

# Read- Aloud Routine

for Building Vocabulary  
and Comprehension Skills  
in the Primary Grades



The Meadows Center  
FOR PREVENTING EDUCATIONAL RISK



English Learner Institute for  
Teaching and Excellence



Prepare

Step 1

Step 2

Step 3

Extend

Weekly

# Acknowledgments

*Read-Aloud Routine for Building Vocabulary and Comprehension Skills in the Primary Grades* was developed with funding from the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs, grant H326M110003.

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## **About This Tool**

The steps of the routine take place in one 25- to 30-minute lesson for one passage from a story. The weekly framework is an overview of what will take place over the course of reading the whole story. The routine focuses on language, vocabulary, and comprehension development.

## **Adapted From**

Hickman, P., Pollard-Durodola, S., & Vaughn, S. (2004). Storybook reading: Improving vocabulary and comprehension for English-language learners. *Reading Teacher*, 57(8), 720-730.

Giroir, S., Grimaldo, L. R., Vaughn, S., & Roberts, G. (2015). Interactive read-alouds for English learners in the elementary grades. *The Reading Teacher*, 68(8), 639-648.

# Prepare: Select a Text and Vocabulary Words

## Select a text.

- Choose a text that is one to two grade levels above students' independent reading level.
- Search for a text that is both engaging and content rich.
- Select a text that is culturally relevant and meaningful to students.

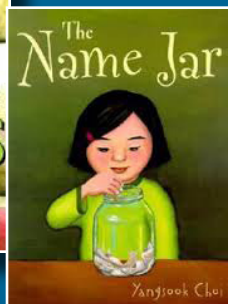
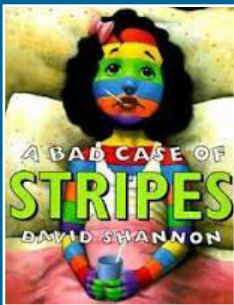
## Prepare.

- The text will be read over 3 to 5 days. Divide the text into 200- to 250-word chunks. Increase the size of the chunks as students' reading progresses.
- Choose three to four vocabulary words per chunk of text.
- Think of a nonlinguistic representation (e.g., picture, gesture) of each word to share with students.
- Create vocabulary word cards with student-friendly definitions and pictures.

### HELPFUL HINTS ON WORD SELECTION

- Focus on high-utility words that are used across contexts and content areas. Will students hear and see the words in math, science, social studies, and extracurricular activities?
- Use words that most students do not know.
- Use words that will help students connect to their own experiences.

## Sample Books



## Sample Vocabulary Card



### **examine**

To look at something carefully and thoroughly because you want to find out more about it

## Step 1: Introduce and Preview the Story

### Preview and activate background knowledge.

- Show and read the front and back covers of the text.
- Activate students' prior knowledge by making connections between what students know and what they need to know to understand the text.
- Have students predict what the text is about and briefly discuss concepts related to the topic.

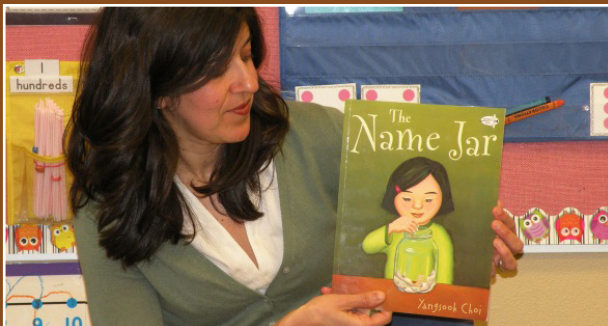
### Briefly introduce the new vocabulary words.

- Say and show each word and have students repeat it.
- Provide a student-friendly definition and nonlinguistic representation (e.g., picture, object) of each word.
- Introduce a gesture that represents the word and have students practice the gesture.
- Make the words visible by displaying them on a pocket chart, vocabulary word wall, or bulletin board.

#### HELPFUL HINTS ON DEFINITIONS

- Definitions should use everyday language and be easy for students to understand.
- Students should have opportunities to access student-friendly dictionaries through print and digital resources.

#### Showing the Front Cover



#### Student Gesture



## Step 2: Read the Chunk of Text

Tell students to listen for the vocabulary words while you read and to show the gesture when they hear a word.

Pose a specific question before reading or tell students to listen carefully while you read because they will have to answer questions.

This technique sets the purpose for reading and increases student engagement.

Read the passage **WITHOUT STOPPING**, focusing on intonation and enunciation to provide a good model for students.

Reading the entire passage without interruptions allows students to focus on meaning.

Guide students in discussing and retelling the passage.

- Ask students to turn and talk with a neighbor to retell what happened in the chunk of text (focus on who, what, when, and where) or to answer the specific question given before reading.
- Use sentence stems or frames as scaffolds as necessary.
- Encourage students to use the new vocabulary words during the retell.
- Use the student responses to write a summary statement on the board.
- Ask students an inferential question that focuses on synthesizing information not directly present in the story (e.g., How do you know \_\_\_\_\_? What clues led you to believe \_\_\_\_\_?). Ask students to explain their thinking and justify their answers.

### Reading the Passage



### Turn and Talk



## Step 3: Reread the Text and Close the Lesson

Read the chunk of text a second time, focusing on vocabulary words.

- Before reading, review words and definitions with students.
- Tell students to show you the gesture when they hear a vocabulary word.
- Stop at each vocabulary word and ask students to repeat it and explain what it means in their own words. Have students turn and talk to explain the word to a partner.
- Guide students in creating sentences that use the vocabulary word. Have students turn and talk about the sentences with a partner.
- Use sentence stems as scaffolds if necessary.
- Continue reading the passage until all vocabulary words have been identified and students have discussed their meanings and created new sentences.
- As a group, have students talk about the text while connecting it to their own experiences. Use prompts such as, “Talk about a time when you have felt like the character.”

Summarize what students read and learned.

- Briefly review the title and author, main events and ideas, and new vocabulary words.
- Challenge students to listen for and use the new vocabulary words throughout the day.

### Sample Sentence Stem

I would like to **examine** \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.

### Students Discuss the Story



### Reviewing and Summarizing



## Extend Language and Comprehension

**Extend comprehension, focusing on deep processing of vocabulary knowledge.**

- Have students write in a reader's response journal. Use prompts such as, "What do you think will happen next in the story? Write a prediction in your journal." Or incorporate any comprehension strategies you may be teaching. This activity can also be done as a shared writing with teacher modeling.
- Have students engage in reader's theater, acting out the story and/or vocabulary words.
- Re-enact the story with puppets, props, or felt board characters.
- Extend the story into other content areas through cross-curricular activities (e.g., math, science, social studies).
- Look for times during the day to use the vocabulary words with students.
- Create original or alternate endings for stories.
- Engage students in different vocabulary games (e.g., vocabulary cubes, vocabulary puzzles).
- Share words with parents/families to encourage a family-school connection.
- Have students retell the story as news reporters or anchors to practice retelling.
- Have students write letters to the author describing why they like or dislike the story or questions they still have.
- Collaborate with other teachers and share ideas for extending language and comprehension. Have fun!

# WEEKLY FRAMEWORK

## Introduction Day

- Step 1: Introduce and preview the text.  
Introduce three to four new vocabulary words from the day's chunk of text.
- Step 2: Read the chunk of text without stopping.  
Have students turn and talk to a neighbor to retell what the chunk is about (who, what, when, and where).  
Based on student responses, write a summary statement on the board for the day's chunk.
- Step 3: Review the new vocabulary words.  
Reread the chunk, stopping at each vocabulary word to review, turn and talk, and check understanding.

## Subsequent Days

- Step 1: Review the summary statement and vocabulary words from the previous day's reading.  
Introduce the day's chunk of text.  
Introduce three to four NEW vocabulary words from the day's reading.
- Step 2: Read the chunk of text.  
Have students turn and talk to a neighbor to retell what the chunk is about (who, what, when, and where).  
Based on student responses, write a summary statement on the board for the day's reading.
- Step 3: Review the new vocabulary words.  
Reread the chunk, stopping at each vocabulary word to review, turn and talk, and check understanding.

## Wrap-Up Day

- Choose four or five vocabulary words from the previous days' lessons that were challenging for students or difficult to remember.
- Review the words.
- If time allows, read the entire text to students.
- Lead an activity that reinforces the meaning of the chosen vocabulary words, such as acting out the meaning of words through charades or using props.
- Place vocabulary words on a word wall and revisit their use throughout the day and in future days.
- Review the prior days' summary statements. Use the statements to create a summary of the entire story.
- Extend learning by having students use the vocabulary words to create a new story or a new ending for the story.