The Guided Reading Classroom

How to Keep ALL Students Working Constructively

Nancy L. Witherell
For their support, I send love and thanks to my husband, Peter W. Witherell, and my friend, Mary C. McMackin.
CONTENTS

Preface vi
Acknowledgments viii

1 Why Guided Reading Fits into a Comprehensive Language Arts Program 1
2 Organizing Group and Independent Activity Time 10
3 Minilessons: Preparing for Independent Success 18
4 How to Structure Independent Activities Throughout the Reading Lesson 25
5 Prereading Independent Activities 37
6 During Reading Independent and Collaborative Activities to Improve Comprehension 50
7 Postreading Independent and Collaborative Activities as Follow-up 64
8 Ensuring Success of Long-Term Projects: Guidelines and Troubleshooting 81
9 Ideas for Independent Long-Term Projects 95
10 Minilessons for Center Preparation 115
11 Using Centers Effectively and with Accountability 123
12 More Ideas for Stationary, Portable, and Mobile Centers 132
13 How It Works 151
14 Putting It All Together 159

References 169
Index 173
There was a time when postreading follow-up was workbooks and ditto sheets, rarely connected to the actual stories in the basal text. Usually there was a skills sheet and application of the vocabulary, but no more thought about the actual reading. This chapter is making a case for both, the application and reinforcement of skills and strategies, and deeper, more intense thoughts about the reading. Often postreading time may involve rereading, so students will be able to respond to the reading with accurate and thorough knowledge of the text information. In the previous chapters it was recommended that certain strategies were best done during a rereading. This would occur during the students’ independent work time.

When planning postreading responses for guided reading groups, it is sometimes hard to measure the amount of time students will need to complete the assigned tasks. Try to estimate time as closely as possible, but better to err on the side of having time left over. Students should always have books available for independent reading time. When students have completed their reading response, they should automatically go into their independent reading books. What’s the worst that can happen? They get an extra ten minutes to read? (For those of you who are skeptical about that last question, ideas for management strategies will be offered in Chapters 13 and 14.)

Postreading responses and activities should always be curriculum oriented, purposeful, and based on effective practices. We know that learners need multiple opportunities to interact with text in purposeful and meaningful ways (Braunger and Lewis 2006). Through reader response techniques teachers facilitate the process of the reader connecting to the text and thereby constructing their own meaning (Farris, Fuhler, and Walther 2004). We want the follow-up responses to the text to focus on meaning, guiding
students to extract more understanding. Instruction should help readers make sense of written language (Braunger and Lewis 2006) and we must be mindful that responses to reading should facilitate that construction of meaning.

The ideas given in this chapter will focus on reader response to narrative and informational text with ideas that can be implemented individually or collaboratively. In addition, there is also a section on vocabulary reinforcement. Also, although not expanded upon in this chapter, skill reinforcement may be done at independent time. Ideally, the skill reinforcement would connect to the reading, but it can just as easily connect to a minilesson in which a need had been identified (such as pluralizing) or connected to the district curriculum.

Responding to Fiction/Narrative text

Checking Predictions

Sounds simple enough, checking predictions, but in reality coming to closure with predictions is often overlooked. For example, in a read-aloud, teachers frequently begin with, “What do you think this book is going to be about?” The question appears to have dual purposes, one of predicting and one of activating prior knowledge. Students enthusiastically answer, and the read-aloud begins. At some points in the story, the teacher may pause and ask if students would like to change their predictions. At the end of the reading, predictions are often not even mentioned.

Predictions are more than a motivational tool or the purpose-setting agenda. As mentioned in Chapter 4, predictions are inferences. In postreading students can be held accountable for why their predictions were right or wrong. As they become strategic readers, we want them to sharpen this strategy by verifying what clues allowed them to predict correctly or what actually happened if their prediction was wrong, what misled them to give the wrong prediction.

Children check their predictions individually or collaboratively. Using the T-chart for predictions, the teacher tells the students to label one column “Predictions” for prereading and “What actually happened” for postreading, or on a three-chart add the label, “Clue for prediction.” In this way during postreading students may analyze their predictions. Very young children can simply draw in a “post” box what actually happened and write one or two sentences about it. During their reading group, they can share the drawn summaries and orally explain why their predictions were right or wrong.
Sequencing (Write or Draw)

To retell a story accurately students must be able to have the sequence correct. Usually we discuss the sequence of stories as having a beginning, middle, and end as when young children use a paper with three boxes to portray the beginning, middle, and end. They should be encouraged to write about each one also. Older students can use the boxes too, but they should write about the events in the beginning, middle, and end of the story. In Mr. Arturo’s fourth-grade class, he gives each student three index cards. He has the students write the beginning, middle, and end on each card. Students then scramble their index cards and exchange with a partner. The partners then read the other student’s three index cards and sequence them in order from beginning to end. The partners tell each other whether or not they are correct. Mr. Arturo explains that an incorrect result of the order could be the result of the writer (or artist) not putting enough detail into their writing (drawing) or the reader missing important information from the writing. Students who have incorrectly sequenced cards reread together and discuss the “why.” Mr. Arturo pays particular attention to this as he strives to improve students’ details in writing and their skill in reading for detail.

For younger children props or stick puppets are great for sequencing skills. If a whole retelling is not needed, sequencing can be done with just part of the story. Using the book pictures of characters and main settings, make small copies for students or allow them to draw their own figures and settings. Glue these onto popsicle sticks or straws to make stick puppets. Have children retell the story or a part of the story to see if anything is omitted.

Story Components

Students can use a variety of graphic organizers to analyze story components as a postreading activity. Story components, or story grammar, include: characters, setting, problem, attempts to solve, and solution. Any web search typing in “graphic organizers” will bring you to numerous story maps. Model and practice story maps prior to assigning as an independent task. Students completing a story map collaboratively should be required to write down more information. Young or struggling students can use pictures to complete the story map. The goal is to see if students can identify the different story map components and if they can recall the facts and events in the story.

Primary grades have a cute project using large-sized construction paper to make a story map. The paper is folded in half lengthwise and slits are
made to the halfway mark (for a flip chart type of look). Usually four sections are cut, and the paper is folded so the cut sections are on top. Students draw the main character on one section, and then the setting, problem, and solution, respectively. On the inside half, students write about these components. (See sample of character analysis, grade 2, Figure 7–1.)

Each individual story component can be the focus of a postreading activity, resulting in students gaining a deeper understanding of the plot. For instance, students can use a graphic organizer to analyze the main character or write a character description in their journals. When modeling the writing
of a character description both physical and personality traits should be included, as long as the narrative gives facts or inferences on both.

An interesting and worthwhile project with characters, making a relationship tree, fosters students’ thinking to go beyond individual character and into story aspects that link character together. Think about reading a historical saga that includes generations of families, and the author very kindly includes a family tree near the front of the book. Readers rely on that family tree to keep their thinking clear about specific characters. Students sometimes need this support in their reading, and they can create a relationship tree of their own. In collaborative groups, students would draw the connections from character to character as they appear in the book. Depending upon the book, this could end up being a long-term project. For instance, in the book *A View from Saturday* (Konigsburg 1996), there are number of characters that relate in a variety of ways, and this would have to be done in almost every chapter. But in a short book like *The Jolly Postman or Other People’s Letters* (Ahlberg and Ahlberg 1986), this might be completed in one setting. Be aware that the relationships in this book are very difficult to connect as many of the connections rely on inference. For example, one character in the book, Giant Bigg, gets a postcard from Jack stating he is on vacation with his mother and Giant Bigg’s hen that lays the golden eggs. So in one postcard we have Jack whom we know has a relationship with the Giant, Jack’s mother, and the Giant’s hen that now belongs to Jack—rather complicated.

The setting of a story can be easily analyzed by having students complete a graphic organizer. A more motivating response is to have students draw the setting while mandating specific criteria. For instance, in the book *Holes* (Sachar 1998), the setting is very important to the plot. The main character, Stanley, is sent to Camp Green Lake, which is not what its name implies. Students should be told to draw the setting, making sure they include facts given in the story, and to also suggest the mood of the story through the drawing. A few sentences explaining what is happening in the drawing should be included. A scene from *Holes* might be Stanley, in town, with sneakers on his shoulders; digging holes would be at Camp Green Lake; a scene of the mountains might be the boys’ escape. Each of these particular scenes would depict a different mood.

When examining the attempts to solve, and the solution, students employ sequencing and analytical skills. The character and setting are usually very factual. Attempts to solve and sometimes the solution may require inferential comprehension. Furthermore, some complicated plots (the attempts and solution) are very difficult to follow. In the book *Someone Was*
Watching (Patneaude 1993), Chris and his best friend refuse to believe Chris’ younger sister has drowned, and they try in a variety of ways to find her kidnappers, if there really are kidnappers. This suspenseful mystery drama uses clues to lead and mislead the reader. Keeping track of the attempts to solve the problem would most likely be a long-term project or a review that could be done in a couple of days. In contrast, in the Caldecott-winning picture book My Friend Rabbit (Rohmann 2002), the plot is easily followed. The problem is a toy airplane stuck in a tree; the attempt to solve has Rabbit placing one animal on top of another to reach the airplane. The solution is obvious but gets somewhat complicated with the addition of all the animals needed to reach the toy airplane.

**Story Frames**

Story frames ask for the same information as story maps using a summary format which assists students in sequencing their writing. For example:

In this story ________________ is the main character. ________________ wanted to ________________. Then ________________. When the story ends _________________.

Sometimes the language used in story frames does not fit the story the students are reading and must be adjusted. The previous example is for one character. If there are two main characters as in a Frog and Toad story, this would be extremely confusing to the students and must be adapted. The teacher could use the example given here and tailor it to the story. Even the verb wanted to may not be the best but can be substituted with tried to or taken out completely and replaced with ________’s (the main character) problem was ________________.

**Piggyback Stories**

A piggyback story is a story that is written in the same pattern as a story the children read. Teachers often use Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? (Martin 1983) to have the class produce a story that involves each student in the class and who they see. A number of books make terrific piggyback stories simply because of their text structure. For instance, a book that offers a repetitive line, such as Have You Seen My Cat? (Carle 1987), could easily become, Have You Seen My Anything!
Any pattern book can be made into a piggyback story, even a fairy tale, which begins with “Once upon a time” and ends with “and they lived happily ever after.” Or a circle book, which ends and begins at the same place. Another familiar pattern is a sequence story, such as a story that goes through the days of the week, or the alphabet. A more complicated alphabet pattern book is *Q Is for Duck: An Alphabet Guessing Game* (Elting and Folsom 1980). In this book *Q* is for duck because ducks quack, *R* is for lions because lions roar, and the whole alphabet is given in the same manner. This book could be used as a model of a very challenging piggyback book by having students write the alphabet in this fashion for a content area. For example in weather “*R* is for clouds because of the rain, *S* is for rainbow because the sun comes out,” and so forth.

**Writing Letters**

Letters can be written as a postreading activity for a variety of purposes. In *Sarah, Plain and Tall* (MacLachlan 1985), teachers often have the students write the letters from Caleb or Anna, since they are not seen in the story, and the reader must infer what has been said. *Dear Mr. Henshaw* (Cleary 1981) is often used as a spin-off for students to write to their favorite author. The book mentioned previously, *The Jolly Postman or Other People’s Letters* (Ahlberg and Ahlberg 1986), is often used for students to write their “letter/postcard” book. A similar book, *With Love, Little Red Hen* (Florda 2001), contains a series of letters to various storybook characters. Don’t be fooled by the name of this book. It is not an easy read and contains some wonderful vocabulary. (This book also has unusual character connections and would be a great source to model the relationship tree.)

Another use for writing letters is to write to characters in a book. When students write their letters, they need to consider the character’s personalities, their relationships, and the events in the plot. Letters can be written for various reasons and should stem from the plot of the book. This may be advice on a range of topics: how to solve a problem, how to get better grades, how to make friends, how to make money, how to get along with someone, and even, as in the case of Pippi Longstocking, how to dress. Some other letter writing ideas include the following:

- Whether characters are best friends or worst enemies, students can team up and write letters to each other as two of the characters in the book.
- The students can pretend to be one of the characters and write a letter to Dear Abby. They can then answer each other’s Dear Abby letters.
If there is a good cause featured in the book, students can write a politician and advocate.

A letter can be written to the author of the book asking questions about the plot.

**Writing a Prequel or Sequel**

When we fall in love with characters we never want to leave them, and we want to learn as much as we can about them. Students can create their own links to a character’s life by writing a prequel, events that happened before a story began, or by writing a sequel, events that happen after the story ended. In the book *Sarah, Plain and Tall* (MacLachlan 1985) we meet Anna, Caleb, and their father Joseph after the death of the children’s mother and Joseph’s wife. Most readers would love to know how Joseph met his first wife and the story of their lives together—the prequel to the book.

In the Caldecott winner mentioned previously, *My Friend Rabbit* (Rohmann 2002), Rabbit is constantly in trouble and the book ends with Rabbit and his friend Mouse in a toy airplane stuck up in a tree. Rabbit says (again), “Not to worry, Mouse, I’ve got an idea.” That idea would make a wonderful sequel, and if students model the sequel after the way the book is written it would be unique, as a few pages of the story are told in just pictures.

Almost any book read in the classroom can have a prequel or sequel. Books with straight story lines, in which there is no problem or climax, would not be useful for either. Students must understand that when writing a sequel or prequel the characters must stay true to form. A character that is greedy most likely remains greedy, unless, of course, the purpose of the sequel is to “change the character’s stripes.”

**Readers’ Response Through Journal Writing and Interpretive Questions**

There are so many things that can be written in a reading journal, such as predictions, T-chart with predictions and what actually happened, or a T-chart with summary and opinion. A reading journal’s purpose is to respond to the story in some way. The response could be simply a Think About. For instance, a teacher tells students that after reading the chapters they are to write and explain what they are thinking about. Reader response theory allows students to become thoughtful meaning makers and aids them in interpreting the text, and with response students are more likely to deepen their comprehension (Barton and Sawyer 2004).
A journal is a wonderful vehicle to think “beyond the lines” and make connections. A beyond the line question asks students to go beyond the story. In the case of Caleb and Anna in *Sarah, Plain and Tall*, the response question might be “How would you feel if you were going to meet a strange woman who might become your mother?” We want to guide students to write to gain a deeper understanding of the story.

In addition, we want students to read between the lines and interpret what the story is saying. Answering interpretive questions aids in critical thinking and helps students understand what the author means (Manzo, Manzo, and Estes 2000). Although it is recommended that the questions come directly from the plot, there are some generic questions that can be used for a number of books. Some questions leading to thoughtful journal responses follow.

- How would you feel if what happened in the book happened to you?
- Who is your favorite character and why?
- Who is your least favorite character and why?
- What do you think the character should have done?
- Do you think the solution was fair?
- If you could go any place with one of the characters, which one would you choose, where would you go, and why would you go there?
- What would you like to have changed in this book and what would that have resulted in?
- Are we meant to blame the ________ for what he did?
- Tell me about the setting of the story—what did you like or dislike about it?
- If you could change one event in the story, which one would you change and how would you change it?
- Did you read any sections that were confusing? Explain why it seemed confusing.
- How did the setting influence the plot? Could this story have happened elsewhere?
- Pick a quote you liked from the last chapter and explain what it means and why you like it.
What else would you like to have known once the story had ended?

In the book *Three Wishes* (Clifton 1976), a young girl finds a lucky penny, which is to give her three wishes. Figure 7–2 shows a third-grade response as Jonathan writes about his own three wishes.

---

**Figure 7–2. Three Wishes**

Jonathan W March 19
Mrs. Fominetol Brode
If I had three wishes,

I want a house and be rich. I will buy a lot of things. I will use them a lot. I will buy a Super Nintendo.

I want all the books in the world. I will read them all. I will spend an hour reading every day. I will have fun reading.

I want to know everything in the world. I will tell my children all the things so they will get an A on their report cards.
Responding to Nonfiction/Information Text

L of KWL

Kerri, a student teacher, has prepared a wonderful lesson to showcase to her college supervisor. She is reading *The Mouse and the Motorcycle* (Cleary 1965) with one of her reading groups and does a KWL on mice prior to reading. The students know a lot about mice and have wonderful questions, such as “Do mice hibernate like bears?” After the reading, the problem becomes clear—the children, although responding to the Learn column, can’t answer their generated questions. And the L column is full of information about the mouse on the motorcycle, but not mice in general. The problem here is that the KWL chart was designed for informational text. Doing a KWL on mice while reading this book will not produce an effective result. If students were reading a nonfiction book on mice, the KWL chart would be perfect.

Summarizing

The strategy of summarizing has been identified as a critical strategy for use in learning from text (Braunger and Lewis 2006). In summarizing, students must capture the major points of a text and add details for support (Caldwell and Leslie 2005). Asking students to independently summarize an informational text during postreading not only increases their understanding but can also be used as an informational assessment resource for the teacher. When groups summarize, it is often difficult to distinguish what each student is contributing. An independent written summary offers assessment data when answering the following: Does the student state the main ideas? Can the student differentiate between what is important and what is superfluous? Does the student use the look back strategy to check information? Does the student use look back to make sure the vocabulary and the spelling are correct? If a teacher finds a number of individuals with an answer of No to these questions, it is time to form a skills group on summarization techniques.

The Four or Five W’s

Students can do a quasisummary by answering the four or five W’s after reading an informational text, the “who, what, when, where, and why” factors. The four W’s come into play because not all informational texts have a “who.” If students are reading an article on the conservation of fuel, the what (conservation of fuel) is easily identified, but there may be no who. Students should also glean from the article the when, where, and why factors.
This activity offers support for students who have problems putting in important details when summarizing.

**Responding to Questions on Informational Text**

For the most part questions on informational text are literal, as we want students to know the facts. But, literal (by the line) questions may not be the best strategy to get students to know the facts and think about the material. It is hard to give generic questions about informational text, but here are some questions that can be easily tailored to different topics.

- What is the purpose of the text you just read?
- What facts did you find the most interesting and why?
- How can you apply the information in this text to your everyday life?
- Explain the cause-and-effect relationship in this text.
- Explain the problem and solution in the text. Would you have considered a different solution? Why or why not?
- Do you agree or disagree with what the author is explaining?
- Compare the information in this text to what you read yesterday.

**Using Graphic Organizers with Informational Text**

One effective way to have children summarize a chapter is through graphic organizers. Teachers can give out cause-and-effect charts, problem-solution, compare-contrast, or chronological order graphic organizers depending on the text structure. Doing a semantic webbing on the text will help students interact with details from the text. If students are familiar with graphic organizers, they can create their own. Students should be told that the connections must be evident. There is some excellent commercial software that helps students with graphic organizers (and outlining) such as Kidspiration or Inspirations.

**Categorizing**

Categorizing information makes the student think about the material read. Text should be selected for this purpose. For instance, text on the classification of life from living to nonliving could lead to categorization. Students can decide the categories or teachers can give specific categories.
Sometimes stating selected categories forces students to think in a different way. If students were reading about the endangered species in your state, they might categorize under the labels of fish, amphibians, reptiles, mammals, birds, and plants. When putting the endangered species under these categories they may find one category, which in this case is a type of vertebrate animal, has more endangered animals than another. This may lead to speculation into the cause.

**Time Lines**

Time lines or products that direct chronological order help students in sequencing information. For some events, such as historical, this can be crucial to comprehending and may aid students in visualizing the cause-and-effect components of a relationship. Time lines can be as simple as the four seasons when applied to the growing of wheat or as complex as when pinpointing events from minute to minute in an explanation of a shuttle launch. Depending on the goal of the teacher's lesson, a time line may be best as a long-term project. Short projects, like the four seasons, can be done during one or two independent work times. On the other hand, one done on the life of Abraham Lincoln may be best done over a longer time period, so students can include the historical events surrounding his election and presidency.

**Mnemonic Devices**

True confessions: I used mnemonic devices to make it through my comprehensive exams as I acquired my doctorate. Mnemonic devices are sayings or letter associations that create a word or sentences to aid us in remembering. For instance, if someone were to ask the names of the five Great Lakes, the mnemonic device HOMES works every time (Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, and Superior). Mnemonic devices assist students in remembering information (Moore, Moore, Cunningham, and Cunningham 2003). When teaching third grade my use of a made-up mnemonic device, FARM B, helped my students (and me) remember the five classifications of vertebrate animals (fish, amphibians, reptiles, mammals, and birds).

Students are motivated when creating mnemonic devices to remember information about a topic. They enjoy this task and have to think critically about the material to write a mnemonic. They can create mnemonic words or sentences, such as the lines on the music scale, “every good boy does fine.” Doing this in groups of two or three works well and leads to a creative solution.
Journal Writing in Response to Informational Text

The focus on journal writing with informational text is different from that of narrative. Journals can be used for a variety of reasons; although it is best to keep these reasons specific to the information read, some generic ideas follow.

- Students could keep a summary of what was read.
- To infuse art into learning, the journal could be a graphic and artistic display of what is being read.
- The 3, 2, 1 entry: students would write three things they learned, two things they had questions about, and one reaction to the reading.
- Double entry journal: use one side for facts, the other for the reader’s reaction.
- Students could use concept mapping, showing connections to concepts through a graphic organizer.
- Students could respond to a specific issue brought up in the text.

Possible Sentences

Possible sentences (Buehl 2001) use key concept words from the reading. The teacher gives the students a list of words they may use in sentences. The students are to make up sentences that could possibly be true using two of the words. Students who are able to make up possible sentences are showing understanding of the information learned and sometimes applying that information differently. For instance, for a book about planets the teacher may choose all the names of the planets as key concepts words, along with the words moon, asteroids, and sun. Possible sentences are: “Earth and Mars are neighbors” and “Jupiter is the planet after Mars.” On the other hand “The Earth and Uranus are neighbors” and “The Earth revolves around the moon” would be incorrect sentences. This technique can also be used prior to reading. Then students would read to check if their sentences could be possible.

Reinforcement of Vocabulary

Word Study

Vocabulary can be taught before, during, and after reading. Postreading is an opportune time to give students activities to reinforce vocabulary and to reinforce strategies used in learning new words. This can be done in their
journals or students may have a designated word study book. For emergent readers word study may be a variety of phonics activities and techniques, such as independent phonics games, gameboards, manipulatives, or computer phonics/word games.

**Primary-Level Ideas**

**Reinforcement of Phonics**

There are a multitude of inexpensive phonics games on the market. These games should be first played in a skills group, and the independent time should be used for reinforcement. Leveled reading groups and skill groups do not necessarily contain the same students, and differentiation should occur. One student may be working with manipulatives matching onset and rimes; another two students may be using manipulatives working with the VCe rule (Vowel, Consonant, silent e); yet another student could be working on manipulatives reinforcing affixes. This differentiation is not as difficult as it seems. One of the advantages of working with small groups in guided reading lessons is that teachers get to know each student as a learner. They see the “fumbles” and use annotated notes to remember what students’ needs are.

**Word Recognition**

Students need reinforcement of words; they need constant repetition to reinforce their learning. Although there are games and manipulatives on the market, word recognition truly has to come from the words students are reading in their text. To build fluency we want students to use these words over and over again in different ways that not only reinforce word recognition but also word meaning (Prescott-Griffin and Witherell 2004).

Following are a few activities that will reinforce word recognition.

- **Sentence match:** Have cutout words that match the sentences in the book. Have students make the same sentence as in the book by putting the words in correct order. Have them read the sentence to a partner.

- **Word sorts:** Closed or guided word sorts (Cunningham 2005) give students the words they will be working with that day. Students fold a paper in four equal parts. The teacher then gives categories for each “box” for the students’ closed sort (such as doing words, clothes words, feeling words, and things). The categories given depend upon the words.
Then students independently or with partners sort the words. They write the word in the correct category so this may be assessed later. Students need the writing; please do not have them cut and paste, as the writing reinforces the word knowledge. Also, this way the words can be sorted a different way another day, and the teacher once again gets more with less.

- Cloze activities: Cloze activities force students to use the context of sentence to fill in the blank. For instance: The man ran up the _____. To increase the complexity of the cloze there could be more than one word to fill in the blank. In the previous example, the answer could be hill or stairs. For repetition that promotes fluency, use the words from the word sort for a cloze activity on a different day.

- Specialized words: Contractions, compound words, and more complex words like idioms and euphemisms should be reinforced. If a reading group is reading *Amelia Bedelia 4 Mayor* (Parish 1999), the students can select four idioms from the reading selection, draw the literal meaning, and write a sentence using the idiomatic expression correctly.

**Beyond Phonics: Intermediate Activities**

Once students have “broken the code” teachers should focus on increasing and expanding student vocabulary. Although students learn most of their vocabulary from wide reading (Armbruster, Lehr, and Osborne 2001), reinforcement expands and clarifies word meaning. I remember when my son, a high school freshman, was trying to gain points on his essay by using impressive vocabulary. He was writing about politics and went to the computer thesaurus to look up a “better” word that would mean the same as saying someone was really, really, good. Somehow, he ended up with the word *delicacy*, a word not used in political circles, although there are a lot of delicate situations in politics.

For clear, concise communication students need a broad vocabulary. We need to focus our vocabulary work on at least these three goals: to clarify and enrich meanings, to increase the volume of known words, and to use word knowledge strategies during independent reading.

Here are a few activities and techniques for word study.

- Word sorts (yes, again). Let’s choose some words from a landforms unit: *source, river, stream, mouth, ocean, lake, tributary, mountain, valley, mesa, cliff, plain, desert, tundra,* and *volcano* to name a few. These could
be sorted by: types, where people can live, words associated with water, the desert, temperate climate, and so forth. The words sorted in these categories should be written down for self-assessment and discussion during group time. Word sorts can be done with vocabulary for any narrative or informational text. This technique makes students reread the word, think about the word, and analyze where it might belong and why.

- Graphic organizers (many can be found with an online search): Have students identify properties of the word, write associations, and write a definition in their own words.

- Word strategy work can be done by having students use their reading to find words of which they are not clear on the words’ meanings. Then, have them guess at the meaning through the use of context.

- Use the dictionary. Someone has to check to see if the guess that was given for the context clues strategy was correct!

- Word cards with pictures drawn for an association have been shown to be helpful in getting students to remember word meaning.

**Concluding Thoughts**

Postreading activities are opportune times to get your students to delve into the meaning of the text or reinforce material. Ideas for postreading activities can sometimes come from the children themselves. They may have an idea to make something from the story that no doubt will be motivating and engaging. The teacher’s angle is to also make sure it involves learning and literacy. For instance, when reading *Someone Is Watching* (Patneaude 1993), in which the little sister is thought to be dead, as a solution to looking for the young girl, students may mention that the boys could have made “reward for finding” posters. The group can do this as a response to reading, although they would need to be told what is expected on the poster.
Thank you for sampling this resource.

For more information or to purchase, please visit Heinemann by clicking the link below:


Use of this material is solely for individual, noncommercial use and is for informational purposes only.