

BEFORE- AND DURING-READING COMPREHENSION **SAMPLE LESSON**

Previewing Text and Question Generation

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The following question types are adapted with permission from Raphael, T. E., Highfield, K., & Au, K. H. (2006). *QAR now*. New York: Scholastic.

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The portion of this lesson on learning to ask and answer different types of questions is an adaptation of the Question-Answer-Relationship strategy (UTCRLA, 2003d; Blachowicz & Ogle, 2001; NRP, 2000; Raphael, 1986).

INTRODUCTION

The Question Generation Routine has two parts—previewing the text before reading and generating different kinds of questions during and after reading.

When students preview text and learn to ask questions about what they read, they understand and learn more from text. In particular, students benefit when, prior to reading, teachers: (a) preteach key words featured in the text and (b) identify the most important idea in the reading. For most text, this means identifying key names, places, or concepts that are important to understanding the text and preteaching them.

Question generation is one of the strategies recommended by the National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000) in its synthesis of the research on reading comprehension. Generating questions during reading has been effective at improving the comprehension of students of all ability levels in grades 4–9 and in college (Pressley et al., 1992; Rosenshine, Meister, & Chapman, 1996). Research has also demonstrated that approaches to reading comprehension that include question generation improve the achievement of students with learning disabilities (Klingner & Vaughn, 1996; Palinscar & Brown, 1989; Therrien, Wickstrom, & Jones, 2006) and that English language learners benefit from efforts to improve their ability to generate questions during reading (Garcia, 2003; Francis et al., 2006). English language learners

taught to self-generate questions in their native language were able to transfer the strategy to reading in English and demonstrate improvements on standardized measures of comprehension administered in both languages (Muniz-Swicegood, 1994).

The question generation lessons described here include four stages in which students first learn to preview text and then to generate low-level literal questions and progress to generating higher-level questions. Taboada & Guthrie (2006) did a study in which they found that generating higher-level questions that required inferences from text enabled students to gain higher levels of understanding of concepts in expository text such as that found in content area textbooks.

The next section provides an overview of the Question Generation Routine. This routine is most appropriate for narrative text such as literature and social studies text, which contains many proper nouns. It can also be applied to other expository text, such as science text, by selecting nouns that represent key concepts, or “big-idea words”. It is less applicable to math text, unless students are reading biographies of mathematicians or some other extended text selection. The sample lessons in this section are based on a social studies unit on Texas history.

OVERVIEW OF THE INSTRUCTIONAL ROUTINE

Step #1: Preteach Key Proper Nouns or Critical Concept Nouns (“Big-idea Words”)

Students may be unfamiliar with key words that are presented in text. Sometimes not knowing the key names, events, places, or other proper nouns prevents students from adequately understanding and learning from text. You can assist them by taking a few minutes to preteach the key proper nouns or critical concept nouns that are truly essential for understanding the passage.

What is a key proper noun? It is a person, place, or thing that is essential for understanding the meaning of the selected text. A key proper noun is *not* a proper noun of low importance. If there are no key proper nouns in the text, this step can be eliminated; however, it may be useful to preteach key nouns that are *not* proper nouns, if they are unfamiliar and if understanding of these words is essential for comprehending the selection. These will be referred to as critical concept nouns, or “big-idea words.”

Step #2: Introduce the “Big Idea”

Students benefit from text for which they have an advanced organizer that gives them some background on the most important thing they will be learning. Teachers assist students when they tell them the most important thing they want the students to understand and remember from the reading. Providing this information prior to reading or discussing text is useful.

Step #3: Previewing Text

Students learn from previewing text when the purpose is to identify key ideas, link content to students’ background knowledge, and connect text to previously read text/content. The role for students is to quickly review the material, state what they know, and make predictions about what they’ll learn. Teachers help students when they keep previewing *brief and to the point* and when they confirm and extend correct responses and disconfirm incorrect responses.

Step #4: Students Asking and Answering Questions

Students with reading difficulties benefit from instruction that teaches them how to answer questions and how to develop questions. When students are provided meaningful opportunities to ask and answer questions during and after reading, they become more cognizant of their understanding. Learning to ask and answer different types of questions is an adaptation of the Question-Answer-Relationship strategy (UTCRLA, 2003d; Blachowicz & Ogle, 2001; NRP, 2000; Raphael, 1986).

It is usually best to introduce one type of question at a time; model how to answer each question type; provide guided practice as you scaffold instruction, providing support and feedback to students so that they can ask and answer questions appropriately; and ask students to generate different types of questions, calling on their classmates to answer them.

OBJECTIVE

- Students will learn important unfamiliar proper nouns or critical concept nouns that are central to understanding a text passage.
- Students will learn to preview the text and to connect key concepts with what they already know.

MATERIALS

- Planning Sheet for preparing the lesson (Figure 20).
- Multisyllable Word Reading Strategy poster, for review activity (see Appendix).
- Text passage or chapter.
- Learning logs (see Appendix).
- Overhead projector, chalkboard, or chart paper.
- List of important proper nouns or critical concept nouns (transparency of learning log can be used).

PREPARATION

1. Read through the passage or chapter and select the important proper nouns. If there are no proper nouns in the passage, select other nouns that are absolutely essential for understanding the passage (critical concept nouns, or “big-idea words”). Depending upon the subject area you teach, the number of appropriate words to select may range from zero to five.

Proper nouns and critical concept nouns are essential to understanding the meaning of the selected text. These words may not occur again in the same text but may be studied in another context such as in a lesson for another content area. A general guideline is to identify 1–2 “who,” 1–2 “where,”

and 1–2 “what” proper nouns.

For example, in an excerpt from a social studies text, possible important proper nouns are: *eastern hemisphere*, *Bering Strait*, *North Atlantic*, *Leanderthal Lady*, and *Beringia*.

Similarly, critical concept nouns, or “big-idea words,” represent concepts that are essential for understanding the text. This is *not* the same as preteaching all of the vocabulary words for the selection.

Sample “big-idea words” from a health selection might include: *bacteria*, *pathogen*, *streptococcus*, and *cholera*.

Most important proper nouns or critical concept nouns selected for this lesson should be *unfamiliar* to many students, but some of these words may be familiar to some students. Review these words to ensure students can read them and know what they are.

2. Identify the “big idea” of the passage. Ask yourself, “What do you think is the most important idea that you want all students to understand and remember from this reading?”

A Planning Sheet (Figure 20) is provided to organize the planning process.

DAILY REVIEW

Quickly review a skill, strategy, or concept that was previously taught and that the students need to practice. The following is an example based on the sample lesson Teaching the Multisyllable Word Recognition Strategy, found on page 257.

As needed, refer to the poster with the steps for the multisyllable strategy written on it. (This poster should be clearly visible in the room for student reference as they learn the strategy.)

FIGURE 19. MULTISYLLABLE WORD READING STRATEGY.

Multisyllable Word Reading Strategy	
1.	Find the vowels.
2.	Look for word parts you know.
3.	Read each word part.
4.	Read the parts quickly.
5.	Make it sound like a real word.

Adapted with permission from Archer, A. L., Gleason, M. M., & Vachon, V. (2005). REWARDS: Multisyllabic word reading strategies. Longmont, CO: Sopris West.

Teacher:

Before we start today’s lesson, let’s quickly review our strategy, or plan, for reading words with more than one syllable. What is the first thing you do when you come to a long word you don’t know...Steven?

Student:

Find the vowels in the word.

Teacher:

Yes, you find the vowels because every syllable will have a vowel sound. What will you do next...Tamika?

Student:

You look for parts you know, especially at the beginning or end of the word.

Teacher:

Exactly right. What is the next step...Juana?

Student:

Read the parts. Then you put the parts together to read the word.

Teacher:

Yes. But sometimes the word doesn't sound quite right. Then what do you do...Marcus?

Student:

You have to play with it to make it sound right.

Teacher:

Yes. Good memory. Sometimes this step is hard. Let's try reading a word that you might need to work with so that it will sound like a real word.

Display the word dedicate on the chalkboard or overhead.

Teacher:

I see a closed syllable, *ded*, followed by an open syllable, *i* (*pronounce with a long "i" sound*), and then a silent *e* syllable, *cate*. If I put them together I would say *ded-I-cate* (*pronounce the "i" with a long "i" sound*). That doesn't sound quite right. Work with your partner to change the *i* sound and tell your partner the real word.

Give partners about 15 seconds.

What's the word—everyone?

Students:

Dedicate

Teacher:

Yes, *dedicate*. Remember, when you read a word with more than one syllable, sometimes the vowels don't follow the rules. Try other vowel sounds until it sounds like a real word.

STATE OBJECTIVE/PURPOSE

1. Introduce the strategy.

Teacher:

Today we will begin to learn a new strategy that will help you understand and remember the important ideas you read. Often, you are asked to answer questions

about what you read. You'll be able to answer more questions correctly if you learn how to *ask yourself* questions as you read and after you read. We're going to take several days to learn how to ask ourselves different kinds of questions when we are reading. First, let me tell you about the whole strategy. Then we'll learn the first step.

2. Provide an overview of the Question Generation Routine.

Teacher:

The first step is *previewing*. You preview a text *before* reading. We will be working on the previewing step today. Previewing has two parts: 1) identifying important proper nouns, or “big-idea words,” and 2) predicting what we will learn by thinking of what we already know about the big idea of the passage.

The next step is called “Ask the question.” We will practice asking and answering different types of questions about what we read, just like teachers do.

3. Introduce the rationale for preteaching important proper nouns, or “big-idea words”.

Teacher:

Textbooks are filled with lots of information. Sometimes there are important words that are hard to pronounce or that we haven't heard of before. If we don't know these words it can be difficult to understand what we read. Some of these words are proper nouns—proper nouns are names of people, places, or things. I'm going to teach you a few of the important proper nouns you will see in the passage before we start reading. When you know these proper nouns, it makes reading easier.

MODEL AND TEACH

Genre: Expository or narrative

Grouping: Whole class or small group

Note: This sample lesson, based on social studies text, will focus on preteaching proper nouns. Modify the lesson if you are preteaching critical concept nouns (“big-idea words”) instead of proper nouns.

1. Present and discuss 3–5 preselected important proper nouns, or “big-idea words”.

Write each word and a brief definition on the chalkboard, chart paper, or transparency (you may use a transparency of the student log for this). Definitions should be short and easily understandable to students.

- Sample introduction of the important proper noun *Leanderthal Lady*:
The Leanderthal Lady is a skeleton of a woman who lived 9,500 years ago. Workers discovered the skeleton near Leander, Texas, not too long ago.
- Definition to write on chart: Leanderthal Lady—9,500-year-old skeleton found near Leander.
- Teach the other proper nouns in the same way. Then read through the list chorally with students so they become familiar with reading the new words.

- Have students record the important proper nouns and their definitions in their learning logs.
2. Introduce the “big idea” (the topic of the selection).

Give the students a brief summary of the selected passage.

Teacher:

We will learn about how the earliest people got to Texas. Many people believe they may have been hunters who followed herds from Asia into North America.

3. Introduce method for previewing.

Model for students how to preview the passage by doing a **think aloud**. During your preview, you should tell students the “big idea” of the text first. Then go through previewing procedures to make connections to the big idea and to prior learning. As you model using a think aloud process, be sure to focus on the reasons for your predictions.

Note: Previewing should be brief and focused on connecting the big idea and prior learning to headings and visuals such as illustrations, maps, and diagrams. As a rule, you should not spend more than 10 minutes in any lesson on previewing.

Sample think aloud for a passage about Patrisia Gonzales:

Teacher:

When I look at this passage, the first thing I see is the title: *First Trail to Texas*. After reading the title and subheadings and browsing the chapter, I know that the big idea is that the earliest Texans may have been hunters who followed herds from Asia to North America. So I think we are going to learn about the path they followed to get here. There is also a map with lines from Asia to North America to South America. Maybe they will tell us where other people went, too. I also see a picture of elephant-like animals, and it says, “The first Americans hunted mammoths and other large mammals.” These must be mammoths, and maybe these are the animals that the people followed to Texas so they could hunt them. Earlier we read about the Leanderthal Lady, which was discovered almost 10,000 years ago, so I think we will learn that the earliest Texans came here 10,000 years ago or maybe much earlier.

GUIDED PRACTICE

Grouping: Whole class or small group

Using a different brief selection (such as a section of a chapter), preteach important proper nouns or critical concept nouns (“big-idea words”), and provide students with the overall “big idea” in no more than 1–2 sentences. Then have students preview the passage with you. Ask students what they notice about headings and visuals. Connect their responses to the “big idea” and their prior learning. Finally, create a prediction statement together by asking the questions:

- What do you think you will learn about _____ (the big idea)?
- Why do you think you will learn that?

INDEPENDENT PRACTICE

Grouping: Partners

Using a different brief selection, preteach important proper nouns or critical concept nouns and provide students with the overall “big idea” of the passage in no more than 1–2 sentences. Then have students work in partners to preview the chapter and “think aloud” to make connections to the big idea and to prior learning. Circulate through the room to monitor and scaffold. Ask students to state the reasons for their predictions.

Ask the questions:

- What do you think you will learn about _____ (the big idea)?
- Why do you think you will learn that?

Ask some pairs to share their predictions and to tell *why* they are making those predictions (based on headings, illustrations, diagrams, etc.).

GENERALIZATION

Ask students for examples of situations in which previewing text would be helpful as they prepare to read. Emphasize the fact that they can preview text in all of their classes by taking a few minutes to read the title, headings, and examine the illustrations, and then to think about what they may learn from the passage.

MONITOR STUDENT LEARNING

Each time students read an unfamiliar passage, have them first use the previewing routine in pairs or small groups. Circulate through the room to monitor students’ ability to accurately connect information from headings and visual materials to previously learned material to make valid predictions. Ask questions that require students to tell the *reasons* for their predictions.

PERIODIC/MULTIPLE OPPORTUNITIES TO PRACTICE

Use the previewing routine each time students read unfamiliar text. Once students become skilled at making valid predictions, turn the process over to them, but continue to preteach important proper nouns or “big-idea words” and to remind students to preview. Occasionally, return to previewing in partners so that you can monitor the process.

FIGURE 20. PREVIEWING PLANNING SHEET.

PLANNING SHEET
PREVIEWING

1. Preteach Proper Nouns or Critical Concept Nouns
Introduce, read, and define. Students write brief definition in learning log.

Who:

Where:

What:

2. Preview Text
Introduce the big idea of the text selection.

What is the most important idea that you want all students to understand and remember from this reading?

Important key concepts, subheadings, bolded print, etc.

Connections to prior learning:

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