Flyleaf Publishing
Books to Remember
Teacher's Guide

Decodable Literature Library Close Reading Guide

Reading Series 1: Contents

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Reading Series 1: Overview

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Your instruction with Decodable Literature Library Reading Series 1 Close Reading Guides will use a model and scaffold approach to support students as they engage in the process of simultaneously reading and thinking deeply about text. Because Reading Series 1 texts are both decodable and robust, your students will have the unique opportunity to develop the habits and skills of competent comprehensive readers with texts they can decode independently.

Many of the language arts standards that students need to meet rely on an understanding of a story's narrative text structure (story grammar) and the academic language used to talk about it. How to get students to this understanding so that they can use their knowledge of story grammar and academic language independently is a challenge for educators. Convergent research evidence demonstrates the effectiveness of explicit and systematic instruction of story grammar and literate language to young children. Effective instruction accelerates their progress and self-regulation in using knowledge of narrative text structure to read, write, speak, and listen (Hayward and Schneider 2000; Liss-Bronstein 2012; Spencer and Slocum 2010).

These Close Reading Guides will help you deliver the explicit and systematic instruction being called for by research. This instruction will help your students integrate information and gain a coherent and deeper understanding of how story grammar elements relate to each other, including how characters' reactions to events in the story lead to the story message (Liss-Bronstein 2012). As they progress through Reading Series 1 texts, students will begin to anticipate each story's narrative structure and become comfortable with the literate language (connecting words, mental-state verbs, and feeling words) used in discussions of story relationships and characters' thoughts and feelings. Your students will also develop important strategic reading behaviors, such as thinking and talking about the text and illustrations, inference making, deliberate and controlled reflection on understanding, grappling with and identifying text structure, and examining the author's craft. These are behaviors that are critical for comprehension (Cain 2009).

An important goal of Reading Series 1 close reading instruction is to bring your students firmly into the narrative development stage 3 → 4: the reactive sequence to abbreviated episode. In this stage, students develop the use of causal chains in their retelling of stories, and they progress in their ability to talk about an initiating event that sets the story into motion and about a character's plan or goal. They are able to identify a character's feelings in response to events and see how those feelings motivate the character to take action. They understand that the actions of the character often spur a sequence of events, and that authors usually conclude a book with a resolution that can help readers understand the story message.
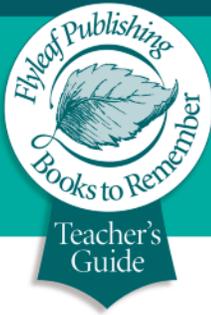
For Your Teaching Knowledge: Story Grammar 101

The story grammar model, first introduced by Stein and Glenn (1979) and further developed by others, including Westby (1999) and Moreau and Zagula (2002), is one of the systems most widely used to analyze the macrostructure of story narratives. As students' knowledge of story grammar grows, their ability to predict the course of the narrative grows, and this not only enhances their comprehension of what they read or listen to but also provides a structure for generating their own unique written stories (Duchan 2004; Johnston 2008).

Story Macrostructure

The macrostructure of the story refers to the narrative text structure, or story grammar, which consists of the setup, the initiating event, the character's internal response, the plan, the attempts to carry out the plan, the consequence, and the story resolution.

Setup: The introduction of main character(s) in the context of a setting that helps to establish a character's habitual actions. In student-friendly terms: *Who is the character? Where is the character? What is the character doing when the story starts?*

Initiating Event: An action or occurrence described as an unexpected event, problem, or dilemma for the character that causes a chain of events beginning with the character's reactions. In student-friendly terms: *What happens that is unexpected?*

Internal Response: The main character's emotional reaction to the initiating event. Often needs to be inferred from what a character says and does and/or the illustrations. In student-friendly terms: *How does the character feel about what happened?*

Plan: Evidence of the character's goal or plan to react to the initiating event. Often needs to be inferred from the character's actions. In student-friendly terms: *What does the character decide to do?*

Attempts: Actions by the main character(s) to carry out the plan or solve the problem. This can be the details of one attempt or multiple attempts. In student-friendly terms: *So how does the character carry out their plan?*
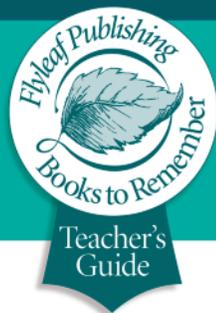
Consequence: The result of the main character's actions. The part that tells how the plan worked out. The author can make it explicit or set it up to be inferred. In student-friendly terms: *Did the plan work?*

Resolution: A response by the main character(s) to the consequence. This is the part of the story where the author lets you know how things turned out for the character and how the character felt about the turn of events. In student-friendly terms: *How does the story end? How does the character feel in the end?*

Story Microstructure

The term *story microstructure* includes the literate language used by the author to convey story elements as well as the literate language used to retell the story. This literate language connects the story grammar components and consists of transitional words that convey sequence (*first, next, then, after that, finally*), words that convey story relationships such as cause and effect (*but, so, because*), mental-state verbs (*realize, decide*), and feeling words (for example: *worried, thrilled, elated, distressed*).

The stories students generate and retell can be analyzed according to the presence or absence of story grammar components (macrostructure) and literate language structures (microstructure) (Westby 1999; Moreau and Zagula 2002, Moreau 2009; Petersen, Gillam, and Gillam 2008). By examining students' narrative behaviors and identifying the language structures that they use, teachers can determine a student's stage of narrative development and make a teaching plan that supports the student's progress toward higher stages of narrative development. The systematic and explicit teaching of story macrostructure and microstructure can promote a student's progression to more advanced stages of development and lead to improved story comprehension and use of the literate language that conveys understanding (Liss-Bronstein 2012; Moreau and Zagula 2002, Moreau 2009).

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Instructional Features of These Guides

The following section provides a detailed description of features of the Close Reading Guides that enable you to fully support students in the development of their close reading skills.

Text-Dependent Questions

Text-dependent questions will be the central feature of your close reading instruction. The text-dependent questions you will pose to students have been carefully designed to lead students to an understanding of what the text says, how the text works, and what the text means (Fisher and Frey 2015). You will ask these text-dependent questions to guide your students in a discovery of the story's overall text structure (its story grammar components) and to ultimately understand the story at a deeper level of meaning.

Boxed Scaffolds

A major outcome expected from close reading instruction is for students to support their answers to questions with key details (evidence) from the text using academic language. Often, student responses to general understanding questions will be incomplete or inadequate. Boxed scaffold questions are provided to enable you to help students identify the evidence and key details they need to express a thorough general understanding of the text they have just read. After all of the scaffold questions have been posed, you will conclude the instruction with a statement that models the expression of a complete general understanding of what has been read. If students can arrive at a complete general understanding without the boxed scaffolds, skip the scaffold questions and move on to the next activity.

Purpose Statements

We provide purpose statements that align with each day's instruction. These purpose statements can be found in a green box in the right-hand margin at the beginning of each day's instruction. Select from the statements and/or adapt them to fit with your instructional focus, and post them for students before they begin reading. Purpose statements focus student attention on specific reading strategies, allowing them to self-regulate the process of making meaning.

Story Grammar Bookmarks

A set of student bookmarks aligned with the teaching of narrative text structure (story grammar) are designed to be used as a component of every narrative reading. The bookmarks serve three distinct purposes: (1) they mark the section of assigned reading; (2) they identify the story grammar component that is the focus of the assigned reading (the story setup, initiating event, and resolution); and (3) they offer questions to guide students' independent thinking during and after the reading of the designated section. Story grammar bookmarks help students become independent in using narrative text structure to guide their comprehension.

Margin Notes

Margin notes are included at key points in the instruction to help you prepare for activities, to remind you of the importance of key instructional strategies, and to clarify the meaning of terminology used in story grammar instruction in these guides. We suggest you read the margin notes as you prepare for each day's lesson.

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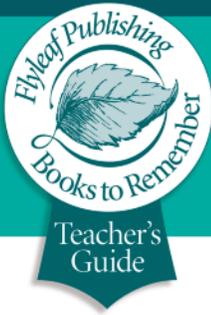
Close Reading Instruction

Because of the length and complexity of Reading Series 1 books, the individual student reading and close reading instruction for each book takes place over a period of four days. Readings are broken into logical sections based on the story grammar of the book. Each day's close reading instruction is designed to follow instruction with Flyleaf's Foundational Skills Guides, which prepares students to read the words they will encounter on each day's assigned reading. Your instructional pacing will vary depending on the needs of your students, but in total, Day 1 instruction is designed to take about 25–35 minutes.

Foundational Skills Instruction (Days 1–4)
Foundational skills activities are designed to consolidate knowledge of English phonics and spelling patterns, promote reading complex closed syllables with automaticity, and further students' skill in reading multisyllabic words. The activities in the Day 1–4 sections of each book's Foundational Skills Guide prepare students for reading the words they will encounter in each day's reading. In the first four days of instruction for each Reading Series 1 title, you will be working from both the Foundational Skills and Close Reading Guides.

Explore Book Cover (Day 1 only)
The focus of this brief exploration is thinking about what the author and illustrator want readers to know about the book from the title and cover illustration. Scaffolds are provided to help students connect the illustration with the book title, and to consider clues that are provided about the character and setting. In the poetry guides, this activity is used to help students identify the topic of the poem from the title and illustration. This engages students in metacognitive behaviors before they begin reading and is especially important for students with weak comprehension skills (Cain and Oakhill 2007). Research has demonstrated that thinking about a book's title prior to reading helps readers activate background knowledge, an important factor in text comprehension.

Begin and Continue Individual Reading (Days 1–4)
Begin each day's individual reading by posting purpose statements and asking students to place the appropriate story grammar bookmark at the end of the page range of the day's reading. As students in the group read quietly to themselves, take the time to listen to individual students read, give feedback on their word pronunciation, and encourage the application of decoding strategies. Pronunciation accuracy improves when students receive immediate feedback after an error occurs. Guidance should also be provided to help your students effectively use punctuation and phrasing to improve prosody.

Provide and Generate a Recap (Days 2–3)
Close reading instruction on Days 2 and 3 begins with a story recap. Providing a recap allows you to model an event summary with story relationships expressed. The purpose of the recap is to remind students what happened in previous readings and to provide them with a model of literate language.

Reread (Day 4 only)
Close reading instruction on Day 4 begins with time for a reread of the text that has been covered so far. This provides an opportunity for additional fluency practice and for students to hear the story again in preparation for a deeper discussion of meaning.

Examine What the Text Says (Days 1–4)
The focus of this activity on Days 1 and 2 will usually be on student's general understanding of the story setup. Assess your students' general understanding of what the text says by asking the general understanding question. If students need help arriving at a complete general understanding, use the boxed scaffolds. If scaffolding is not necessary, move on to the next section. As the story progresses, focus will shift to recognition of the initiating event and the main character's reaction to that event. You will generally use text-dependent questions to evaluate and guide students' understanding of the element of story grammar that is the focus of the reading.

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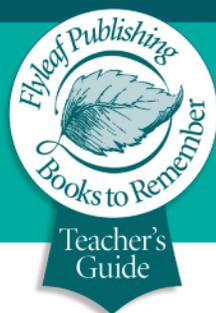
Examine How the Text Works (Days 1–4)

In this activity, you will use think alouds and modeling to help students understand how the author's craft—e.g., word choice, punctuation, and the integration of text and illustrations—enhance the meaning of the story.

Discussing the author's word choice provides an opportunity for vocabulary instruction. The vocabulary activities use context (text and illustrations) to guide students in understanding word meanings. This process of clarifying the meaning of words promotes self-monitoring to assess whether or not a word is understood in context as well as an understanding of how the word choice may enhance the meaning of the story. Students will have opportunities to use newly acquired vocabulary in answering text-dependent questions and in collaborative discussions and writing.

The analysis of the author's use of punctuation helps students to reflect on meaning, builds a sense of suspense or anticipation, contributes to students' understanding of characters' feelings, and cues students to read with expression.

Carefully considering the integration of the text and illustrations will help students understand how to confirm meaning of vocabulary words, monitor comprehension, and make inferences about what is happening in the story. At this level of literacy development, the interplay of text and illustrations is an important element of inference making as a strategy to get at text structure and deeper levels of meaning (Liss-Bronstein 2012).

Explore What the Text Means (Day 4 and/or Day 5)

By Day 4, students have gained a general understanding of the text, have unraveled the story grammar, have examined how the text works and are ready for deeper discussions related to the story's resolution and message.

Text-dependent question scripts with integrated scaffolding and think alouds are designed to support students' understanding of how the story's resolution can provide evidence for the story message and/or author's purpose for writing the story. The goal is for students to learn to develop the habit of asking themselves, "What can I learn from this story or this character?" We want students to support their answers with evidence from the text and/or illustrations. This can lead to deeper discussion about a character's feelings or further examination of the interplay between the text and the illustrations. It is also an opportunity to compare and contrast stories that have similar messages.

Retell Activities

By conducting the Generate a Retell cloze activity on Day 4 of instruction, you can provide a model for the expression of story relationships and the causal chain of events using language cue words while engaging students in active participation. The model retellings systematically develop students' use of important connecting words (cohesive ties) that convey story relationships. These microstructure skills associated with story grammar support oral language development, reading comprehension, and writing.

Retell practice is also integrated into examination of what the text says during the appropriate day's instruction. By retelling the initiating event and character attempts to carry out a plan, students gain oral language practice that is critical at this stage of development as it promotes accelerated growth in narrative skills. To improve oral language skills, children must practice speaking in an environment where they are exposed to appropriate modeling and encouraged in the expansion of the use of literate, or academic, language (Liss-Bronstein 2012).

Demonstrating Understanding (Day 5)

These activities, which integrate speaking, reading, writing, and listening, allow students to demonstrate understanding of what they have read and to express themselves as writers, illustrators, and discussion partners. Using story vocabulary, story grammar knowledge, and important ideas generated during Day 1–4 instruction, students discuss and write opinions, story extensions, narratives, and character sketches. Academic language frames offer support in students' use of literate language when speaking and writing.
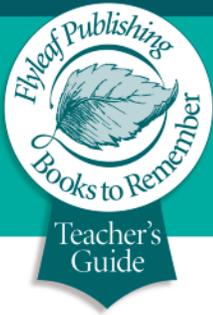
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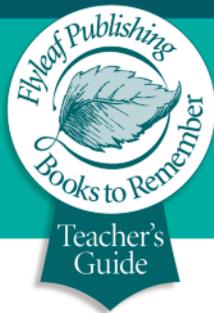
Create a Story Matrix (Day 5)

Depending on time available, you may choose to engage students in the creation of a story matrix as a group. This activity provides an opportunity for comparing and contrasting the experiences of characters, settings, initiating events, story resolutions, and themes/messages. The components of a matrix provide a spark for collaborative conversations about story grammar elements. A matrix, by definition, is an environment where something originates or develops. Students can use the matrix to integrate new information and see relationships across stories. This will add to students' story schema and language development along with supporting collaborative discussions.

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Reading Series 1: Scope and Sequence

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This chart illustrates the close reading skills that are modeled and scaffolded in Decodable Literature Library Reading Series 1 Close Reading Guide instruction.

Narrative Development Stage 3 → 4: Reactive Sequence to Abbreviated Episode*

Modeled or Scaffolded Instruction

Print Concepts and Text Features
- Text features (captions, labels, labeled diagrams, boldface headings, glossaries).**

Story Structure
- Identifying and expressing the characters' plans, goals, intentions, and/or motivations.
- Expanding sentences to convey the actions of characters/events that impact the story and causal relationships, including plan, problem/solution, and attempts.
- Identifying and expressing an initiating event.
- Identifying the feelings of characters based on the evidence in the illustrations and text and connecting the feelings back to events in the stories; using the connecting word *because* to make the feelings connection clear.

Illustration-Story Relationship
- Monitoring comprehension.

Vocabulary
- Asking and answering questions to help determine or clarify the meaning of words and phrases in a text.
- Speaking in complete sentences.

Retelling
- Using mental state verbs (*realize*, *decide*) in retelling to explain characters' actions or goals.

Exploring Common Themes
- Explore theme, make text-to-text connections, and compare and contrast the experiences of characters in stories.

Identifying and Categorizing Key Words and Details
- Use various text features (e.g., headings, labels, captions, glossaries) to understand key details or information in a text.**

Integrated Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening Activities
- Adding drawings to oral and written descriptions when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings.
- Practicing oral language with and without sentence frames to facilitate collaborative conversations followed by writing about text.
- Sharing responses to text to promote speaking and listening skills.

Text-Dependent Questions
- Exploring poetic devices that suggest feelings and appeal to the senses, including rhyme, alliteration, repetition, and personification.
- Integrating the text features, illustrations, and text in informational text to gain a deeper understanding of the topic.**
- Recognizing the features of different text structures.
- Becoming familiar with the academic language that identifies evidence to support inferences made about what was read and to explore the author's craft for stories, descriptive, and informational text.

*By the end of this stage of the Scope and Sequence, students develop use of causal chains in their retelling of stories, progressing in their ability to talk about an initiating event that sets the story into motion and about a character's plan or goal of event chains. Students begin to talk about characters' feelings and reactions to events, and as this ability progresses, an understanding of story relationships begins to emerge, along with consistent use of *but*, *so*, and *because* to connect ideas and explain story relationships.

**More relevant to informational texts, which are not included in Reading Series 1.