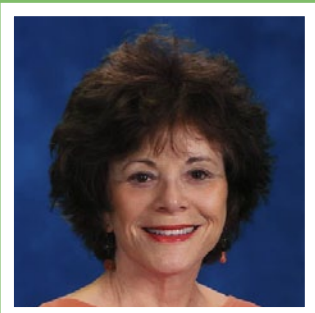


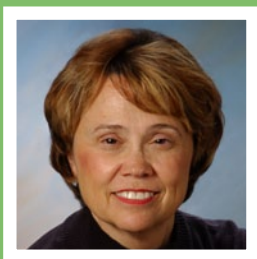
# Rigorous Real-World Teaching and Learning

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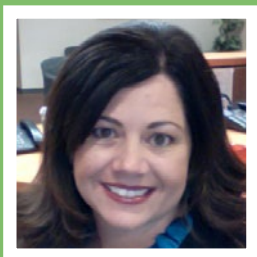


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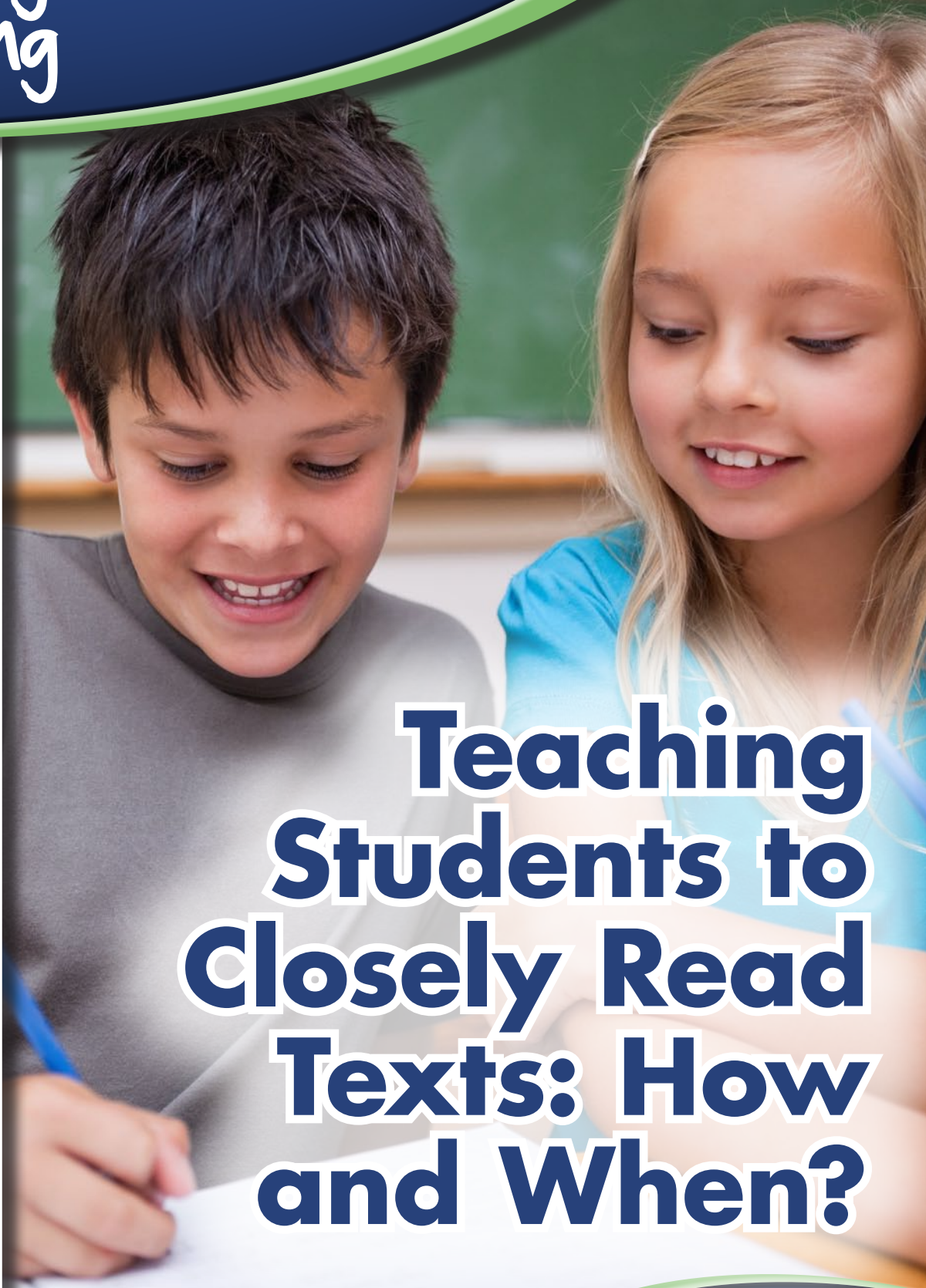
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## Teaching Students to Closely Read Texts: How and When?



**G**eraldo, a fourth grader at an urban elementary school close to the U.S. Mexican border, was born in the U.S. Although he effortlessly switches from Spanish, his home language, to English when speaking with his friends, he does not read or write Spanish. Day after day, period after period, Geraldo struggles in school. His textbooks are written well above his second grade reading level. The academic vocabulary he needs to succeed in science, social studies, English, and mathematics is beyond his reach. Despite this reality, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which have been adopted in the majority of states, mandate that students, including English learners, graduate from high school with literacy abilities that enable them to:

- *readily undertake the close, attentive reading that is at the heart of understanding and enjoying complex works of literature.*
- *habitually perform the critical reading necessary to carefully evaluate the staggering amount of information available today in print and digitally.*
- *actively seek the wide, deep, and thoughtful engagement with high-quality literary and informational texts that builds knowledge, enlarges experience, and broadens worldviews.*
- *reflexively demonstrate the cogent reasoning and use of evidence that is essential to both private deliberation and responsible citizenship in a democratic republic. (Common Core State Standards, 2010, p. 3)*

The majority of educators at all grade levels agree that these are definitely literacy behaviors that should be exhibited by every person entering college or the work force. However, they wonder **how** to design instruction that supports students in developing the necessary language, content, and literacy practices to read complex texts, and then to

subsequently promote and act upon their well-informed ideas. They also wonder **when** during the instructional day or period students should be taught how to do close text reading.

## The How of Close Reading

To begin to address the **how** of instruction, we need to consider that to closely read a text, one needs to analyze and scaffold textually based inferences which are at “the heart of meaning construction for learners of all ages” (Anderson & Pearson, 1984, p. 107). To make inferences while reading, the reader must understand the language of the passage and then use context clues to support an even more precise understanding of the intent of the language. To promote his deepening interpretations of the passage, he must be able to apply related background knowledge to support connections, eliminate ambiguity, enable visualizing, fill in informational gaps, predict, draw conclusions, and form logical opinions—all while assessing the strength of his performance and his developing stance(s). He must be able to deeply comprehend the message(s) of the text. Depending on the text complexity, the reader often must reread multiple times and while doing so use all of his bundled skill sets in order to deeply infer the information or message.

Knowledgeable teachers who carefully observe their students' reading and discussion of complex texts are able to make instructional decisions based on each student's performance. If the first close reading indicates that the reader does not have the needed conceptual background knowledge, language, or strategies to support an analytical scrutiny of the author's language and message, one way to accommodate the acquisition of these funds of knowledge is to use companion text sets which contain short, same-topic passages. Companion passages can build the background knowledge, language, and literacy

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skills needed to accomplish an analytic or deep text reading of continually more sophisticated, topically same texts. They are companions because, while at scaffolded levels of difficulty, they address the same theme and offer the possibility to gain the scaffolded language and knowledge to accomplish the same standard(s) or purpose(s).

Companion text sets also provide readers an opportunity to analyze and identify elements that are interfering with their comprehension. Identifying one's areas of interference and then knowing how to remedy these needs is indeed a behavior exhibited by proficient, metacognitively sophisticated readers. The acquisition and supportive scaffolding of knowledge through the use of tiered, companion text sets model for readers how to independently build their own bases of knowledge when teachers are no longer part of the learning equation.

To begin a close reading, students need opportunities to independently attempt an initial reading of a text passage. They need to "have a go" at a passage to see what they can take away from it. Their initial reading can serve as a formative assessment, identifying critical performance

information about the kinds of scaffolds they need to enable their development of the concepts, language, and skills needed to make increasingly deeper text inferences. From this initial assessment, teachers can design instruction—whole group, small group, and individual instruction—which uses existing routines such as shared reading, guided reading, and partner collaborations to support students as they build their ever-growing bases of information. Through modeling, the teacher can also show readers what to do to support their own growth of language, concepts, and skills.

The texts used for this informational scaffolding should be increasingly more complex and require deeper and deeper analysis of the theme, topic, issues, or messages. The use of companion texts allows students to access content and build background knowledge from varied sources. While one text may provide foundational content knowledge, another may offer connections between linked concepts. Students are thus provided with multiple resources that allow them to dig deeper in terms of content. This is a significant part of being able to internalize and use information in a thoughtful, critical manner. It's also what experts in any field do before they

form opinions, make judgments, or write about a topic. A doctor will read multiple articles about a new surgical procedure when considering adopting a technique for her own practice. She will most likely start with the simplest descriptions before progressing to the more technical explanations. An historian will pore over numerous related documents when writing about a major historical event. It's common practice among professionals and informed citizens to learn about a topic from varied authors in various ways.

Instruction designed with the goal that students will be able to engage in close reading by deeply and analytically reading increasingly complex texts must offer opportunities for each reader to acquire the language, information, and literacy skills his performance suggests is needed to accomplish this task. The following discussion offers one possibility for making the goal of deeply reading increasingly complex texts a reality for every student. First, we identify the strengths of using tiered companion text sets to support students acquiring academic English, as well as the base(s) of knowledge that their performance suggests is needed to infer and analyze increasingly more sophisticated text-based information. Then, we view



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an example of a teacher implementing the companion tiered-text set approach. Finally, we describe the reaction of teachers and students to companion tiered-text set instruction.

### **Companion Tiered-Text Sets Support Acquiring the Language of School**

The CCSS promote the idea that students have school reading experiences in which they learn to read increasingly complex texts. This suggestion is based on research indicating that older students who regularly interact with difficult texts perform better in college than students who lack such experiences (ACT, Inc., 2006; Adams, 2009). Learning to read complex content-based information is often difficult for students because the structure, vocabulary, and informational loads differ from the narrative texts traditionally used in early grade classrooms. Learning to read complex expository texts becomes even more complex for thousands of students like Geraldo—students in American classrooms who, with below grade-level literacy skills in their native language, are expected to master complicated course content while gaining English proficiency in classrooms where rigorous, standards-based curricula and high-stakes assessments are the

norm. The literacy crisis for these students is compelling; only 8% of fourth grade English learners scored at the proficient or advanced levels on the reading portion of the 2011 National Assessment for Educational Progress (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011).

English learners often learn the basics of reading and writing English in two or three years, but it takes five to 10 years to learn the academic language skills needed to succeed in content area classrooms. Students like Geraldo are usually transitioned into regular classes after only two or three years of ESL instruction where they experience double jeopardy: they are not yet proficient in English and their teachers are unsure about how to provide instruction that supports their continuing development. While they may be skilled at using the informal language needed to text friends or communicate with family, in the classroom they need to use a more formal register of Academic English, which is a complicated “tool set” to learn and to use. Zwiers (2008) suggests that learning to comprehend academic English involves understanding the words and phrases that are the “talk of a text.” Attempting to comprehend complex and difficult phrases like *evaluate the premise*, *contrast the characters*, *identify the chronology*,

or *examine the evidence* can quickly confuse English learners, who lack knowledge of the academic language that is common in school talk and texts. Students who struggle in reading do so primarily because they have low-meaning vocabulary knowledge (Lesaux and Kieffer, 2010), which certainly affects their potential to comprehend sophisticated concepts.

Companion sets of tiered texts offer one instructional possibility for supporting all readers' scaffolding of the difficult, topically related language and information found in a challenging text. Text sets can consist of any topically related combination of informational sources, including Internet resources, literature, documents, magazine or newspaper articles, teacher-created passages, and sections from below grade level textbooks.

The key to assembling companion tiered-text sets is to ensure that they support the study of a topic by introducing vocabulary and concepts through very easy to comprehend language and illustrations which grow in sophistication as students' bases of language and knowledge increase. In this way the goal of reading the complex text becomes possible for every student. This is unlike previously designed thematically related text sets, which grouped students

as high, medium, or low readers and then offered them the opportunity to read a single thematically related text at their entering reading level. The companion text set idea we are proposing is designed to support each reader gaining the skills needed to read the most complex text in the set, while also developing the skill set required when concepts from multiple texts are synthesized.

A lesson format that utilizes companion tiered-text sets develops academic language for English learners and struggling readers through literacy experiences designed around successively more difficult texts in order to steadily increase topically related background knowledge, language, and reading skills. More specifically, the instructional intention of using tiered-texts sets is to

- promote student engagement.
- scaffold instruction that develops students' language and schema and lays the foundation for successful literacy experiences.
- provide many opportunities to read, write, and speak academic language.
- offer multiple exposures to related vocabulary and content concepts.
- ensure explicit instruction in word meanings and many opportunities to apply those meanings.
- build the learner's capacity for reading increasingly complex texts.
- build the learner's capacity to synthesize ideas from multiple related sources.
- build the learner's understanding of how to support his own literacy learning.

Instruction incorporating tiered-text sets, designed to support students' learning to closely read increasingly complex texts, involves applying the following six-step process:

1. Identify the lesson purpose(s) and select the texts that are appropriate for a close reading. The number of texts in a companion set can vary. Since readers may revisit the text more than once, and since they are learning to conduct a close reading, the selections should not be too long; in addition to poems, news clips, or a short story, a text excerpt that can stand on its own would work well.
2. Encourage students to "try on" the most complex text (Tier 3) through a close, independent first reading. Remind students to pay attention to the meaning, and to note areas of confusion. By having students take notes along the way they mimic and internalize what proficient readers often do as a way to study their own patterns of knowing and need. Students' responses will help them and you to understand causes of confusion. Be sure students understand that readers often must persevere and note areas of confusion when first tackling challenging texts. This knowledge can then be used to choose materials that will help them ultimately comprehend the initial, complex, stretch text through subsequent readings.
3. Invite partner, group, or class conversations about students' inferred meanings and wonderings. Conversation with peers and with you can clear up misconceptions and also offer additional insights about instruction that should follow.
4. Model how an expert (teacher) might conduct a deep text reading of the least difficult, most comfortable (Tier 1) text in the text set. Your modeling should focus on areas of language and knowledge you observed are needed by the students to succeed with a reading of the most complex text in the set.
5. Support students by expanding the targeted language, concepts, and strategies they need to read the next most difficult text that their skills and knowledge can support. Reading this grade range appropriate text (Tier 2)

can occur during a variety of grouping configurations. Students often struggle with comprehension because they do not have an understanding of the vocabulary and concepts of the passage. A major segment of instruction at this point is to guide them in knowing how to support their own learning. Since groups of readers will have evidenced various strengths and needs, this is where smaller group work may be warranted.

6. Provide students opportunities to again closely read **the most complex stretch text (Tier 3) in the set**. Once students have had opportunities to gain the needed bases of knowledge, they can return to the mentor, original, or most difficult text. Their independent reading can be followed by a discussion of the text, as well as their perceptions of their conceptual, language, and literacy skills growth.

## An Example

The following example illustrates how tiered-text set-supported instruction designed for students in Geraldo's class, especially English learners who were struggling with reading the grade level social studies text, can be implemented. Many of them, like Geraldo, were reading two to three grade levels below grade placement. Most were native Spanish speakers, but native speakers of Somali and other African languages were also part of the group.

### Step 1: Identify the Lesson Purposes and Select the Texts

Focusing on California Social Science and Common Core Literacy Standards, the following lesson sequence, which used a tiered-text set, was designed with the purpose of enabling students to gain the bases of information and language to

- discuss the reasons, challenges, and economic incentives associated with westward expansion.
- understand, speak, and read topical vocabulary and grade level academic language.



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- distinguish main ideas from details.
- determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details.
- summarize the text.
- create related notes that could support retelling, writing, and further study.

After targeting the lessons' purposes, three progressively more difficult text passages related to westward expansion—specifically the Gold Rush—were selected. Although the texts had the same vocabulary and basic content ideas and terms, the language structures, phraseology, and depth of information increased with each text. The first text was a short, teacher-created narrative nonfiction account of the discovery of gold at Fort Sutter with a Lexile level of 710. It introduced students to key concepts and was written at an easy reading level that matched many students' proficiency levels. The second, more difficult text was a longer expository excerpt from *A History of Us: Book 5: Liberty for All? 1829-1860* (Hakim, 2006), which is from the same series as another common core text exemplar for fourth through fifth grade. It contained the same terms as the first and third texts, but since the content

was less dense than that of text three, and shared less-complex sentence patterns, it provided opportunities for developing students' language, topical concepts, and close reading skills such as note-taking and vocabulary analysis. This text had a Lexile of 880, placing it in the recommended Lexile ranges for Grades 4-5. The third text, the most complex, was a longer expository excerpt, similar to a textbook in content and tone, entitled *The California Gold Rush (Cornerstones of Freedom)* (Stein, 1995). This text has a Lexile of 950, making it a text that will stretch the knowledge of these students. Literacy activities using the selected texts were then designed to address the identified lesson purposes.

Although three texts were selected for this particular lesson, this is not meant to suggest three as a magic number, or that students will all develop grade level literacy proficiency simultaneously. Rather, we encourage teachers to select the number of texts needed to scaffold information for students that supports their individually growing knowledge and independence. This number might increase once student performance begins to be assessed. We also support the idea that, as students' bases of knowledge develop, they should be encouraged to select texts that support their own reading interests and growth

(Lapp & Fisher, 2009). Short articles, poems, or visual texts like graphic novels are ideal for this purpose because they often mimic the language and features of the original text but are more motivating to students.

### **Step 2: Encourage Students to 'Try On' the Most Complex Text**

In order to determine students' bases of knowledge and needs, Geraldo's teacher, Lorena Jackson, introduced the stretch-level Tier 3 text, which was an excerpt from *The California Gold Rush (Cornerstones of Freedom)*. Before inviting the students to read, she said:

*As you know, people move from their home country to a new country for lots of reasons. They also move from place to place within a new country. They make these moves for many reasons. Today, we are going to think about the reasons that caused settlers to move from the East to West coast of the United States. To do so, I'd like you to read a text about the Gold Rush. As you read the text, think about what information the text is telling you. Think about what you understand about what the author is saying. What parts of the text are difficult or confusing to you? Notice words you already know and words or sentences that are difficult for you. Jot your thoughts on your response guide. (Figure 1)*

What I Learned	Page

Hard Words I Knew	Page

Hard Words and Sentences I Don't Know	Page

New Ideas I Learned From My Partner	Page

**Figure 1 • Response Guide—Building My Thoughts**



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After students finished reading, Ms. Jackson invited discussion that involved responding to text-dependent questions and also identifying where in the text the information had been found. Responding to text-dependent questions often involves students in deeply inferring and synthesizing information across the passage that was not literally stated. When the students appeared unsure of the reasons why settlers moved from coast to coast, she encouraged them to return to the text to find the phrases and sentences that explained why. She also asked them to identify which words the author used to show the excitement felt by the westward travelers. Their investigations involved returning to the text multiple times. Their responses suggested that because of their limited understanding of this period of history and related language skills they needed additional supports to help them make inferences about the text language and ideas. Students' responses to text-based questions identified both their bases of knowledge and needs. Additionally, students were focused on the topic of westward expansion and in a meta-cognitive manner, became aware of their own gaps in knowledge.

**Step 3: Invite Partner, Group, or Class Conversations about Inferred Meanings and Wonderings.**

Following this brief discussion, Ms. Jackson invited partner talk as a way for students to more comfortably share the information they had compiled. Often after students complete an initial read, she invites them to share their responses as a whole class. Or, if the English learners and others appear uncomfortable doing so, she invites them to partner talk first. How students share after a first read should depend on the comfort level of the speakers. As these children partner shared, Ms. Jackson had them complete the final section of their response guide (see Figure 1), which identified what they learned from a partner. Listening in as they conversed afforded her deeper insights about their understanding of this passage. It was obvious to her that these conversations helped their understandings and independence to grow.

**Step 4: Model How You, an Expert Teacher, Might Conduct a Deep Text Reading of the Least Difficult or Comfort Level Text (Tier 1) in the Text Set.**

Assessment of student understanding during the initial close reading, and their subsequent discussion(s), provides a starting point of information from which to build the knowledge, skills, and topical and academic language students need to read all of the tiered texts. In this example,

Ms. Jackson found that her students had very limited background knowledge and language needed to support a deep analysis of a sophisticated text about the Gold Rush era of American history. She explained to them that when she is presented with a passage to read on a topic that she doesn't know much about, she has to think like a detective who is always trying to get some background by looking at videos, or reading less difficult books so that she can solve or resolve whatever is stopping her from reading the difficult text. She told them that she pays really close attention to the text language, and she also keeps asking herself what parts of the text she doesn't understand. She explained that the more you know about a topic, the better able you are to read and understand harder and more complex texts on the topic. She invited them to watch a short video of life during the Gold Rush to build their background knowledge and language. After showing the video, she again asked students to think, pair, and share with a partner about what new ideas or language they noticed about life during the California Gold Rush. They again added this information to their response guides (Figure 1). From their conversations she again noted that they were continuing to develop a deeper knowledge about this period of history.



She next had them look back at the original, Tier 3 stretch text to identify the words that had caused them trouble when they engaged in their initial deep reading of the most complex text. They identified terms like *discovery*, *migrated*, and *miner*, which were conceptually similar across texts. Once the terms were listed for all to see, she asked students to first pronounce each term with her. Then she asked them to work as partners to find and highlight each word in both the original and new comfort level text, say them, and complete the word Prediction Guide (Figure 2). To do this, they needed to examine the word in context and record a prediction about its meaning. After this, they worked together, looking up the words in the dictionary and then rated their prediction as correct or incorrect. She always encouraged them to draw a picture or graphic that would support their understanding the word. Ms. Jackson then invited them to independently read the text. She wanted them to also “try on” reading this comfort level text independently before she modeled her reading. By doing so, students were able to assess their growing understanding of the topic and their sense of text investigation. After students read and discussed this text, which was the least difficult in the companion set, Ms. Jackson used a think aloud procedure to model for them how to take notes. She said,

*Let me show you one way to take notes that works for me. All of us take notes, like when we write a grocery list or write down a phone number. In school, notetaking is an important skill because we read so much information that we can't remember it all. We need to take notes to understand the main or big ideas. Also, since we are reading more than one text about the topic of the Gold Rush, we can use our notes to compare what the authors said that was the same and what was different. Let's return to the text you just read. I want you to listen while I think aloud about what I'm reading. Also notice how I take notes. When I record notes, I don't write down everything, just key words. I abbreviate information when I can, and I use bullet points. Watch as I turn the first few sentences into notes.*

Word	What I think it means	What it means	Rate my prediction

**Figure 2 • Prediction Guide**

At this point, Ms. Jackson projected the text on the document camera and read the first few sentences aloud. She said,

*In the first sentence it says 'John Sutter, a big barrel-chested man, built a large fort at Sutter's Mill in California.' I need to decide what information in the sentence is important enough to write as a note. Watch as I highlight the important words with a highlighter. I need to remember the name John Sutter, so I will highlight that. I don't really think it is important that he was a 'big barrel-chested man' because that doesn't affect the meaning or the outcome of the text. It is important that he built a large fort at Sutter's Mill in California. I don't need to highlight all the little words, just the most important ones.*

*To record my note I will start with a bullet point to show that this is a new idea. Then I will record this information next to the bullet point like this:*

- John Sutter built large fort at Sutter's Mill CA

*Notice that I did not write out California. I want to use abbreviations whenever I can, so I abbreviated the state name.*

After reading and modeling how to turn the new information into a bullet point, Ms. Jackson continued reading and invited the students to create bulleted

points with a partner. As they did so she was able to listen, observe, and offer additional instruction. She continued to model notetaking of the article in this way, creating with the students new bullet points for each important idea by demonstrating how to select key words and abbreviate where appropriate. She was showing them how an expert reader supports her comprehension.

**Step 5: Invite Students to Expand their Conceptual Knowledge, Language, and Skills while reading the Tier 2, Grade Range Appropriate Text**

During the next phase of the lesson, Ms. Jackson engaged students in reading the next most difficult text. This text, which was tiered in difficulty, served as a scaffold to the needed language, concepts, and skills that would enable the students to eventually read the fourth grade level text. This type of instruction can occur with small groups, individuals, and the whole class.

**Vocabulary.** Before reading the Tier 2, grade range appropriate text, which was a passage from *The History of Us; Book 5: Liberty for All? 1829-1860*, Ms. Jackson engaged students in reviewing key terms found in both texts by asking them to create 3" x 5" word cards and divide each card into four quadrants. For the word discovery, for example, they wrote the word in one

## Coming to California

- by ship around Cape Horn
- by boat to Panama, then overland and upriver

• \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_\_\_
- supply and demand
- \_\_\_\_\_

Figure 3 • Notetaking Guide

square, drew a picture of it in the second square, wrote a sentence using the word in the third square, and completed the phrase "It reminds me of..." in the fourth square.

**Notetaking.** After students had read the second text, Ms. Jackson provided them with guided practice in notetaking, building on the notetaking modeling shared with the Tier 1 text. She shared a skeleton notetaking guide (Figure 3) of a portion of the text and showed it on the document camera. She involved students working with partners to highlight the text, identify key terms, and create headings and notes for each bulleted point. Being able to do so indicated their depth of understanding. During this guided practice time, she offered individuals and partners help in identifying key words, reading the text, and taking notes. She was able to do this because she was continually assessing their responses to the initial instruction.

### Step 6: Provide Students Opportunities to Again Closely Read the Most Complex Text.

Once students had the appropriate language and conceptual base of information they were able to independently read the Tier 3 stretch text, the excerpt from *The California Gold Rush (Cornerstones of Freedom)*. To assess their understanding of the vocabulary and

language, students compiled notes as they independently read the text and completed a topically related cloze passage that concluded with their writing a summary statement when finished. This also assessed their understanding of the information. As they worked, Ms. Jackson again had an opportunity to offer more individualized instruction. When the students finished, she was pleased that the discussion that followed indicated that they had a much deeper understanding of the causes and problems of the westward expansion. They also had many new questions that would invite their doing further reading.

## The When of Close Reading

As illustrated by this example, a close reading of a text can occur at many times during instruction. Ms. Jackson first invited students to closely read the most complex leveled (Tier 3) text as a whole class. She used information from their performances to then plan instruction that was shared both with smaller groups during guided partner instruction, and also as she offered a shared reading-think aloud to the whole class. Inviting students to analyze a text is a literacy practice that many teachers already invite students to do. What may be the new dimension associated with the practice of close reading is asking students to return to an informational passage multiple times for

deeper and deeper analysis that is assessed by their responses to text-based questions. Additionally, the practice of having students start with the most complex text in order to gain metacognitive insights regarding their personal needs may be novel to some educators. Engaging students in close text analysis does not preclude using familiar and effective grouping routines such as guided reading, shared reading, book study, and collaborative groups. The grouping configuration is not the primary focus. The primary purpose is to support students' learning to critically analyze text-based information.

## Teacher and Student Reactions to Using Tiered Texts

We recently interviewed 15 students in Ms. Jackson's class and three of her colleagues who also used companion tiered-text sets. Our intent was to explore their thoughts about the effectiveness of this lesson format. Geraldo's response, "By the time I read the hardest one a couple of times I get it," indicated that repeated exposure to the text, and scaffolding his learning of language and information, increased his confidence as a reader. Mohammad's response, "I liked learning the hard words because there's lots of chances to learn what they mean," showed that he enjoyed the vocabulary prediction activities and repeated opportunities to interact with the vocabulary terms. Maria's response illustrated the power of using tiered-text sets to guide students to deepen knowledge and synthesize concepts: "I like going back and forth with the texts. I keep learning more."

The comments from Ms. Jackson and her colleagues suggest they found the lesson format easy to use, valuable in addressing student vocabulary needs, useful for developing skills in notetaking and writing, and enjoyable to the students. They reported that the step-by-step lesson format was easy to use and helped them identify skills crucial to students' academic success. The repetition of vocabulary terms



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and ideas provided through a series of lessons supported student ownership. Teachers also reported that teaching notetaking effectively scaffolds students' ideas and supports their retellings of increasingly complex texts. They said that they realized that students needed to be taught how to do a close reading, and that by starting with a stretch text they were able to really streamline their instruction through the use of formative assessment.

Ms. Jackson's colleagues were relieved that meeting the challenge of engaging students in a close reading didn't mean changing all of the instructional routines they had been using. They also agreed that using tiered-text sets helped them with guided reading instruction because as they watched students' first attempts to negotiate the most difficult texts, they knew what needed to be taught.

One teacher stated that he had been initially concerned that he may not have time to compile text sets especially if he had to write them, but after giving it a try he said he was sold because with the Internet, it's pretty easy to put together a text set.

*I knew my students would be motivated to read a challenging text entitled Saving Animals from Volcanoes (Aronin, 2011) (Lexile 950) as part of our earth science unit, but I knew they would need support. I first introduced this text. Then, to create the text set, I went online to KidsDiscover.com and found a text that I analyzed on the Lexile Analyzer (<http://lexile.com/analyzer>). It had a Lexile of 760, putting it at the lower end of difficulty for the fourth to fifth grade range and making it perfect for a comfortable Tier 1 text. I found the text exemplar for Grades 4-5 titled Volcanoes (Simon, 2006) (Lexile 880) in the school library, and it became my Tier 2 text. After reading these two texts, students were ready for the more difficult stretch text (Tier 3), Saving Animals from Volcanoes.*

Ms. Jackson's conclusion—"I like my students to stretch their thinking. By watching them read through a text set I can decide what to teach along the way that helps them become more and more sophisticated in their understanding and their reading"—illustrates why companion text sets may be one way to support all students attaining the skill and practice of closely reading increasingly complex texts.

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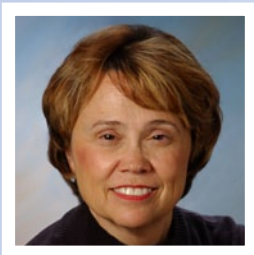
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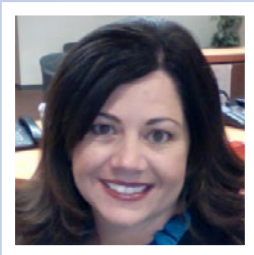
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