

2. As students gain experience with stop-and-chats, follow up with lessons based on observations of their performance.

Information Gathering

Information gathering involves inviting students to closely read a text or its illustrations to meet a specific whole-class purpose.

1. Collect a text set on a topic you are exploring through your social studies or science curriculum. Use one of the texts to show students how you read for specific information the class needs. For example, the class may be working to collect information on the ways individuals can conserve resources or on an important person in history. Show how you read the text and/or view the illustrations with this goal in mind.

2. Provide each student with a form for documenting information in relation to the question at hand. Figure RIT 1.10 provides an example. Allow students to work in teams to search for answers to the question.

3. As a follow-up, bring the class back together to use the information that has been collected. For example, the class might web the information, forming categories along the way. Or individual students/teams might use the information to write a particular page for what will be eventually compiled into a class book.
Figure RIT 1.10

Information Gathering

Name: ___________________________ Date: __________________

Title: ________________________________________________________________

**Topic or Question**

**Information from the Text**

Key Feature Illustrations

A key feature illustration is a visual representation of the who, what, where, when, why, and how of an informational text. Such illustrations may be created as a part of students’ independent reading (to encourage and support close reading) or after you have read a text aloud to/with the class (as a means for rethinking and discussing the content). Students may use any combination of drawing, writing, colors, and symbols to represent the key features. Figure RIT 1.3 may be used as a template.

Number One Sentence!

Encourage close reading by giving students a sentence challenge. Students use highlighting tape or an erasable highlighter to mark what they think is the most important sentence in a designated section of text or in the whole text. You can teach students to choose a sentence that signifies an important concept worth considering or one that best signifies the main idea. After students have individually highlighted key sentences (or done so in teams) allow discussion time with a small group or the whole class.

Number One Word!

Encourage close reading by giving students a word challenge. Students use highlighting tape or an erasable highlighter to mark what they think is the most important word in a designated section of text or the whole text. After students have individually highlighted key words (or done so in teams), allow discussion time with a small group or the whole class.

Notes to the Author

In notes to the author, students use sticky notes to comment to the author on what they are thinking as they read. For example, they may comment on feelings: “This part is so sad!” They might comment on the content: “So, whales migrate to warm water to have their babies? That makes sense.” They may even have a little advice for the author: “You could have written more about that. It would have been interesting.” “I wish you would have defined echidna.” Close reading is encouraged as students have an “audience” (albeit imagined) with whom to share their thinking. Of course, it’s always fun for students to share their notes with one another, and this can encourage creativity and a desire to keep writing.