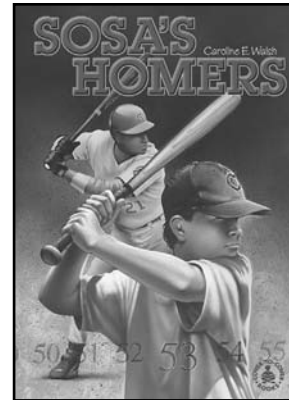
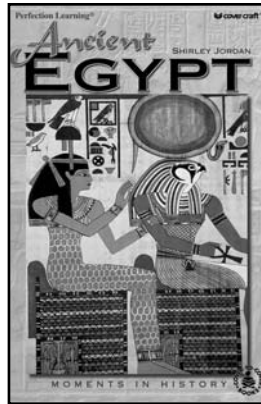


Research-Based Reading Comprehension Instruction for Struggling Readers

Cover-to-Cover

High-Interest/Low-Readability Books



Overview

Children's reading skills do not develop at an equal rate. Students' reading levels in an average middle school heterogeneous classroom span eight to ten years, with some students behind more than five reading levels. Students who fail or struggle or are at risk by middle school have little motivation to read because of unsuccessful reading experiences in the past. Yet reading is exactly what they need to do to increase their skills.

“First, we know that children who are motivated and who spend more time reading are better readers (Anderson, Wilson & Fielding, 1988; Morrow, 1992; Taylor, Frye & Maruyama, 1990). ...supporting and nurturing reading motivation and achievement is crucial to improving education prospects for children who find learning to read difficult (Allington, 1991; Smith-Burke, 1989).”
—Allington, 1998.

Struggling readers need to read materials that are interesting and instructionally appropriate. Their reading should be extensive and varied. “The amount of time spent reading separates successful from unsuccessful readers (Anderson, Wilson & Fielding, 1988), and that allowing students to just read is the only way for them to become truly engaged in reading.” (Nell, 1988; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) Struggling readers should have the opportunity to choose books from genres that are most interesting to them. Reading should become an enjoyable activity rather than a dreaded or boring task.

The high-interest/low-readability series of fiction and nonfiction books in Perfection Learning's Cover-to-Cover program offer reading success to children in grades two through nine. The more than 300 titles are written and designed for students who are reading at least two years below grade level. All reflect the recent research findings about how to improve comprehension of struggling readers.

Cover-to-Cover Books	Flesch-Kincaid Reading Level	Interest Level
Chapter Books	Grades 1-4	Grades 2-6
Chapter 2 Books	Grades 1-3	Grades 4-6
Novels	Grades 2-3	Grades 4-9
Timeless Classics	Grades 1-4	Grades 4-9
Informational Books	Grades 2-6	Grades 4-9

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Research on Reading Comprehension Instruction for Teaching Struggling Readers

Interest Level

“Far more important than readability is interest. When students have strong interest in what they read, they can frequently transcend their so-called reading level. Indeed, many educators and researchers consider interest to be a paramount factor in all learning.”

—*Worthy, 1998*

Students who do not enjoy reading will never engage in a text. But it's difficult to find fiction and nonfiction that is both interesting and accessible to below-grade-level readers. Teachers too frequently resort to “baby books”—texts that are below the student's reading and interest levels.

The Cover-to-Cover books encompass a wide variety of topics to give students and teachers many choices: mystery, adventure, sports, animals, classics, fantasy, humor, American and ancient history, geography, environmental disasters, the natural world, biographies, cultural tales, and heroes. Readers can select from fiction, nonfiction, narrative informational books, narrative biographies, fables, myths, and folktales. Fictional characters reflect different cultural groups and real life situations, and main characters generally match the age of the intended interest (grade) level.

Authentic Text

Struggling readers should have the opportunity to interact with authentic texts—real stories written by real authors (Routman, 2000). The Cover-to-Cover books are written by a variety of authors, including classroom teachers. These books present an opportunity to “pull out” students with reading difficulties and provide books that will engage them. Students can have lively discussions with their peers who are reading the same title. This strategy takes students

Text Features

Fountas and Pinnell (1996) have identified factors in a text that affect the reading process. When matching books and students, teachers should consider

- page length
- size and layout of print
- language structure
- text structure and genre
- predictability and pattern of language
- illustration support

These text features should vary according to grade level.

The interest levels of the Cover-to-Cover books progress from early elementary to middle school. The reading level of each book is at least two years below the intended grade level, but the books themselves look very much like texts that on-grade-level students are reading.

Series books are excellent for struggling readers. These books provide predictability, comfort, and easy practice (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). Once students have read one or two books in a series, they are hooked. The 13-title Kooties Club Mysteries Series are Cover-to-Cover Chapter Books for students in grades two through six. The five young boys live in an inner city environment and they love solving mysteries. And mysteries they do find! They solve the mysteries of Apartment A-13, the Too Crisp Cash, Ben Franklin's Ghost, the Missing Heart, the Flying Mummy, and other unexpected predicaments. Other series in the Novels line, including David's Adventures, The Five Winters Series, and the Cody Smith Mysteries, offer the same allure for older students in grades four through nine.

beyond learning from basals to interacting with a real book. Many reluctant readers will finish reading a complete book for the first time—an experience that will build their self-esteem and motivate them to read more.

GLOSSARY	
ancestry	line of descent or relating back to one's earlier relatives
assembly center	temporary camp where Japanese Americans were housed until permanent camps were built
barb	short, sharp piece of wire sticking out from the main strand
barracks	set of plain, dreary buildings used for housing
bayonet	knife attached to the end of a rifle

65

Chapter Books & Chapter 2 Books • Grades 2–6

These books are designed for students who are making the transition from story books to chapter books. The reading levels of individual books span grades one through four. Text features include

- 14-point type size
- ample white space
- colorful illustrations with a close text match
- full-color covers with appealing illustrations or photos
- short chapters
- a book length of 56 to 72 pages
- short sentences and paragraphs
- carefully chosen vocabulary
- natural-sounding dialogue

The historical fiction and informational Chapter Books introduce students to content-area text support features including historical photographs and illustrations, sidebars, heads, subheads, glossaries, and indexes.

Novels and Timeless Classics • Grades 4–9

These books have more sophisticated text features for older students who read below grade level.

- fully developed plots
- illustrations to introduce chapters and highlight plot
- multicultural characters
- sophisticated covers
- small trim size
- 12-point type
- wide variety of fictional genres
- manageable chapter lengths

Informational Books • Grades 4–9

The more than 75 informational books span reading levels two through six. The text structure introduces students to features of nonfiction books.

- organizational patterns, including cause/effect, comparison/contrast, concept/definition, description, and sequential
- tables, charts, and graphs
- head and subheads

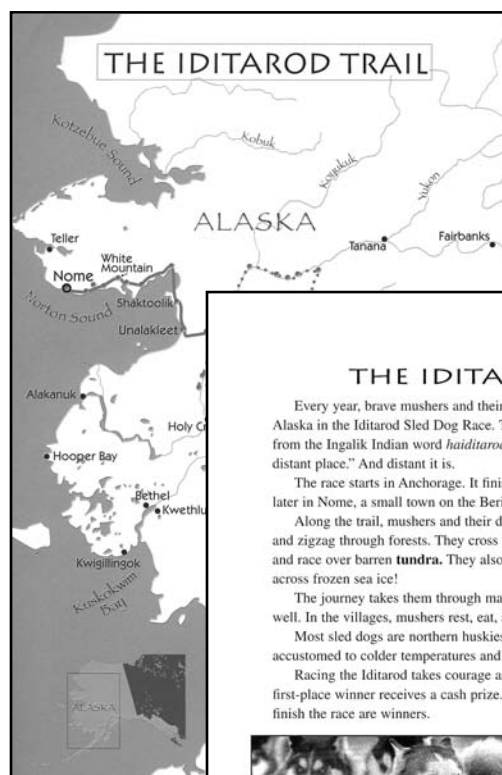
Nonfiction

“...students who report doing more nonfiction reading have higher reading achievement.”

—Routman, 2000

Nonfiction is an important genre for reluctant readers. First, most students are drawn to the highly interesting nonfiction or informational topics. “In particular, books about drawing, animals, cars, and sports are ‘always checked out’ according to middle school librarians” (Worthy, 1996). Second, the text structure helps students to be more deliberate and predictive readers.

The Cover-to-Cover Informational Books offer a wide range of topics that will pique students’ interest, such as animals, the natural



THE IDITAROD

Every year, brave mushers and their dog teams race across Alaska in the Iditarod Sled Dog Race. The word *Iditarod* comes from the Ingalik Indian word *haiditarod*, which means “a distant place.” And distant it is.


The race starts in Anchorage. It finishes over 1,000 miles later in Nome, a small town on the Bering Sea coast.

Along the trail, mushers and their dog teams cross riverbeds and zigzag through forests. They cross two mountain passes and race over barren **tundra**. They also travel over 50 miles across frozen sea ice!

The journey takes them through many small villages as well. In the villages, mushers rest, eat, and feed their dogs.

Most sled dogs are northern huskies. Huskies are accustomed to colder temperatures and are born to run—fast!

Racing the Iditarod takes courage and endurance. The lucky first-place winner receives a cash prize. But in the end, all who finish the race are winners.



5

Sample pages from the *The Iditarod* Informational Book

- historical photographs and illustrations
- sidebars
- maps
- glossaries and indexes
- boldface vocabulary words in text
- appropriate length—56 to 72 pages
- full-color covers

environment, heroic adventures, history, sports, and biographies. The titles are arranged by topic so students can delve into a subject—Ancient Worlds, Mysteries in History, American History, Environmental Disasters, Thrills and Adventures, Sports, Adventure, the Natural World, and Geography.

Adults read more nonfiction than fiction, so giving students success with informational books makes it more likely they will be lifelong readers.

Direct Instruction of Comprehension Skills

“Readers experiencing difficulties benefit from immediate intervention. This direct instruction can be done individually or in a pull-out group. The mini-lesson should target a particular skill or skills and be short in duration. Intervene and remediate early, strategically, and frequently.”

—Kameenui, 1993

The teacher support materials for the Cover-to-Cover program are called *Portals* Teacher Resources. These books contain reproducible materials that can be used for immediate remediation. All of the activities are based on the context of the corresponding Cover-to-Cover book for relevant instruction and learning.

Activities in the *Portals* Teacher Resources vary by grade level and include direct instruction of

- word attack skills
- study skills
- comprehension skills
- spelling
- vocabulary
- social studies reading skills
- science reading skills
- math reading skills

Conclusion

“No single method, program, or book will help accelerate the needs of all children or any subset of children. Only knowledgeable, reflective teachers can respond to the diverse and ever changing need of individual students.”

—Ivey, 2000

The Cover-to-Cover high-interest/low-readability books give teachers hundreds of high-interest books with supporting skills activities

for their reluctant readers. With strategic use of these materials, teachers can help struggling readers become motivated readers.

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