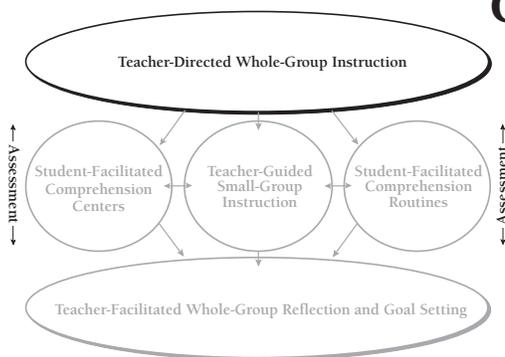


Teacher-Directed Whole-Group Instruction

The first stage of the Guided Comprehension Model, teacher-directed whole-group instruction, is the focus of this chapter. The purposes of Stage One include the following:

- To provide a meaningful, comfortable context for a community of learners
- To afford students access to multiple levels of authentic text, including those that may otherwise be viewed as challenging
- To teach comprehension strategies through explicit instruction

Organizing for Stage One



Guided Comprehension is a context that includes a variety of instructional settings, resources, and teaching methods. In Stage One of the Model, we use whole-group instruction to provide students with a positive sense of belonging to a community of learners. Student opportunities to interact with peers of mixed abilities afford additional advantages in this form of grouping. The sense of community also is fostered by student–teacher and student–peer interaction, print-rich environments, numerous opportunities to engage with authentic texts from a variety of genres, students who are active learners, and teachers who are knowledgeable about current best practice.

Because the instruction in Stage One is teacher-directed and allows us to fully support student learning, we can choose to teach from books that range in level from easy to challenging. For example, if we choose a text that is interesting to the students and works well when teaching a particular strategy but is challenging in nature, we can share it with students through a read-aloud. We may also select an easier text as the focus of the lesson because it may be the best choice for teaching a particular strategy within a particular timeframe. Because the teacher is doing the reading in Stage One, text level is not usually a factor when choosing a text. Instead, we think about text usefulness for teaching a particular strategy or set of strategies, student interests, and connections to literacy themes.

Engaging in Explicit Instruction

In working with a wide variety of literacy professionals, we have heard many comment that reading educators often describe teaching comprehension strategies as “going over” the strategies with students. “Going over” or “covering” a strategy is equivalent to mentioning it or assigning it without teaching it. Effectively teaching comprehension strategies requires more than “going over” these ideas; it requires explicit instruction: explaining, demonstrating, guiding, practicing, and reflecting.

We use authentic text to explicitly teach comprehension strategies in Stage One. Assessment is a natural part of this process. The strategies associated with the Model are previewing (activating prior knowledge, predicting, and setting a purpose), self-questioning, making connections, visualizing, knowing how words work, monitoring, summarizing, and evaluating. Regardless of the strategy being taught, the process of explicit instruction remains the same. It includes the following steps.

1. *Explain the strategy:* We begin by explaining the strategy. We focus on how the strategy works and how it contributes to comprehension. Then we invite students to make connections to their background knowledge. For example, when introducing self-questioning, we explain the strategy, describe the process, and provide an example. Next, we ask students how they use questioning in their lives to help them make connections to their background knowledge. This creates a contextual framework for the strategy. During this step, we also explain to the students the teaching idea we will be implementing to help them learn how to use the strategy. For example, if we are using Question–Answer Relationships (QAR; Raphael, Highfield, & Au, 2006) to teach the students how to ask questions while they read, we would explain that teaching idea at this point.
2. *Demonstrate the strategy:* We demonstrate strategies by reading a selection aloud and using a Think-Aloud and a visual to share ideas with students. As we think aloud, we orally explain precisely what is triggering our thoughts and how it is affecting our understanding. (For a description of the Think-Aloud strategy, see Appendix A, page 222.) This can lead to the development of personal connections, questions for clarification, and refined predictions. When using the Think-Aloud process to demonstrate strategies, we need to explain our thinking so students have a clear idea of the cognitively active process readers experience as they transact with text. For example, when demonstrating self-questioning, we read a text selection and think aloud about the questions we generate to guide our reading by stating the questions, why they occurred to us, and what responses we expect. If the strategy requires a written or sketched response, we also model that during this step. For example, if students need to write Question–Answer Relationships on a blackline, we demonstrate how to do that during this time.
3. *Guide the students to apply the strategy:* We read the next section of the text aloud, and ask the students to work with a partner to apply the strategy just taught. For example, if we explained and demonstrated self-questioning, we would then read aloud a portion of the text and ask the students to create, orally or in writing, Question–Answer Relationships about the text. Then we would discuss the questions the paired students created and read aloud another section of text.

4. *Practice the strategy*: We monitor as students work independently within the whole-group setting. We either continue reading segments of the text with reduced teacher support or invite the students to read independent-level text on their own. In either case, the students independently use the strategy, in this case self-questioning, to generate and respond to Question–Answer Relationships. During this stage, we differentiate our instruction by providing scaffolding for those students who need more support, and by releasing the task to those students who are ready to use it. The goal is to ensure that students know the strategy and the process for using it. Ultimately, the students develop a repertoire of strategies that they can use as needed when they are reading on their own.
5. *Reflect on the strategy*: We encourage students to reflect on how using the strategy helped them to understand the text. Invite students to share their reflections in small groups or with the whole class. Discuss how they can use the strategy when they are reading on their own.

We also use multiple authentic assessments in Stage One. These include observation, discussion, sketching, and informal writing.

Throughout Stage One, we scaffold students' learning. When students learn how the strategy works, they have our total support. When they engage in guided practice, they have our support as necessary. When they apply the strategy independently, our support is diminished and the students are in control.

Comprehension Strategies

During Stage One of the Guided Comprehension Model, we use a number of teaching ideas to clarify and reinforce students' understanding and application of the comprehension strategies. Although we initially use these ideas as frameworks for teaching, our goal is for students to eventually use them on their own. In this section, we explain each comprehension strategy and link it to a list of teaching ideas. These lists are not exhaustive, but they do include the ideas we use most frequently. In Appendix A, we examine each idea by describing its purposes and procedures, as well as its links to reading stages, comprehension strategies, and types of text.

Previewing

Previewing is activating background knowledge, predicting, and setting purposes for reading. The following teaching ideas support previewing:

- Anticipation/Reaction Guide
- Predict-o-Gram
- Prereading Plan (PreP)
- Probable Passages
- Questioning the Text
- Semantic Map
- Story Impressions
- Text Introductions

Self-Questioning

Self-questioning is generating queries to guide our thinking while reading. We read to answer the questions we create. The ability to generate questions is a skill that underpins not only this strategy, but also many of the dimensions of transacting with text. For this reason we always use explicit instruction to teach our students how to generate and respond to questions.

When teaching students about questioning, we explain what questions are, discuss their purposes, and delineate their multiple levels. For example, we explain that there are many reasons for generating questions, including information-seeking, connected understanding, psychological and moral reconstruction, historical speculation, imagination, and research. We also immerse students in topics from multiple perspectives by reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing to foster their questioning abilities (Busching & Slesinger, 1995).

We teach students how to generate questions at four levels: memory, convergent, divergent, and evaluative. Ciardiello (1998, 2007) suggests the following signal words and cognitive operations for each category:

Memory Questions

Signal words: *who, what, where, when?*

Cognitive operations: naming, defining, identifying, designating

Convergent Thinking Questions

Signal words: *why, how, in what ways?*

Cognitive operations: explaining, stating relationships, comparing and contrasting

Divergent Thinking Questions

Signal words: *imagine, suppose, predict, if/then*

Cognitive operations: predicting, hypothesizing, inferring, reconstructing

Evaluative Thinking Questions

Signal words: *defend, judge, justify/what do you think?*

Cognitive operations: valuing, judging, defending, justifying

When students become proficient in generating and responding to questions, they apply their knowledge to comprehension strategies, including self-questioning. The following teaching ideas support self-questioning:

- “I Wonder” Statements
- K–W–L and K–W–L–S
- Paired Questioning
- Question–Answer Relationships (QAR)
- Thick and Thin Questions

Making Connections

Making connections is thinking about the text in relation to ourselves, other texts, and the world (Keene & Zimmermann, 2007). The ability to make connections provides the basis for learning, as students connect new information with their own experiences. This, therefore, is necessary for understanding. The following teaching ideas support making connections:

- Coding the Text: Text–Self (T–S), Text–Text (T–T), Text–World (T–W)
- Connection Stems: That reminds me of..., I remember when...
- Double-Entry Journal
- Drawing Connections
- Save the Last Word for Me

Visualizing

Visualizing is creating pictures in our minds based on what is happening in the text. The following teaching ideas support visualizing:

- Gallery Images
- Graphic Organizers/Visual Organizers
- Guided Imagery
- Open-Mind Portrait
- Photographs of the Mind
- Sketch to Stretch

Knowing How Words Work

Knowing how words work is understanding words through strategic vocabulary development, including using graphophonic, syntactic, and semantic cueing systems to figure out unknown words. The graphophonic cueing system involves creating grapheme (written letter)–phoneme (sound) matches. The syntactic cueing system deals with the structure of the language. The semantic cueing system focuses on meaning. Readers use all three of these cueing systems, along with other knowledge of words, to effectively engage with text. The following teaching ideas support knowing how words work:

- Concept of Definition Map
- Context Clues
- Decoding by Analogy
- List–Group–Label
- Possible Sentences
- RIVET
- Semantic Feature Analysis
- Vocabulary by Analogy
- Vocabulary Self-Collection Strategy

Monitoring

Monitoring involves asking, “Does this make sense?” and clarifying by adapting strategic processes to accommodate the response. Monitoring is knowing if meaning is being constructed and what to do if it is not. When readers monitor, they are actively engaged in thinking while reading. The following teaching ideas support monitoring:

- Bookmark Technique
- INSERT
- Patterned Partner Reading
- Say Something
- Think-Alouds

Summarizing

Summarizing is extracting essential information—including the main idea and supporting details—from text. The following teaching ideas support summarizing:

- Bio-Pyramid
- Lyric Retelling/Lyric Summary
- Narrative Pyramid
- Paired Summarizing
- QuIP (Questions Into Paragraphs)
- Retelling
- Summary Cubes

Evaluating

Evaluating is making judgments about text. The following teaching ideas support evaluating:

- Contrast Chart
- Discussion Web
- Evaluative Questioning
- Journal Responses
- Meeting of the Minds
- Mind and Alternative Mind Portraits
- Persuasive Writing

These strategies and teaching ideas provide the foundation for instruction in Guided Comprehension. It is important to note that although we have organized the teaching ideas by strategy, many of them can be used for more than one purpose. Additionally, once we teach a particular strategy, we encourage students to add it to their repertoire so they can integrate the

strategies to engage authentically and deeply with the text. We also often contextualize the strategies in larger teaching routines, which we describe in the next section.

Comprehension Routines

Duke and Pearson (2002) define *routines* as integrated sets of practices that students can use with multiple texts in various settings. They are designed to help students gain deeper understanding of the text and to equip them with strategies they can use when reading other texts on their own. In Guided Comprehension, these include comprehension routines such as Literature Circles, Reciprocal Teaching, and Questioning the Author. We teach these routines to the students through direct instruction in Stage One, and when they become proficient they use them independently in Stage Two.

Literature Circles, Reciprocal Teaching, and Questioning the Author are described in this section. These routines, along with Directed Reading–Thinking Activity and Directed Reading–Listening Activity, are presented in a step-by-step teaching process in Appendix A.

Literature Circles

The basic goal of Literature Circles is to help students converse about texts in meaningful, personal, and thoughtful ways (Brabham & Villaume, 2000). Ketch (2005) notes, “Conversation helps individuals make sense of their world. It helps to build empathy, understanding, respect for different opinions, and ownership of the learning process” (p. 8). Researchers also report that small-group conversations motivate students, foster higher order thinking, and promote comprehension (Berne & Clark, 2008; Gambrell, 2004; Ketch, 2005; Kucan & Beck, 2003). Blanton, Pilonieta, and Wood (2007) further note that students of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds benefit from participating in such discussions.

Implementing Literature Circles. To facilitate students’ use of Literature Circles, we need to explicitly teach the concept and actively demonstrate how to engage with text (Stien & Beed, 2004). Brabham and Villaume (2000) caution against a “cookie-cutter” approach to implementing Literature Circles and instead recommend designing and using them in ways that emerge from students’ needs and challenges. These circles may not all have the same format, but they all encourage the implementation of grand conversations about the texts (Peterson & Eeds, 1990). Although the procedural decisions about the implementation of Literature Circles need to emerge from specific classrooms, there are some guidelines that do facilitate their use.

It is important to remember that the students’ personal interpretations drive the discussion. There is not a list of questions to be answered, but rather a focus on students’ inquiries, connections, and interpretations. The teacher may need to model how to converse in critical ways by doing some class demonstrations or using Think-Alouds.

Daniels (2002) and Tompkins (2006) suggest guiding principles for using Literature Circles. We have incorporated their ideas into our process for explicit instruction, which includes the following steps:

1. *Explain:* Begin by explaining that Literature Circles are discussion formats for sharing meaningful ideas about books that group members have selected to read. Note that groups are formed based on book selections and meet on a regular basis according to predetermined schedules. Explain that when we first begin using Literature Circles, each person will have a particular role, such as discussion director, passage master, connector, illustrator, or word finder. Note that everyone in the group will need to know every role, because the roles rotate every time the Circle meets. Share the Guided Comprehension Literature Circle Bookmarks (see Appendix B, page 284) with the students and explain how they can be used to record information that will later be shared within the Literature Circles.
2. *Demonstrate:* Model how Literature Circles work by gathering a preselected group of students and engaging in a Literature Circle. You and the students will have read the same segment of text in preparation for the demonstration. It is helpful if the text is one the rest of the students have already read because this will help the students who are observing to focus on the process. All circle participants should think aloud about their roles as they complete them. Then use an overhead projector to share responses from the perspective of the roles used in Literature Circles. Think aloud about how the information students recorded contributed to the discussion.
3. *Guide:* Encourage students to engage in Literature Circles by forming roles and choosing roles. Read aloud another brief text and encourage students to jot or sketch notes or reactions they have on their Literature Circle Bookmarks or in their Guided Comprehension Journals. Then guide students to use the information they recorded to facilitate their discussions. Monitor students' abilities to engage in meaningful discussion. Support or prompt as needed. Discuss the process with the whole group.
4. *Practice:* Invite students to self-select brief texts and engage in Literature Circles. Remind them to use their Literature Circle Bookmarks to record ideas they want to contribute to the discussion. Also remind them to rotate the roles.
5. *Reflect:* Think about how Literature Circles help us comprehend by providing opportunities for strategy use and discussion of text. Encourage students to complete the Literature Circle Group or Self-Assessment (see Appendix B, pages 285–286). This will lead to further goal setting.

Once students are comfortable engaging in Literature Circles, explain how they can integrate the use of comprehension strategies in the process.

There are several factors related to Literature Circles that we need to consider when preparing to implement them. In the next section, we begin by describing some of the choices students can make concerning Literature Circles and the types of text that may be used. Then we examine schedules, talk, and roles. Finally, we discuss student response and assessment.

Student choice in Literature Circles. Students make many choices within the framework of Literature Circles: They choose the books they will read, the group they will join, the schedule of their reading, and the direction of the conversation. We can set the parameters for students to make these choices by providing a variety of texts for student selection, setting minimum daily or weekly

reading requirements, and prompting ideas for conversations. However, the ultimate responsibility for the group rests with the students.

Selecting texts for Literature Circles. Although students traditionally read authentic literature while participating in these circles, they may also read high-quality informational text (McLaughlin, 2010; Stien & Beed, 2004). Text choices should relate to students' experiences, help them make personal connections, contain relevant themes and rich language, and prompt critical reflection (Brabham & Villaume, 2000; Noe & Johnson, 1999; Samway & Wang, 1996). These books should also be engaging, meaningful, interesting, and accessible for students. Including theme-based leveled texts ensures that students will be able to engage in the circles independently—without teacher assistance. Although students in Literature Circles usually read the same text, they can also read similar texts about the same theme or a variety of theme-related genres on multiple levels. The texts that are selected will need to accommodate a wide range of student interests and abilities.

There are several ways to select texts for Literature Circles. One way is to choose books that relate to a theme, topic, genre, or author (Noe & Johnson, 1999). When using this method, we choose several texts on varying levels and the students make reading choices based on interest and ability. Another way to select text is to create collections of text sets related to a theme or topic (Short, Harste, & Burke, 1996). Texts within each set are related but can vary in levels of difficulty. Students select the theme or topic and then choose the reading material from within that set. For example, text sets might focus on the theme of survival, include a variety of versions of a fairy tale, or be comprised of a group of biographies. A third way to choose reading material is to allow students to self-select from a predetermined list of titles.

After selecting the texts to be used in Literature Circles, we introduce the books to readers. Although there are various methods for doing this, we have found these two to be especially effective:

1. *Book talks*: This is a short oral overview of the book, focusing on the genre, the main characters, and the plot.
2. *Book pass*: Several books are passed among students. Each peruses a book for a few minutes, noting the title, reading the book cover, and leafing through the opening chapter. If the students find a book appealing, they jot the title in their notebook and pass the book to the next person. After previewing several titles, students make choices. To make sure that there are an appropriate number of students in each group, we often ask them to list their top two or three choices; that way, we can create groups of a reasonable size and still make sure the students get one of their top selections. Groups are formed on the basis of book selections.

It is important to remember that we may need to guide some students in making appropriate text choices. If text sets are used, we will want to introduce the theme of the set and the kinds of texts that are in it. If selections are used from an anthology, we can use them as the basis for book talks.

Schedules, talk, and roles in Literature Circles. Once the groups are formed, students meet and develop a schedule to determine how much they will read and to create meeting deadlines. At first, we can provide the schedule as a way to model how to set these goals. After reading goals

have been set, students read independently or with a buddy. At the designated group meeting time, the students gather to discuss the texts. Notes from their reading that have been recorded in their Guided Comprehension Journals inform this discussion. Prior to this point we model how to respond to text and how to use these responses to get the group conversations started.

The time spent in Literature Circles varies by length of text, but a maximum of 20 minutes is usually sufficient. We can use a mini-lesson to demonstrate a particular literary element—such as plot, theme, or characterization—on which the students may focus their discussion. It is important, though, that we allow each group's conversation to evolve on its own.

Gilles (1998) has identified four types of talk that often occur during Literature Circles: (1) talk about the book, (2) talk about the reading process, (3) talk about connections, and (4) talk about group process and social issues. Teachers can encourage all types of talk with demonstrations and gentle prompts during the Literature Circle conversations.

Some teachers prefer to use assigned roles and responsibilities as a way to guide the conversations. Daniels (2002) has found that the following roles, which students rotate, provide a wide level of conversation within the Literature Circle:

- *Discussion director*: Takes on the leadership of the group and guides the discussion. Responsibilities include choosing topics for discussion, generating questions, convening the meeting, and facilitating contributions from all members.
- *Passage master*: Helps students revisit the text. Responsibilities include selecting memorable or important sections of the text and reading them aloud expressively.
- *Connector*: Guides the students to make connections with the text. Responsibilities include sharing text–self, text–text, and text–world connections and encouraging others to do the same.
- *Illustrator/artful artist*: Creates a drawing or other symbolic response to text. Responsibilities include making the visual response and using it to encourage others to contribute to the conversation.
- *Vocabulary enricher/word finder*: Locates an interesting word or two to share with the group. Responsibilities include finding the word(s), noting the page and paragraph in which it is located, and sharing the word and its meaning based on its use in context.
- *Summarizer*: Restates the essential ideas discussed in Literature Circles at the conclusion of the Circle or as requested by group members.

The advantage of using these roles is that they represent response in a variety of learning modes. The disadvantage is that continuing to use roles over long periods of time may stifle responses. We have found that starting with clearly defined roles and then relaxing or relinquishing them as the students gain competence in Literature Circles is effective. Daniels (2002) concurs, noting that role-free discussions are the ultimate goal.

Student response in Literature Circles. After reading, students gather in their small group to share understandings from the text and make personal connections. This sharing, in the form of a conversation, helps students broaden their interpretations and gain new perspectives from the

other group members. After the sharing has concluded, groups often engage in projects to extend their thinking about the text. (For a list of literature response prompts, see Appendix C.)

Assessing students in Literature Circles. There are several ways to assess the students' comprehension, contributions, and cooperation within Literature Circles. Options include informal assessments such as self-reflection, observation, and response sheets or journal entries.

- Students may self-reflect on their contributions to the group and the group's ability to function. To record this information, we can provide forms for students to complete (see Appendix B, page 286). The group can also reflect (see Appendix B, page 285).
- We may assess individual students or the group as a whole through observation. Although the students meet independently, we can observe their conversations and make anecdotal notes about individual contributions to discussions. We can also keep a checklist about the content and depth of discussions. If the students are focused on basic recall of story events, we can choose to do a mini-lesson on making meaningful connections with texts.
- Students' response sheets or book journals provide another opportunity for assessment. In this format, students take notes about the text, document understandings, and make personal connections to bring to the discussion.

Each of these assessments provides insights into students' thinking. We should use the results of these informal measures to inform future instructional decisions.

Reciprocal Teaching

Reciprocal Teaching is a routine designed to promote students' comprehension of text. It involves four comprehension strategies—predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing—and takes the form of reciprocal interactions between group members regarding segments of text. The teacher demonstrates the “role of the teacher” in leading a strategy-based discussion about the text. Then the teacher engages in a gradual release of responsibility and students take turns engaging in that role (Palincsar & Brown, 1984).

Reciprocal Teaching has three purposes:

1. To help students participate in a group effort to bring meaning to a text
2. To teach students that the reading process requires continual use of the four strategies (predicting, questioning, clarifying, summarizing) for effective comprehension
3. To provide students with the opportunity to monitor their own thinking and learning

Implementing Reciprocal Teaching. In order to successfully implement the Reciprocal Teaching procedure, we teach it explicitly. The following steps facilitate this process:

1. *Explain.* Begin by explaining that Reciprocal Teaching is a routine that involves four comprehension strategies and reciprocal discussion among group members. Explain each strategy—predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing—and how it is used as students silently read a segment of text. Remind the students that they have already

learned how to use these strategies individually and now they will be using them together in Reciprocal Teaching.

2. *Demonstrate*: Begin by introducing the text. Next, read aloud a small section of text and demonstrate each of the strategies using verbal prompts, such as those suggested by Mowery (1995). Think aloud as you demonstrate the four strategies.

Predicting

I think _____

I bet _____

I imagine _____

I predict _____

Questioning

I wonder _____

I am curious about _____

What connections can I make?

How does this support my thinking?

Clarifying

I did not understand the part where _____

I need to know more about _____

Summarizing

The important ideas in what I read are _____

In my own words, this is about _____

Then engage in Reciprocal Teaching with a preselected demonstration group of students. Think aloud as you and the participating students prepare to read a segment of text silently and discuss it using the four comprehension strategies. Think aloud about the “role of the teacher” and how students will eventually assume that role. Give one of the four strategies and suggested prompts to each group member. Read a section of text silently. Invite students to explain how they used the strategies. Rotate strategies and repeat this process with at least three segments of text.

3. *Guide*: Read aloud another section of text and invite groups of four students to participate in Reciprocal Teaching using the process modeled. Provide the students with Reciprocal Teaching Bookmarks (see Appendix B, pages 297–298) to support their strategy use. Continue the process of reading aloud a section of text and guiding students to use the four Reciprocal Teaching strategies with at least two segments of text. Observe students as they engage in Reciprocal Teaching and assist as needed. Then discuss the text and Reciprocal Teaching with the students.
4. *Practice*: Continue the process of reading aloud a section of text, as students independently use the Bookmarks as they engage in Reciprocal Teaching with at least two sections of text. Reduce support as students demonstrate increased ability to successfully use this routine.

Invite the groups to use Reciprocal Teaching as they finish reading the selection. Engage the students in discussion of the text and Reciprocal Teaching.

5. *Reflect*: Provide opportunities for the students to reflect on their Reciprocal Teaching experiences. Encourage them to share their ideas in small groups and to record their thoughts on a Reciprocal Teaching Self-Assessment form (see Appendix B, page 299). This will lead to further goal setting.

This process provides students with opportunities to share their thinking in a reciprocal fashion. While students are participating in their groups, we can monitor their activity and scaffold the dialogue when appropriate. Once the students are skilled at using Reciprocal Teaching, they can use it as an independent comprehension routine.

Studies by Palincsar and Brown (1984) demonstrate that students with a wide variety of abilities can use Reciprocal Teaching successfully. Although originally designed to help students who could decode well but had weak comprehension skills, Reciprocal Teaching benefits all students because it encourages students to read, effectively use the strategies, and understand more challenging texts.

Selecting texts for Reciprocal Teaching. Text selection is influenced by students' abilities and interests, as well as the instructional setting in which Reciprocal Teaching is being used. Narrative texts should have complex story lines that require critical thinking. Informational texts should have complex organizations and enough information for students to distinguish essential from nonessential content.

Assessing students in Reciprocal Teaching. We can assess students in Reciprocal Teaching groups by observing their conversations and documenting their ability to successfully execute the strategies. (An observation checklist for Reciprocal Teaching is included in Appendix D, page 328.) Students may use a form to self-reflect on their contributions (see Appendix B, page 299) or they may keep notes of the ideas they contributed on their Reciprocal Teaching Bookmarks or in their Guided Comprehension Journals. Guided Comprehension Journals are used for recording students' ideas. They can be any kind of notebook. Students use the journals in all stages of the Model. For example, when engaging in Reciprocal Teaching, students can use their journals to record ideas, to respond to prompts, or to reflect on new insights. This information promotes discussion and informs future instruction.

Questioning the Author

Questioning the Author (QtA; Beck & McKeown, 2006; McKeown, Beck, & Worthy, 1993) is a text-based instructional format that helps students engage in deeper understanding of texts by learning to query the author. This process helps readers engage with text by considering text ideas in-depth and using a "reviser's eye." QtA can be used with both narrative and informational texts (Beck, McKeown, Hamilton, & Kucan, 1997).

QtA empowers the reader to actively make something understandable. Students learn to construct personal meanings and therefore make texts understandable—something mature

readers do when reading (McKeown et al., 1993). When using QtA, students learn that building understanding involves determining what information means, not just extracting it from the text (Beck et al., 1997). In other words, QtA strongly supports the view of reading as a thinking process.

Implementing Questioning the Author. Before students can use QtA, we need to explicitly teach it. The Guided Comprehension Model provides opportunities not only for this explicit teaching, but also for students' transfer and application. To teach students QtA, we follow these steps:

1. *Explain:* Begin by explaining that Questioning the Author (QtA) helps us to understand text when authors leave out important details or parts of the text. Using QtA helps readers determine what information is missing, implied, and/or needed in order to engage meaningfully with the text. Explain that we use questions, known as queries, as general probes to initiate discussion. Queries are essential components of QtA and include the following (Beck et al., 1997):
 - What is the author trying to tell us?
 - What is meant by that?
 - Why is the author telling us that?
 - Did the author say it clearly?
 - How could the author have said it better?
2. *Demonstrate:* Introduce the text. Throughout the demonstration, read aloud a portion of the text and, using Think-Alouds, verbalize queries that could be posed to discern what the author really means. Begin with a query related to the big idea of the section, such as "What is the author telling us?" Then follow up with more specific queries such as, "Why is the author telling us that?" and "How could the author have said it better?" Think aloud so students can observe this thinking process. Guide students to respond to the queries, noting that ideas can later be refuted, revised, or challenged by other others in the class. Engage the students in discussion about the text. (See Appendix A, page 222, for details about Think-Alouds.)
3. *Guide:* Then read another section of text aloud and guide students to work with partners to respond to similar queries, beginning with the big idea of the section and then analyzing what the author is saying. Engage the students in discussion to build an understanding of the text.
4. *Practice:* Continue to read aloud sections of text and gradually reduce the amount of support as the students demonstrate their ability to independently use QtA to make meaning from the text. Discuss students' query responses and encourage students to use QtA as they read texts on their own.
5. *Reflect:* Encourage students to reflect on how QtA helps them to comprehend and how they can use it in other settings.

After we demonstrate QtA with the whole class, we ask students to practice the process in small groups. An effective way to guide this practice is to provide groups with the same text and

guide them through the process of reading, querying, discussing responses in groups, and sharing answers with the class. We scaffold this process until students grasp how to generate the queries. Then we can turn over the responsibility to the students in the group, providing assistance as needed. As the students engage in this process, we observe and probe, helping them move through the text. Once the students understand how to question the author, they can engage in the process independently during comprehension routines.

QtA helps students learn to use queries as a way to interact with text for the purpose of understanding. In other words, they are constructing meaning by interacting with the text from their perspective and the author's, not just reading and recalling what is on the page (Allen & Mohr, 2008). Students can work in pairs or small groups to talk about the ideas the author is trying to convey. This cognitively active process helps students assume a responsible role in understanding text. When students become proficient in using QtA, they can use it with peers as a comprehension routine in Stage Two of the Guided Comprehension Model.

Selecting texts for Questioning the Author. Text choices for using QtA can be based on a number of factors. When demonstrating QtA for the class, the text should be one that poses some challenges, encourages critical thinking, and leaves questions to be answered. The following examples suggest ideas for selecting narrative and informational text:

- For a narrative text, a good choice would be one in which certain aspects of story elements are given, but others are implied. This may be related to plot structure, characterization, or theme. The goal is to use QtA to help students work through a complex text, “reading between the lines” and creating understandings based on what message they think the author is trying to convey.
- With informational text, a good choice would be one that provides some of the information but assumes additional reader knowledge. When students use QtA, they can learn to determine what information is missing, discounted, implied, or needed in order to comprehend text.

Another factor to consider when choosing a book to demonstrate QtA is students' background knowledge. It is important to be able to guide students through the process of generating questions for the author. To successfully create questions, students must have some knowledge of content, understanding of the type and purpose of the text, and familiarity with levels of questioning. (For ideas about teaching students how to generate questions, see the discussion of self-questioning earlier in this chapter.)

Assessing students in Questioning the Author. Because assessment in QtA is based on the questions students ask and the conclusions they draw, observation is often the most effective method. We make notes about what the students say and do, which provides the impetus for more demonstrations about the process. (An observation checklist to facilitate this process is included in Appendix D.) We also ask students to reflect on their questions and subsequent understandings as a way to assess comprehension of the text. We use a self-assessment form to facilitate documentation and provide data for later lessons and demonstrations (see Appendix B, page 296).

Using teaching routines such as Literature Circles, Reciprocal Teaching, and Questioning the Author not only provides us with frameworks for teaching, but also helps students to comprehend. This supports Duke and Pearson's (2002) belief that students can use an integrated set of strategies with any text to help build deeper understandings while they read. When students become proficient, they can use Literature Circles, Reciprocal Teaching, or Questioning the Author as independent comprehension routines in Stage Two of the Model.

When reviewing the components of the Guided Comprehension Model, it is important to acknowledge that in addition to the whole-group instruction that occurs in Stage One, all students participate in teacher-guided small groups and experience small-group, paired, and independent practice and transfer on a daily basis. This assures that students transact with multiple types and levels of text in a variety of settings.

Once Stage One of the Model is completed, the class progresses to Stage Two, which is the focus of the next chapter. This stage is comprised of three different instructional settings: teacher-directed small groups, student-facilitated comprehension centers, and student-facilitated comprehension routines.

Making Connections to Theory and Practice

To learn more about Literature Circles, Reciprocal Teaching, and Questioning the Author, read the following:

Beck, I.L., & McKeown, M.G. (2006). *Improving comprehension with Questioning the Author*. New York: Scholastic.

Blanton, W.E., Pilonieta, P., & Wood, K.D. (2007). Promoting meaningful adolescent reading instruction through integrated literacy circles. In J. Lewis & G. Moorman (Eds.), *Adolescent literacy instruction: Policies and promising practices* (pp. 212–237). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Palincsar, A.S., & Brown, A.L. (1986). Interactive teaching to promote independent learning from text. *The Reading Teacher*, 39, 771–777.