Have you ever found yourself...

- Using books to teach skills rather than using books to engage readers?
- Asking higher level questions only to receive literal recall from books?
- Faced with passive quiet listeners?
- Trying to endlessly elicit responses that don’t come?
- Prepared for and excited about a read aloud that did not quite live up to your hopes and expectations?
- Generally frustrated that what you know is possible seems so unattainable?

A Case for More Read Aloud

- The best place to immerse children in the experience of high quality reading
- A heavily supported opportunity for richer comprehension
- An arena for growing and talking about, and possibly changing our thoughts and interpretations (of books and of life)
- A place to assess the kinds of thinking our students are doing when they read

Read Aloud: Not Just For our Youngest Readers!

- Fight the misconception that picture books are too simple in content and structure for fluent readers
- Follow the complete arc of a story in a shorter period of time, giving room to explore narrative complexity in ways that support independent reading
- Provide older elementary students with a vehicle to explore complex social issues together
- Use chapter book read alouds (with purposeful talk) to help students understand what reading their own chapter books should feel like
Various Purposes for Reading Aloud

- Enjoying great books and loving reading
- Learning about content
- Giving children access to books they may not be able to read independently

Today's purpose:
- Engaging with texts and classmates and the world in ways that make an impact and leave us pondering things that matter
  - “For me, this book really spoke to the issue of....”
  - “Having read this book, I am left thinking a lot about....”

Defining High Quality Reading

**Harold Bloom (How to Read and Why)**

We read deeply for varied reasons:
- That we cannot know enough people profoundly enough
- That we need to know ourselves better
- That we require knowledge, not just of self and others, but of the way things are
- The search for a difficult pleasure

Impact on Student Reading Quality

- Only literal understanding → Increased inferential thinking
- Lack of engagement → Increased empathy, visualization, questioning, etc.
- Unresponsive reading → Increased ability to “talk back” to the book and to other readers
Powerful Interactive Read Alouds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comprehension and Meaning Making</th>
<th>Talk and Discourse</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Actively engaging readers in the mental “busyness” of reading well</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Implicitly engaging readers in employing comprehension strategies while making meaning of text</td>
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<td>• Modeling and engaging readers in the use of specific types of talk structures</td>
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<td>• Modeling and engaging readers in increasingly complex and higher levels of conversation</td>
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Some Ways to Support Engagement, Inquiry and Collaboration

• Dramatization
• Unanswerable Questions and Debate
• Critical Literacy and Digging Deep
• Possibilities Across the Day

Dramatization: Breathing Life into Reading

• Connect
• Feel
• Comprehend
• Interpret
• Empathize
Dramatization with Fiction

- Becoming characters; saying what is not being said
- Advising characters
- Filling in missing scenes
- Reenacting heightened, tense, confusing, or otherwise stand-out scenes

Dramatization with Nonfiction

- Use gestures to better understand traits/descriptors
- Use gestures to better understand action/movement
- Visualize descriptors and actions/movement

Opportunities for Practice

- Think across the To-With-By continuum
- Habituate this work- help it become natural and automatic (this later leads to higher quality visualization and connections)
- Make the transfer to independence explicit-this isn’t just something we do together
The Interplay of Meaning Making

- Literal ~ Holding onto the gist of the story
- Inferential ~ Making sense of and thinking more about the story, especially what’s not on the page
- Unanswerable ~ Pondering something bigger launched by the story

Critical Literacy and the Unanswerable

- Readers need to think about and beyond texts
- Readers need to grapple with and ponder meaning in texts
- Readers need to develop a comfort in modifying meaning as they read
- Readers need to come to expect that reading makes an impact on them in some way

Concepts for Critical Reading/Thinking

- Groups
- Power
- Taking Things for Granted (Naturalization)
- Fairness/Justice
- Voice/Silence
- Multiple Perspectives (Different Sides of Stories)
- Representation (Showing What People Are Like)
- Gender
- Race
- Class
- Money
- Labor
- Language
- Intimate Relationships and Families
- Relationships to Nature
- Violence and Peace
- Acting Alone or Together (Individualism/Collectivism)
When planning for lots of talk around critical literacy lenses and the unanswerable, keep an eye on/think about:
- Character decisions
- Character interactions/conflict
- Themes
- Lenses
- Perspectives

Eyeing the Possibilities

Give Them a Little Substance
- Move beyond the obvious
- Imagine possible interpretations
- Plan thinking through lenses for critical thinking/analysis
- Embrace the unanswerable
- Consider the symbiotic relationship between content and form of conversations

Continuum of Talk Skills
- Say Nothing
- Say Something that relates
- Say something that responds
- Say something that adds
Curriculum for Talk
- Keep eyes on speaker
- Be able to repeat what was said
- Use “because”
- Respond to comments
- Take it further

Growing the Talk
- Refer to the text
- Respond emotionally
- Agree/disagree
- Question
- Clarify
- Suggest possible interpretations

Something to Think About
Ignorance is not so much about not knowing an answer as it is about not knowing that there is a question, not being able to think when thinking is required.

Frank Smith
Essays into Literacy; 1983