

Teaching Informational Text

9th International Reading Recovery Institute
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

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GOALS – BUILDING INSTRUCTIONAL EXPERTISE

- Knowledge of the characteristics of informational text
- Effective orientation to informational text
- Strong support for active and strategic decision making when reading informational text

The primary purpose of informational text is to inform the reader about particular aspects of the natural world; about the arts, sciences, and social studies.

- ☐ "....enlarges experience, and broadens world views." (CCSS, p. 3)
- ☐ supports knowledge-building
- ☐ can increase children's knowledge and use of strategic activity

LLDI Part 2, p. 205: To think about the meaning

"You said ... Does that make sense?"

Informational Text

- | | |
|---|--|
| • "What did he do that was nice?" | • Why is the caterpillar under the leaf now? |
| • Does the pot look too small to you? | • What does the book say to do next to make mud pies? |
| • How did Mum trick Greedy Cat? | • Think about where a giraffe can reach leaves to eat. |
| • Would you like to have Jake for a brother?" | • What are you learning here about giraffes? |

How can we best implement Clay's literacy processing theory and instructional procedures when teaching with informational text?

Not business as usual....



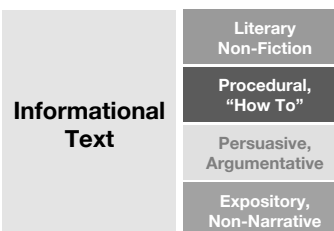
- ◆ Informational text tends to be more difficult for children to read than we may anticipate.
- ◆ It is also all too easy for us to not explicitly recognize or fully understand the challenges of informational text.



Do I understand how THIS TEXT works well enough to teach with it in this child's lesson?



Least Difficult to Most Difficult



Maloch & Bomer, 2013, p. 207

"These text type differences make for very distinct experiences for readers. They affect our instruction, as well, for when we lump all nonfiction together and treat the very different texts as if they aren't different at all, we're likely to confuse our students."

Literary Nonfiction



"The teacher must plan for the child to have in his head the ideas and the language he needs to complete the reading."

(Clay, *Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals, Part 2*, 2005, p. 91)



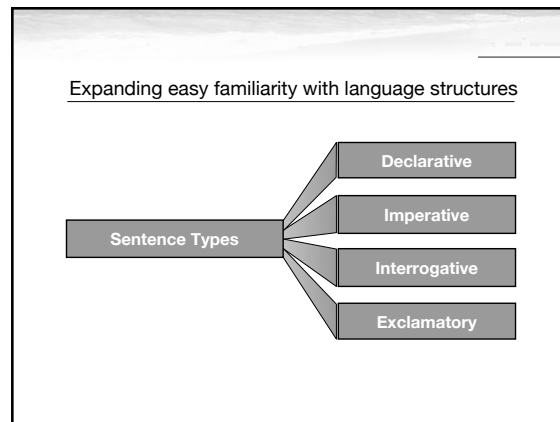
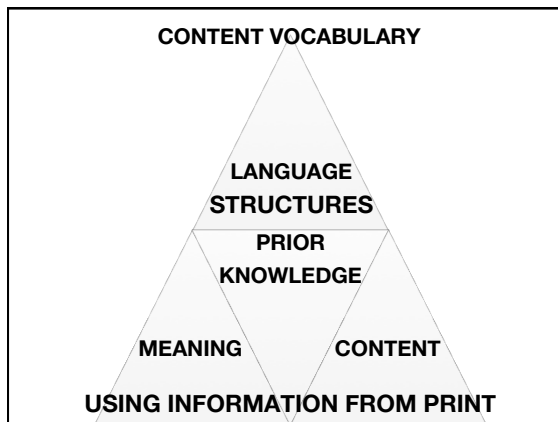
"To the observer, what happens does not sound at all like teaching. All the interactions take place within an easy conversational exchange that does not dismember the story."

(Clay, *By Different Paths to Common Outcomes*, 2014, p. 189)

1

Do I understand how this text works?

- ✓ Actual topic: Caterpillars
- ✓ Narrative Non-Fiction: Characters and a problem/resolution
- ✓ Uses dialogue and literary language to convey the story and information
- ✓ Informational: Conveys specific information about the life of caterpillars
- ✓ Inferencing: Relates the role of food to caterpillars' shift to the butterfly stage
- ✓ Includes simple to somewhat more complex sentences



“Look at the plant now!” said Katie.
 “The leaves are all gone!
 We have no more plants
 for them to eat.”

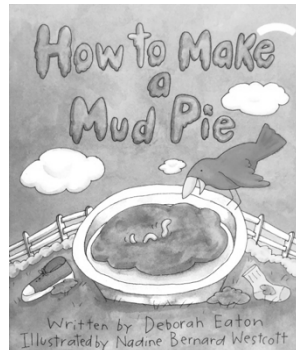
“Oh, **no!**” said Anna.
 “The caterpillars are still hungry!”

- 2 Which of these are well within the child's current working systems and which are challenging?**
- ✓ Background knowledge about caterpillars?
 - ✓ Texts with characters and a problem/resolution?
 - ✓ Use of dialogue and literary language to convey the story?
 - ✓ Already familiar with the text's somewhat more complex sentence structures?
 - ✓ Will she pick up specific information about the lives of caterpillars?
 - ✓ Make sense of the role of food to caterpillars' shift to the butterfly stage?

- Orientation to the story before reading**
- Depending the child's current knowledge, I might:
- ✓ Introduce the characters and premise of the story.
 - ✓ Discuss the main events of the story together.
 - o Ensure that the child understands the problem of the caterpillars' running out of food.
 - o State that he will learn about the food that caterpillars eat as he reads the book.
 - ✓ Give the child the opportunity to hear and use 1 or 2 challenging new structures: “The caterpillars are STILL hungry.”

- If we have done this well.....**
- The child's first reading will:
- ✓ Flow smoothly with good anticipation of the events in the story and the dialogue between characters.
 - ✓ Show evidence that he is attuned to the caterpillars' need for a steady supply of food.
 - ✓ Include effective and efficient strategic activity, with problem solving at a few points within the text (prompted by the teacher if needed).

"How To" Texts



"The teachers' introduction creates a scaffold within which children can complete a first reading of a whole story."

(Clay, *By Different Paths to Common Outcomes*, 2014, p. 187)



"Introductions are useful when it is important for children to read a new text with a high degree of successful processing."

(Clay, *By Different Paths to Common Outcomes*, 2014, p. 187)

Instructional scaffolding does not protect the child from the complexity of the task as he reads a new book. Instead, scaffolding provides the framework to ensure that children can tackle an appropriately challenging task with sufficient success to support new learning.

Gibson & Moss (2016). *Every Young Child a Reader*.

Orientation to the story before reading

Depending on the child's current knowledge, I might:

- ✓ Model my own attention to the procedural steps: "Oh, we're going to learn about the steps to make mud pies. 'First, find some good dirt.' What will the book tell us to do next?"
- ✓ Provide opportunities for the child to hear and practice 1 or 2 of the imperative sentence structures: "Fill some pans with water."
- ✓ State that he's going to laugh at the funny parts in this book too: "Look at that! This part will be fun to read."

Brief review of the story after the first reading

Purpose:

- Co-constructed, positive interaction with the child about the reading.
- Opportunity for the child to rehearse (and thus deepen) his understanding of the language and information in the text.
- "The whole story was the point of the reading activity." (Clay, 2005b, p. 97)
- Observe for evidence of the child's understanding of the information and humor in the book.

Brief review of the story after the first reading

• **Ask an inviting question related to the book's information:**

- "Wow! I laughed at this book. What part did you think was funny?"
- "What did you learn about how to make mud pies? Did something surprise you?"

• **Refer back to text and pictures as needed:**

- "After the mud pies baked in the sun, who did they give them to? Let's look at those pages. What do you think Dad, Mom, and the dog were thinking here?"

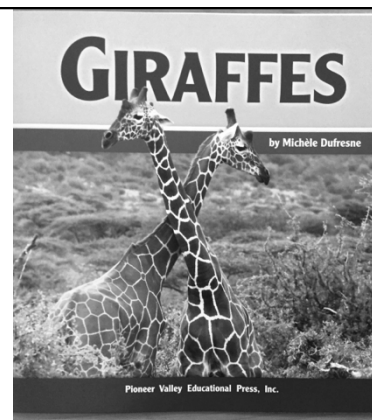
Expository Non-Fiction

- Widely varying text structures
- Neutral, factual statements
- General description
- Facts
- Examples
- Definitions
- Description

Factors	Easier Informational Text
Background	Child's existing knowledge supports the reading
Idea Complexity	Simple concepts and direct description
Density	Statements are explicit, with single meaning
Purpose	Stated directly and explicitly at beginning
Text Structure	One type of text structure used throughout
Text Features	Familiar features, such as simple headings or a table of contents
Graphic Elements	Illustrations directly inform the text.
Language style	Close match to child's own language patterns or previous reading experiences
Register	Casual and familiar, often with humor
Voice	Information presented in straightforward way; 2 nd or neutral person and in a personal tone
Sentence Structure	Simple sentences; limited clauses or modifiers
Vocabulary	New vocabulary describes familiar concepts and ideas, is a small percentage of the text, and defined in child-friendly language

4 Proficient readers/writers use subsystems to support each other (Clay, 2001, p. 85)

- parsing word by word, using oral language, or syntax or meaning as a guide. Temporarily it may sound labored.
- most attention to single letters, beginning to use clusters of letters or chunks of words.
- Shifts processing from one approach to another on words.
- Selection of 'next words' often led by oral language knowledge, or an expected order in the real world.



Here is a giraffe.	2	Look at the giraffe's spots.	12
Giraffes are tall.		Look at the giraffe's horns.	13
Look at the tall giraffes!	4	Here is a baby giraffe.	
A giraffe's legs can be six feet long.	6	The baby giraffe is called a calf.	15
A giraffe's neck can be six feet long.	8		
The giraffe is hungry.			
The giraffe is eating leaves on a tall tree.	10		

The giraffe is hungry.
The giraffe is eating leaves on a tall tree.

10



- + **Fluent, phrased**
- + **At or near 100% accuracy**
- + **Strong and accurate meaning construction**

Gibson, S. A. (2016). Teaching Informational Text. 9th International Reading Recovery Institute. Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

LLDI Part 1, page 41

"The ways in which the child solves the challenges of seeing and solving words sequentially across a sentence put him in touch with new words, new structures, new styles, or genres....The child is extending his own literacy learning and is building his own neural networks to support continuing progress."



Children's reading in Reading Recovery lessons is not somehow about simply "**surviving**" through the book, or remembering the book well enough to read more than 9 out of 10 words correctly.



Instead, children should be **learning** about strategic activity and the value of reading in their own lives each time they read every book.

The giraffe is hungry.
The giraffe is eating leaves
on a tall tree.

10

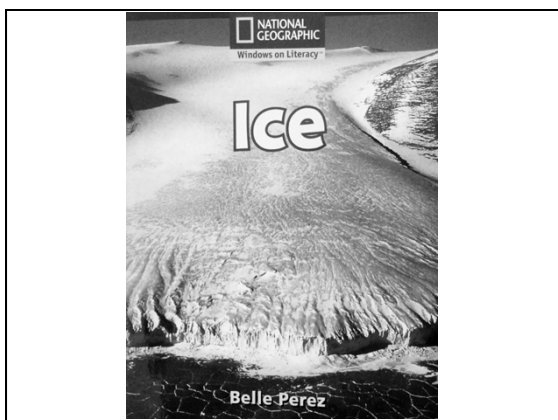
✓ R ✓ ✓ ✓
The

✓ ✓ ✓ e e R ✓ ✓
eating "What is the giraffe doing? TTA

✓ ✓ t t [masks all] ✓ ✓
tall "Look for something that would help you.
What kind of tree does a giraffe need?"

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Ice is frozen water.

Ice can be found in the sky,
on the land, and in the water.

3

Snow is made of ice.

Snowflakes are tiny pieces of ice
that fall from the sky.

4

Hail is made of ice.

Hailstones are balls of ice that fall
from the sky.

5

A glacier is made of ice.

A glacier is ice that covers a large
area of land.

6

An iceberg is made of ice.

An iceberg is a large chunk of ice
that floats in the ocean.

7

An iceberg is made of ice.
An iceberg is a large chunk of ice that floats in the ocean.

Frustration Level Reading:

✓ ī ī ice? "IDK" ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
 iceberg What is it about? Told

✓ "IDK" A ✓ ✓ lot c c catch "No" ✓ ✓
 iceberg Told large chunk

✓ sits ✓ ✓ water "No" water
 floats ocean How does it start?

Least Difficult to Most Difficult

Concept Vocabulary	A new name for a familiar concept
	A word the child has heard before, but not yet read or talked about to any extent
	A never-heard-before name for a concept not in the child's experience
	A technical, new word and a complex concept in a difficult-to-read text

Learning Concept Vocabulary

One

- I don't remember hearing the word *iceberg* before.

Two

- I remember you said the word, iceberg, but I don't really know it on my own yet.

Three

- I know the word iceberg has something to do with ice, but I'm not sure what it really is yet.

Four

- I can understand and talk about an iceberg correctly, but only in a general and not-yet-precise way.

Vocabulary learning:

- Tightly connected with knowledge of concepts
- Words are not simply known or not known
 - Learning is incremental, requiring lots of conversation and oral language, plus multiple exposures and contexts
- Words are not simply learned by a definition
 - How the word fits in sentence structures and usage
 - Knowing the word's multiple meanings

Vocabulary Load	- Avoid texts with too many new terms and unfamiliar concepts - Especially when new terms are not surrounded and supported by sufficient, familiar concepts and reading
Support Long Term Learning	- Understand the breadth of difficulty children experience when learning new vocabulary - Carefully consider the difficulty level for the child of any new, unfamiliar terms in the read
Learning will Take Time	- Do not expect children to learn new, difficult vocabulary immediately because you named the new term for them once or twice - Expect that beginning readers will not be able to solve unfamiliar vocabulary with visual information alone

- What improvements will you make as you select informational text, and plan and teach the child's orientation to the book?
- How will you change your interaction with each child in support of valuing and understanding a whole story after the first reading of an informational text?
- What new or revised expectations do you have for the child's reading behaviors and strategic activity during the first reading of an informational text?
- How might you revise your teaching decisions so that the child is learning (not just surviving) through the reading of an informational text?

CAUTION

It is not necessary for every child to read informational books in Reading Recovery lessons.

LLDI Part 1, p. 62

“The essence of success with discontinuing judgements is whether the teacher can be confident that this child does discover things for himself, works out some possibilities and extends his own processing skills in both reading and writing. And that he enjoys the challenge of doing this.”

References

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