



The Literacy Event

Introduction

In this chapter, readers are given an opportunity to reflect on the five components of a reading event—teacher, reader, text, context, and task. An effective *teacher* has more influence over a student’s ability to learn to read than does any curriculum. Effective teachers must be able to differentiate instruction and motivate all students. Teachers need to understand that what motivates one reader may not motivate another. Motivation includes being able to engage students at a personal level.

The chapter next discusses the role of the *student* in the reading event. The student brings the following elements to the process, which the teacher must consider: background knowledge, literacy knowledge, language systems, different learning styles, and different dominant multiple intelligences. Based on a student’s needs, teachers must explicitly teach reading strategies and then give the student opportunities to use them while under their supervision. The goal is for a student to use a strategy readily when reading independently.

Text can be categorized into three levels of reading—easy or independent reading level (readers can read it and comprehend it with 95 percent accuracy), instructional reading level (readers can read and comprehend it with 90 to 95 percent accuracy), and frustrating reading level (readers read this level with less than 90 percent accuracy). Readers should be given plenty of time for reading texts on their easy or independent reading level; during instructional time, they should read texts on their instructional level. They should never spend time with books that are too difficult for them.

Many publishers now publish leveled text with a fine gradient for use during tutoring events or guided reading. In addition, the grade level of most trade books for young readers can be found on the websites listed throughout the chapter. For trade books that cannot be found on any of the listed websites, and for all textbooks, teachers can easily learn how to use the Fry Readability Formula; this gives an approximation of the grade level of the text. In recent years, with the shift to Common Core Standards, most publishing companies now use the Lexile leveling system. In order to use this system when choosing books for a particular student, teachers need to know the student’s Lexile band.

Dimensions of text *complexity* include quantitative dimension, qualitative dimension, and reader and task considerations.

The *context* of the reading event is the entire classroom climate: the teacher's beliefs, student grouping, and type of literary talk. Many schools use the guided reading method, which focuses on grouping readers into small, dynamic groups, based on readers' need.

Reading *tasks* should be authentic. Students should be given large blocks of time for engaging in authentic writing tasks and for reading good children's literature. Integrated reading/writing tasks should foster higher-level thinking skills instead of literal recall.

In-Class Discussion Topics and Activities

1. In small groups, have your students reflect on one or two of their favorite teachers, asking them to explain why they thought that teacher was special. Compare their lists to the lists of traits and activities of effective teachers given in the text.
2. Before discussing the characteristics of leveled books, give each small group (two or three students) a set of A–J leveled books and have them describe the characteristics of each level.
3. Give each student a trade book or a textbook. Explain the Fry Readability Formula and have them find the approximate grade level for the book. Then, have them go to www.renaissance.com and find the grade level for each title. Ask them to compare the results of the Fry Readability Formula to the grade level indicated on the website and discuss why they might be different.
4. Give the following reading bands to pairs of students. Using the [Lexile website](http://www.lexile.com), they should choose four books that match the reader's interest.
 - a. Natasha loves to learn about zoo animals; her reading band lies between 450 and 700.
 - b. Josiah loves mysteries; his reading band lies between 450 and 700.
 - c. Micah loves to learn about the rainforest; his band lies between 770 and 980.
 - d. Ava loves to study other cultures, especially those in developing countries; her band lies between 955 and 1155.
 - e. Damon loves sports; his band lies between 770 and 980.
 - f. Josie loves romantic novels; her band lies between 955 and 1155.
5. Divide the class into groups of two or three. Give each group the following scenario. Instruct them to list what they must consider when working with Joey and what they will do to help him.

Joey, a first grader, has lived in a series of foster homes; he is now living in his fifth. He does not stay in one home for very long because he is extremely active and difficult to discipline. His current foster parents say

he has a very short attention span, but he will stay occupied for quite a long time with computer programs or television programs about animals.

He attended four different kindergarten classes last year and did not do well; because he is already seven and a half years old, however, the present school put him in the first grade. It is obvious that he has not had many experiences with books. He does not understand the difference between a letter and a word. He can write his name and the letters of the alphabet, but he does not know the sounds of the letters.

6. If possible, take the class to observe an effective teacher during a guided reading session. Have the class observe the format of the session and what the other students in the class are doing while the teacher works with the small group. What does the teacher do to motivate all students and keep them on task?

Test Questions

Multiple Choice Questions

1. IRA/ILA is the acronym for which of the following?
 - a. International Reading Association, now International Literacy Association
 - b. Independent reading assessment/Independent literacy assessment
 - c. Independent Research Association, now Independent Literacy Association
 - d. Independent Reading Act/Independent Literacy Act
 - e. None of the above
2. Gambrell (2011) lists seven principles for literacy engagement. These include
 - a. Students need reading materials that are relevant to their lives.
 - b. Students need a large range of reading materials.
 - c. Students need time to read books of their choice.
 - d. Students need to be able to choose what they read.
 - e. All of the above
3. What does *differentiating instruction* refer to?
 - a. Students choosing their own books
 - b. Students choosing their own writing topics
 - c. Teachers modifying the lesson according to individual student needs
 - d. Teachers using various types of books, including digital, poems, narrative, expository, and historical fiction
 - e. All of the above
4. According to research, when do students become engaged?
 - a. When they know they are getting a grade on the assignment.
 - b. When they know that they will have to skip recess if their work is not complete.
 - c. When they get to work in large groups.
 - d. When they are interested in a concept or activity.

- e. When they receive a reward if they are able to do better than anyone else.
5. *Skills* refer to which of the following?
- a. One's ability to perform a task
 - b. Plans or methods used to accomplish a task
 - c. The ability to explain what and how one knows
 - d. One's ability to explain why he or she is engaged in an activity
 - e. One's ability to use higher-level thinking
6. What is metacognition?
- a. One's ability to explain why he or she is engaged in an activity
 - b. The ability to explain what and how one knows
 - c. One's ability to perform a task
 - d. The plans or methods used to accomplish a task
 - e. The written plan for completing a task
7. Who developed the multiple intelligences theory?
- a. Lev Vygotsky
 - b. Abram Maslow
 - c. Kenneth Goodman
 - d. Marie Clay
 - e. None of the above
8. Which of the following is true of the Fry Readability formula?
- a. It gives teachers the exact grade level for a book.
 - b. It can be used only for narrative text.
 - c. It can be used only for expository or informational text.
 - d. It can be used only for poetry.
 - e. It gives teachers an approximate grade level for a book.
9. Which of the following is true of gradient-leveled books?
- a. They range from 200L to 1700L.
 - b. They indicate the grade level at which the average student can read the text.
 - c. They are books that are chosen by publishing companies for a particular grade level.
 - d. They have minute shifts in difficulty between the levels.
 - e. They indicate the intended reading age for the book.
10. All of the following are multiple intelligences EXCEPT:
- a. Naturalistic
 - b. Linguistic
 - c. Interpersonal
 - d. Musical
 - e. Global

Short-Answer Questions

1. _____ refers to one's ability to perform a task.
2. _____ are plans or methods to accomplish a task.
3. _____ is the ability to explain what and how one knows.
4. _____ is believing that one can reach his or her goals.
5. The _____ cueing system refers to the grammar of a sentence.
6. The _____ cueing system refers to the meaning of words and sentences.
7. According to Allington (2002), effective teachers consider the following:
_____, _____, _____, _____,
_____, and _____.
8. According to Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory, each person has the following eight intelligences, with one that is dominant: _____,
_____, _____, _____, _____, _____,
_____, _____.
9. Two of the three dimensions of text complexity are _____
and _____.
10. Four of the seven criteria for determining gradient levels of books are
_____, _____, _____, and _____.

Essay Questions

1. After researching effective teachers, Allington (2002) found that all effective teachers provided six elements to a reading event. Name and describe these elements. How do you plan to incorporate these elements into your lessons when you teach?
2. Name and explain the eight multiple intelligences. What is your dominant intelligence? What must you consider when you work with students who have a dominant intelligence that is different from yours?
3. When teachers select reading materials for students, what must they consider?
4. Using the Fry Readability Graph, find the approximate reading level of a history textbook that has the following syllable count for three passages and the sentence count for the same three passages:

SYLLABLES

SENTENCES

118

4.6

124

4.9

119

4.5

Answer Key

Multiple Choice Questions

1. A
2. E
3. C
4. D
5. A
6. B
7. E
8. E
9. D
10. E

Short-Answer Questions

1. Skills
2. Strategies
3. Metacognition
4. Self-efficacy
5. syntactic
6. semantic
7. time, student choice of text, teachers demonstrate, teachers foster discussion among students, students have choice of task, teachers grade process as well as product
8. linguistic, logical mathematical, spatial, kinesthetic, musical, intrapersonal, interpersonal, naturalistic
9. quantitative, qualitative, reader and text consideration
10. length and number of words in the book, size and layout of print, vocabulary and concepts, language structure, text structure and genre, predictability and pattern of language, and illustration support

Essay Questions

Answers will vary.