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# The Science of Reading —Part 1

## Reading Comprehension Overview



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**Objective of this slide:** Welcome and frame purpose of this training.

**Estimated time:** 2 minutes

**Facilitator says:**

- Welcome to this training on reading comprehension!
- We hope that you found our introductory training and study guide on the simple view of reading useful to yourselves and your teams.
- This additional set of resources is part of our advanced series on teaching reading.
- This slide deck was designed by Public Impact and draws on the latest research in reading comprehension, grounded in the science of reading. The complete training consists of three parts: Reading Comprehension Overview, Explicit Comprehension Instruction, and MCL/Team Leader Study and Action Guide. Each part is designed to take you about an hour to review, with the goal of supporting you and your team teachers to move to research-based instruction that helps more students become better readers.
- This does not include all research on reading. It focuses on supporting reading comprehension—a key element of reading instruction once students have mastered the component skills of the simple view of reading. Future slide decks will address additional research for further enhancing students’ reading.
- The language you’ll see here refers to teaching teams, as this was built for Multi-Classroom Leadership teams to use for improving instruction. But any teacher or teaching team can use this resource!

## Objectives

- Define** the elements of reading comprehension
- Identify** ways teachers *across content areas* can develop students' comprehension skills
- Focus** on a critical research-based approach: explicit comprehension instruction
- Identify** next steps for learning more and systematically improving instruction together

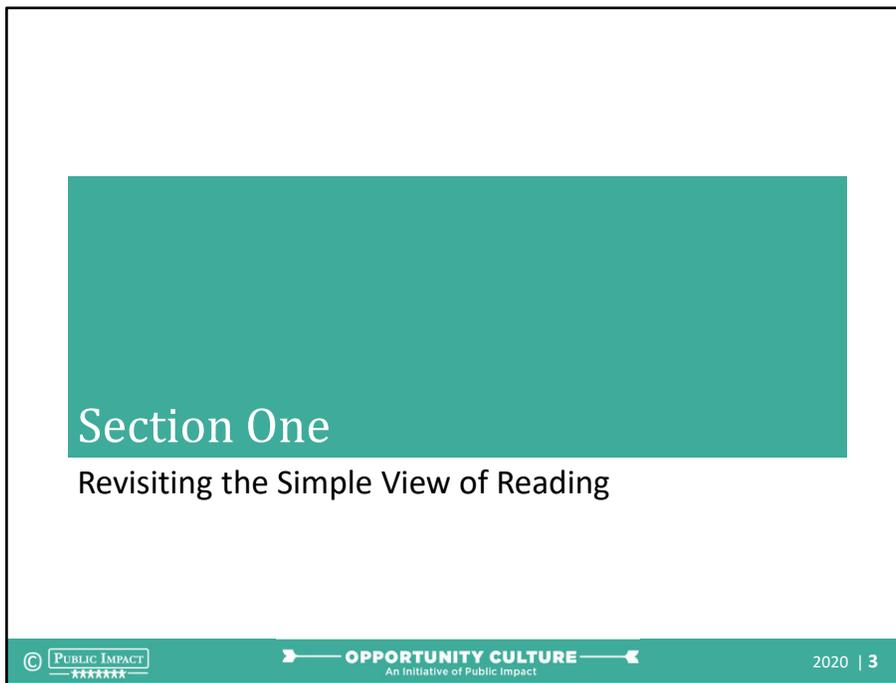
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**Objective of this slide:** To introduce the objectives of this training.

**Estimated time:** 2 minutes

**Facilitator says:**

- The goal of this training is to continue deepening your knowledge of excellent reading instruction and help you pursue reading success with all your students.
- To that end, our objectives are to:
  - Define the elements of reading comprehension and why each matters
  - Identify ways that teachers across content areas can develop students' comprehension skills
  - Focus on a critical, research-based approach to supporting students' textual meaning-making: explicit comprehension instruction
  - And identify next steps for learning more and systematically improving your team's explicit comprehension instruction together.
- We'll address the first two, in the green circle, during Part I of this training.



**Objective of this slide:** To transition into a section on reviewing the simple view of reading and connecting to reading comprehension

**Estimated time:** < 1 minute

**Facilitator says:**

- First, a quick review.

## Myth or Truth?

 Children don't need to "learn to read" beyond third grade.

 <p><b>Myth:</b> Children don't need to "learn to read" beyond third grade.</p>	 <p><b>Truth:</b> Some children will have mastered the components of the simple view of reading by third or fourth grade, but others will not. <i>All</i> students can benefit from reading comprehension support as they master the simple view of reading and beyond.</p>
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**Objective of this slide:** To engage participants in reflection on reading development.

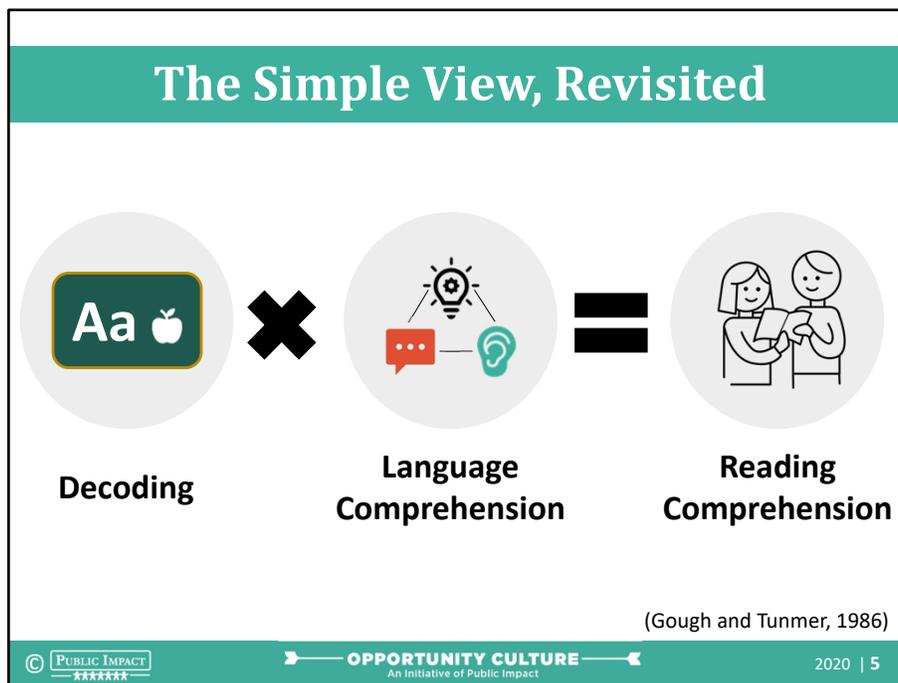
**Estimated time:** 3 minutes

**Facilitator says:**

- Take a moment to ponder this statement "Children don't need to "learn to read" beyond third grade. What is your reaction to this statement?"
- [Click] We imagine that you identified this statement as a reading myth. Some children will master the components of the simple view of reading by third or fourth grade. But others will not, and will require ongoing instruction and support in decoding, phonemic awareness, etc. All students can benefit from reading comprehension support and instruction both as they master the simple view of reading and well beyond.
- We'll begin this training by briefly reviewing the simple view and talking about what is meant by the transition from "Learning to Read" to "Reading to Learn."

<https://www.educationcorner.com/learning-to-read-to-read-to-learn.html>

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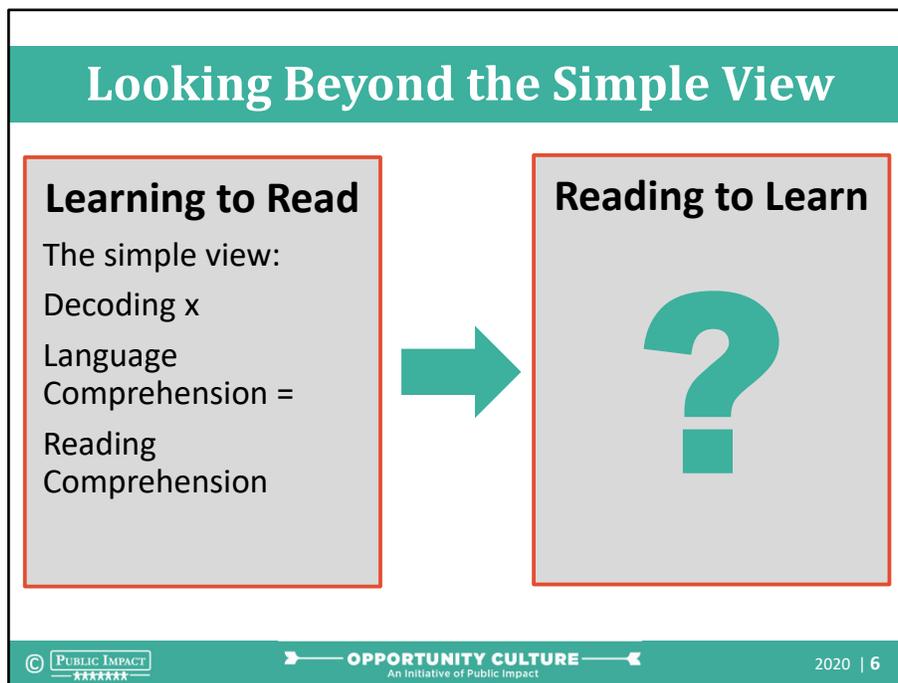


**Objective of this slide:** To reground our thinking in the simple view of reading.

**Estimated time:** 2 minutes

**Facilitator says:**

- In our introductory training, we learned about the simple view of reading. As you will recall, the simple view is a basic model of what it takes to read. The model shows us that reading comprehension is the product of two key skills: the ability to **decode written text** and the ability to **comprehend oral language**.
- Both decoding and language comprehension can be broken down into several component parts, with each being important for reading development. **These pieces are what really matter for early readers.** Every teacher should understand and know how to apply the simple view of reading to support students' literacy development.
- If you are looking for more information on decoding and language comprehension, please refer to our introductory training on the simple view.



**Objective of this slide:** To discuss the transition from “learning to read” to “reading to learn”

**Estimated time:** 2 minutes

**Facilitator says:**

- Not all students master the components of the simple view of reading by the third grade, but many do.
- Experts often describe this point, when students have a solid foundation in decoding and language comprehension skills, as the transition point from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.” When they can decode skillfully, students can focus more fully on making meaning of text– both informational and literary– and using that meaning for their own purposes. For example, students can read about a topic of interest and synthesize it on a webpage, report, or podcast episode. Likewise, they can read a poem and consider how the themes or messages relate to their own personal experiences.
- Research indicates that students can make big literacy gains with intentional support in the components of the simple view in early elementary school. Unfortunately, many of those gains can fade by the eighth grade without ongoing support for students’ emergent language and reading comprehension skills.
- So what exactly is “reading to learn”?

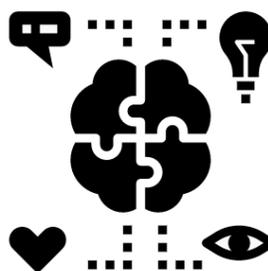
Source: Jeanne Chall describes this transition. See Annenberg Learner. (n.d.) “Chall’s States of Reading Development.” Retrieved from [https://www.learner.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/RWD.DLU1\\_ChallsStages.pdf](https://www.learner.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/RWD.DLU1_ChallsStages.pdf)

## So, What Is “Reading to Learn”?

Reading comprehension is “the process of simultaneously constructing and extracting meaning through interaction and engagement with print”

—RAND Reading Study Group, 2002

### Reading To Learn



- Understand text's meaning
- Think for yourself about meaning



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**Objective of this slide:** To define reading comprehension

**Estimated time:** 2 minutes

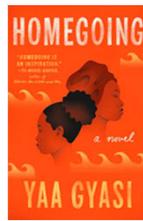
### **Facilitator says:**

- “Reading to learn” is a common descriptor for the type of reading that students do in upper elementary and beyond.
- The more technical term for this process, and the term that we will use for the remainder of this training, is “reading comprehension.”
- Reading comprehension was defined by the RAND Reading Study Group in 2002 as “the process of simultaneously constructing and extracting meaning through interaction and engagement with print.” In other words, reading comprehension is the ability to understand written language with purpose and meaning.
- Some people think that comprehension is simply about remembering what you read once you are finished. For example, a student might be judged to have “comprehended” a story if they can answer a question about the name of the main character once they’re done.
- But thorough and successful comprehension involves more than memory; it involves taking the words on a page and combining them with what you already know to grow knowledge of a subject, develop a meaningful interpretation of a story, or otherwise make sense of the text at hand.

Sources: <http://www.cal.org/create/conferences/2012/pdfs/reading-comprehension.pdf>  
<https://www.readinguniverse.org/copy-of-vocabulary>

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# Reading to Learn

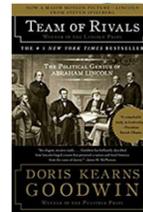
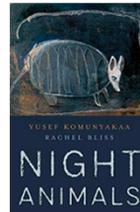


How to Remove a Ceiling Fan and Prepare for a New One  
Follow these steps to prep for a new ceiling fan.

#### Instructions

##### Step 1

Turn off power to the existing fan or light at the main fuse or circuit box, and use a circuit tester to verify the power is off. Place the wall switches for the fixtures in the off position. For help, watch our DIY Basics video: [What's in My Breaker Box?](#)  
If the location has dual-switch wiring — one switch controls the fan and a separate switch controls the light — label the wires so you'll know which ones should go to the new fan



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**Objective of this slide:** To provide a concrete example of why reading to learn is important in a range of content areas and for a range of student interests

**Estimated time:** 1 minutes

**Facilitator says:**

- Reading to learn is critical in every content area taught in school (and many areas not addressed in typical school curriculum!). When content area teachers understand the unique challenges and complexities of reading in their discipline, they are better equipped to support student success.
- Likewise, our students have a range of interests and aspirations. When we support them to comprehend a range of texts on multiple topics (and to go deeper in areas of special interest), we support their emergent college and career pathways and ability to enrich their lives with information of personal interest and utility.

Section Two

Elements of Reading Comprehension:  
Unpacking the RAND Reading Comprehension Model

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**Objective of this slide:** To transition into a section on the elements of reading comprehension.

**Estimated time:** < 1 minute

**Facilitator says:**

- In this next section, we will explore the components of reading comprehension to get a better sense of what we need to know about our readers, our texts, and the reading “tasks” we assign to best support students as they read to learn.

## Myth or Truth?

 The boundaries of what it means to comprehend a text are clear: You either comprehend it, or you don't.



**Myth:** What it means to comprehend a text is clear: You either comprehend it, or you don't.



**Truth:** Reading comprehension is a complex task made up of several components, including the sociocultural context for reading. Strong reading teachers understand all the pieces that drive comprehension to have the best possible picture of if and how their students *really, fully* understand.



2020 | 10

**Objective of this slide:** To engage participants in reflection on reading comprehension.

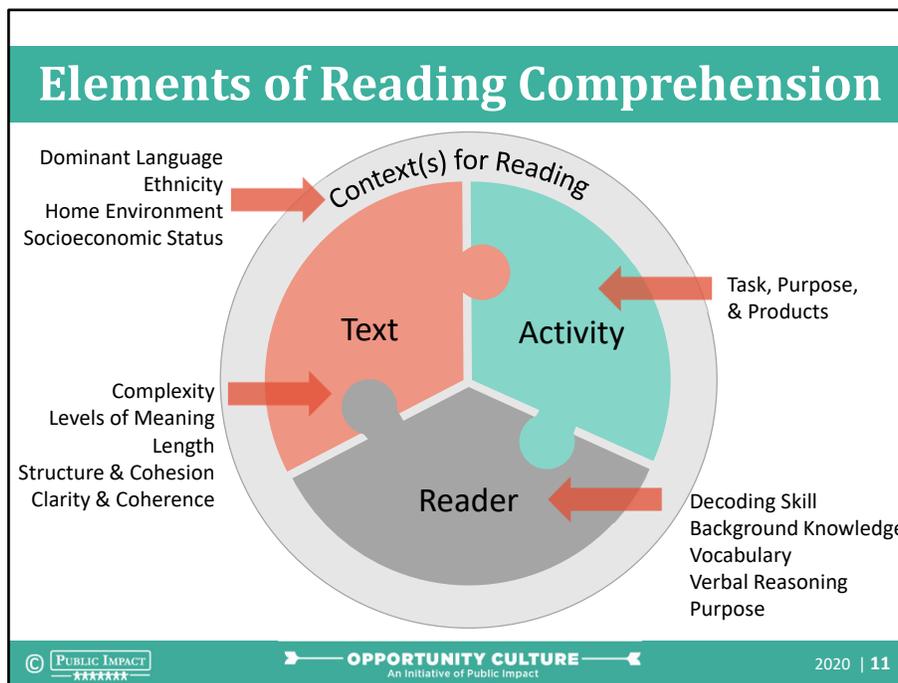
**Estimated Time:** 3 minutes

**Facilitator says:**

- Here is another statement for you and your team to consider. Take a moment to think. What is your reaction to the statement, “The boundaries of what it means to comprehend a text are clear: you either comprehend, or you don’t”?
- [Click]
- You might have been on the fence about this statement. While comprehension is clearer in some cases than in others, for many reading experiences, what it means to understand a text is quite blurry. Part of the reason for this is that reading comprehension is made up of multiple elements that must work together for a reader to make meaning of a text.
  - Skilled reading teachers understand the pieces that drive comprehension in order to have the best possible picture of what “understanding” really means and whether their students have reached that goal.
  - In the section that follows, we explore the elements of reading comprehension.

<https://www.educationcorner.com/learning-to-read-to-read-to-learn.html>

Icon by: Kokota, EE, cc Creative Commons



**Objective of this slide:** To define elements of reading comprehension

**Estimated time:** 7 minutes

**Facilitator says:**

This graphic is adapted from the National Reading Panel report, published in 2000 by a team of reading experts. It identified key parts of the reading comprehension process so that researchers could learn more about each part and how they work together. The model is also useful for educators who want to understand the elements of reading comprehension to better support their students.

According to the model, the process of reading comprehension is influenced by:

1. **The Text:** Of course, the text—a book, article, poem, etc.—to be comprehended matters in reading comprehension. Aspects of the text such as the vocabulary used, level of complexity, length, and the clarity of the phrases and sentences in it influence the process of reading comprehension, so it matters for educators to understand what makes various texts different for readers.
2. **The Reader:** What also matters is the reader who is trying to understand the text! The reader brings a certain set of background knowledge, vocabulary, and reading skills to the reading experience, among other factors. All of these things influence the process of reading comprehension, so, once again, it is important for teachers to understand their readers’ skills in these areas.

3. **The Activity:** A third element of the comprehension process is the “activity” for reading the text. Readers have a purpose in mind when reading. That purpose can be internal, such as the desire to operate a new game system. Purpose can also be externally mandated, such as when a teacher assigns a set of questions for students to answer after a classroom reading. A reader’s purpose can change during reading. For example, when reading a passage about marine life on a comprehension test, a reader may begin with the purpose of determining the answers to the questions that follow the passage. However, while reading, the reader may become interested in the information about whales in the passage and develop new questions that they would like to ask someone later. Other reading purposes, or activities, include reading to get the gist (skimming) and studying, or reading to remember key information for a later purpose. Challenges can arise for readers when internal purposes for reading do not match or shift away from externally generated purposes.
4. **“Context(s) for Reading”:** All reading comprehension is influenced by the context(s) in which the reading takes place. Another term for this is the sociocultural context for reading. For example, the classroom itself is a context, but it is also influenced by a reader’s life outside of school and the many forces that shape readers’ experiences such as language, community, and socioeconomic status. Understanding a reader’s contexts for reading is important to understanding their reading comprehension process.

Next, we’ll go into a little more detail on some of the parts of these elements: the text, the reader, and the activity and why they matter for reading comprehension.

Source:

[https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/38406216/Reading\\_for\\_understanding\\_Toward\\_an\\_R\\_D\\_program\\_in\\_reading\\_comprehension.pdf?1438909181=&response-content-disposition=inline%3B+filename%3DReading\\_for\\_Understanding\\_Toward\\_an\\_R\\_an.pdf&Expires=1596638999&Signature=Xc1ZAq7xl~X68eJclYg2H15rFzbZvXZsat02J568o9ILWV5luCLb3JTGo1KSgVLfwaPYOEo3fJz3jb4iwUtRnH2Xml9pkX9gyDKVgDn1BWA1O0IUeKmRZ8CKHhRF2~BFM277asU7TO9EABmSxrX8eho6Qu32vZM-LcT-ghNm6~wRIqQEDx2DNqDDwAawX~IHMDsj12jiQyxXa-UYO-UO~E7CFIrAvAt7KfxRWxFqWGGNLqZhXF6oPBxCOHogpAVo1gzABOdjU7nfzrAAJ10B2hn~BR6hvQtFmv3jFO14egpMePHw390MtmyKeU~pCxQvkMZX3yxP~XM5aCvrbIS-Jw &Key-Pair-Id=APKAJLOHF5GGSLRBV4ZA](https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/38406216/Reading_for_understanding_Toward_an_R_D_program_in_reading_comprehension.pdf?1438909181=&response-content-disposition=inline%3B+filename%3DReading_for_Understanding_Toward_an_R_an.pdf&Expires=1596638999&Signature=Xc1ZAq7xl~X68eJclYg2H15rFzbZvXZsat02J568o9ILWV5luCLb3JTGo1KSgVLfwaPYOEo3fJz3jb4iwUtRnH2Xml9pkX9gyDKVgDn1BWA1O0IUeKmRZ8CKHhRF2~BFM277asU7TO9EABmSxrX8eho6Qu32vZM-LcT-ghNm6~wRIqQEDx2DNqDDwAawX~IHMDsj12jiQyxXa-UYO-UO~E7CFIrAvAt7KfxRWxFqWGGNLqZhXF6oPBxCOHogpAVo1gzABOdjU7nfzrAAJ10B2hn~BR6hvQtFmv3jFO14egpMePHw390MtmyKeU~pCxQvkMZX3yxP~XM5aCvrbIS-Jw &Key-Pair-Id=APKAJLOHF5GGSLRBV4ZA)

## Turn and Talk

TEXT	READER	ACTIVITY	CONTEXT(S) FOR Reading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complexity</li> <li>Levels of Meaning</li> <li>Length</li> <li>Structure &amp; Cohesion</li> <li>Clarity &amp; Coherence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decoding Skill</li> <li>Prior/Background Knowledge</li> <li>Vocabulary</li> <li>Verbal Reasoning</li> <li>Purpose</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Task</li> <li>Purpose</li> <li>Products</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dominant Language</li> <li>Ethnicity</li> <li>Home Environment</li> <li>Socioeconomic Status</li> </ul>

Pause & Reflect: Which parts of the elements of reading comprehension are you most familiar with?  
Which parts are less familiar?





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**Objective of this slide:** To offer participants a chance to reflect on their experience with these elements.

**Estimated Time:** 3 minutes

**Facilitator says:**

- If you are working with colleagues, now would be a good time to pause and reflect on your own knowledge of these elements of reading comprehension.
- As you review this list, think to yourself, which parts of the elements of reading comprehension am I most familiar with? Are there any parts that are less familiar?
- It may also be helpful to think about which parts you know the most about before you begin working with a student or students and which parts you might need to learn more about in order to better understand your students' comprehension experiences. For example, you might know a lot about a student's decoding skills but much less about the kinds of reading they do in their home and community and how that might influence the way they approach a text in your class.

## The Reader: Prior Knowledge & Background Knowledge

**Prior Knowledge:**

The information and understandings that a reader brings to a text from prior academic study and life experiences

**Background Knowledge:**

Supplemental information provided *by the teacher* to support students' comprehension

**Key Takeaway:** Teachers who understand what a student knows already can add critical background information to help students understand each text.





2020 | 13

**Objective of this slide:** To elaborate on another part of the element of “the reader” from the RAND model by distinguishing between prior knowledge and background knowledge. What can a teacher influence? Let’s look together!

**Estimated time:** 4 minutes

**Facilitator says:**

- Thank you for taking a moment to reflect. In the next several slides, we will break down a few parts of each element of reading comprehension. We won’t cover each part, but instead touch on just a couple of pieces to get you thinking more about what you know about your readers, the texts you assign, and the reading “activity” in your classroom. Let’s begin with an area that is obviously important: the reader!
- More and more, researchers recognize the critical role that a reader’s background knowledge plays in ability to comprehend text. This is the ongoing, cumulative effect of a reader’s learning experiences both in and outside of school.
- It may be useful for you to distinguish between two types of knowledge that readers bring to a reading experience: prior knowledge and background knowledge.
- We typically think of **prior knowledge** as the information and understandings that a reader brings to a text from *prior academic study and life experiences*.
- **Background knowledge**, on the other hand, can be thought of as *supplemental information provided by the teacher* to support students’ comprehension.

- Here's the key takeaway!: It's important for teachers to have a sense of their students' prior knowledge of a topic when entering a reading experience so that, where appropriate, teachers can supplement those understandings with additional background information that will help students understand what they read.
- You can think of it as a puzzle. Students begin with a certain number of pieces in place (prior knowledge). The teacher can then provide additional pieces (background knowledge) and help students get them in the right spots. Students can then add new information from the text to the existing structure in order to form a complete puzzle, understanding the text that they have read.

## The Reader: Vocabulary

**Key Takeaway:** When a student is likely to be less familiar with a text's vocabulary, teachers should add explicit study of words critical to understanding the text.

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**Objective of this slide:** To elaborate on another part of the element of “the reader” from the RAND model: vocabulary.

**Estimated time:** 2 minutes

**Facilitator says:**

- Related to prior knowledge, vocabulary has long been understood as a key part of reading comprehension.
- The words that early readers encounter in texts are often familiar—part of their existing *oral* vocabulary.
- But as readers progress into more difficult texts, particularly those with words less common in spoken language, students are less likely to know the vocabulary.
- Both reading teachers and content-area teachers benefit from an understanding of their students’ vocabulary in relationship to the texts they assign.
- When a student is likely less familiar with a text’s vocabulary, teachers can add explicit study of key vocabulary words to support readers’ comprehension.

Source:

[https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/PracticeGuide/adlit\\_pg\\_082608.pdf](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/PracticeGuide/adlit_pg_082608.pdf)

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**The Reader: Key Idea**

By adolescence, readers' skills and range of prior knowledge is even more varied than in primary grades.

Secondary teachers must be even more adept at differentiating reading instruction to meet the needs of subgroups and individual students with diverse prior knowledge, vocabulary, and skills.

Pause & Reflect: What steps can you take to understand a reader's prior knowledge? What steps can you take to teach vocabulary explicitly to students with varied prior knowledge and vocabularies?

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**Objective of this slide:** To share a key idea about the importance of knowing adolescent readers and their skill sets well.

**Estimated time:** 5 minutes

**Facilitator says:**

- Prior knowledge and vocabulary are just two of many aspects of a reader's skill sets. As readers move beyond "learning to read" and into "reading to learn" (and beyond the foundational skills outlined in the simple view of reading), their skill sets become increasingly diverse.
- This means that teachers must be even more adept at getting to know their students as readers and differentiating comprehension instruction to meet the needs of subgroups and individual students.
- This is a complex but exciting challenge!
- If you are working with colleagues, we suggest that you pause now to reflect on steps you can take to understand a reader's prior knowledge and how you might teach vocabulary explicitly to students with varied prior knowledge and vocabularies.

[https://media.carnegie.org/filer\\_public/8c/8d/8c8dfd82-b5fc-4bb9-8bd1-bb262175eaf4/ccny\\_report\\_2010\\_tta\\_agenda.pdf](https://media.carnegie.org/filer_public/8c/8d/8c8dfd82-b5fc-4bb9-8bd1-bb262175eaf4/ccny_report_2010_tta_agenda.pdf)

## The Text: Structure

### LITERARY TEXT

- Plot
- Character
- Setting
- Point of View
- Goal
- Theme



### INFORMATIONAL TEXT

- Description
- Sequence
- Comparison
- Cause and Effect
- Problem and Solution
- Argument



**Key Takeaway:** Teach how text structures work across similar texts and strategies to interpret them.



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**Objective of this slide:** To elaborate on one part of the element of “the text” from the RAND model

**Estimated time:** 4 minutes

**Facilitator says:**

- Now, let’s discuss a couple of components of the text.
- We’ll begin with text structure, which refers to the form and organization of a text. Most of the texts we use with students are either literary or informational.
- You are certainly familiar with the typical characteristics of literary texts like novels, short stories, graphic novels, and poems, such as plot, character, and theme. Similarly, you are familiar with such characteristics of informational texts as cause and effect and/or description.
- As teachers, we need to teach students strategies that help them build their understanding of how text structures contribute to the meaning of the text as a whole.
- Text structures are not comprehension strategies in and of themselves. In other words, simply naming the typical parts of a feature article will take a reader only so far. As texts become increasingly complex and discipline-specific in upper elementary, middle, and high school, teachers can teach students how various text structures function, and strategies to interpret features in similar texts.

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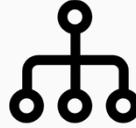
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# The Text: Cohesion & Coherence



## Cohesion:

The way that a text fits together based on grammatical and linguistic devices such as sentence structure, connective words, etc.



## Coherence:

How a text makes sense based on the way that ideas in the text follow from one to the next.

**Key Takeaway:** Teach students micro-comprehension strategies to help them make clear connections between parts of sentences and in between sentences. More on this later!!

**Objective of this slide:** To elaborate on another part of the element of “the text” from the RAND model

**Estimated time:** 4 minutes

**Facilitator says:**

- Perhaps less familiar than text structures, but equally important, are text cohesion and coherence.
- **Cohesion** refers to the way that a text fits together based on such grammatical and linguistic devices as sentence structure and connective words.
- An example of **grammatical cohesion** is pronoun reference. For example, in the sentence, “Pedro went for a bike ride this afternoon, and he saw several other people out riding,” it is fairly easy to tell that “he” refers to Pedro. On the other hand, pronoun reference is more difficult to discern in the sentence, “When Pedro spoke to Lewis this morning, he did not understand the plans for a bike ride.” We cannot tell if “he” refers to Pedro or Lewis. Long sentences where pronouns are placed far away from their antecedents, or where there are multiple antecedents, make texts less cohesive and more difficult to comprehend.
- An example of **linguistic cohesion** would be the use of connecting words like first, next, then, and last. These types of words guide the reader to discern how ideas in the text are related to one another.
- Texts can be more and less cohesive. Readers need to be able to make clear associations between the words in the text and the ideas they represent, regardless of how easy or difficult the writer has made that task. Teachers can support students to make these connections via **micro-comprehension strategies**. More on this later!

- Meanwhile, **coherence** is the way that a text makes sense based on how ideas go from one to the next. In a coherent text, one sentence flows logically into the next, and the reader can make meaning from the text as a whole. When ideas don't flow together due to issues with verb tense, change of topic within a single paragraph, or poor word choice, a reader can be confused and feeling as if the text does not make sense.
- **Text coherence and cohesion** contribute to the overall complexity and readability of a text—let's look at those next.

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# Text Readability vs. Complexity

## What's the difference and why does it matter?

### Readability

- ✓ **Quantitative** measure
- ✓ Multiple formulas exist
- ✓ Usually considers factors like:
  - Word length
  - Word frequency
  - Sentence length

### Complexity

- ✓ **Quantitative and qualitative** measure
- ✓ Usually considers factors like:
  - Readability
  - Style
  - Theme
  - Visual support and layout
- ✓ **Reader and task** also matter

**Key Takeaway:** Determine the readability and complexity of a text before you assign it to gain a better understanding of how difficult it will be for a student or students.





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**Objective of this slide:** To illustrate the difference between readability and complexity and why they matter for teachers.

**Estimated time:** 4 minutes

**Facilitator says:**

- There are two main ways of describing a text's level of difficulty—**readability** and **complexity**—and they are different in important ways.
- **Readability** is a quantitative measure of various text features. There are various formulas to calculate readability, but most take into account things like word length, sentence length, and word frequency. A common readability measure is Lexile level. Each grade level from K through 5 is assigned a Lexile range, meaning that the middle 50 percent of readers in that grade should feel comfortable reading texts whose Lexile number falls within that range.
- For teachers, **readability** is a helpful starting place for determining the difficulty of a text for students. Free online tools such as one found at [readabilityformulas.com](https://readabilityformulas.com) (<https://readabilityformulas.com/free-readability-formula-tests.php>) allow you to copy and paste a section of a text into a readability calculator to get a sense of the readability of the sample.
- While it can be useful for teachers to understand **readability**, text **complexity** takes into account both quantitative and qualitative measures of the content of the text *and* considers the reader in relationship to the text. So text complexity is a more complete measure of the appropriateness of a text for an individual student or group.
- Descriptions of text **complexity** acknowledge that quantitative measures like Lexile level alone cannot fully characterize the difficulty of a text. For example, John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* has a relatively low Lexile level—placing it within the reading range of 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> graders. But the themes of *Grapes of Wrath*, including inhumane treatment of migrant workers, may be best understood by older children.

- Finally, reader and task factors play into the **complexity** of a text. Considerations include students' reading skills, prior knowledge and experience, and level of motivation and engagement, as well as any specific tasks that will be asked of students during or after reading in order to gauge the complexity of a text relative to a particular reader.
- So try using a Lexile level calculator or Google search to get a basic sense of the readability and/or complexity of a text you plan to assign, to better understand how difficult it will be for a student or group of students.

## The Text: Key Idea

As students progress through grade levels, the texts that they encounter are increasingly challenging and content-specific.

The more expert teachers are in the features of those texts and what makes them complex, the better they can support students to comprehend their reading.

Pause & Reflect: What steps can you take to understand the features of the texts you assign? How readable and complex are the texts you typically assign in your class?

2020 | 19

**Objective of this slide:** To share a key idea about the importance teacher expertise in the type of texts they teach.

**Estimated time:** 5 minutes

**Facilitator says:**

- Again, text structure, coherence, cohesion, and complexity are just a few aspects of the texts that we ask our students to read.
- As texts become more challenging and content-specific, teachers must become experts in what makes the texts that they assign unique and prepare to teach students strategies for making meaning from what they read.
- This would be a great time to pause and reflect on ways that you might become more expert in the texts that you typically assign in your class.

[https://media.carnegie.org/filer\\_public/8c/8d/8c8dfd82-b5fc-4bb9-8bd1-bb262175eaf4/ccny\\_report\\_2010\\_tta\\_agenda.pdf](https://media.carnegie.org/filer_public/8c/8d/8c8dfd82-b5fc-4bb9-8bd1-bb262175eaf4/ccny_report_2010_tta_agenda.pdf)

## Activity: What's the Purpose?

Surface—Literal <i>What does it say?</i>	Text-Based—Inferential <i>What does it mean?</i>	Deeper—Situational <i>What do I think?</i>
At the surface level where information is explicitly stated in the text <i>What, where, when?</i>	At the text or structural level where information within the text must be pieced together to infer new meaning. <i>How?</i>	At the reasoning level where information from background knowledge or other sources is linked to information in the text to infer new meaning <i>Why?</i>
Involves sequencing and details	Involves understanding author's word choice and word meaning	Involves reasoning and assumptions using evidence from the text
Relies on accurate decoding and serves as a critical foundation for higher levels	Relies on a grasp of syntax and grammar; provides a foundation for higher levels	Relies on critical and analytical skills for deepest understanding and application of knowledge beyond the text

Adapted from: [www.readinguniverse.org](http://www.readinguniverse.org)

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2020 | 20

**Objective of this slide:** To elaborate on another part of the element of “the activity” from the RAND model

**Estimated time:** 5 minutes

**Facilitator says:**

- Perhaps the most complex part of the RAND reading comprehension model is the reading “**activity**,” or purpose for reading.
- There is a large range of purposes for reading, even within a classroom setting. The table on this slide is a very basic description of three reading purposes that teachers often ask of students.
- First, teachers sometimes ask students to do **literal** readings of text. Literal, or surface-level, readings require readers to look for information stated explicitly in the text, relying on sequencing of the text and accurate decoding skills to identify specific details. When teachers ask students to retell stories or recall a specific piece of information from a text, they create a **literal** reading activity.
- Other times, the purpose is **inferential**. Inferential readings require students to piece together information within the text to construct new meanings or understandings. For instance, we often ask students to infer what a character’s words and actions reveal about their feelings or their character. Students rely on an understanding of author’s word choice and word meaning in order to make inferences about the text.
- Finally, we sometimes set a deeper **situational** purpose for reading. In these cases, we ask students to use their background knowledge and experiences to move beyond the text and evaluate some aspect of it. For example, we might ask students to consider what they think the author is saying about a relationship between two characters.

Sources: [www.readinguniverse.org](http://www.readinguniverse.org)

## The Activity: Key Idea

Challenges arise when readers' purposes are mismatched with what's been asked of them by a teacher or their lack of motivation to read.

To increase student engagement and motivation, teachers must be clear about what type of reading they're asking students to do and share why that purpose for reading is valuable.

Pause & Reflect: How explicit are you when you explain the purpose(s) for reading in your class? How could you share reading purposes more explicitly with students?

  2020 | 21

**Objective of this slide:** To share why it is important for teachers to be aware of the reading “activity” that they require of students and to be explicit about why that activity is important, when possible.

**Estimated time:** 5 minutes

**Facilitator says:**

- So, teachers often generate an external purpose for reading, but readers also have an internal purpose. Challenges arise when readers' purposes are mismatched with what's been asked of them by a teacher, or when an externally generated activity or purpose is not adequately interesting—in other words, the reader is not motivated to read for that reason.
- To increase student engagement and motivation in reading, teachers need to be clear about what type of reading they're asking students to do, and they should share why that purpose for reading is valuable.

Source:

[https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/PracticeGuide/adlit\\_pg\\_082608.pdf](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/PracticeGuide/adlit_pg_082608.pdf)

## Affirming Motivation & Purpose: Classroom Practices

Motivations	Teacher Practices	Student Reasons to Read
Interest/Intrinsic Motivation	Relevance (selecting or allowing students to select relatable texts)	I enjoy this material. It's fun. I can relate.
Ownership	Offering Choice	I chose it. It matters to me. It belongs to me.
Self-Efficacy	Supporting Success (providing targeted praise)	I can do it well. I enjoy being successful.
Social Interaction with Peers	Collaboration	I can do it with others. I enjoy relating to my peers.
Mastery	Thematic Units	I want to understand. I like to learn new things.



2020 | 22

**Objective of this slide:** Share a brief summary of ways teachers might think about discussing the purpose of a reading activity with students.

**Estimated time:** 3 minutes

**Facilitator says:**

- Reading purpose can vary widely by the task at hand. However, teachers can help support students' motivation to read and their understanding of the "why" behind a classroom task by considering these five principles of motivation in the left column of the table.
- The center column reflects general teacher practices that can support these sources of motivation, while the column on the right reflects ways that students may perceive the purpose or reason for a reading task and why it is motivating to them.
- Not all reading activities can align to all five of these principles of motivation, but ideally teachers will align most classroom reading activities to at least one of them

Source:

<https://www.readingrockets.org/article/teacher-practices-impact-reading-motivation>

## Turn and Talk

- What do you typically know about your readers before starting a text with them?
- What do you know about the text itself?
- What about the demands of the activity?





Brainstorm 2–5 ways that you could...

1. Learn about the reader before starting a unit/skill/reading activity
2. Learn more about the text itself
3. Clarify the demands of each activity





2020 | 23

**Objective of this slide:** Provide time for participants to reflect on knowledge of texts, readers, and demands of reading activities

**Estimated time:** 8 minutes

**Facilitator says:**

- So now, it may be useful to pause again and reflect on the following questions:
  - What do you typically know about your readers before starting a text with them?
  - What do you know about the text itself?
  - What about the demands of the activity?

[Allow time for discussion]

- While we certainly can't know everything about all elements of reading comprehension for every text and every student, the more we know about these components, the better we can provide targeted comprehension support that matches the readers, texts, and reading activities in our classrooms.
- This brings us to the end of Part I. In Part II, we explore one research-based approach to supporting students' comprehension skills: explicit comprehension instruction.

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- See: [www.readinguniverse.org](http://www.readinguniverse.org)