A Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction, Grades 4 to 6

Volume One: Foundations of Literacy Instruction for the Junior Learner
1. The Junior Learner
2. Knowledge and Skills Required for Literacy
3. Principles of Effective Literacy Instruction

Volume Two: Assessment

Volume Three: Planning and Classroom Management
1. Planning
2. Classroom Environment and Resources

Volume Four: Oral Language
1. An Overview of Oral Language in the Junior Grades
2. Talking, Listening, and Thinking
3. Accountable Talk
4. Formal Talk

Volume Five: Reading
1. Reading in the Junior Grades
2. Reading, Comprehending, and Responding
3. Reading Instruction
4. Reading Assessment

Volume Six: Writing
1. Writing in the Junior Grades
2. Writing Instruction
3. Assessment of Writing
4. Sample Writing Lessons

Volume Seven: Media Literacy
1. An Overview of Media Literacy in the Junior Grades
2. Approaches to Teaching Media Literacy
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A Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction, Grades 4 to 6

A Multi-volume Resource from the Ministry of Education

VOLUME FOUR

Oral Language

2008
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INTRODUCTION

A Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction, Grades 4 to 6 is organized into several volumes. The first three volumes provide the foundation for effective literacy instruction and literacy learning in the junior grades. Subsequent volumes go more deeply into what and how to teach to help all students experience success.

Volume Four, “Oral Language”, builds on the research findings and best practices in Literacy for Learning: The Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy in Grades 4 to 6 in Ontario. It provides a framework to support the implementation of learning activities that address the expectations in the Oral Communication strand of the Language curriculum. Additionally, it provides in-depth discussions of the various forms of oral language that are used in classroom instruction and learning.

Oral language is fundamental to thinking and learning in all areas of the curriculum. Information in this volume supports learning expectations in the other Language strands (Reading, Writing, and Media Literacy) and in other curriculum subject areas (including Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Health and Physical Education, and the Arts). There is a particularly strong connection between oral language and learning to express one’s self in the arts. A student’s ideas, interpretation, thinking, imagination, knowledge, and understanding are often first expressed in talk and then extended and enriched in further discussion and presentation.

The pedagogical approach to oral language instruction presented in this volume is based on Vygotsky’s theory of the zones of proximal development. Through modelling, demonstration, support, and guidance, teachers support the students’ movement from their zone of proximal development to a zone of actual development, in which they can work independently. (For a discussion of Vygotsky’s theory and its application, see “Zones of Cognitive Development” in Volume One [pp. 78–79].) This guide is constructed to reflect this progression, both in its thematic discussions of oral language development in the junior grades and in the instructional tools and practices it presents.

The sample lessons and learning experiences presented in this volume are designed to respond to the needs, interests, and growing awareness of students in the junior grades. As students encounter increasingly complex texts, ideas, and information, their pathways
to learning are eased and enriched by talk, discussion, and oral exploration. All students benefit from participation in oral language activities that involve higher-order thinking skills. Oral language can provide easy access to learning and enable students to make use of a wide range of abilities and skills. Students who are learning English as a new language benefit from inclusion in all oral language activities, whether or not they participate in them actively. Students at an early stage of new-language acquisition may not talk much in class, but by listening they unconsciously absorb and begin to sort through the uses, meanings, and nuances of the language.

Students in the junior grades look for relevance and meaning in what they learn. They are eager to explore the complex issues that they encounter in their daily lives, the texts they read, the media, and the world around them. They are highly motivated to develop new understanding through thoughtful analysis of both the content and presentation of ideas and information. Many students most readily express their interests and concerns through oral language. Use of oral language in class, whether in the context of informal daily talk or organized discussion, encourages students to exchange and compare ideas and points of view. It also helps them understand and empathize with the diverse experiences and perspectives of those around them.

**The Organization of This Volume**

This volume is organized into four chapters. The first chapter provides an overview of oral language in the junior grades. The remaining three chapters deal with uses of oral language from inner speech and daily talk for learning, to modes of more formal expression in discussions and presentations. These groupings are provided to assist teachers in selecting a focus for teaching and program organization. Information from research and theory is presented in each chapter, along with a set of classroom practices that show teaching and learning in action through:

1. **Sample Learning Experiences**, which provide brief snapshots of student–teacher interactions and activities that support language learning;

2. **Sample Lessons** that provide detailed plans, which teachers may use as models or resources for classroom teaching and learning.

The learning experiences and lessons in each chapter acknowledge the complex and recursive nature of language learning, as students use many forms and skills of talking, listening, and thinking simultaneously within any one learning activity.

In combining examples of classroom practice with discussions that help build teacher knowledge of instructional content and pedagogical theory, this volume weaves together
the information needed to plan and implement a thoughtful, effective language program. Within each learning experience or activity, teachers use modelling, demonstration, guided practice, and support to shift gradually the responsibility of using skills and strategies independently to the students.

Chapter 1 introduces the three main categories of oral language, discusses the place of oral language within the junior grades’ curriculum, and examines the roles and responsibilities of the teacher and students in oral language instruction. It also addresses the ways in which student talk can be used for assessment and provides guidance on gathering evidence of student achievement through teacher observation, using assessment information to inform instruction, and assessing the overall effectiveness of oral language instruction.

Chapter 2 is concerned with talking and listening in supporting student learning. It also examines the relationship between talking and thinking. Sample lessons provide models of teaching that help students listen to, talk about, and understand complex oral texts in a highly supportive environment. The lessons show how students can develop the discussion skills they need to mine increasingly complex texts and informational materials for deeper insight and understanding.

Chapter 3 discusses the skills and strategies needed to engage in discussion and debate. It emphasizes the importance of discussion in supporting inquiry-based learning and outlines tactics to use in teaching specific skills and strategies. Sample lessons and learning experiences show how discussion and debate can be used to explore issues and assess the importance of information in other subject areas.

Chapter 4 focuses on the use of scripted and/or rehearsed forms of oral presentation. It discusses the skills needed for successful presentation and storytelling and includes sample lessons that demonstrate uses of the formal aspects of oral language in the junior grades. The information in this chapter will assist teachers in helping students gradually develop the skills and strategies needed to engage in the “high-risk” public forms of oral expression and presentation, including dramatic performances.

**Key Messages for Teachers and Students**

In each volume of the *Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction*, teachers are reminded of the key messages (listed in the chart on page 4) that are intended to help them address the goals of the junior literacy program. The key messages are fundamental ideas that underlie all of the approaches, strategies, and tools described in this guide. They answer the question, “Why am I teaching this material, in this way, to this group of students, at this time?” Teachers can use these key messages to guide their practice.
Key Messages for Teachers and Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effective literacy teachers in Grades 4 to 6 understand that:</th>
<th>Successful students in Grades 4 to 6 understand that:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy instruction must be driven by equitable ongoing assessment.</td>
<td>Assessments are a way for the teacher and me to understand how well I am learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy instruction must be explicit and relevant to students’ lives.</td>
<td>I learn best when I am reading and writing for a real purpose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy instruction must be differentiated, inclusive, and respectful of all students.</td>
<td>Some tasks will be difficult, but I can learn the strategies that I need to succeed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ unique identities and diverse experiences can contribute greatly to a rich learning environment.</td>
<td>I have valuable knowledge and experiences that I can share with my classmates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk is the foundation for literacy.</td>
<td>Accountable talk helps me to improve my reading, writing, and thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading, writing, talking, listening, thinking, viewing, and representing are reciprocal literacy processes.</td>
<td>Reading will make me a better writer, and writing will make me a better reader. Talking, listening, and thinking will make me a better reader and writer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students need to become proficient in “multiliteracies”, involving texts of all types.</td>
<td>I need to use my literacy skills to work with texts of all types.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students need to learn that their literacy skills are transferable to all content areas.</td>
<td>I can apply the strategies and skills that I learn in Language to all subjects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students learn best when they are motivated and actively engaged in their learning.</td>
<td>If I am actively involved in making meaning when I read and write, I will improve my learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit feedback given immediately after assessment leads to improved levels of student achievement.</td>
<td>The teacher’s feedback will help me to improve my learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By gradually releasing responsibility for learning to students, teachers help students improve their learning and develop a greater level of independence.</td>
<td>The strategies I am learning will help me become a proficient and independent reader, writer, and communicator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When students are encouraged to assess their own work and set their own goals, they take ownership of their learning.</td>
<td>I need to think about my learning and set goals for it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic literacy experiences help students develop skills and attitudes that will serve them throughout, and improve the quality of, their lives.</td>
<td>Knowing how to read, write, and communicate effectively will help me be successful during my school years and throughout my future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacognitive skills give students a growing awareness of themselves as learners and a greater degree of independence.</td>
<td>Thinking about my thinking will help me understand what I have learned, make decisions about my learning, and become a more independent learner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical-thinking and critical-literacy skills are the tools students need to develop into active, responsible participants in the global community.</td>
<td>I need to think critically about all the texts I encounter and ask myself questions about the accuracy and fairness of the stories or information in these texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional collaboration and ongoing learning help teachers develop a deeper, broader, more reflective understanding of effective instruction.</td>
<td>Working with others gives me new ideas and helps me to reflect on and expand my own thinking and learning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WORKING TOWARDS EQUITABLE OUTCOMES
FOR DIVERSE STUDENTS

All students, regardless of their socioeconomic, ethnocultural, or linguistic background, must have opportunities to learn and grow, both cognitively and socially. When students feel secure in their learning environment and see themselves reflected in what they are learning, their true potential will be reflected in their achievement. A commitment to equity and inclusive instruction in Ontario classrooms is therefore critical to enabling all students to succeed in school and, consequently, to become productive and contributing members of society.

To create the right conditions for learning, teachers must take care to avoid all forms of bias and stereotyping in resources and learning activities that can quickly alienate students and limit their ability to learn. Teachers should be aware of the need to provide a variety of experiences and multiple perspectives, so that the diversity of the class is recognized and all students feel respected and valued. Learning activities and resources for teaching language should be inclusive, provide examples and illustrations, and use approaches that reflect the varied experiences of students with diverse backgrounds, abilities, interests, and learning styles.

The following are some strategies for creating a learning environment that recognizes and respects the diversity of students and allows them to participate fully in the learning experience:

- Provide reading opportunities with contexts that are meaningful to all students (e.g., texts that reflect the students’ interests, home-life experiences, and cultural backgrounds).
- Use language resources that reflect diverse ethnocultural groups (including Aboriginal Peoples).
- Use multiple text forms and children’s literature that reflect various cultures and customs.
- Respect customs and adjust teaching strategies as necessary (e.g., a student may come from a culture in which it is considered inappropriate for a child to ask for help, express opinions openly, or make direct eye contact with an adult).
- Consider the appropriateness of references to holidays, celebrations, and traditions.
Twenty per cent of the children in English-speaking schools in Ontario enter school as speakers of a language other than English or speaking a variety of English significantly different from that used for instruction in Ontario schools. In order to catch up to English-speaking students who have been learning English all their lives, they have to acquire English two or three times as fast as their peers in the same grade. This accelerated learning process takes five or more years. Although they have different starting points in oral English and in English literacy, English language learners can reach the same high standards expected of all Ontario children, when given sufficient time, specialized support, and the additional scaffolding they need.

- Provide clarification if the context of a learning activity is unfamiliar to students (e.g., describing or showing a food item that may be new to some students).
- Evaluate the content of textbooks, children’s literature, and supplementary materials for cultural bias.
- Design learning and assessment activities that allow students with various learning styles (e.g., auditory, visual, or tactile/kinaesthetic) to participate meaningfully.
- Provide opportunities for students to work both independently and with others.
- Provide opportunities for students to communicate, orally and in writing, in their home language (e.g., pairing English language learners with a first-language peer who also speaks English).
- Use diagrams, pictures, manipulatives, and gestures to clarify vocabulary that may be new to English language learners.

For a full discussion of equity and diversity in the classroom, as well as a detailed checklist for providing inclusive language instruction, see pages 1 and 3–8 in Volume Three of A Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction.

PLANNING LANGUAGE PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS

Planning language programs to provide differentiated instruction and assessment for students with special education needs is a fundamental aspect of inclusive instruction. For a detailed discussion of the considerations involved in planning programs for students with special education needs, including the provision of accommodations and modified expectations, see the following:

- Volume Three of this guide, Planning and Classroom Management, pp. 9–10;
1 AN OVERVIEW OF ORAL LANGUAGE IN THE JUNIOR GRADES

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FORMS OF ORAL LANGUAGE

The forms of oral language discussed in this guide fall into three main categories: informal or unrehearsed talk, accountable talk/discussion, and formal or scripted talk. While each of these three categories of oral language can be separately defined, there is a good deal of overlap among them.

Informal or unrehearsed talk is used in conversations and dialogues throughout the school day for a wide range of learning purposes, including:

- brainstorming;
- problem solving;
- expressing opinions;
- providing supporting arguments/ideas;
- asking questions;
- making comparisons;
- sharing/recounting experiences;
- responding to texts;
- summarizing texts;
- engaging in word play;
- giving impromptu book talks;
- participating in literature circles.

Accountable Talk/Discussion entails a focused, extended deliberation of a topic. When students engage in discussion they participate in a purposeful exchange of ideas that provides a focus for inquiry and problem solving and leads to new knowledge and understanding. Discussion may take place on any topic, including:

- ideas and issues in literature;
- concepts and issues in mathematics, science, and social studies;
- views expressed in journal responses;
- current events;
- classroom issues, problems, or procedures;
- community issues.
Formal or scripted talk is used in prepared, rehearsed presentations to an audience. In formal, rehearsed speaking situations, students develop skills (over time) in various forms of presentation or performance, including:

- storytelling;
- poetry reading;
- role play;
- readers’ theatre;
- dramatic reading;

Almost any form of oral language may occur in more than one category, ranging from spontaneous delivery in an informal manner to a fully developed polished presentation. For example, students may give an informal book talk in telling a peer about a particular book they have read, or may use jott notes to prepare a book talk for their literature study group, or may develop a fully scripted and rehearsed book talk for the whole class, using multimedia resources to enhance the presentation.

Within this guide, the term “student talk” refers to all three categories of oral language used by students in their learning. It also refers to languages other than English, since some students may benefit from opportunities to use their own languages as a rehearsal for using English or as a source of cultural enrichment for all students in the class.

**Oral Language in the Junior Grades**

Oral language is often an assumed or invisible part of the curriculum in the junior grades. It may appear on the timetable only when a particular language form (such as readers’ theatre, debate, or oral report) is directly addressed, either in the Language program or in a content area. Yet much of what students learn is learned through oral language – talking, listening, observing, and interacting with others.

Most of the time devoted to oral language in the junior classroom is taken up by the more informal or unrehearsed, but essential language functions. These include asking and answering questions, brainstorming, recounting and sharing experiences, telling and retelling stories, expressing opinions, and giving explanations. Less formal, unscripted uses of talk and listening occur frequently throughout the day, every day. It is these
classroom interactions that engage students in “talk for learning” and provide them with a forum for developing their thinking, understanding, and expression in all areas of the curriculum. Teachers plan and arrange for purposeful talk, provide models and demonstrations of talk about interesting, engaging texts, topics, and experiences, and constantly seek out ways to increase opportunities for all students to use talk as the “motor for learning” in the classroom.

The more formal uses of oral language are taught as students learn how to make oral presentations and reports and participate in storytelling, dramatic role play, interviews, and debates. Teachers plan and support student learning and skill development throughout the year to enable students to successfully gain control of the numerous elements and conventions of addressing an audience in different types of presentation and performance.

Informal and formal uses of oral language are interrelated, and teachers combine them when planning units of study for the class. For example, students may explore a topic through informal talk (sharing responses to text, brainstorming ideas) and take part in small-group discussions (to exchange information and clarify points of view) in preparation for a formal debate or presentation. The sample lessons in this volume illustrate ways in which various forms of oral language can be used together to support student learning and achievement.

Formal and informal uses of oral language are addressed in planning, teaching, and assessing student learning, since they both provide an important means for students to develop their thinking and understanding through talking and listening. The teacher interacts with students, guiding them in their use of oral language forms through deliberate demonstration and modelling. Continuously observing the students, the teacher listens for evidence of their thinking and understanding. This evidence is used to make decisions about future directions, strategies, and lessons that will support new learning while consolidating and refining current skills and knowledge. In this continuous cycle of assessing, teaching/learning, assessing, consolidating, and refining, teachers provide a strong basis for learning through oral language, which underpins learning in all areas of the curriculum.

The learning expectations in the Oral Communication strand of the Language curriculum provide the basis for oral language planning, teaching, and assessment. But, as with reading and writing, the uses of oral language extend beyond the expectations of a single strand. Throughout the Language program, in reading and writing workshops, interactive read-alouds, shared and guided reading, literature circles, and planning, drafting, and composing writing, oral language processes are vital components of student learning. They are also critical supports to learning in content areas across the junior curriculum. Achievement of Oral Communication expectations is thus only a part, albeit an essential part, of student oral language learning.
Planning Oral Language Instruction

The following schedule provides one example of how oral language instruction may be planned for the school year. Various forms of oral language are included in instruction throughout the year using the “gradual release of responsibility” model of learning. Based on student progress, teachers decide which forms to introduce in each term and which ones to build on from the previous term. Once a form has been introduced it becomes part of regular classroom activity for the following terms, being revisited many times in different situations and contexts. Prior to the formal introduction of any form, students may engage in a related form of talk at their current level of skill and understanding.

For example, while oral book reports may be formally introduced in the third term, teachers provide students with frequent opportunities to hear and talk about books from the first day of school. Depending on student needs, the teacher may decide to concentrate on fewer forms in each term (i.e., focusing on all three aspects of the book talks and story telling in the first term, followed by interviews and debates in the second term, so the gradual release takes place within the term).

Planning Oral Language Instruction for the School Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>September-November</th>
<th>December-March</th>
<th>April-June</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussions about books</td>
<td>Impromptu book talks</td>
<td>Oral book reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storytelling (teacher teaches storytelling)</td>
<td>Storytelling (teacher guides storytelling)</td>
<td>Storytelling (students practise storytelling)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response to literature: conversations, discussions</td>
<td>Response to literature: conversations, discussions</td>
<td>Response to literature: conversations, discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character conversations</td>
<td>Role play in content areas</td>
<td>Drama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>Readers’ theatre</td>
<td>Poetry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inquiry activities/discussions</td>
<td>Interviews/informal debates</td>
<td>Debates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Topic” talks/informal oral presentations</td>
<td>Mini-presentations</td>
<td>Oral presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retelling</td>
<td>Oral summaries</td>
<td>Oral presentations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Roles and Responsibilities in Oral Language Instruction

Junior learners are becoming increasingly independent and want to take a more active role in their learning. They realize that other students have different attitudes, values, and standards and are interested in finding out about them. They recognize that texts of all types present different viewpoints and perspectives. The challenge for teachers is to ensure the needs of all the students are being met, while providing instruction that supports and encourages student talk, reflection, engagement and independent inquiry.
The roles and responsibilities of the teacher and students in oral language instruction and learning in the junior classroom are summarized in the chart on the following page.

### Roles and Responsibilities of Teacher and Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Teacher</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establishes a climate of respect and support for the students’ interaction through talk and listening.</td>
<td>Speak and listen with respect and respond constructively to the ideas of others in daily talk and discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Models and promotes thoughtful use of oral language.</td>
<td>Use talk and listening to support and extend their learning and thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides rich texts and resources.</td>
<td>Read, listen to, view, and interact with texts and resources in order to obtain information and develop ideas and opinions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Models talk about texts and interpretation of them to extend student understanding of texts.</td>
<td>Talk about their responses to texts to interpret the meaning and extend their understanding of texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Models and promotes inquiry as a prime means of learning.</td>
<td>Use an inquiry approach (questioning, wondering, predicting, and hypothesizing) to support and extend their learning through reading, listening, and viewing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plans frequent opportunities for students to hear and absorb the “sound” of language in all its forms (e.g., poetry and debate).</td>
<td>Attend to the sound, cadence, structure, and flow of language in oral texts and develop an appreciation of how texts “work”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses mentor texts (texts chosen explicitly to illustrate specific teaching points) in introducing and analysing oral language forms.</td>
<td>Explore and analyse various aspects of mentor texts to learn about the structure, language, and purpose of oral language forms and the processes, strategies, and techniques involved in creating or using them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides scaffolded support in teaching processes and strategies for understanding oral and written texts. Utilizes the gradual release of responsibility.</td>
<td>Describe and independently apply oral language processes and strategies to construct meaning from and extend their understanding of oral and written texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaches and models think-alouds and guides students in voicing their thoughts to track their thinking and reflect on their learning.</td>
<td>Think aloud to explore, apply, and describe the processes and strategies they use in thinking and learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engages students in developing and using critical-thinking skills to identify multiple perspectives and to analyse texts for their purpose, message, and possible bias.</td>
<td>Examine the perspectives and ideas of others (e.g., through role play, questioning, discussion) and analyse texts for their purpose, message, and possible bias.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaches and models skills of accountable talk. Provides guided practice in their use.</td>
<td>Develop and apply skills of discussion to collaborate in constructing meaning. Extend their knowledge and understanding through purposeful talk and interaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guides and supports students in developing scripted/rehearsed forms of oral language (e.g., presentations, storytelling, and dramatic monologues).</td>
<td>Learn, experiment with, and use strategies and techniques to develop and present scripted/rehearsed forms of oral language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guides and supports students in listening to oral texts for specific purposes.</td>
<td>Listen to oral texts for specific purposes and respond accordingly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Models and guides students in developing audience skills and responses.</td>
<td>Develop skills of listening, engaging, responding, supporting, and giving helpful feedback as an audience.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Roles and Responsibilities of Teacher and Students – Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Teacher</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assesses learning and thinking, using evidence provided through student talk.</td>
<td>Monitor and reflect on their thinking and learning and use assessment information to move on to next steps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides feedback, support, and encouragement in the development of oral language expression.</td>
<td>Use teacher feedback, models, and support to refine and extend their use of oral language in terms of content, skills, and technique.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plans opportunities for students to use languages other than English, in their daily work.</td>
<td>Share information about their own languages (e.g., names and naming systems, idioms, greetings and polite expressions).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invites parents, community members, and older students who speak community languages to support English-language learners and enrich the class.</td>
<td>See linguistic and cultural role models as valuable assets to the school community.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Oral Language and Assessment

Use of oral language can be both the object of assessment and the vehicle for assessing the students’ thinking processes and learning in other areas of the curriculum. Assessment focuses on the thinking, learning, and understanding students demonstrate through their talking and listening, as well as on their use of listening and speaking skills to communicate for various purposes and in various situations.

It is important for teachers to pay attention to all forms of student talk in all areas of the curriculum for purposes of assessment. Teachers observe student talk in literature circles, discussions on topics in different content areas, oral presentations, student–teacher conferences, daily tasks and activities, and during group and partner work. In all these settings, teachers:

- focus on the students’ use of oral language in order to assess their achievement of expectations in the Oral Communication strand;
- listen to what students are saying in order to assess what they know and are able to do with respect to other areas of the Language curriculum and other subject areas.

Examples of what teachers look for when assessing student achievement of the Oral Communication expectations include the students’ ability to:

- use talk to guide and explain their thinking;
- use talk as a problem-solving tool;
- use talk to clarify understanding;
- share ideas and points of view;
- ask questions;
• articulate responses;
• speak clearly and expressively;
• contribute to discussions.

Teachers also observe and record their students’ use of communication skills in learning with others – in order to assess, for example, the extent to which students:
• cooperate to explore a topic or complete a task;
• agree with others or disagree constructively;
• build on others’ comments and contributions;
• ask questions and respond to questions;
• negotiate meaning;
• check for understanding;
• support the learning of others;
• seek out response and feedback;
• give response and feedback.

When students are engaged in formal or scripted uses of oral language, where preparation and rehearsal are part of the learning process (e.g., in debates, storytelling, dramatic monologues, and presentations), assessment includes additional factors such as the students’ ability to:
• present ideas and information;
• use language to explain, inform, persuade, or entertain;
• use appropriate voice techniques;
• incorporate gestures, body language, and facial expressions;
• demonstrate awareness of audience needs and interest;
• listen actively and respond constructively as an audience member;
• incorporate visual components and/or use technology to enhance meaning.

In assessing what students know and are able to do in all areas of the curriculum, teachers look for evidence of their thinking skills as well as of their learning and understanding. Students’ thinking skills are demonstrated by their ability to:
• reason;
• infer;
• synthesize;
• evaluate;
• make connections;
• inquire and question;
• make critical judgements based on evidence;
• clarify;
• construct meaning;
• evaluate messages for purpose, credibility, and bias;
• reflect on their own learning.

The students’ learning and understanding are demonstrated by their ability to:
• identify and describe new facts and concepts;
• restate and clarify information and ideas;
• summarize information;
• find and connect new information;
• figure out meaning and concepts;
• explain concepts to themselves and others;
• recall information and ideas;
• synthesize information and formulate big ideas.

Gathering Evidence of Learning

It is important not to miss opportunities to assess student learning as revealed by student talk. Assessment of student talk is best achieved through teacher observations using checklists and anecdotal notes as students engage in conversations, discussions, and activities. Teachers prepare checklists and anecdotal records to ensure that they are aware of how each student’s talk demonstrates his or her thinking, learning, and understanding. These checklists and anecdotal records reflect the focus of the teaching, modelling, and demonstration, and list/document the skills the teacher wishes to emphasize and observe at particular times. For example, when teachers are focusing on student responses to text, they may develop a checklist or anecdotal record using the traits and skills of response they wish to promote, such as:
• makes connections to own experiences;
• provides reasons for response;
• makes references and gives justification for opinion;
• explores character;
• reflects on events or feelings in the story.
Checklists and anecdotal records are used in a variety of ways at various stages of learning to help track student skill development. They can list skills, understanding, behaviours, processes, and/or attitudes that might or should be demonstrated in a given situation. When skills from the checklist or anecdotal record are not in evidence, the teacher plans scaffolded learning experiences that model each skill and guide students in its use.

Checklists and anecdotal records may be used to observe individual students or to create a class profile of skill development. “The class profile provides the teacher with the necessary elements for modifying the curriculum for individual students and making appropriate accommodations; for differentiating his or her teaching; for planning significant projects; and for meeting the personal needs of each student. It is a basis for planning centred on the strengths, challenges, individual characteristics, and similarities that the students share in the classroom”. (Expert Panel on Literacy and Numeracy Instruction for Students With Special Education Needs, Kindergarten to Grade 6, 2005, p. 32).

(For a description of the steps in creating a class profile, see Expert Panel on Literacy and Numeracy Instruction [2005], pp. 32–33.)

Sample checklists for student talk, listening, and oral presentation are given on pages 31, 58, and 122 of this Guide. Key look-fors for focused conversation/discussion are shown on page 81.

**Using Assessment Information to Inform Instruction**

Assessment information is gathered daily and used to make adjustments to instruction and to plan for future teaching and learning. Teachers adjust instruction by providing texts, learning experiences, and resources to support student learning of skills that need development, while validating those skills that are observed to be well developed. The teacher also notes which students require further experience and coaching through guided instruction, partnering, or one-on-one conferences. Assessment thus provides information that helps teachers to plan and guide differentiated instruction.

Teacher observation is an especially powerful assessment tool that can inform planning and guide instruction (see sample list in the opposite chart).
**Teacher Observations and Resulting Actions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Observation</th>
<th>Resulting Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The teacher observes that several students talk very little during discussions and</td>
<td>The teacher gathers these students in a small group, models and demonstrates with texts that are interesting and motivating for the junior learner, and prompts and supports students in discussing the texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>appear to be disengaged.</td>
<td>The teacher involves students in selecting texts and other resources that engage their interests and enable them to make connections to their own experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher observes that many students have limited experience and ability in</td>
<td>The teacher plans a series of mini-lessons, demonstrates using the think-aloud process, and provides numerous opportunities for students to work with partners to talk about their thinking during reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thinking aloud to explain the processes they use (e.g., to make inferences,</td>
<td>The teacher invites students to contribute their thought processes and reading strategies and records these on a class chart. More thoughts and strategies are added regularly as students identify them. The teacher plans for read-alouds and shared and guided reading, incorporating prompts and questions to elicit metacognitive thinking (e.g., “What are you thinking about now?” “Why do you say that?” and “What helps you know that?”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>summarize information, or confirm predictions) when reading a text.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher observes that the students’ focus in independent small-group discussion</td>
<td>The teacher works with the group, modelling higher-order thinking responses through discussion of text. The teacher leads students in developing an anchor chart of sample responses:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is on factual recall and surface details.</td>
<td>– “This makes me think of …”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– “I wonder if …”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– “I don’t understand how …”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– “I think … because …”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– “(The character) is really sad/ happy/scared because …”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– “The author used … to …”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– “I predict that …”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– “I just discovered that …”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– “I agree/disagree with … because …”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The teacher monitors the students’ use of such statements and determines if higher-order thinking is evident.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher observes that some English-language learners appear not to understand</td>
<td>The teacher modifies the task and the resources used, and reduces the size of the group, so that English-language learners can work within their zone of proximal development on engaging and intellectually stimulating tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>what is going on or are shy to speak in English class.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher observes that some students are disengaged because they are finding the</td>
<td>The teacher provides reading material that students can read with the help of a stronger reader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>text too difficult.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recording Assessment Data

Teachers may include oral language in each student’s literacy folder to monitor the growth and learning achieved over the course of a term. As the teacher uses observation notes/anecdotal records, checklists, and rubrics throughout the term, the information is dated and placed in the folder. It can then be used to develop a year-long record of each student’s oral language development. These records are helpful in assessing student needs, grouping students for learning, and planning for future instruction. The folder may include:

- teacher observations/anecdotal records;
- task-specific checklists;
- work samples (e.g., response journal entries that show evidence of discussion skills);
- sample comments from student think-alouds;
- a rubric for formal presentation;
- the student’s reflections on his or her learning;
- a record of interviews or conferences with the student;
- audiotapes and/or videotapes of student work.

Accumulated data created by classroom assessment can be used for evaluation and reporting.

A Note About Evaluating Student Achievement in Oral Language

Evaluation occurs at a particular time, most often at the end of a unit of study or a term. It involves making a judgement about the level of a student’s achievement based on assessment data. Teachers “delay the judgement associated with evaluation until students have had frequent opportunities to practise and apply learning and to refine their control of the skills and strategies they are developing” (Literacy for Learning, 2004, p. 51). For example, a formal oral presentation is evaluated after students have been taught all the skills and techniques, have prepared, practised, and rehearsed, and have had opportunities to present their material to “practice” audiences for feedback and refinement. Numerous opportunities for brief impromptu presentations may be necessary before students are ready for evaluation.
Student Self-Assessment

Students benefit from having opportunities to participate in assessing their own achievement. Through active involvement in the development of criteria, checklists and rubrics, students obtain a clear understanding of what they are aiming for and which expectations are being assessed. They learn how to use rubrics as a tool to guide them in developing, for example, an oral performance for presentation to the class. Using the rubric, students can assess the quality of their own work, reflect on the strengths and needs of their performance, and identify next steps for improvement. Self-assessment will also make students more proficient in providing feedback to their peers.

For a more detailed discussion of student self-assessment, see “Involving Students in Assessment” in Volume Two of this guide (pp. 26–31).

Assessing Oral Language Instruction

The accumulated checklists and anecdotal notes used to record observations assist teachers in making an overall assessment of their oral language instruction. When reviewing the checklists and anecdotal records periodically, teachers may find that some uses of language are well represented while others have not been addressed. They may also find that new assessment tools need to be developed to reflect the use of the thinking skills they wish to emphasize, model, and teach.

The following checklist is designed to help teachers reflect on their oral language instruction and identify areas where adjustments may be needed.
TEACHER REFLECTION ON ORAL LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

☐ Do I value and promote talk as a major source of learning in the Literacy Learning Block and in all subject areas?

☐ Do I provide varied and numerous purposes for student talk in informal and formal settings, ranging from shared responses to oral presentations?

☐ Do I model, teach, and support students in applying skills of interaction, discussion, and presentation?

☐ Do I create opportunities for students to use talk as a means of explaining, extending, and refining their understandings and ideas?

☐ Do I model, value, and promote talk as a means of problem solving, inquiring, wondering, and deciding?

☐ Do I model the language and processes of metacognition, and provide frequent opportunities for students to use oral language to explain, articulate, and reflect on the processes and strategies they use for learning, thinking, and understanding?

☐ Do I emphasize talk as a means of developing and deepening students’ comprehension of reading – increasing their understanding and gaining information from literature texts, content-area texts, and media/visual sources as well as from oral texts?

☐ Do I model, value, and promote talk as a means of rehearsing language, content, and ideas for writing?

☐ Do I provide numerous models of oral texts from which students can learn and gain enjoyment?

☐ Do I use a variety of mentor texts that model the language, techniques, and conventions of oral language forms (e.g., stories, interviews, discussions, and debates)?

☐ Do I frequently engage students in the use of oral texts (e.g., poetry, readers’ theatre, and partner read-alouds)?

☐ Do I value drama, role-play, storytelling, and oral reporting as a means of learning?

☐ Do I model, teach, and practise the language of coaching and supporting student development in oral language presentations?

☐ Do I use small groups, pairs, and triads to increase oral language opportunities for each student?

☐ Do I ensure that each student has numerous opportunities to engage in talk for learning and thinking on a daily basis?

☐ Do I ensure an appropriate balance of student talk and teacher talk in the classroom?

☐ Do I promote student-to-student responses, questions, and comments, rather than always using the “teacher to student and student back to teacher” pattern?

☐ Do I provide regular, informative feedback, using assessments that support student learning and growth?

☐ Do I ensure that students have numerous opportunities to practise, apply, and consolidate oral language skills before evaluating their achievement?

☐ Do I encourage students who are learning English to build their skills in their own language?

☐ Do I provide opportunities for all students to share linguistic and cultural information and enrich their cultural horizons?

☐ Do I provide alternative tasks and resources for English-language learners that are within their zone of proximal development but are no less engaging and intellectually stimulating than those provided for other students?
2 TALKING, LISTENING, AND THINKING

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**Talk: The Foundation of Learning**

“Talk is an essential part of communicating, thinking, and learning. It allows students to express themselves, to negotiate relationships, to give definition to their thoughts, and to learn about language, themselves, and their world.”

*(Bainbridge and Malicky, 2004, p. 33)*

Talk is the foundation of learning in the junior grades. Both teacher talk and student talk are essential to the development of all literacy skills, literacy understanding, content area knowledge and understanding, and learning/comprehension processes.

Talk is a means of constructing meaning. It is used to develop, clarify, and extend thinking. This is true not only of the prepared, formal talk of interviews, book talks, debates, and presentations but also of the informal talk that occurs when, for example, students ask questions, make connections, and respond orally to texts or learning experiences, or when a teacher models a think-aloud.

Teachers in the junior grades use talk to model and scaffold learning strategies that enable students to “mine” their reading and experiences for new insights and connections that increase meaning and deepen understanding of important concepts. For example, while reading a book to the class, the teacher may pause to conduct a think-aloud to demonstrate the thinking that goes on inside a reader’s head as he or she attempts to make meaning of the text.

Students in the junior grades bring ideas and information from their reading to their experiences in and outside school. It is in talking with others that students explore, reflect on, and extend the meaning of what they learnt and understood from these ideas and experiences. New thoughts and insights are developed as students give voice to their understanding.

Research shows that when talk is valued and used as the foundation for learning in the classroom, students are more likely to:

- explore beyond facts into situations, causes, and consequences;
- know more about the ways language is used to convey their thoughts and knowledge;
- have a greater repertoire of learning strategies;
- have a greater insight into the relationship between bits of information;
• have a greater understanding of how they acquire knowledge;
• have a better understanding of the possibility of multiple solutions to a problem or question;
• have a greater understanding of why they are working within a particular topic or area of knowledge.

(Adapted from Pierce and Gilles, 1993, pp. 28–29)

**Talk and Thinking**

Talk is thinking aloud. It is a means of giving shape and focus to thoughts and involves a broad range of cognitive skills and processes. When students are talking about their reading, writing, and viewing, they are:

• actively engaged in thinking about ideas, information, characters, situations, events, problems, and solutions;
• interacting with the author and the overall experience;
• taking on the challenge of entertaining new ideas, perspectives, information, and experiences;
• entering into new worlds of knowledge and imagination in literature, history, science, social studies, mathematics, and popular culture;
• making decisions and judgements about important concepts, values, experiences, and points of view;
• engaging their minds in developing and strengthening their understanding of the works they are reading;
• making connections to new experiences, ideas, and information;
• using and developing their imaginations;
• questioning, inquiring, wondering, confirming, comparing, evaluating, sifting, refining, inferring, synthesizing, and consolidating their knowledge and thinking;
• beginning to use the language of literate learners, authors, thinkers, and researchers;
• examining their responses to characters, situations, problems, and solutions in the light of new reading experiences and the thoughts and responses of others;
• learning about what lies behind the text – the hidden meanings, implied messages, and subtle or overt biases of authors and creators of texts.

“For those groups of individuals who do not have occasions to talk about what and how meanings are achieved in written materials, important cognitive and interpretive skills, which are basic to being literate, do not develop.”

*(Shirley Brice Heath in Daniels, 1994, p. 30)*
In all the contexts outlined above, talk provides a means for students to sort out what is going on in their minds. Expressing thoughts gives them definition. It also makes them available for consideration by others, and this, in turn, can lead students to change or refine their thinking.

The skills and strategies students use in their listening and speaking are themselves the subject of student talk. Teachers encourage students to reflect on what they do. For example, students who monitor their understanding of an oral text become aware of the cognitive processes involved. Talking about their thinking helps students develop metacognitive skills – they learn how they learn – and helps teachers understand and assess students’ learning processes.

**Talk and Inquiry**

Students in the junior grades are becoming increasingly aware of the complex issues, topics, and questions they encounter in the media, popular culture, and the texts that constitute their reading. They are now able to read, view, and inquire into longer texts for sustained periods and can become engrossed in new worlds and new ideas. Teachers respond by engaging students in inquiry-based learning.

The term “inquiry-based learning” describes an approach to teaching and learning that views all learning as a quest for meaning and understanding. Learning in inquiry-based classrooms is driven by intellectual pursuits that pique the students’ interests and reflect their curiosity about the world around them. Teachers lead the way by introducing challenging topics and concepts. Students are given many opportunities daily to explore these topics, share their thoughts and feelings, and develop and extend their understanding of them through various forms of classroom talk. To guide students in the inquiry process, teachers model an open-minded attitude by questioning, wondering, hypothesizing, evaluating, and making connections.

**Creating a Talk-Rich Environment**

“In language-centered classrooms, teachers value talk and its role in learning. Language-centered doesn’t mean talk alone; it involves the juxtaposition of talk in conjunction with new, challenging learning experiences and texts. In other words, students are always talking about something: substantive, stimulating content and the exciting learning it inspires.”

*(Fountas and Pinnell, 2001, p. 21)*
Group Work Skills

- **PARTICIPATE**
  Share your ideas and contribute your talents.

- **COMPROMISE**
  You might need to change your ideas.

- **LISTEN**
  Remember, everyone has ideas that are worth listening to.

- **BE KIND**
  Never put others down – always use positive criticism (check your tone of voice and the words you choose).

- **TALK**
  When working in a group, you can’t make decisions on your own.

- **STAY ON TASK**
  Stay focused on the task at hand.

- **COOPERATE**
  Try to work through disagreements with others.

Note: Group work skills in the junior classroom are an important part of setting a tone for the classroom environment. A chart on group work skills helps to guide and promote group talk.

Teachers create a classroom environment that is conducive to talk when they:

- provide numerous opportunities for students to engage in discussions;
- help students to establish patterns of interaction and language, using classroom structures that facilitate talk with partners, small groups, and large groups;
- provide time for students to make new connections, explore and develop understanding of new ideas and concepts, and practise new skills through talk before asking them to express their learning in other language forms (such as written reports or formal oral presentations);
- provide opportunities for students to use languages other than English within the classroom (e.g., confer with a partner in their first language before switching to English);
- surround students with oral texts (e.g., readings of poetry, stories, and informational articles) to help them attune to the sounds and patterns of oral language forms;
- immerse students in the language and thinking people use to talk about written, oral, and visual texts;
• value talk by listening actively, responding constructively to the information and ideas conveyed by the speaker, and talking about the kind of talk used in various situations and for various purposes;
• provide relevant texts, resources, learning experiences, topics, and inquiry activities that engage the students’ interest;
• use talk and listening in listening centres, talking circles, literature circles, paired discussion, classroom conversation, and cooperative tasks;
• recognize and allow for different purposes of talk (e.g., exploration, evaluation, inquiry, brainstorming, debate, consensus building, organized information gathering, and cooperative learning);
• use talk as a resource for writing, research, explanations, and presentations.

Tip for Teachers

Managing Classroom Talk

• Model and teach appropriate voice volume for classroom talk.
• Establish and maintain a noise level that allows students to hear what others are saying.
• Teach and revisit the rules of engagement for classroom talk.
• Invite students to contribute to the rules and to problem-solve solutions to classroom issues.
• Provide relevant topics, questions, and challenges that engage students’ interests.
• Plan for wait time so that students have time to think.
• Ensure that students understand the focus and purpose of the talk in each learning activity.
• Use organizational aids to focus and track discussion (e.g., anchor charts, jot notes, and graphic organizers).
• Use flexible seating arrangements that allow students to move seats to face each other, expand group size, or create a quiet space for small-group or partner learning.
• Use self-reflection, pairs, triads, and small groups to increase student participation.
• Teach students how to enter appropriately into free-flowing discussions and conversations.
• Teach students how to disagree respectfully, build on each other’s ideas, and encourage all their group members to participate.
• Do not tolerate inappropriate comments.
• Aim for lively, respectful interactions.
• Don’t expect perfection.
• Model, teach, and expect English-speaking students to engage with and support children learning English.
Talk in the Junior Grades

Teachers recognize that development of oral language skills is critical for effective reading and writing and for learning across the curriculum. In planning a rich language program, teachers provide for a variety of oral language activities that promote higher-order thinking and motivate students to develop proficiency in the use of talk for various purposes (e.g., to express their thoughts and opinions, solve problems, make connections, collaborate with peers, interact with texts, and reflect on their learning). Teachers work alongside their students, modelling forms of talk and guiding students in their use. Many of these oral language experiences focus on the students’ reading and writing.

Talk to Support Student Reading and Writing

“Talk is probably the main tool in teaching reading. As children dig inside the narrative, they revise and remake their own stories in the light of what others reveal about their own attempts at making meaning. During and after reading they can use talk – invisible print that can be reedited and reformed so easily – to make both personal and collective meaning. Talk can be the starting point for story projects of all kinds – research, role playing, writing, storytelling, reading aloud, painting . . . Sharing thoughts and feelings with others who have read the same books can lead to quite sophisticated literary generalizations and understanding.”

(Booth, 1993, p. 146)

Some of the principal uses of talk related to reading and writing are outlined below.

Talk for Reader Response

Response is the first point of entry to a text. Readers use their own experiences and knowledge to make personal connections with their reading. This personal investment motivates them to read further.

Students learn how to respond to texts and how to use the language of reader response from teacher modelling and think-aloud. Teachers take the opportunity, during and after teacher read-aloud sessions, to verbalize their own response and to engage students in contributing theirs. Teachers provide support by encouraging responses (e.g., asking open-ended questions such as

“Response-centered talk . . . focuses on the unique images, impressions, thoughts, feelings, and reactions that come to the mind of each reader and lays the foundation for exploring and interpreting the deeper meanings that students find in the texts they read.”

(Gambrell and Amalsi, 1996, p. 196)
“What were/are you thinking?”) and by reflecting back to students what they thought or said, so they can further build on their ideas. Discussion of response allows students to share their understanding and ideas, while learning from the understanding and ideas of others.

Sample Lesson 2.1, “Teacher Read-Aloud of a Novel”, on pages 36–52, suggests an approach to the explicit teaching of read-aloud response, through ten days of teacher-guided lessons.*

“Although individual readers can construct their own interpretation of literary works, interpretive work within a group is more powerful. In a group, readers share their own understandings and significant insights and must convince others of the value of their insights. This type of negotiation involves the exchange of ideas in which readers present support for their positions and consider the arguments of others in presenting counter positions. Such activities reflect problem solving and reasoning and produce discoveries about literature that no one reader by him or herself could likely construct alone.”

(Gambrell and Amalsi, 1996, p. 197)

Talk for Deeper Understanding of Texts

The goal of reading is to construct meaning. Teachers provide instruction that enables students to engage in a complex process of selecting, combining, and orchestrating strategies to achieve this goal. Through modelling and think-aloud, teachers encourage students to use talk to develop, apply, and refine this process as well as to discuss and clarify the meaning that results. For example, the teacher can initiate the talk by modelling high-level responses that question the text. Following this, prompts such as: “Do you disagree or agree with the author? Why?”, “I wonder if . . . ?”, and “What is the author’s intention here?”, can engage the students in developing their comprehension of the text. The teacher can also summarize what some students say using anchor charts and then invite others to build on those comments. Providing prompts after modelling helps students develop their ability to use comprehension strategies independently in small-group situations such as literature circles.

Talk to Explore Elements and Structures of Texts

In literature conversations and discussions, students learn how elements of fictional, narrative, and poetic texts work to create meaning and achieve their purpose of entertaining, informing, or evoking emotion. As they talk about the interplay of setting, plot, character,

* The number of days is flexible and can be changed to reflect the needs of students.
tension, problem, and resolution, students learn about the numerous variations in these elements that give stories their power and appeal. They also learn to use their understanding of literary elements to create and compose their own fictional and narrative writing.

Similarly, exploring and talking about the structures of informational texts helps students increase their ability to use these structures to access meaning and enhance their understanding of the texts they read. They also learn to use their understanding of structures to enhance the presentation of ideas and information in their own writing.

**Talk as a Resource for Writing**

> “Teachers . . . help students put their thoughts into words and their words into writing; draw attention to the writer’s craft in texts that engage students’ interest, and encourage them to try similar language and techniques in their own writing . . .”

*(Literacy for Learning, 2004, p. 17)*

Students use talk in teacher-student conferences and in pair or small-group discussions to:

- clarify, extend, and consolidate ideas and content in their writing;
- analyse writers’ craft in familiar texts for the purpose of using similar techniques in their own writing;
- respond to first drafts and writing in process;
- revise their writing by reading the piece aloud for themselves and others;
- add details, description, or events;
- try out language, phrasing, or techniques for their writing;
- share their writing with others;
- obtain audience reaction and feedback.

Some English-language learners may benefit from opportunities to use their first language to rehearse ideas, solve problems, plan projects and presentations, or share first drafts.
Talk to Support Learning Across the Curriculum

In both the Language program and subject areas, much of the students’ learning takes place through talk in partner or small-group sharing and discussion. The teacher plans and designs interactions that enable students to use talk to:

- analyse and assess new information;
- develop an understanding of new concepts;
- share information and ideas;
- select ideas and organize thinking (e.g., using graphic organizers to achieve a purpose);
- make sense of complex texts (written, visual, oral, or media);
- learn from mentor texts (texts chosen and used intentionally/explicitly by the teacher to illustrate specific teaching points);
- make analogies and comparisons to extend understanding;
- explore possibilities, perspectives, or ideas (e.g., through brainstorming);
- cooperate to complete shared tasks;
- reflect on what they learn and how they learn;
- connect learning across the curriculum.

Partner or small-group talk can be used to prepare students for a whole-class discussion of an issue or a topic by having each pair or group first record its observations and then contribute them to the discussion. Some English-language learners may benefit from working with others who speak their own language or who are at a similar stage of development in English. At other times, they will benefit from working with fluent English speakers who can act as language models and helpers.

Assessing Student Talk Across the Curriculum

Teachers continually notice and assess the learning, thinking, and understanding expressed in student talk in all areas of the curriculum. As teachers listen to student talk, they make observations about the “content” as well as the oral language skills and behaviour that students demonstrate in interacting with their peers. Important look-fors are shown in the sample observation checklist on the following page.

Teachers review their observations to determine which students need increased opportunities, modelling, support, or scaffolding to develop particular uses or aspects of talk.
# **STUDENT TALK: OBSERVATION CHECKLIST**

Student Name: ___________________________ Date: ________________

Task: ___________________________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student talk-over time includes:</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Teacher Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• details</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• inferences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• opinions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• personal reactions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• clarifying concerns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• retelling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• revisiting texts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• literary elements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• new insights</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• connections to previous books</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• personal connections</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• connections to theme/topic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• content-area concepts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• connections to broader society/world</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• inquiry, questions, wondering</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• explanations, rationales</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• group work skills (i.e., see pg. 25)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Role of “Teacher Talk”

As teachers comment, prompt, question, think aloud, and talk about topics, ideas, information, and processes, they are teaching students by example how “experts” think and talk. In every interaction with students, teachers convey both a purpose and a model that contribute to student learning.

The chart opposite illustrates how teacher talk during a read-aloud is designed to activate student thinking. Each think-aloud statement demonstrates to the class the teacher’s thought process as he or she attempts to make meaning of the text, and is made with a specific purpose in mind (e.g., activating prior knowledge, making predictions, or making connections with the text). Through the think-aloud, the teacher models the range of comprehension strategies that students can learn to apply in their independent reading. The sample learning experience “Making Connections” (p. 34) shows how this comprehension strategy can be taught through a teacher read-aloud.

The purpose of teacher talk before, during, and after guided reading is to assist students in thinking their way through the text. Teacher talk focuses student thinking by providing questions and prompts that help students know why they are reading the passage, figure out what they expect to find in the text, think about the information and ideas presented, and use cognitive strategies to make sense of the text. Teachers are not just guiding the students’ reading; they are guiding the thinking processes they have modelled for students during shared and interactive read-alouds. They engage students in talking about the text’s meaning and the processes used to uncover that meaning. The sample learning experience “Making Predictions” (p. 35) shows how this comprehension strategy can be taught through guided reading.

Sample Lesson 2.1, “Teacher Read-Aloud of a Novel” (pp. 36–52), illustrates a broader application of teacher talk. It provides an extended framework for the explicit teaching of discussion skills and response journal writing, based on teacher-directed read-aloud responses that focus on a variety of literary elements. Teachers may streamline the process to suit their students. The read-aloud enables the teacher to model good reading skills, broaden student experiences, provide access to books that may be beyond the reading level of some students, and help students develop good listening skills. It is here that the teacher establishes high expectations, builds supports for achievement, and promotes high levels of engagement and responsibility from all students.
### Using Teacher Talk in a Read-Aloud to Promote Student Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Teacher Talk</strong></th>
<th><strong>Student Learning</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I’m going to read on to find out if …</td>
<td>Making predictions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oh, I know something about this topic. I saw a TV documentary …</td>
<td>Making connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m thinking this character had a previous bad experience with … because …</td>
<td>Making inferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I once went to a restaurant where a similar thing happened …</td>
<td>Making text-to-self connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This reminds me of the character in ___ who had a similar problem … because …</td>
<td>Making text-to-text connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is somewhat like the situation during the tsunami … because …</td>
<td>Making text-to-world connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wonder if the author really means …</td>
<td>Conversing with the author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was on the right track when I predicted … It says here that …</td>
<td>Confirming predictions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let me review what’s happened so far …</td>
<td>Summarizing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OK, now I understand why x feels so alone … because …</td>
<td>Using information to gain new insight/build understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the author really want me to dislike this character? …</td>
<td>Questioning the author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m not sure it is fair to say … because …</td>
<td>Evaluating perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This word/phrase makes me feel very sad … because …</td>
<td>Noticing effective language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wow! This opening sentence just pulls me into the cave … because …</td>
<td>Noticing author technique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think the author wants me to agree with the need for peace … because …</td>
<td>Detecting bias or author intent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sample Learning Experience

Making Connections – Teacher Read-Aloud

The Teacher

Before
Select and pre-read story, and make notes of questions, observations, thoughts, and feelings.
Begin with elicited responses from students about what they think this story will be about; what other stories may be similar; what they can predict from the title, cover, and illustrations.

During
Read the story aloud. After reading, invite students to share their observations with their partner.
Explain that the story will be read aloud again, and that this time students are to make connections (text to self [TS], text to text [TT], text to world [TW]) and keep track of them for later discussion. Reread the story.

After
Invite students to share connections in pairs.
Invite whole-class sharing of partners’ connections.
Distribute blank strips of paper. Ask student pairs to record as many different connections as possible in a five-minute period. Ask students to sort and classify connections – TS, TT, TW.
Teacher and students build a chart or bulletin board by attaching students’ recorded connections according to their category – TS, TT, or TW.

Assessment: Teacher notes that text-to-world connections need further development.

Students

Students pre-read and discuss several stories read aloud by the teacher.
Students respond to the teacher’s invitation to predict and compare. They share responses/impressions with a partner.
Students share their observations.
Students listen for connections they can make. They note, jot, or code (TS, TT, TW) to identify and remember which type of connection they make.

Using the Assessment Information for Teaching

Bring in newspaper items that connect to the themes, characters, and situations in today’s story. The items are presented and considered by students in shared and independent reading.
Invite students to make text-to-world connections, and add them to the chart/bulletin board.
Ensure that each student has texts he or she can read successfully (i.e., at his or her independent reading level).

Note: The same learning sequence described above can be used for various genres (e.g., fable, biography, or science-fiction novel).
### Sample Learning Experience

#### Making Predictions – Guided Reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Teacher</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Before</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sit with a group of six students. Make sure that all students have a copy of the text.</td>
<td>Students examine the front cover and read the title. They speculate and offer predictions about the story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Briefly introduce the text. Have students examine the front cover and read the title. Invite them to speculate and make predictions about the story.</td>
<td>Students read the back cover text and confirm or reject their initial ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have students read the text on the back cover and ask them: “How does this information compare with your thoughts and predictions? Do you have further predictions based on this information?”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>During</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask specific questions related to elements of the story – setting, characters, problem, resolution, ending – to elicit predictions.</td>
<td>Students think about the story elements and offer predictions, including reasons for their predictions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask students to compare the story with other texts (e.g., “Does this book remind you of another storybook you have read? Have you/we read any other books by this author?”). The teacher should first establish a focus for the reading of the text—something the students are practicing at the moment.</td>
<td>Students make connections with other texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell students to read the first paragraph silently.</td>
<td>Students read silently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invite student responses about what they now know about the paragraph (e.g., the setting, and one or two characters). Ask students to read aloud the part of the paragraph that gives this information.</td>
<td>Students respond to the teacher’s prompts/questions, providing evidence from the text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invite further predictions about the plot and the characters.</td>
<td>Students make new predictions, giving reasons why they may be possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell students to read the next section of the story (up to a predetermined “stop” point), looking for further details about the plot and the characters. Have them discuss how these details confirm or contradict their predictions.</td>
<td>Students read to the “stop” point. They discuss how their predictions are confirmed or contradicted. Students may also use sticky notes to mark text or record information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask students to relate everything they have learned so far about the plot and the characters.</td>
<td>Students respond with details of the plot and the characters, giving evidence from the text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask students to focus on the central character and talk about what the character is thinking, feeling, and hoping and why this may be so.</td>
<td>Students talk about the character, making connections to themselves, other characters, and past experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask students to read to the next “stop” point and find out everything they can about the character’s thoughts, feelings, wishes, and problems and how these will affect the story.</td>
<td>Students read to the next “stop” point. They discuss their findings and describe how the details of character and events compare with their original predictions. They then make new predictions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell students to read the rest of the story independently and note any details that confirm or contradict their predictions.</td>
<td>Students read the rest of the story, making jot notes of details that confirm or contradict their predictions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invite students to share their notes in small groups.</td>
<td>Students share their findings about the story and the characters, and comment on their predictions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sample Lesson 2.1 – Teacher Read-Aloud of a Novel

This sample unit involves a teacher read-aloud and not a whole-class novel study. Reading aloud enables the teacher to model good reading skills, provides access to books that may be beyond the reading level of some students, helps students develop good listening skills, and provides opportunities for rich discussions. Additional teaching/learning material, inserted where appropriate to meet the needs of students, should extend previous lessons and complement forthcoming learning activities (including the students’ reading of the text).

This lesson is presented here because it illustrates two important aspects of classroom talk discussed earlier in this chapter: the use of talk for reader response and the role of teacher talk in modelling and supporting responses to text. The format of the teacher read-aloud of a novel involves students in a “good read” by an expert reader who models fluent and expressive reading. The teacher then helps students understand and make connections to the text through oral and written responses. The lesson provides teachers with a model for making complex texts, such as novels, accessible to all students. It also engages students in talk that addresses the complex relations and situations they are experiencing in their reading. The support the teacher provides during discussion is the scaffolding that enables students to begin developing discussion skills they can later apply independently in other contexts. Discussion skills and strategies and their application in inquiry-based learning are the focus of Chapter 3.

TEN TIPS FOR CHOOSING A NOVEL TO READ ALOUD

- Choose a novel that you have enjoyed reading. Share your enthusiasm with the group.
- Choose novels that are appropriate and relevant to the needs and tastes of the class, as well as the teaching focus.
- Generally, choose a read-aloud novel that most students would not read independently. The goal of read-alouds is to introduce the students to a genre, an author, or perhaps the first novel in a series.
- Choose a novel with rich language and vocabulary and interesting themes. The read-aloud is an opportunity to promote discussion about each of these elements and demonstrate what a reader can do when reading independently.
- Generally, choose a novel in which the protagonist is the same age as, or older than, the students in the class.
- Choose a read-aloud novel that is not too long. Interest may wane if it takes a while to complete the novel. Novels with short chapters are suitable for read-alouds.
- Note that many students at this age do not read hardback editions of novels. If a new book by a favourite author appears only in hardback, you can share the new edition with the group. Other forms of graphic text could also be used, including video and graphic novels.
• Seek recommendations for novels from colleagues and other professionals.
• Offer students a few choices. Survey the students to determine which novel they think would be good to read aloud.

For a sample list of good read-aloud novels for the junior classroom, see Appendix 2.1A (pp. 47-48).

**USING MINI-LESSONS TO TEACH “GOOD DISCUSSION” SKILLS**

By listening to student talk and observing during literature circles, the teacher notes aspects of discussion that students haven’t yet mastered. The topic can then be covered the following day in a mini-lesson. An introduction might be: “I noticed when I listened in on your discussions yesterday that many groups were struggling with... Today we’ll look at a way to resolve that issue.”

Possible topics for mini-lessons are:
• How to keep the discussion on track and focused
• How to discuss aspects of character
• How to find evidence to support your ideas
• How to use personal connections to support your point of view
• How to make comparisons with characters in the same or other stories
• How to get deeper into the story
• How to deal with story spoilers (students who read ahead and give away the story)
• How to build on responses
• How to disagree without using put-downs
• How to help your fellow group members to participate
• What to do when someone “hogs” the discussion

Brief and focused mini-lessons are an ideal way for the teacher to teach or demonstrate a particular skill.

**LESSON FOCUS**

*What is the focus of the lesson? How will I teach it?*

Students will explore a novel through a teacher read-aloud, response journal writing, and literature circle discussions.

**Teaching Strategies**
• Teacher read-aloud
• Teacher questioning, teacher modelling, and teacher think-aloud
• Small-group and whole-class discussions
• Directed reading/thinking activities
• Guided exploration of literary elements and responses to reading
RATIONALE
Why am I teaching this lesson?
• To provide opportunities for guided and independent discussion and response journal writing.
• To familiarize students with a variety of literary elements through teacher-directed responses to the novel.

ASSESSMENT
How will I know when my students are successful?
• Observation of small-group discussions: Class size will determine how often each group is observed. It is not realistic to expect to observe each group every day; consider listening to each group at least once a week.
• Analysis of audiotape of group discussions (optional): Listening to a recording of group discussions will enable the teacher and students to analyse student thinking and the content of their discussions.
• Review of response journal entries: Although this lesson suggests collecting response journals only once for assessment, teachers may wish to make notes regarding student writing at multiple points during the lesson. Teachers may also have students choose an exemplary response journal entry for assessment.

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE
What prior knowledge do my students need in order to be successful with the focus of this lesson?
Prior to this lesson, students need to:
• have experience writing in response journals, with a focus on making connections and analyzing authors’ craft;
• have direct instruction in response journal writing, focusing on the 3 Rs (retell, relate, reflect), with particular emphasis on the last two;
• have knowledge of literary elements (e.g., plot, characters, setting, and theme) through class studies of picture books and short stories;
• participate in many activities involving group work and discussion.

CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS
Which expectations will I address?
Students will:
Oral Communication
Overall
1. listen in order to understand and respond appropriately in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes;
2. use speaking skills and strategies appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes;
3. reflect on and identify their strengths as listeners and speakers, areas for improvement, and the strategies they found most helpful in oral communication situations.
Specific (Grade 4)*

1.2 demonstrate an understanding of appropriate listening behaviour by adapting active listening strategies to suit a variety of situations, including group work;

1.3 identify a variety of listening comprehension strategies and use them appropriately before, during, and after listening, in order to understand and clarify the meaning of oral texts;

1.5 make inferences using stated and implied ideas in oral texts;

1.6 extend understanding of oral texts by connecting the ideas in them to their own knowledge, experience, and insights, to other texts (including print and visual texts), and the world around them;

1.8 identify the point of view presented in oral texts and ask questions about possible bias;

2.2 demonstrate an understanding of appropriate speaking behaviour in a variety of situations, including paired sharing and small and large group discussions;

2.3 communicate in a clear, coherent manner, presenting ideas, opinions, and information in a readily understandable form;

3.1 identify, in conversation with the teacher and peers, what strategies they found most helpful before, during, and after listening and speaking and what steps they can take to improve their oral communication skills;

3.2 identify, in conversation with the teacher and peers, how their skills as viewers, representers, readers, and writers help them improve their oral communication skills.

MATERIALS/PREPAREATION FOR TEACHING

What do I need to know, have, and be able to do before I can begin the lesson?

• A copy of a novel to read aloud
• Photocopies of the front cover, back cover or book jacket description of the story, and any reviews that might have been featured on the cover to promote the book
• The "Response Journals" anchor chart created in previous lessons (Appendix 2.1C, p. 50)
• A "Literature Circle Observation Sheet" (Appendix 2.1D, p. 51)
• The "Response Journal Checklist" (Appendix 2.1E, p. 52)

DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION

How can I ensure that I am meeting the needs of all my students?

• Having the book available on audiotape for review can help students who have difficulty understanding the text during the read-aloud.
• Writing in response journals may take the form of point notes or visual representations. Responses may also be dictated.
• Having partners summarize previous readings, particularly after students have been away from the reading for several days, provides a review for those who have difficulty remembering/recalling information.

*The lesson can be adapted to meet similar expectations in grades 5 and 6.
INSTRUCTION

OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES

Oral Language Activities Before the Read-Aloud
- Activity #1: Previewing the Novel
- Activity #2: Introducing the Novel
- Activity #3: Brainstorming the Novel

Oral Language Activities During the Read-Aloud
- Activity #4: Thinking Aloud
- Activity #5: Demonstrating Strategies
- Activity #6: Working in Role
- Activity #7: Storytelling

Oral Language Activities After the Read-Aloud
- Activity #8: Summarizing the Novel

ORAL LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES BEFORE THE READ-ALOUD

Activity #1: Previewing the Novel
- Have students work with a partner to do a Think-Pair-Share on the following questions:
  What is a discussion? What makes a discussion good or bad?
- Develop a “Good Discussion Strategies” anchor chart, together with the whole class, using student suggestions (for an example, see Appendix 2.18, p. 49).
- Divide the class into small groups (you may want to model some activities before sending them off) and distribute photocopies of the front and back covers. To frame the discussions, ask questions such as:
  - What does the title make you think about?
  - Does the illustration suggest a story event?
  - What mood is conveyed by the colours, the font, and the images?
  - What do you predict the book will be about?
  - Does the book remind you of other books you have read?
  - Does the summary or blurb grab your attention?
  - Are there reviews that promote the novel?
  - What questions come to mind about the novel?
  - Can you judge a book by its cover?
- Circulate among the groups, noting student use of good discussion strategies and adding further strategies to the chart.
- Reconvene the class and revisit the “Good Discussion Strategies” chart. Add to and/or modify the chart, using the informal notes as a guide.
- Inform the students of the kinds of things a reader can learn about a book before actually starting to read it (e.g., the date of publication, publisher, author, and dedication information). Draw the students’ attention to the format of the novel (e.g., number and length of chapters, chapter titles [if any], illustrations or graphics, and font size).
Example:

The teacher might say: "The novel Safe as Houses is by Eric Walters. The back cover has no illustrations. The matte and shiny cover, wavy lines, and simple white font give the cover a dramatic look, which suits the adventures described in the story. The story takes place on October 15, 1954, during the disastrous events of Hurricane Hazel. The blurb that appears on the back cover is intended to capture the reader’s attention and make one want to read the story, which is based on true life incidents. The blurb reads: ‘Fast-paced and dramatic, Safe as Houses is the fascinating retelling of a devastating moment in Canadian history.’"

Activity #2: Introducing the Novel

- Provide the students with the lead sentence(s) or first paragraph of the novel.
- This could also be done by giving students a collection of articles that represent aspects of the text.
- Display the same text on a chalkboard, chart, or overhead. Use the opportunity to conduct a shared reading of the text.
- Conduct some modelling before breaking students into small groups.
- Have students, working in small groups, discuss the information found in the first sentences. To frame the discussions, ask the following questions:
  - What information do we learn from the sentences?
  - What questions do you have about the novel now?
  - What do you predict will happen in the novel?
  - From this small amount of text, what do we learn about the characters? The setting? The plot?
  - Are there any words that you are unfamiliar with?
  - What pictures came to mind as you read this text?
  - Who is telling the story? (i.e., is it a first-person account? Or a third-person account?)
- Reconvene the class and ask students to share their opinions about the novel. Survey the students to determine who is looking forward to finding out what happens in this book. Encourage the students to give reasons for their choices.

Example:

Naja shuffled a few inches forward in line, firmly sandwiched between the over-stuffed, under-washed luggage of her fellow travelers, and waited for the inevitable assault on her aching legs. Ouch! She followed the path of pain from the hideous blue pleather valise rammed into the back of her knees up to a face that, if possible, had a sourer expression than Naja’s. It was also the exact same color and texture as her luggage. Naja turned back, then immediately dropped her eyes from the man in front of her, who was busy picking his three noses, to a rhinestone-collared mutt, something between a Vernilian flyingrat and Dopalian monkeyfish, which growled at her as it chewed her shoelaces. Naja sighed. She was a long way from Three Moon Hollow. Well, the ad had promised travel to exotic locales.

(from Spaced: One Cadet’s Confused Interplanetary Misadventures, by Athanasia Pallas, p. 1)

Students might say: "By reading the opening of the novel Spaced, by Athanasia Pallas, we learn that the story is going to be told in the third-person ("Naja shuffled a few inches forward..."). We learn that Naja is traveling somewhere ("luggage of her fellow travelers...", "the ad had promised travel to exotic places...") and that the story is taking place in a fantasy setting (The lady behind her in line has blue, pleather-like skin, the man in front has three noses, the ‘pet’ chewing her laces is alien). The title “Spaced”, suggests Naja will be traveling through outer space. The author references an ad that Naja has read. We may start to wonder: What is the ad for? Where is Naja heading? Why is she going? Is she traveling alone? How will she be travelling?"
Activity #3: Brainstorming Questions

- Explain to students that we read because we are curious about what we will find, and we keep reading to answer the questions that continue to fill our reading minds. Readers ask questions before they read, while they read, and when they are finished reading.
- Read aloud the opening paragraph or the first page or two.
- Model one or two questions you have as a reader.
- Ask students to work in pairs to brainstorm a list of questions they have about the text. Pairs can then join with another group to compare questions. Ask:
  - Which questions were the same?
  - Which questions can one pair "borrow" from the other?
  - Which questions will have answers in the text?
  - Which questions encourage me to "read between the lines"?
- Display the questions in the classroom and tell students to note which come to mind as you continue to read the novel.

Note: This activity can be repeated at any time during the read-aloud of the novel.

Example:
Cole Matthews knelt defiantly in the bow of the aluminum skiff as he faced toward a cold September wind. Worn steel handcuffs bit at his wrists each time the small craft slapped another wave. Overhead, a gray-matted sky hung like a bad omen. Cole strained at the cuffs even though he agreed to wear them until he was freed on the island to begin his banishment. Agreeing to spend a whole year alone in Southeast Alaska had been his only way of avoiding a jail cell in Minneapolis.

(from Touching Spirit Bear, by Ben Mikaelsen, p. 3)

Questions students might ask about this opening passage:
- Why did Cole Matthews choose to spend a year alone in Southeast Alaska?
- What crime did Cole Matthews commit?
- Will Cole Matthews survive the year in Alaska?
- Was Cole alone on the aluminum skiff?
- Who will miss Cole while he is away?
- What equipment will Cole have to help him survive on his own?
- How might this experience change Cole?
- Is the 'gray-matted sky' a bad omen?

ORAL LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES DURING THE READ-ALOUD

Activity #4: Thinking Aloud
The think-aloud is a powerful form of demonstration. Reading the text and then reflecting on it out loud, show students that adults also wonder about things they have read and need time to reflect on them. The think-aloud is also a good way to provide students with a variety of strategies and ways to approach a text. Teachers need to centre their think-aloud on the specific focus of the unit (i.e., making connections, inferring, etc.). The goal is to develop in students the methods and habits to become self-monitoring and independent "good readers," who are able to mine their reading for meaning and read in depth.
The following statement starters are useful for think-alouds:
- I’m puzzled by...
- I wonder about...
- I think that...
- This reminds me of...
- Some questions that come to mind are...

**Example:**

Binti didn’t want to touch the clothes box, which was full of things donated by the families of wealthy students and British donors for students who were on scholarship. They weren’t uniform, and anyone wearing a charity stood out like a *mzunga*. But no one ever said no to the Headmistress. Mrs. Chintu would remember and would come to Binti’s classroom to check.

(from *The Heaven Shop*, by Deborah Ellis, p. 30)

The teacher might think aloud: "Hmmm. I wonder if ‘wearing charity’ is a bad thing if no one knows that it’s a charity item. This made me think about the clothes I donate to a charity every time I clean out my closet. I wonder if anyone will wear those clothes. I’m not sure what a *mzunga* is. My guess is that it’s another word for ‘sore thumb’. Some other questions came to mind: Will Binti get into trouble if she refuses the clothes? What would her punishment be? Would Binti wear any of these clothes if she needed to keep warm?"

**Note:** One way to keep track of the thoughts you have about the story is by marking the text with sticky notes. You can record questions, puzzling things, and things that the story reminds you of, thereby demonstrating what good readers think about to draw meaning from a text.

**Activity #5: Demonstrating Strategies**

Effective readers apply a range of strategies to construct meaning and to improve their understanding of a text. The read-aloud is a useful way to demonstrate these strategies. When students see a strategy used in context they are able to see how it works and how it benefits the reader. They are then able to apply the strategy themselves when they read.

As you continue to read the novel aloud, vary the questions for discussion. This will give you an opportunity to demonstrate a variety of reading strategies, focusing on one while maintaining background strategies.

**Example:**

Jack Plank was an out-of-work pirate. He’d had a job, and a good job too, on a lovely ship called the Avarice. But the thing is, Jack wasn’t good at plundering. There’s only one way to plunder: You have to yell and make faces and rattle your sword, and once you got people scared, you take things away from them. That’s what pirates do. But Jack didn’t seem to have a knack for it.

(from *Jack Plank Tells Tales*, by Natalie Babbitt, p. 3)

Some strategies and sample questions are:
- **Activating prior knowledge:** What do you know about pirates?
- **Making predictions:** What do you think is going to happen to a pirate who is out of work?
- **Making connections:** Does this novel remind you of other books you’ve read? Other movies you’ve seen?
- **Visualizing:** What do you think Jack Plank looks like? If he were a character in a movie, what might you expect to see?


**Questioning:** What questions do you have about what is happening?

**Drawing inferences:** How has the author let you know that Jack is not a good pirate? Who do you think might be telling this story?

**Finding important ideas:** What words or phrases tell you that this is a story about pirates?

**Summarizing:** Using one or two sentences, can you retell what we learn about the novel in this passage?

**Synthesizing:** How have the book’s title, introduction, and illustrations helped you understand what this novel is about?

**Monitoring and revising comprehension:** What words or phrases were unfamiliar to you? What did you do to understand the text?

**Evaluating:** How successful was the author at capturing your interest in this introduction?

**Activity #6: Working in Role**

To help the students understand the themes, plot, and relationships of the story, invite them to work in groups of three and role-play characters from the novel. One member of the group can role-play a character while the other two role-play reporters sent to interview the character about his or her life. The activity can be repeated so that each member of the group has a chance to role-play a character from the novel.

Allow students time to prepare for the improvisation. Afterwards, interviewers can report on the information they obtained from the character. Some groups may choose to present their interview as a dramatization. This complex activity may require extensive teacher support, depending on student capacity.

**Activity #7: Storytelling**

The best response to a story is to tell another story. One of the best ways to help students make text-to-self connections is to demonstrate how story events remind us of things that have happened to us, someone we know, or someone we have heard or read about. While reading the novel aloud, pause to tell stories that come to mind as you read about characters, conversations, or problems in the story. As students listen to your story, some might be reminded of stories from their own lives. When students volunteer to share their stories, it will likely prompt others to share stories. Again, this activity may need some scaffolding.

An alternative way to promote personal storytelling is to organize students into small groups, provide them with a topic drawn from the novel, and invite them to tell stories based on the prompt you have suggested.

**Example:**

I was grateful for the noisy three-year old who had been playing peek-a-boo with me the whole trip. She was wearing a hat with a rubber dinosaur on top. Its jaws snapped open and shut every time she moved her head. A laughing dinosaur. What will they think of next? Just an hour outside of the basin, she worked up enough nerve to come and crawl up in the seat beside me.

(from The Gravesavers, by Sheree Fitch, p. 60)

Possible stories that might be prompted by the text:

- Trips you have taken
- Interesting things about dinosaurs
• Entertaining or caring for a toddler
• Special toys or clothing we wore when we were younger
These stories may link to writing accounts or journal entries.

**ORAL LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES AFTER THE READ-ALOUD**

*Activity #8: Summarizing the Novel*

A book blurb is a summary of a novel written on its jacket or back cover. Its purpose is to make people want to read the novel.

• Revisit the blurb that appears on the cover of the novel you have read aloud. Invite students, working in small groups, to share book blurbs of novels they are reading independently. Groups can discuss the information they obtain from reading each of these blurbs.

• Ask the groups to each prepare a blurb of their own for the jacket of the novel you have just read aloud. Creating a graphic organizer may be needed to scaffold the process. Remind students that a blurb can include:
  - a description of the main characters;
  - an overview of the plot;
  - an overview of the main problem of the novel;
  - a description of the setting;
  - a brief excerpt from the novel;
  - an opinion of the book.

• Once the groups have completed their blurbs, have two groups join together to compare what they have written. What information is the same? How are the two blurbs different?

• As an extension, challenge the groups to write a blurb that is exactly 100 words long. This challenge will promote discussion and require students to negotiate, solve problems, and choose words carefully to prepare their summary.
  - Was the novel written for a specific audience or could it be enjoyed and understood by a variety of readers?
  - A novel can often teach the reader something about life. What do you think people will learn from reading this novel?
  - Was this novel a suitable choice for reading aloud? What elements of the story made it appealing for an audience to listen to?

*Note:* Observe and assess whether each student:
  - gives an opinion and supports it with a fact or reference to the text;
  - listens and responds to the opinions of others;
  - uses language and tone of voice to persuade others;
  - responds to questions asked by the moderator or other panelists;
  - critically analyses the author’s style, language, and intent.

**REFLECTION**

*Were my students successful? Did my instructional decisions meet the needs of all students? What worked well? What will I do differently in the future? What are my next steps?*

**Students**

• Did I come to the literature circle group prepared to respond and having done the reading?
  Did I bring a completed response journal and evidence to support my opinions?
• Did I listen to my group members, encouraging everyone to contribute?
• If I didn’t agree, did I disagree in a polite manner? If others disagreed with me, did I respond politely?
• Did I help the discussion continue by asking for clarification or by building on the ideas of others?
• Was I willing to change/modify my responses in my journal after being introduced to other points of view?
• Am I able to communicate ideas about literary elements (e.g., theme, character development, and plot) and use evidence from the text to support them?

**Teacher**

• Did students work cooperatively within a group, sharing and building upon each other’s ideas and exploring the text on a deeper level?
• Did I track the discussion groups closely enough to be able to address (in a timely manner) any issues that might inhibit progress, through mini-lessons, modelling, or other behaviour management strategies?
• Did I provide adequate modelled, shared, and guided experiences before the independent use of journals? (see Appendix 2.1C)
• Are students’ response journal entries moving beyond retelling? Are they making connections, exploring authors’ craft, and offering opinions and criticisms? Do the response journal entries show the students’ willingness to adapt/modify their points of view upon hearing other points of view in the discussion groups?
APPENDIX 2.1A – A SAMPLING OF NOVELS FOR READING ALOUD IN THE JUNIOR CLASSROOM


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title and Notes</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mass, Wendy</td>
<td><em>Jeremy Fink and the Meaning of Life</em></td>
<td>New York: Little, Brown and Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mikaelson, Ben</td>
<td><em>Touching Spirit Bear</em></td>
<td>New York: HarperCollins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pallas, Athanasia</td>
<td><em>Spaced: One Cadet’s Confused Interplanetary Misadventures</em></td>
<td>Toronto: Author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park, Linda Sue</td>
<td><em>A Single Shard</em></td>
<td>New York: Clarion Books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patterson, Katherine</td>
<td><em>Bridge to Terabithia</em></td>
<td>New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paulsen, Gary</td>
<td><em>Hatchet</em> (series)</td>
<td>New York: Puffin Books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sachar, Louis</td>
<td><em>Holes</em></td>
<td>New York: Dell Yearling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Spinelli, Jerry             | *Eggs*                                   | New York: Little, Brown and Company  
                                | (Also: *Crash, Loser, Maniac Magee, Wringer*) | |
| Spinelli, Jerry             | *Stargirl*                               | New York: Knopf Books For Young Readers |
| Walters, Eric               | *Safe as Houses*                         | Toronto: Doubleday Canada       |
| Walters, Eric               | *Shattered*                              | Toronto: Puffin Canada          |
| Walters, Eric               | *Sketches*                               | Toronto: Puffin Canada          |
| Wynne, Jones, Tim           | *The Maestro*                            | Toronto: Groundwood             |
To Have a Good Discussion:

- Prepare to participate. Do your reading and write your response or jot notes before meeting with your group.
- Listen with an open mind.
- Consider partners/group members as sources of information.
- Ask questions.
- Don't interrupt the speaker.
- Be willing to reconsider your point of view after hearing others speak.
- Focus on the topic.
- Offer new ideas and possibilities.
- Build on what others are saying and offer support.
- Don't make it personal when you disagree or challenge a comment.
- Be willing to clarify and explain your point of view.

(Adapted from Spiegel, 2005)
APPENDIX 2.1C – “RESPONSE JOURNALS” ANCHOR CHART

Criteria for a Good Response Journal Entry

- Does more than retell
- Relates to the memories and experiences of the reader
  ("I remember . . .", "It makes me think of . . .", "It reminds me of . . .")
- Is reflective, asks questions and shares ideas ("Now I want to know . . .", "I wonder if . . .", "I want to know what others think about . . .")
- Can be personal ("It makes me feel . . .", "I liked . . .", "I didn’t like . . .", "This is my favourite part because . . .")
- Looks for explanations ("I didn’t understand . . .", "I wonder why . . .")
- Looks at authors’ craft ("I wish the author . . .", "I noticed the author . . .", "The character/setting/plot/mood/theme was revealed when . . .")
### APPENDIX 2.1D – LITERATURE CIRCLE OBSERVATION SHEET

**Thinking Skills:** making connections to personal experiences and connections/comparisons to other texts read, predicting, asking questions, providing evidence, using knowledge of literary elements (plot, character, setting) and authors’ craft in discussion.

**Discussion Skills:** making contributions, inviting others’ comments/opinions, accepting disagreement, offering support, building on others’ responses, disagreeing constructively, listening without interrupting, bringing discussion back on track.

**Group Members:** ___________________________  **Date:** ___________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Thinking Skills</th>
<th>Discussion Skills</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(e.g., “The lake sounds like the one my cottage is on.” [making connections])</td>
<td>(e.g., Added to Thomas’s response “Not only that but . . .”)</td>
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</table>
APPENDIX 2.1E – RESPONSE JOURNAL CHECKLIST

Student Name: _______________________________ Date: ___________________

☐ Focuses beyond retelling

☐ Relates to memories and experiences (“I remember . . .”, “It makes me think of . . .”, “It reminds me of . . .”)

☐ Reflects, asks questions and shares ideas (“Now I want to know . . .”, “I wonder if . . .”, “I want to know what others think about . . .”)

☐ Expresses personal feelings (“It makes me feel . . .”, “I liked . . .”, “I didn’t like . . .”, “This is my favourite part because . . .”)

☐ Seeks meaning/understanding (“I didn’t understand . . .”, “I wonder why . . .”)

☐ Examines authors’ craft (“I wish the author . . .”, “I noticed the author . . .”, “The character/setting/plot/mood/theme was revealed when . . .”)

☐ Modifies/expanded response after hearing others’ ideas/opinions

Comments:
________________________________________________________________________
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A GUIDE TO EFFECTIVE LITERACY INSTRUCTION, GRADES 4 TO 6 • VOLUME FOUR
LISTENING

Listening, an integral part of talk, is an important avenue for learning and needs to be explicitly encouraged and nurtured in young learners. Listening is a private, internal cognitive process in which listeners select and attend to particular aspects of their talk-filled environment, while ignoring or “tuning out” the rest.

In a talk-filled junior classroom, listening is assumed and expected. It is also planned, explicitly taught, and purposeful. Teachers seek, through their modelling and interactions, to involve students in listening that is active and engaged rather than passive. Students learn to listen actively when teachers set purposes for listening and give them “look-fors” to focus on, and when students are aware that the information and ideas they are listening for will be part of a follow-up discussion, activity, or task.

Instructional Uses of Listening

Throughout the junior curriculum, teachers use listening for a variety of instructional purposes. Frequently the purpose of the first reading of a text is to have students listen for enjoyment and for a sense of its overall meaning. In subsequent teaching, the teacher guides students in focusing on a particular part or aspect of the text as they listen to the reading. The chart on page 54 summarizes some instructional purposes of listening, and the corresponding focus for learning, as students listen to the teacher read and think aloud.

Listening to the sound of language not only enhances the students’ appreciation of different literary forms and genres, but also assists them with their own writing. The sample learning experience “Listening and Writing” (on pages 55–56) shows how students can learn to appreciate the sound of language and use listening to the sound of their own writing as an integral part of the revision process.

“. . . the major reason for providing students with many different opportunities to listen to the sounds of words is to fine-tune their ability to listen to their own drafts so that their ears become part of the revision process.”

(Harwayne, 1992, p. 125)
## Purposes of Listening

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Teacher</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| **Uses listening as a means of teaching and extending the students’ abilities to use comprehension strategies.** | Listen for:  
- connections they can make (text to self, text to text, and text to world);  
- the most important ideas/information;  
- details to support their predictions;  
- implications and inferences;  
- clues about the characters’ thoughts, feelings, actions, personality;  
- evidence of bias.  
Think about how they will summarize the text. |
| **Uses listening to immerse students in the language of literature and non-fiction writing.** | Listen for:  
- words/phrases that paint a picture in their mind;  
- language that makes them feel sad, happy, curious;  
- authors’ techniques that catch their interest, cause them to question, create suspense, or give clues about what will happen next. |
| **Uses listening to immerse students in the different sounds of language.** | Listen for:  
- the sounds (e.g., alliteration), rhythms, and imagery-filled language of poems, rhymes, lyrics, ballads, and nonsense verse;  
- the language of explanation, direction, persuasion, and information in non-fiction text;  
- the language of memory, recount, and description in memoir and autobiography;  
- the language of humour, tragedy, hope, or longing. |
| **Uses carefully planned listening activities to familiarize English-language learners with the sounds and patterns of spoken English.** | Participate in guided reading activities (e.g., stories read aloud or recorded with careful articulation, phrasing, and pacing; short items of information from radio and TV news and weather broadcasts; online audio-visual material using language that is within their range of comprehension). |
Sample Learning Experience

Listening and Writing

Students learn that listening to the “sound of writing” is a skill they can develop and use to revise their own writing. The teacher models revision of writing by showing students how to listen to the sound of the writing read aloud.

Prior to this classroom experience, the teacher and students collect words, phrases, sentences, quotes, descriptions, passages, and lines of poetry that affect them by their appeal to the senses or the imagination. Possible examples include opening/lead sentences, words or phrases that are descriptive or convey information or feelings in a particularly effective or lyrical manner, or “words/phrases that sing”. Lists, charts, booklets, or bulletin boards can be used to record personal and class favourites under such headings as “I like the sound of this”, “Favourite Sentences”, or “Great Quotes”.

Day 1: Collecting the Sounds of Writing

- Bring a piece of writing to the class and read/think aloud to show students how to determine the following:
  - What does the writing say?
  - How does my writing sound?
  - How does it flow?
  - How do the words help to paint a picture, tell a story, and give information?
  - Does the writing say what I want it to say?
  - Does it need more ideas/information/details?
  - Is it clear?
  - Is there too much?
- Have students contribute favourite words, phrases, and/or sentences from their personal reading and listening, to the class list. Read an item from the list aloud to the class and ask, “Is this a phrase/sentence that you would like to put in your book of favourites? Read it aloud. What makes it great?” Continue with other items from the list. Encourage discussion among students, prompting them to use specific comments to support their choices.

Day 2: Mini-lesson – Students learn that they can evaluate or revise writing using the “sound” of what they have written.

- Collect (or create) several pairs of sentences or brief passages for comparison.
- Read aloud a pair of sentences/passages and ask students to listen carefully and determine which one works and sounds better.
- Have students identify which they think is the better model and talk about the reasons for their selection.
- Repeat the process with another pair of sentences.
- Guide students to understand that different pieces of writing can contain the same information/ideas but one of them:
  - presents the information/ideas more succinctly;
  - creates more interesting images;
  - gives a clearer message;
  - provides more or less detail;
  - sounds better to the listener.
Sample Learning Experience – Continued

- Present a draft of a piece of writing to the class for revision. The writing may be a draft of the teacher’s own writing or a grade-appropriate sample (e.g., student exemplar, EQAO sample, or student writing from previous years’ teaching). Revise the draft with the class, as follows:
  - Read aloud the passage with the students.
  - Discuss how the writing sounds.
  - Make revisions and explain each rephrasing of the text.
  - Have students discuss the improvement.
  - Create the revised draft on a chart or overhead.

Day 3: Mini-lesson – Students use the sound of language to identify key ideas/information and notice effective language and technique.

Teacher Modelling
- Using books or articles on current science or social studies topics, select well-written non-fiction texts to read aloud to the class. After reading a text, have students (either as a whole class or in small groups) discuss the information and concepts it contains. Guide students in making a summary of the discussion(s).
- Create a chart with two columns headed “Content” and “Writers’ Craft/Language”. Ask students to contribute words, phrases, or sentences that express important content (concepts, facts, and details). List these items on the chart under “Content”.
- Reread the text and ask students to listen for the language or author technique that makes it an interesting piece of writing. Have them select examples from the text using direct quotes. For example:
  - Starts with a question (quote example from text)
  - Creates pictures in your mind (quote example from text)
  - Makes the information sound exciting (quote example from text)
- Record student and teacher selected examples in the “Writers’ Craft/Language” column on the chart.

Student Partner Work
- Have students read several informational texts with a partner. While partner B reads, partner A listens and makes jot notes about the language, flow, and author techniques. Then the students change roles: partner A reads and partner B listens and makes jot notes. The partners discuss which examples to contribute to the “Writers’ Craft/Language” column on the chart.
- Ask students to share a piece of informational writing they are working on with their partner. Each student reads his or her draft aloud and discusses the language and flow of writing with his or her partner. Partners refer to the examples of writers’ craft and language listed on the chart to support their suggestions for changes, rewording, or deletions.

Independent Work
- Students work independently to revise their writing for improved flow, sound of the language, techniques, clarity, meaning, or interest. They consider suggestions made by their partner, but select only those that they feel are appropriate to the purpose of their writing.
- Students may record choral reading of selected text.
Assessing Listening Across the Curriculum

Assessing student listening skills in the junior grades focuses on the understanding students achieve through listening. This is demonstrated by their engagement while listening and their ability to respond appropriately. As well, students are assessed on their ability to reflect on and identify their strengths as listeners. As teachers observe students listening, they make observations on the responsiveness both during and after listening. Important look-fors are shown in the sample checklist on the following page. Listening assessment checklists can be created for particular lessons or blocks of time (e.g., a two-week focus on listening skills).

Using “Inner Voice”

Engaged listeners and readers use silent conversation with themselves to find meaning in what they are listening to or reading. Students in the junior grades are not necessarily aware of this process. Students who become aware of, and attend to, their inner voice can use it to monitor, reflect on, and deepen their understanding. When comprehension breaks down, listening to their inner voice helps them identify problems and select appropriate “fix-up” strategies to resolve them. The inner voice also enables students to verbalize their thought processes and thus supports them in developing the challenging skills and language of metacognition.

Teachers guide and support students in using their inner voice to attend to and examine their thinking, identify strategies for learning, and reflect on how they learn, by:

- modelling and drawing attention to (during read-alouds) the use of inner voice to monitor and reflect on their understanding of the text and clarify its meaning;
- facilitating and guiding frequent discussions through and about their own think-alouds;
- naming strategies they notice students using in their reading and talking;
- frequently asking: “What are you thinking?”, “How did you figure that out?”, “How did you make that connection?”, “How did this insight come to you?”;
- providing frequent opportunities for students, in pairs and small groups, to talk about their thinking, discuss their inner voice, and respond to the thinking and strategies verbalized by others;
- thinking aloud as they go through the process of revising their own writing;
- making revision of writing an oral activity.

“I’m constantly having silent conversations with myself as I read. I’m commenting on a character’s decision, making and confirming predictions, raising questions, telling characters what to do or say. I even dream about characters and place myself in their world.”

(Robb, 2000, p. 58)
## STUDENT LISTENING: OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

**Student Name:** ___________________________ **Date:** ________________

**Task:** ____________________________________________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The student:</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Teacher Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• comments on the topic or ideas being discussed</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• seeks clarification</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• asks questions</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• responds to the questions of others</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• builds on the ideas or responses of others</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• paraphrases or summarizes statements/arguments made by others</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• expresses a point of view related to the topic/text</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• elaborates on the ideas of others</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• asks for further information</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• encourages and supports the speaker</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• expresses agreement or disagreement appropriately</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• responds appropriately according to the task or purpose for listening</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• understands responsibilities as a member of the audience in formal presentations</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Sample Lesson 2.2, “Using Inner Voice to Activate Reading Strategies” (on pages 59–68), demonstrates how students can be taught to use their inner voice as a guide to help them understand challenging texts.
Sample Lesson 2.2 – Using Inner Voice to Activate Reading Strategies

LESSON PLAN AT A GLANCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAY 1</th>
<th>DAY 2</th>
<th>DAY 3</th>
<th>DAY 4</th>
<th>DAY 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Modelling of listening to inner voice, using a challenging narrative text - Riding the Tiger, by Eve Bunting</strong></td>
<td><strong>Shared practice of using inner voice and fix-up strategies, using an informational text</strong></td>
<td><strong>Review “Listening to My Inner Voice” chart</strong></td>
<td><strong>Review “Listening to My Inner Voice” chart</strong></td>
<td><strong>Review “Listening to My Inner Voice” chart</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-class development of “Listening to My Inner Voice” chart</td>
<td><strong>Shared reading of magazine article, practising use of inner voice</strong></td>
<td><strong>Guided practice in listening to inner voice, using a new magazine article</strong></td>
<td><strong>Guided practice – partner work using inner voice</strong></td>
<td><strong>Independent practice of listening to inner voice, using a science text</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student reflection on use of inner voice</strong></td>
<td><strong>Whole class adds to “Listening to My Inner Voice” chart</strong></td>
<td><strong>Partner reflection</strong></td>
<td><strong>Whole class adds to “Listening to My Inner Voice” chart</strong></td>
<td><strong>Whole class adds to “Listening to My Inner Voice” chart</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LESSON FOCUS

What is the focus of the lesson?

Students will learn through modelling and guided practice how readers use their inner voice as a comprehension aid. They will develop the ability to attend to their inner voice when meaning breaks down.

How will I teach it?

The teacher models the steps and provides supports as students learn to use their inner voice to monitor understanding. The teacher gradually shifts the responsibility to the students to apply the knowledge and skills independently.

Teaching Strategies

- Demonstration/modelling
- Think-aloud
- Think-pair-share
- Read-aloud
- Guided practice

Note: This lesson provides suggestions that teachers may adapt or change to respond to the needs of students. The number of days suggested is flexible and can be changed. The lesson is adaptable across the junior grades and may be changed to accommodate other grade expectations/resources/materials.
RATIONALE
Why am I teaching this lesson?
To enable students to become strategic readers who independently listen to their inner voice as they read, monitor their comprehension, and know how to use “fix-up” strategies when they encounter difficulties.

ASSESSMENT
How will I know when my students are successful?
- Determine beforehand each student’s independent reading level, using information from Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), PM Benchmark Kit, or other reading assessment resources.
- Review student reflection charts “Thinking About Myself as a Reader” (see Appendix 2.2A, p. 66).
- Review teacher observation jot notes.
- Review student reflection charts “Listening to My Inner Voice When Reading” (see Appendix 2.2B, p. 67).
- Review teacher observation checklists “Using Inner Voice to Monitor and Repair Comprehension” (see Appendix 2.2C, p. 68).

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE
What prior knowledge do my students and I need in order to be successful with the focus of this lesson?
Prior to this lesson, students need to:
- be assessed for reading levels so that appropriate texts can be chosen;
- participate in a variety of partner activities and have experience working and sharing with others.

CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS
Which expectations will I address?
Students will:
Oral Communication
Overall
3. reflect on and identify their strengths as listeners and speakers, areas for improvement, and the strategies they found most helpful in oral communication situations.

Specific (Grade 4)*
1.6 extend understanding of oral texts by connecting the ideas in them to their own knowledge, experience, and insights, other texts (including print and visual texts), and the world around them;
2.2 demonstrate an understanding of appropriate speaking behaviour in a variety of situations, including paired sharing and small and large group discussions;
3.1 identify, in conversation with the teacher and peers, which strategies they found most helpful before, during, and after listening and speaking, and determine which steps to take to improve their oral communication skills.

* The lesson can be adapted to meet similar expectations in Grades 5 and 6.
Reading

Overall
1. read and demonstrate an understanding of a variety of literary, graphic, and informational texts, using a range of strategies to construct meaning;

4. reflect on and identify their strengths as readers, areas for improvement, and the strategies they found most helpful before, during, and after reading.

Specific (Grade 4)∗
1.3 identify a variety of reading comprehension strategies and use them appropriately before, during, and after reading, to understand texts;

3.2 predict the meaning of and rapidly solve unfamiliar words using different types of cues, including: semantic (meaning) cues, syntactic (language structure) cues, graphophonic (phonological and graphic) cues;

4.1 identify, in conversations with the teacher and peers or in a reader’s notebook, which strategies they found most helpful before, during, and after reading and how they can use these and other strategies to improve as readers;

4.2 explain, in conversations with the teacher and peers or in a reader’s notebook, how their skills in listening, speaking, writing, viewing, and representing help them make sense of what they read.

MATERIALS/PREPAREATION FOR TEACHING

What do I need to know, have, and be able to do before I can begin the lesson?

• A class set and a wall chart of the reflection chart “Thinking About Myself as a Reader” (Appendix 2.2A, p. 66)

• A copy of the picture book Riding the Tiger, by Eve Bunting, or another short, challenging narrative piece of text

• Copies of an informational text at a challenging level for the teacher (for modelling purposes)

• Copies of informational text at various reading levels (to accommodate the needs of all students)

• Copies of text at various reading levels on the same science topic (to accommodate the needs of all students)

• A class set of the work sheet “Listening to My Inner Voice When Reading” (Appendix 2.2B, p. 67)

• Copies of the checklist “Using Inner Voice to Monitor and Repair Comprehension” (Appendix 2.2C, p. 68)

DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION

How can I ensure that I am meeting the needs of all my students?

• Allow for different levels of comprehension among students when modelling use of inner voice to track meaning during the read-aloud.

• Provide a variety of texts at different levels of difficulty to meet the needs of all students, based on information obtained about student reading levels (DRA, PM levels, etc.).

• Assign partners to help students in need of additional guidance.

• Review “Using Inner Voice to Monitor and Repair Comprehension” checklists to identify which students require additional practice (partnered-up or individually) with strategies.

∗ The lesson can be adapted to meet similar expectations in Grades 5 and 6.
INSTRUCTION

DAY 1

Before Reading
- Hand out copies of the reflection chart “Thinking About Myself as a Reader” (Appendix 2.2A, p. 66) and give students five-minutes to complete it. Use the chart throughout the lesson as a reference for student awareness of strengths and areas for improvement in reading skills, ability to monitor comprehension, and level of awareness of fix-up strategies.
- Explain that you will be reading aloud a difficult text, Riding the Tiger, by Eve Bunting, and will be sharing the thought processes you are experiencing as you read.

During Reading
- Read aloud Riding the Tiger. Model use of the inner voice to track meaning by sharing your inner conversation as you read. Tracking involves noting some, or all, of the following:
  - Questions
  - Comments
  - Rereading
  - Slowing down to capture understanding
  - Refocusing
  - Examining the illustrations
  - Handling challenging concepts or vocabulary
  - Exploring problem-solving possibilities
- Record your thought processes on a chart or overhead.

After Reading
- Ask students the following questions:
  - "What were my problems in reading this text?"
  - "What did I do to solve my problems?"
  - "What did I learn from tracking my thinking?"
  - "What problems did you encounter in your inner conversation with the meaning of the text?"
  - "What did you do to solve those problems?"

DAY 2

Before Reading
- Explain that this will be a shared think-aloud of an inner conversation and the use of fix-up strategies, using an excerpt from a challenging or complex informational text (e.g., a physics textbook, legal document, news editorial, or technical manual).
- Hand out copies of the text to students.

During Reading
- Follow the process below to, again, explicitly model the inner conversation of a proficient reader. Track the process using jot notes, highlighting, questions, etc. Sticky notes and margin notes can be placed right on the text. Practise using the process together with the students. Have students gradually assume more and more responsibility for the reading.
1. Ask students to look at an excerpt from an advanced text on a difficult topic (e.g., a physics textbook, legal document, news editorial, or technical manual). Choose text that is challenging but not too difficult to understand. The text can be displayed on an overhead as well as being handed out to students.

2. Explain that you will be listening to the text as you read it, and will listen to your own thinking when you have difficulty with words or the meaning of the text.

3. Begin reading the text aloud. Stop and think aloud when you encounter a difficulty. For example:
   - “I need to reread this sentence.”
   - “I will try to figure out this word by telling myself what I already know.”
   - “I will read the next sentence – maybe it will give me some help with the meaning.”
   - “My inner voice is telling me that if I jot down what I found out in this paragraph, it will help me to read the next part.” (Make quick jot notes.)
   - “Now my inner voice is telling me to look more closely at the illustration.”

4. Ask students what they would do. Have they ever used their inner voice to guide them through a difficult text?

5. Ask a student to read a new section of the article out loud, stopping throughout to share what his or her inner voice is saying. (This should first be done with a partner, each student taking turns reading a section of the article.)

6. After reading, modelling, and thinking aloud about the use of inner voice, review the experience with the students.

**After Reading**

- Begin a class chart entitled “Listening to My Inner Voice When Reading”. Together, with the students, identify and note some of the fix-up strategies used as a result of listening to their inner voice. For example:
  - reread the difficult part several times
  - ask myself questions about a difficult word to predict the meaning
  - stop and jot down the information before reading on

This chart will be used throughout the week as new points are added.

**DAY 3**

**Before Reading**

- Review the “Listening to My Inner Voice” chart with the students.
- Hand out copies of a magazine article for shared reading using inner voice as a guide.

**During Reading**

- Read the magazine article aloud, using a think-aloud to track your inner conversation with the text. Have students join in the reading at the second or third paragraph.
- Stop at the end of each paragraph and use jot notes, sticky notes, highlighting, etc., to record your inner conversation during the reading.
- Practise using your inner voice together with the students as you complete the reading.
• Have students practise use of their inner voice with a new piece of informational text, using jot notes, questions in margins, rereadings, sticky notes, etc., to track their inner conversation with the text.

• Circulate among the students, offering support and writing jot notes on the fix-up strategies they are using.

After Reading
• Ask students to reflect on and, then as a class, discuss the following questions:
  - "What were my problems in reading this text?"
  - "What did I do to solve my problems?"
  - "What did I learn from tracking my thinking?"

• Collect student reflections to assess their understanding of the concept of "inner voice" and their knowledge of fix-up strategies. This information can be used to help focus future lessons and determine student needs.

• Revisit the class chart "Listening to My Inner Voice" and, with the students, add new fix-up strategies used as a result of listening to their inner voice. For example:
  - read the text very slowly
  - look ahead for words and ideas that I know
  - say the words aloud while I'm reading

• Review and discuss all the items on the chart to help students consolidate their thinking.

DAY 4

Before Reading
• Review the class chart "Listening to My Inner Voice When Reading".

During Reading
• Repeat the process from Day 3 with students working in pairs. Use a variety of reading passages to ensure each student has a challenging text.

• Have students read their passage (using jot notes, highlighting, etc.). Then, in pairs, have each student tell their partner what they were thinking as they recorded their notes and how their inner voice is helping them.

• Use the observation checklist "Using Inner Voice to Monitor and Repair Comprehension" (Appendix 2.2C, p. 68) to note the students' growing control of their use of inner voice to help them read. Information from the checklist assists the teacher in identifying students who need further guided practice in small-group, paired, and individual settings.

After Reading
• Have students work with their partner to review and summarize the meaning of the passage they have read. Instruct them to list the ways in which using their inner voice helps their reading.
DAY 5

Before Reading
• Review with students the use of inner voice to help them in their reading.
• Distribute reading passages (from science textbooks or other sources) related to the class’s
current science topic. Use texts at various levels of difficulty so that each student has a
challenging passage to read.

During Reading
• Have students read their text independently and use their inner voice to identify fix-up
strategies as they read.
• Have students record on their “Listening to My Inner Voice When Reading” work sheet
(Appendix 2.2B, p. 67) where they got stuck and what they did to help themselves in
their reading.
• Use the observation checklist “Using Inner Voice to Monitor and Repair Comprehension”
(Appendix 2.2C, p. 68) to note each student’s growing control in the use of his or her inner
voice. Information from the checklist assists teachers in identifying students who need
further guided practice in small-group, paired, and individual settings.

After Reading
• Have students debrief with a partner, comparing the fix-up strategies they have used.
• Review the “Listening to My Inner Voice” chart with the class and add new items arising
from the day’s reading.

REFLECTION
Were my students successful? Did my instructional decisions meet the needs of all my students?
What worked well? What will I do differently in the future? What are my next steps?

Students
• Do I stop when I don’t understand a passage and try to find a fix-up strategy to help me
understand?
• Do I listen to my inner voice?
• Do I try a variety of fix-up strategies to try to improve my understanding of a text?

Teacher
• Were students aware of problems in comprehending the text?
• Can students describe how listening to their inner voice helps them understand what they read?
• Did students use several fix-up strategies to repair comprehension?
• Did I encourage constant development of this strategy from lesson to lesson through
incremental instruction?
• Were students successful in understanding and sharing the meaning of the challenging text
provided?
• Do some students require further practice (with a partner, in a small group, or one on one) in
listening to their inner voice and using fix-up strategies?
• Was the text I used challenging enough to encourage the use of a variety of fix-up strategies?
APPENDIX 2.2A – THINKING ABOUT MYSELF AS A READER

Student Name: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Books and Materials I Have Read and Finished</th>
<th>Books and Materials I Have Not Finished</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List the reasons why you were successful in finishing them</td>
<td>List the reasons why you did not finish them</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title:</th>
<th>Title:</th>
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<tbody>
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</tbody>
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Title: ___________________________ Title: ___________________________

Title: ___________________________ Title: ___________________________

Title: ___________________________ Title: ___________________________

Title: ___________________________ Title: ___________________________
**APPENDIX 2.2B – LISTENING TO MY INNER VOICE WHEN READING**

Student Name: __________________________ Date: __________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where I Got Stuck</th>
<th>What I Did to Help Myself</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
# Appendix 2.2c – Using Inner Voice to Monitor and Repair Comprehension

**Student Name:** ____________________________  **Date:** ____________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Indicator</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is aware of problems or difficult parts of the text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continually monitors comprehension</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses several strategies to repair comprehension (rereads, slows down, reads aloud)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses strategies to make meaning when reading challenging text (makes jot notes, retells, summarizes)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognizes inner voice as a means of identifying strategies to help with difficult text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates use of inner voice during reading (thinking aloud, asking questions, taking notes)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discusses and names a fix-up strategy and can talk about how the strategy helps with difficult text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses inner voice independently in reading a variety of texts for a variety of purposes (literature, content-area texts, resource materials)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Talk and Visual Texts**

Talk is used to make sense of visual as well as written texts. When teachers model and think aloud their responses to visual texts (such as maps, posters, and films), they teach students to notice and attend to particular aspects or details of the text. Teachers demonstrate the thinking process and inner conversation involved in getting meaning from a visual text by:

- activating prior knowledge;
- relating the images to ideas, experiences, and information in their own lives, other texts (both visual and written), and the world;
- making inferences based on details in the visual text;
- determining point of view and possible sources of bias;
- determining the key message or most important information;
- summarizing ideas and information;
- using several related images to synthesize key messages.

Teachers plan and guide talk about visual texts to elicit student use of a variety of thinking processes and skills (e.g., prediction, hypothesis, wondering, questioning and inquiry, analysis of information or ideas, evaluation of scope and purpose of the message). Through teacher-guided discussion, students learn to “decode” visual texts and read “between the lines” (or behind the images) for inferences, messages, and symbols that are not immediately apparent. They also learn that visuals can enhance the information and ideas presented by written text. Images may also contain important information not addressed by the words. (Ways of focusing conversations and discussions on the particular function of a visual text are summarized in the chart on pages 70–71.)

**Visual Texts in the Junior Classroom**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pictures</th>
<th>Illustrations</th>
<th>Maps</th>
<th>Advertisements</th>
<th>Sculptures</th>
<th>Videos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Picture books</td>
<td>Posters</td>
<td>Diagrams</td>
<td>Video graphics</td>
<td>Displays</td>
<td>Webcasts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comics</td>
<td>Brochures</td>
<td>Diagrams</td>
<td>Films</td>
<td>Packaging</td>
<td>Podcasts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graphic novels</td>
<td>Graphic organizers</td>
<td>Diagrams</td>
<td>Paintings</td>
<td>Labels</td>
<td>Video games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Number charts/lines</td>
<td>Animations</td>
<td>Photographs</td>
<td>Blogs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Talk About Visual Texts

Visual Text as a Story

The teacher guides students in focusing on the narrative aspects of the visual text. Conversations and discussions are designed to help students:

• notice important supporting details;
• predict and hypothesize about the plot, character, setting, events, problems, tension, resolution, and what happens next;
• notice relationships between characters, setting, and mood;
• observe features of the text such as colour, shading, distance, position, camera techniques and angles, and point of view, then describe how these features contribute to the story;
• notice symbolic representations of good, evil, menace, heroism, power, struggle, or courage;
• make inferences about the characters or events and use evidence from the visual text to support the inferences;
• tell, retell, or compose the story told by the text;
• develop the story of a picture or character, using the conventions of a particular genre (e.g., mystery, fable, biography, autobiography, journal, or historical narrative).

Visual Text as Information

The teacher models, then guides students in identifying and analysing the information, ideas, or processes represented in pictures, timelines, maps, illustrations, diagrams, and charts. The study and discussion of a single image, or series of images, may precede the reading of written informational material. By focusing on the visual information first, the teacher supports the students’ development of strategies for learning from informational text.

Conversations and discussions may focus on:

• identifying and “mining” all information, details, and facts to be gleaned from the graphic image;
• the use of KWL charts to organize information and promote inquiry before, during, and after reading;
• relating information from the visual text to the students’ own experiences;
• making connections between information in the text and information from previous texts (both non-fiction and fiction) and other sources;
• determining the main idea or most important information;
• determining bias;
• working with a partner to summarize the information from the image (with partners taking turns presenting their summaries to each other);
• deliberating on questions raised by the visual text;
• determining how the particular visual form (illustration, timeline, diagram) could be used in classroom activities in various subjects.
Talk About Visual Texts – Continued

Visual Text as Symbolic Representation

The teacher guides the study of visual images as representations of ideas, and plans discussions around symbols and the message/ideas/information they may represent. The following activities may be included:

• Students view and discuss images from art (e.g., landscapes) in a variety of art forms from different periods.
• Students discuss articles of clothing or manner of dress as symbols in illustrations, picture books, and advertisements.
• Students focus on objects present in illustrations and brainstorm the possible meanings of each object in relation to the central idea of the picture.
• Students consider point of view and possible bias.
• The teacher reads aloud a story and guides students in developing a symbol to represent an idea, emotion, character, or mood. Students may work alone, in pairs, or in triads and present their symbols to the whole class.

Talk and Critical Literacy

The development of critical literacy requires students to learn and apply skills of analysis and investigation. It also involves improving the ability to recognize different perspectives and grapple with the ambiguities and contradictions of complex issues. Students learn to look at a text’s purpose as well as its content. They also learn to infer an author’s viewpoint and experience. The major vehicle for consolidation of these complex processes is carefully planned and guided discussion, based on interesting, relevant texts gathered from various media. In such discussions, teachers provide scaffolded support that helps students develop their discussion and inquiry skills (which are the focus of Chapter 3).

Discussion dramas and enactments provide opportunities and creative structures for whole-class discussion around critical issues. Instead of free-for-all discussions, students participate in activities such as staging radio and talk shows, choral montages, and newscasts. They prepare and present, or act out, a position from the perspective of another. These responses need to be explicitly taught to students.

The sample learning experience “Social Studies Discussion Drama – Mining Perspectives” (on pages 73–74), shows how a discussion drama might be conducted.
As students become critically literate they develop a habit of mind that questions the intentions of texts. Problem posing (asking probing questions about the text) is an effective approach to establish an author’s intention (McLaughlin and DeVoogd, 2004, p. 62). Using this strategy, students pose critical questions to help them analyse the text. They then take action based on their new understandings. For instance, when considering how they can promote social justice, students might ask:

- “How will my attitude or actions change on this topic?”
- “How will I treat others differently as a result of having critically analyzed this topic?”
- “What could I do to change a rule, a procedure, or an attitude that is unjust?”
- “How can I support those who are treated unfairly?”

(McLaughlin and DeVoogd, 2004, pp. 62–65)

These questions lead students to examine power relationships and the whole issue of equity in and among communities and nations.

For further discussion of critical literacy, see “Critical-Literacy Skills” in Volume One of this guide (pp. 63–64).
Sample Learning Experience

Social Studies Discussion Drama – Mining Perspectives

The teacher gathers a variety of reading and graphic materials about the mining industry, collecting both non-fiction and fictional resources that offer a variety of perspectives. These could include:
- advertisements;
- promotional material;
- government publications (Ministry of Natural Resources);
- newspaper items related to the closing of a mine or environmental damage/repair;
- literature selections (e.g., novels, picture books, and short stories);
- informational texts;
- industry publications.

Day 1

- Read aloud passages from three different sources about the benefits of mining to a town/city/region. Ask students to listen and identify key messages about the benefits. In paired discussion, students tell each other what they heard.
- Lead a classroom discussion in which students brainstorm to gather key messages from all three sources. Have them look at the key messages from each source – how they are alike; how they differ; why there are differences in emphasis, and information; why there are similarities; why there are contradictions (if any). Conclude the discussion by asking students to identify any key messages, issues, or questions that arise from them. Record these on a class chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Key Messages</th>
<th>Issues/Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</table>

Days 2 and 3

- Have students select material from the teacher’s gathered resources and read from two or three sources (independently and/or with a partner). After reading each item have students record their findings on a chart (using the same format as the class chart).
- Have students place their chart in the package with the books/articles/pamphlets they have read. The next student reads the material and adds his or her ideas to the chart. Each student may have a very different interpretation of the material.
- Repeat this process so that students read/view a number of resources. Ensure that several students read the same materials and contribute to the chart for that resource.

Day 4

- Hold a class discussion on the students’ findings and interpretations. Add all the key messages, issues, and questions the students identified to the class chart.
- Read aloud a fictional piece about life in a mining town.
- Hold a class discussion on how mining affected the lives of people in the story. Record key messages, issues, and questions on the class chart.
- Have students discuss why each source had different messages, perspectives, and areas of emphasis, pointing out the difference between point of view and opinion.
Sample Learning Experience – Continued

Day 5

• Create scenarios and roles for an impromptu “in-role” discussion. Prior to this activity, model some points of view and encourage brainstorming of other responses to provide scaffolding. For example, ________ has been discovered in Town “X” and a mine is about to be developed there. Consider how the following would react:
  a) The mayor
  b) The mine company’s president
  c) The owner of the land
  d) A person who will work in the mine
  e) The bank president
  f) The school principal
  g) A store owner
  h) An environmentalist
  i) A farmer
  j) A student whose family is emigrating from another country to work in the mine

• Have students work in pairs or triads to develop their reactions in one of these roles.
• Arrange a class discussion to respond to the question: Should the mine come to Town “X”? Students speak in role (as selected from the list) and give their opinions, using information, supported opinion, and personal interpretation. (Two or three students with the same role may have divergent or opposing responses.) If there are two to three students to a role, form two to three groups and hear from each student in each group.
• After the role playing, lead students in a discussion of why there were different responses, opinions, and interpretations. Refer to the issues on the class chart. Did these issues come up? Did new issues arise? (If so, add them to the chart.)

Day 6

• On another day, using the same cast of characters, have students select a different role and prepare to discuss their reactions to the following situation: The “X” mine is closing and about to leave town. Ask students to consider: How will each character react? What will/should each character do? Again, allow students to work in pairs or triads to develop the role and prepare (orally) to respond to the situation. Students speak in role. Observe and take notes of issues, perspectives, questions, and solutions.
• Lead a class discussion on areas of agreement and disagreement among the characters in the role play. Guide student reflection on:
  – why there are different perspectives;
  – why there are different interpretations of the same event;
  – why authors of non-fiction material writing about the same topic may present the information differently.
• Revisit the source material read in Day 1 and the issues on the class chart. Have students reread the material they read previously and think about the author’s perspective. What do they find? Have students share their findings and thoughts in a class discussion on an author’s perspective and the possible reasons he or she may have for presenting this perspective.

Next Steps

The in-role experience prepares students to take on a perspective, stance, or point of view in order to explore the thinking and experience of another person. This experience is also useful for preparing students to write in role. At a later date, the teacher can build on the students’ emerging skills in perspective taking, using role-playing techniques (including writing in role) to explore another topic.
3 ACCOUNTABLE TALK

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**Introduction**

As talk is the motor for learning, accountable talk, or focused discussion, is its major vehicle in the junior classroom. Accountable talk is a frequent daily occurrence that allows students to use focused talk to move their learning and thinking forward to new ideas, perspectives, and knowledge. Accountable talk engages the students’ minds as they develop their language and thinking to increase understanding and create meaning from texts and learning experiences in all areas of the curriculum.

Accountable talk/focused discussion, involves the thoughtful and sustained examination of a given topic for the purpose of exploring it in a thorough and undistracted manner. It goes beyond conversation as ideas are not just exchanged but considered and acted upon, becoming part of each participant’s thinking. As they put forward their ideas to be considered and tempered by the ideas of others, students extend and refine their personal understanding. “True discussion is a purposeful interchange of ideas through which meaning has the possibility of being revised and extended” (Spiegel, 2005, p. 9).

**Accountable Talk in the Junior Grades**

Accountable talk supports student learning in many ways. For example, it may be used to examine and clarify challenging concepts or processes in content areas, talk through processes and strategies the teacher has modelled, review and analyse important information, revisit and revise ideas, resolve problems and different points of view, and extend understanding of oral, written, and media texts. Accountable talk enables students to gain insight into how others apply strategies and solve problems. The goal of explicit strategy instruction is to help students become flexible thinkers across a wide range of learning situations. This flexibility is greatly assisted when students witness and observe the thinking of their peers. Some students, particularly those who struggle, do not realize that there are many different ways to build, maintain, and enrich understanding.

Focused discussion is a natural form of response in many learning situations. Students have a natural desire to talk about what they have read or discovered. Providing a focus and a framework for discussion allows students to work together constructively, engaging in inquiry that is open-ended yet purposeful. Accountable talk gives students opportunities to put their own ideas forward, listen to the ideas of others, compare and evaluate those ideas, and refine their understanding. This, in turn, can lead to new contributions to the discussion. This discussion cycle – respond, discuss, refine response – involves a recursive rather than linear approach to learning.
Using response journals with the discussion cycle (see the sample learning experience below) provides additional support, practice, and opportunities for students to reflect on their learning. Response journals:

- provide rehearsal text for talk;
- make explicit what was implicit;
- provide high-level participation with students;
- encourage high-level engagement with text;
- provide raw material for extensions or elaborations;
- connect reading, writing, and talking.

(Kooy and Wells, 1996, pp. 16–20)

It is important, however, to consider when the writing gets in the way of the thinking.

Participating in accountable talk also prepares students for the idea and opinion exchanges that take place in more formal oral situations such as debates. Through focused discussion, students establish their point of view in a debate and identify information that will support it. They then apply the discussion skills they have learned and practised within the debate itself. Sample Lesson 3.1, “Science Debate” (on pages 91–100), shows how focused discussion, and a discussion web, can be used to prepare students for a debate.

The qualities of (or rules for) good accountable talk may be posted in the classroom. The process of helping students understand, develop, internalize, and apply discussion strategies and skills however, requires teaching, modelling, and shared and guided practice with the support and example of the teacher.

**Sample Learning Experience**

**Using Response Journals with the Discussion Cycle**

In this experience, the three-part cycle – respond, discuss, refine response – is used to help students extend their understanding of a story read aloud by the teacher.

- The teacher reads aloud a story.
- Students are asked to respond to the central theme in their response journals.
- Students prepare to discuss their responses.
- Students bring their response to a small-group focused discussion of the theme. They explain their responses, consider the responses and ideas of others, and question and extend the ideas discussed.
- Students return to their response journals. They use a different-coloured pencil or pen to make changes/additions to their original responses.
**Instructional Strategies for Teaching Focused Discussion**

Teaching students to engage in focused discussions effectively is a process of “determining what students can do, then determining what they can do with assistance, and then gradually moving them to that point through modelling and practice until they are capable of doing the activity independently” (Speigel, 2005, p. 87). The gradual release of responsibility, applied to each skill or strategy taught, helps students build competence and confidence in fully utilizing focused discussion to support and extend their learning.

Development of discussion skills and strategies goes beyond behaviour to true understanding. It takes time and frequent practice in authentic discussion. Teachers provide the model and name the discussion strategy in the same way they make a comprehension strategy or a writing technique explicit. Teachers listen for instances of students using the strategy and bring the example to the attention of the whole class. They lead and guide students to reflect on the strategy “in action” and help students develop a conscious consideration of how using the strategy helped to make the discussion more effective.

The process of teaching focused discussion, like discussion itself, is recursive rather than linear. Students revisit particular discussion strategies and skills several times as they develop and consolidate their ability to use them. Teachers use one of four instructional approaches, depending on the students’ ability level, in applying a particular strategy or skill.

1. **Modelling.** Students need to study models of good discussion in which skills and strategies work together. They also need to see each strategy modelled on its own in order to learn how to use the skills and strategies in their practice. Sample interactions are shown in the chart on the following page.

2. **Shared Practice.** Teachers provide a forum and purpose for students to share their ideas, responses, and thinking processes with each other. Students work in small groups, pairs, or triads to reason their way through shared reading of texts as they practise skills and strategies of focused discussion. The teacher observes and moves from group to group to check on progress, note student needs, provide assistance, and plan for future instruction.

3. **Guided Practice.** Teachers guide students in using skills and strategies during small-group focused discussion. They help students maintain their focus by asking open-ended questions and ensuring that students are interacting with each other’s ideas during the discussion. Teachers guide students in their consideration of responses, interpretations, and ideas, as well as in their reflection on the processes, skills, and strategies used in the discussion.

**Successful participation in focused discussion involves:**

- preparing for discussion;
- listening to others with an open mind;
- viewing others as sources of information and ideas;
- willingness to rethink and revise after listening to others;
- building on the ideas of others – working together to build meaning;
- finding a focus and refocusing when necessary;
- staying on task;
- learning how to introduce a new idea, disagree, and challenge or support other ideas effectively during discussion.
4. **Independent Practice.** Students engage in small-group focused discussions in which they apply and monitor discussion strategies, independent of the teacher.

### Modelling Discussion Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building on the Ideas of Others – Sample Interactions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The teacher models the strategy on numerous occasions during the whole-class and small-group focused discussions that follow a teacher read-aloud.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Example 1**

The teacher names the strategy and asks students to reflect on its use:

Did you notice what I just did when I responded to Jake’s comment about the character? I thought about what he said and then I added another idea.

**Example 2**

The teacher gives the students the model and language they can use in developing this strategy for themselves:

Did you notice what I said to build on Rashid’s idea? I said:

- “In the same way…”
- “Not only that, but…”
- “Using your idea about… I think…”

**Example 3**

The teacher uses a student example to model discussion skills. The teacher observes an instance of a student building on the ideas of others and then explains what transpired in the discussion to the rest of the class.

Teacher:

*Today, I noticed in Jake’s group that Kela built on Jake’s idea. They were discussing the challenges faced by the character.*

Jake said: “The character feels abandoned because no one is listening to him.”

Kela said: “I also think he felt abandoned when everyone else joined the party and didn’t invite him. When everyone abandons you, you feel lonely and left out.”

In presenting this example to the class, the teacher leads the students to examine and reflect on how an idea is extended and how it moves from an example from the text (the character being excluded from the party) to a larger thought (feelings of loneliness).
ASSESSING STUDENT PERFORMANCE THROUGH ACCOUNTABLE TALK

Accountable talk, or focused discussion, provides many opportunities for teachers to assess the students’ achievement of oral communication expectations, as well as their knowledge and understanding of content in all curriculum subject areas. Teachers observe the students’ participation and interaction in focused discussion and listen to what they say, using checklists and anecdotal records to record their observations.

Additional evidence of accountable talk-related achievement may be found in the students’ reading and writing. Students who engage in focused discussions of their reading tend to read more. Teachers should therefore observe an increase in the amount and frequency of reading recorded in their students’ reading lists. (Gambrell and Almasi, 1996, p. 20). Similarly, the students’ focused discussions on their thoughts, ideas, and responses tend to inform their written responses. Teachers may look for growth in student response journals, written responses, and daily writing. (Note: These changes take place over time. They reflect, but can never fully include, all aspects of the thinking developed and demonstrated in accountable talk.)

In making their assessment observations, teachers can group discussion skills and content into four key areas:

• Preparation
• Focus and engagement with the topic
• Interaction
• Level of thinking

Important look-fors related to each of these key areas are shown in the figure on the following page and can be used to develop observation checklists for assessment purposes.
Key Areas of Discussion Skills and Content

**Preparation**

- Have students prepared for the discussion? Did they:
  - do the reading or listening?
  - reflect on the ideas and respond in jot notes or journals?
  - each write at least one response/question/idea to bring to the group?
  - each bring their response/question/idea to the group?

**Focus and Engagement with Topic**

- Do students:
  - know the purpose of the discussion?
  - engage with the big ideas or concepts?
  - stay on topic?
  - give evidence to support ideas?
  - make connections with prior knowledge, other texts, larger issues?
  - consider different points of view?
  - refocus when necessary?
  - build on the ideas of others?

**Interaction**

- Do students:
  - listen actively?
  - speak directly to others?
  - articulate clearly?
  - respond to others’ statements?
  - take turns?
  - respect the ideas of others?
  - contribute comments, observations, and speculations?
  - ask for information?
  - raise questions?
  - share information effectively?
  - agree/disagree politely?
  - offer support or encouragement?
  - seek clarification?
  - check whether others understand?
  - challenge thinking or information constructively?
  - try to ensure that everyone participates?

**Level of Thinking**

- Do students:
  - critically examine the big ideas or concepts?
  - explore more than one aspect of the topic?
  - introduce another dimension of the topic?
  - bring new information to the discussion?
  - examine and probe information and ideas?
  - extend and elaborate on ideas?
  - revise their thinking as a result of what others say?
**Student Self-Assessment**

Interaction during accountable talk may be a focus of student self-assessment as well as assessment by the teacher. By reviewing student reflections on how they interact, both the students and the teacher gain important information on how well students are developing their interaction skills and what next steps are needed to improve those skills.

The teacher and students together develop a list of indicators of effective interaction for students to reflect on. A list of indicators may look like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do I:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>❑ listen to others?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ show respect for the ideas of others?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ agree/disagree politely?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| ❑ contribute comments?                                              |
| ❑ ask questions to seek clarification?                              |
| ❑ explain my point of view?                                         |

Both teachers and students use the list to assess what is working well and what needs to be addressed, modified, or changed to improve focused discussion. For example, if “disagreeing politely” is an issue, the teacher plans a series of lessons in which disagreeing, arguing, and supporting a position are modelled, practised with teacher guidance, and discussed.

**Assessing the Effectiveness of Instruction**

The accumulated assessment tools used to record observations assist teachers in making an overall assessment of their instruction. When reviewing the assessment tools periodically, teachers may find that some uses and skills of discussion are well represented, while others have not been addressed. They may also find that new assessment tools need to be developed to reflect the use of the higher-order thinking they wish to emphasize, model, and teach.

Anecdotal records, written records in a positive tone of progress particular to selected milestones, can also assist in accumulating assessment.

The following checklist is designed to help teachers reflect on their instruction and identify areas where adjustments may be needed.
## Anecdotal Record-keeping Form – Template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Objective(s):</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students’ Names</th>
<th>Criteria/Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other Comments:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teacher Reflection on Instructional Approaches Used in Focused Discussion

- Do I teach and model the skills of good discussion?
- Do students have time and opportunity to practise discussion strategies?
- Do whole-class and small-group focused discussions occur regularly throughout the day and throughout the week?
- Is inquiry emphasized?
- Is discussion focused on student-to-student interaction vs. response to teacher?
- Are students grouped to promote the interaction and engagement of all?
- Do I honour think time?
- Do I restate what students say?
- Do I nudge students to elaborate?
- Do I use discussion prompts?
- Do I use prompts that affirm the students’ answers and thinking?
- Do I limit my teacher talk during focused discussions?
- Do I keep records of student progress?

ACCOUNTABLE TALK AND INQUIRY

Accountable talk is an important means of promoting inquiry-based learning. Through focused discussion, teachers create opportunities for students to develop an active, inquiring attitude towards their learning. When students engage in an exchange of ideas and points of view, they learn to question not only what others say, but also their own thinking and understanding. Inquiry becomes part of their approach to learning and leads them to their own discoveries and new understandings.

Teachers build the foundation for active inquiry in all areas of the curriculum when they:

- provide rich texts for reading, listening, and viewing;
- model curiosity and inquiry in their teaching, think-alouds, responses to students, and interactions in the classroom;
- bring in newspaper items, articles, artefacts, guest speakers, and multimedia presentations that help students make connections between their learning in the classroom and the world outside.

Research projects are a major application of inquiry-based learning. Teaching students to research topics in social studies, science, literature, and current events is a standard practice in the junior grades. Student research frequently culminates in a major project or presentation that reflects mastery of the numerous skills and strategies involved in investigating a topic (from its initial phase through to its full development as a final product or presentation). In inquiry-based classrooms, these skills and strategies are developed daily through inquiry into numerous topics and frequent focused discussions on finding, analysing, interpreting, and applying information and ideas. Thus, a research project is
not an “assign and assess” activity; it is a culmination of careful, planned experiences. By the time they embark on the inquiry, students are familiar with the expectations for the assignment, the structure of texts, and the processes of gathering, sorting, and selecting information. They also know how to use reasoning and evidence in analysing texts for content and for author purpose and bias, and have assimilated the language of inquiry and presentation.

Sample Lessons 3.1 and 3.2 at the end of this chapter demonstrate two ways accountable talk supports inquiry-based learning. “Science Debate” (pp. 91–100) illustrates the role of focused discussion and the use of a discussion web in researching and developing a position on an issue that will be the subject of a formal debate. In “Summarizing and Focused Discussion of Non-fiction” (pp. 101–112), students use accountable talk to help them identify important information and ideas contained in texts and to reflect on the process involved in preparing a summary.

There is a particular focus here on using discussion-based strategies with informational text. All too often language programs focus on narrative and fictional literature such as novels and short stories. Yet many students, particularly boys, prefer reading informational texts such as magazines, non-fiction books, blogs, webpages, and manuals.

**Questioning and Thinking Used in Accountable Talk**

Inquiry is based on questions and a questioning approach to learning. The type of inquiry conducted depends on the type of questioning used. The nature of the questions demonstrated by the teacher determines the level of thinking students will employ in focused discussions and their interactions with texts and learning experiences. If students are to think about big ideas and larger themes, they need to engage with the big questions that call on many aspects of thinking. Often these questions are divergent and multifaceted, laden with many possibilities, rather than convergent with one correct answer. Convergent and divergent thinking are at opposite ends of the questioning continuum. When teachers emphasize divergent thinking, they open up discussion and inquiry in ways that encourage students to extend and deepen their learning and understanding.

Focused classroom discussion may incorporate all types of questions; however, information-based questions are used to support inquiry at deeper levels of meaning rather than becoming the focus of the discussion. In their own questioning, teachers model genuine curiosity, promote investigation of ideas rather than interrogation of details, and challenge students to engage in further exploration and deeper thinking and reflection. “Through [students’] active explorations of their world, tensions arise and they ask questions about aspects of their world that puzzle them. They then systematically investigate those questions or tensions and create new understandings, new questions, and issues that they want to explore further” (Short, Harste, and Burke, 1996, p. 257).
### Convergent and Divergent Thinking in Focused Discussions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Convergent thinking when they:</th>
<th>Divergent thinking when they:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• promote information seeking</td>
<td>• promote understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• are text based, looking for one right answer</td>
<td>• are inquiry based, looking for multiple possibilities and various interpretations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• focus on facts and recall</td>
<td>• focus on exploration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• emphasize the pattern: teacher question – one student answer; next teacher question – one student answer</td>
<td>• allow students to ask questions of and respond to both teacher and peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• allow only teacher-generated questions</td>
<td>• allow questions generated by both teachers and students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• use texts to find answers</td>
<td>• use texts to verify, argue, and interpret</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• seek only right answers</td>
<td>• seek deeper understanding of ideas and topics by inquiring into the text</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teachers model and encourage questions that go beyond the information level and support critical thinking and inquiry when they ask students to:

- compare and contrast;
- examine and evaluate;
- detect bias;
- analyse and synthesize;
- make connections;
- think of alternative solutions and actions.

As teachers model and discuss open-ended or analytical questions, they teach students to distinguish between questions that have only one answer and questions that open up a number of possibilities. Students can apply this understanding as they develop their own questions for various purposes (as shown in the sample learning experiences on the following page).

For further discussion of questioning, see “10. Questioning” in Volume One of this guide (pp. 49–50) and the Ontario Curriculum Unit Planner (OCUP).
Sample Learning Experiences

Generating Questions
Select a theme, such as survival, and a book that deals with this theme. Give students, in pairs or small groups, ten-minutes to discuss their knowledge or experience with surviving dangerous situations and to generate questions they have about the topic of survival. For example:

- Why do people survive?
- What do people feel and think in dangerous situations?
- How do people react when the danger is over?

Collect the questions and use them for focused discussion in guided reading groups and teacher read-alouds to the whole class. As students become familiar with the text, they can relate their questions to the specific characters or events in the text. They will also realize that having questions in their minds as they read helps provide a clear focus for their reading.

Categorizing Questions
Before students begin reading, write a number of questions related to the text on a chart. Encourage students to add their own questions. Ask students what they will need to look for or think about in order to answer these questions as they read. When students have finished reading, have them discuss their findings and answers and categorize the questions.

Questioning the Text
Lead a focused discussion to identify the larger theme(s) in the literary text. Have students pose questions about the theme before they begin reading, then record the questions on a class chart. Have students develop further questions as they read. When students have finished reading, record their additional questions on the chart. Discuss with students how their questions could be applied to other stories. Consider how a survival scenario could be dramatized to engage students.

Focused Discussion of Informational Text

Informational texts should be a regular part of literacy discussions in the junior classroom. Students are increasingly involved in inquiry-based learning that engages them with a wide range of informational texts in subject areas across the curriculum. Much of their reading materials contain ideas and factual content that are new to them. Discussing what they have read helps students to assimilate new learning and connect what they have been reading to prior knowledge and experience.

Focused discussion of informational and persuasive text is essential in helping students go beyond the facts. When students are taught to apply critical and analytic thinking to their reading, they learn to connect the information to other subject areas, real-life situations, and the “knowledge field” of a particular topic. For example, in science, students learn through modelling and focused discussion, how scientists think, gather information,
hypothesize, and test their theories. They bring this learning and thinking to their reading of science texts and discussion of current events, such as new discoveries in medicine. As they read about and discuss topics using a number of different texts, they learn how to investigate their sources for credibility, authenticity, and possible bias (see the sample learning experience “Inquiry Into Credibility of Sources” below). They learn there is frequently a difference between what they think they know and what they know “for sure” about a topic. Class and small-group focused discussions using KWL charts become a means of sifting what belongs in the “Know” section. Students, guided by the teacher, sort out assumptions and misconceptions from information verified by their own investigation and reading.

Focused discussion can also focus on the ways in which the various features of informational texts present information. Knowledge of these features, and skill in using them, help students predict the contents of the texts and find specific information in them. An inquiry-based approach to learning about the features of informational text is illustrated in the following sample learning experience “Learning About Informational Text Through Focused Discussion and Inquiry” (on pages 88–90).

**Sample Learning Experience**

**Inquiry Into Credibility of Sources**

**Topic: Ancient Greece**

- Gather a variety of texts and visuals, including trade books, travel brochures, government material, maps, catalogues, art books, newspaper items, promotional videos and documentation, and Internet materials.

- In presenting this range of materials, ask students to consider the sources. This activity may require some explicit teaching and modeling. Work with students to develop a set of questions they will use to determine the credibility of the sources and the validity of the information they gather. For example:
  - Who is the author?
  - Who is the publisher?
  - What is the purpose of the information?
  - What does the author want me to know, think, believe, and do as a result of this information?
  - Is the author qualified? How? (e.g., through knowledge, experience, or expertise)
  - Can this information be verified? How?
  - Is the information current? (date of publication)

- Have students examine material to determine the purpose of the author. Guide them in sorting out the differences between information that promotes knowledge, understanding, and appreciation and materials that promote a product, offer a service, or persuade the user to accept a particular point of view.

- Support whole-class and small-group focused discussions of Ancient Greece with a parallel discussion of how to determine the validity of information and the credibility of sources. Use the materials and the discussions to carefully guide students in developing the higher-order thinking skills needed to discriminate among sources and make decisions about the information they contain.
Sample Learning Experience – Continued

Learning About Informational Text Through Focused Discussion and Inquiry

Preparation

- Gather a large number of informational texts of all types (trade books, picture books, reference books, textbooks, guides, manuals, etc.). Ask students to take a book walk and select any one text.

Before

- Have students generate a list of informational text features and post it in chart form.
- Demonstrate and lead a focused discussion on the various features of informational text. Show a sample (or several samples) of each while naming and describing the text feature (e.g., table of contents, glossary, index, subheading, sidebars, maps, and diagrams). Ask students to keep their chosen text closed during the demonstration and discussion.
- Invite students to explore the text they have selected to see how many text features they can find. Have them name the features and share them with the class. Write each feature contributed by students on a class list.

During

- Ask students to make predictions about the information contained in their chosen text by reading/reviewing only those text features they have located (e.g., table of contents, glossary, graphics, index, illustrations, and chapter headings). For example:
  - “This text will tell about . . .”
  - “It will explain how . . .”
  - “It will include details about . . .”
  - “It will show examples of . . .”

  Have students share their findings with a partner.

- Ask students to tell the class one thing they predict they will find in their text, along with their reason for making this prediction. For example: “I predict that this text will tell about the animals’ habitat, because the word ‘habitat’ is in the glossary.”

- Invite students to work in pairs to look more closely for any clues contained within the text features of their chosen text (e.g., signs/symbols in illustrations, and numbers on graphs/timelines). Tell them to use these clues to add to their predictions about the information they will find in the text.

- Gather the students’ additional predictions and their reasons for making them. (Any additional text features referred to may be added to the class list.)

- Distribute copies of a “jot-note” template to the class. Ask students to take another book walk and select a text of a different type from the one they have just explored (one that incorporates new text features or involves different types of prediction). Have students make predictions based on at least three different text features and jot the information on the template.

- Gather students with their texts and completed templates. Make sure each jot-note template is left inside the book it refers to.

- Lead a focused discussion on the students’ findings and predictions.
Sample Learning Experience – Continued

After
• As students read these texts over the course of the term (for independent reading, projects, personal interest, and reference), invite them to use the template before reading (to make predictions) and after reading (to add comments about how the predictions were confirmed or proved incorrect). Tell them they may also add new predictions before reading. Have them sign the template when they have added their comments.

Assessment
Make and record observations of students to assess their:
• understanding of the kind of information contained in a variety of text features;
• ability to use information from text features to predict information;
• independent use of text features to assist them in reading informational text.
Sample Lesson 3.1 – Science Debate

LESSON PLAN AT A GLANCE

| DAY 1 | Introduction of debate topic and discussion web graphic organizer  
|       | Shared reading of news article  
|       | Partner focused discussions on debate topic  
|       | Independent reading of collected resources |
| DAY 2 | Introduction of debate skills  
|       | Viewing of mentor texts  
|       | Development of anchor chart “Characteristics of a Good Debate”  
|       | Role-play |
| DAY 3 | Peer coaching mini-lesson  
|       | Gathering research for debate |
| DAY 4 | Working with discussion webs  
|       | Sharing of research |
| DAY 5 | Students present debates in two groups of four  
|       | Peer feedback  
|       | Student self-reflection  
|       | Whole-group sharing |

LESSON FOCUS

What is the focus of the lesson? How will I teach it?

Students will explore an issue in science through the development of a discussion web and research on the topic. They will then participate in a debate on their findings. The issue in this sample lesson will concern animal habitats, with a focus on the conflict between bears and human settlements/populations/living spaces.

Teaching Strategies

- Use of graphic organizers as an instructional tool  
- Modelling/Demonstration  
- Think-pair-share  
- Small-group and whole-group discussion

RATIONALE

Why am I teaching this lesson?

To introduce students to the use of debate as a means of expressing and justifying opinions. Students learn to use a graphic organizer (discussion web) to organize thoughts and facts, and develop debate skills within the context of a relevant subject-specific topic (in this case, science).

Note: This lesson provides suggestions that teachers may adapt or change to respond to the needs of students. The number of days suggested is flexible and can be changed. The lesson is adaptable across the junior grades and may be changed to accommodate other grade expectations/resources/materials.
ASSESSMENT

How will I know when my students are successful?

- Review anecdotal notes and observations, looking for knowledge and use of debate skills (see Appendix 3.1A, p. 98).
- Assess the students' discussion web graphic organizers. Look for an understanding of multiple viewpoints, as well as research content.
- Review the students' self-reflection on the use of debate skills.

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

What prior knowledge do my students need in order to be successful with the focus of this lesson?

Prior to this lesson, students need to:

- participate in lessons that focus on the habitat needs of animals and their possible conflict with human needs and activities;
- participate in partner/small-group/whole-class focused discussions;
- participate in other research projects that involve the use of non-fiction resources such as books, CD-ROMs, and teacher-selected websites;
- participate in lessons that directly teach how to access important information from a variety of sources and how to record that information in jot-note form;
- participate in role-play activities.

CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

Which expectations will I address?

Students will:

**Oral Communication**

Overall

1. listen in order to understand and respond appropriately in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes;
2. use speaking skills and strategies appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes;
3. reflect on and identify their strengths as listeners and speakers, areas for improvement, and the strategies they found most helpful in oral communication situations.

Specific (Grade 4)*

1.2 demonstrate an understanding of appropriate listening behaviour by adapting active listening strategies to suit a variety of situations, including work in groups;
1.4 demonstrate an understanding of the information and ideas in a variety of oral texts by summarizing important ideas and citing important details;
1.6 extend understanding of oral texts by connecting the ideas in them to their own knowledge, experience, and insights, other texts (including print and visual texts), and the world around them;

*Note: This is the students' first attempt at a debate, so teacher assessment will focus on providing feedback on the process. Formal evaluation of debate is delayed until later in the year when students have had several experiences with the process.

†The lesson can be adapted to meet similar expectations in Grades 5 and 6.
1.7 analyse oral texts and explain how specific elements in them contribute to meaning;
1.8 identify the point of view presented in oral texts and ask questions about possible bias;
2.3 communicate in a clear, coherent manner, presenting ideas, opinions, and information in a readily understandable form;
3.1 identify, in conversation with the teacher and peers, what strategies they found most helpful before, during, and after listening and speaking. Identify which steps they can take to improve their oral communication skills.

MATERIALS/PREPARATION FOR TEACHING

What do I need to know, have, and be able to do before I can begin the lesson?

- Copies of the discussion web graphic organizer (Appendix 3.1B, p. 99) and a larger, chart version
- Multiple newspaper or magazine articles, editorials, ministry/park pamphlets, websites, videos on the topic of bears and human conflict (the “Bear Aware British Columbia” website [http://www.bearaware.bc.ca/links.htm] has links to many other recommended sites), wildlife conservation books, pamphlets, and websites
- Mentor texts for debate (e.g., city/town council televised debates, videos of local debating society guest speakers, the local high school debating team, The Greatest Canadian DVD set [see http://www.cbc.ca/greatest/ for ordering information] and televised election debates)

DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION

How can I ensure that I am meeting the needs of all my students?

- Provide research resources at a variety of reading levels.
- Arrange partners to support the needs of each student (e.g., place a non-reader or weak reader with a stronger reader).

INSTRUCTION

DAY 1

Setting the stage - introduction of debate topic and discussion web graphic organizer

Before Discussion

- Read aloud a news article about a bear encroaching on human space (e.g., entering a yard, a campsite, etc.).
- Review briefly with students animal habitat requirements and the conflict of these with the needs of human populations living nearby.
- Write the following question on the board or an overhead: “Should bears always be saved?”
- Give students three minutes to write jot notes responding to the question.

During Discussion

- Have students form pairs and share their jot notes with their partner. Tell them to take a stand on the question (student A - yes; student B - no) regardless of their personal viewpoints or perspectives. You may need to point out that this activity focuses on adopting a “position” and defending it and not on expressing their personal opinion on a topic.
- Hand out a copy of the discussion web graphic organizer (Appendix 3.1B, p. 99) to each pair. Have the partners take turns providing a number of supporting points for the “Yes” and “No” columns.
After ten minutes of focused partner discussion, have partners compare the supporting points given for each point of view with another pair of students.

Tell the newly joined groups of four that they must come to a conclusion regarding the question. Remind students that they do not need to agree personally but must be able, as a group, to support the conclusion they reach.

Have each group choose the one reason that best supports its conclusion.

**After Discussion**

- Gather the whole class together.
- Have each group of four share its conclusion and the one supporting point considered most important. Record the results on the chart version of the discussion web.
- Encourage a whole-class discussion of the process. Focus student attention on the fact that using the discussion web enabled them to explore both sides of the issue and reach a conclusion that was well supported.
- Independent reading: Students peruse, select, and read materials and resources on bear encounters gathered by the teacher. Encourage students to consider whether the sources present fact or opinion. Have them take notes on their research to use in discussion.

**DAY 2**

**Before Discussion**

- Select a mentor text for debate (see “Materials/Preparation for Teaching” for suggested sources) and introduce the topic to the students.
- Have the students view/listen to the debate and record jot notes of their observations, thoughts, and feelings.
- Give the students guidance on aspects of the debate to think about as they view/listen to it. Tell them to consider some of the following points:
  - How do the speakers begin?
  - What kind of language does each speaker use? Is it formal, informal, technical, or slang?
    - Is it effective? Why or why not?
  - Is the message clear?
  - How do the speakers respond to opposing viewpoints? Are they sharing research that clearly supports their position or refutes the opinion of the opposing side?
  - Are questions being asked? What kind of questions?
  - Notice the body language of the speakers. How does that improve or detract from their message?
  - What about the speaker’s tone of voice? How does that affect your response to the message?
  - How are you feeling during the debate? Why do you think you are feeling this way?
  - Finally, are you convinced? Why or why not?

**During Discussion**

- Place students in groups of four to share jot notes. Have the groups select two or three strategies or techniques they observed while viewing/listening to the debate.
- Gather the whole class together and ask each group to share its key observations. Record these observations on a chart.
- Direct students, in their groups of four, to look at the observations and, from them, generalize the characteristics of a good debate.
- Have a spokesperson from each group share the characteristics of a good debate. List them on an anchor chart entitled "Characteristics of a Good Debate". (A sample chart is shown in Appendix 3.1C, p. 100).
- Guide students to appreciate the following points of a good debate:
  - Clear introductory argument/statement, clearly showing which side of the debate is being supported
  - Evidence to support points made
  - Ability to see both sides of an issue
  - Ability to refute opposing viewpoints with evidence, using facts and not just opinion
  - Counter-arguments presented in a non-insulting/non-offensive manner
  - Ability to appeal to the audience on both an emotional and intellectual level (through emotive language, personal connections and factual, research-based information)
  - Ability to remain calm and think clearly

**After Discussion**

- Refer to the original question: "Should bears always be saved?".
- Have students form the same groups of four from the previous day and assign one of the following roles to each group member: animal rights activist, towns-person, animal control officer, and hunter. Ask students to predict the point of view of each role.
- Have students gather according to their assigned roles (all townspeople together, all hunters together, etc.) and brainstorm, in role, possible arguments that they would put forward in this debate.
- Tell each student to keep a record of the arguments put forward for future reference. (Alternatively, assign this task to one student per role and make photocopies for the other students in that role.)
- Have students form their groups of four again, to share information from the role-play activity.

**DAY 3**

*Peer coaching mini-lesson*

**Before Discussion**

- Review the anchor chart "Characteristics of a Good Debate" (Appendix 3.1C, p. 100).
- Prepare students to watch/listen to a debate (choose from media texts collected on bear encounters). Instruct them to focus on the content of the debate and the techniques used (identifying techniques that seemed to work and those that either didn’t or could be changed to improve the message). Tell students to write jot notes, which will be presented as feedback remarks following the debate.

**During Discussion**

- Students view/listen to the debate and write jot notes.
After Discussion

- Have students form pairs and as partners come up with three "stars" (things that worked) and a "wish" (or suggestion) based on their jot notes.
- Have partners take turns sharing their "stars" and "wishes" with the whole class. Provide guidance/modelling as necessary on wording, to promote the use of positive feedback (in preparation for peer feedback that will be provided during debate presentations).
- Have students gather in their groups of four. Addressing the original question "Should bears always be saved?", have two students select the "yes" side of the debate and two students select the "no" side.
- Give the groups the remaining class time to begin gathering information to support their side of the debate, using a variety of resources provided by the teacher (books, newspapers, magazine articles, and websites). Tell them to make jot notes as they read.
- Circulate among groups and record observations. Provide guidance, where necessary, in gathering information, making jot notes, citing journals, etc.

Day 4

Before Discussion

- Give students a period of time to work in their groups, gathering more information and ideas to support their side of the debate.
- Circulate in the class and observe student progress, providing guidance in gathering information.
- When students have completed their information gathering, provide two discussion web graphic organizers (Appendix 3.1B, p. 99) for each group to fill out (one for the "yes" side and one for the "no" side). Tell students to select what they feel are their three strongest arguments for "yes" and three strongest arguments for "no".

During Discussion

- Tell students to gather in two groups, one for the "yes" side and one for the "no" side.
- Have the members of each group share their top arguments and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each.

After Discussion

- Have students work with a partner to revise their discussion webs in preparation for the debates.
- As partners begin planning their presentation, remind them to decide on a brief opening statement and determine which arguments are strongest and should be presented first. Ask them to consider the responses that can be made to counter arguments the other side may put forward. Introduce students to some persuasive techniques. Tell them that jot or point-form notes are all that are needed for reference during debate, not a formal written essay.

Day 5

Before Debates

- Review with students the anchor chart "Characteristics of a Good Debate" (Appendix 3.1C, p. 100).
During Debates

• Have students work in teams of eight, consisting of two of the original groups of four. Four students (two partners on each side of the argument) make their presentations. The other four observe and make jot notes, in preparation for offering feedback in the form of three "stars" and a "wish" (as was done on Day 3).
• Have the two halves of the teams exchange roles and repeat the process.
• Record observations in preparation for providing feedback.*

After Debates

• Have students fill out a self-reflection following the debates (possibly after viewing the videotape or listening to the audiotape, if that is an option), answering the following questions:
  - Did I feel confident in my knowledge of the topic and the viewpoints of all stakeholders?
  - What characteristics of a good debate were present in my presentation?
  - What debate skills do I need to work on?
• With the whole class, revisit the discussion web created on Day 1. Discuss what changed in the web, what stayed the same, and why. Some questions to consider are:
  - Were there some supporting "facts" that turned out to be unfounded?
  - Did partners find new and more powerful information to support one side or the other?
  - Were the supporting points on the first-day discussion web more fact based or subjective/emotional in nature?
  - What have students learned about debate skills/techniques?

REFLECTION

Were my students successful? Did my instructional decisions meet the needs of all my students? What worked well? What will I do differently in the future? What are my next steps?

Teacher

• Was the debate topic motivating enough to encourage full participation of the students?
• Were students able to see all the viewpoints in the argument?
• Did students support their arguments with evidence?

*Note: Three suggested options for presentations and teacher feedback are as follows:
1. Groups present at different times with the teacher observing and providing feedback, while the rest of class is involved in another activity.
2. Groups present at the same time, each group being audiotaped for the teacher to listen to later and provide feedback.
3. Groups present at the same time, each group being videotaped for the teacher to watch later and provide feedback.
APPENDIX 3.1A – TEACHER OBSERVATION: DEBATE SKILLS

Debate: “Should bears always be saved?” Date: ______________________

Look-fors:
- Clarity of message (introductory statement clearly states position; supporting evidence clearly presented; strong, persuasive language used)
- Use of arguments (sufficient, strong examples and facts used to support viewpoint; both intellectual and emotional responses presented)
- Alignment with curriculum expectations for oral communication (see pg. 92).
- Use of rebuttal (effective response to arguments made by other team; respectful language and tone of voice used; able to distinguish fact from opinion; able to distinguish bias)
- Presentation style (helped to convince audience through tone of voice, gestures, and body language)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student: _____________________________</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Student: _____________________________</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 3.1B – DISCUSSION WEB

Yes

Discussion Topic: “Should bears always be saved?”

No

Conclusion
### APPENDIX 3.1C – “CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD DEBATE” ANCHOR CHART

**For a Good Debate, Speakers Need:**

- A clear opening statement, presenting the position taken
- Evidence to support points made - facts, not just opinion
- The ability to see both sides of an issue and to provide counter-arguments
- The ability to refute opposing viewpoints in a respectful manner
- The ability to remain calm and think clearly
- The ability to appeal to the audience on both an emotional and intellectual level (through emotive language, personal connections and factual, research-based information)
- Effective use of tone of voice, body language, gestures, and enthusiasm to help convince/persuade the audience*

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* This is an area that might need some additional focused instruction.
Sample Lesson 3.2 – Summarizing and Focused Discussion of Non-Fiction

LESSON PLAN AT A GLANCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAY 1</th>
<th>DAY 2</th>
<th>DAY 3</th>
<th>DAY 4</th>
<th>DAY 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-assessment activity: summarizing a short article</td>
<td>Review of KWL chart on space</td>
<td>Teacher modelling of choosing key words</td>
<td>Shared preview/reading of a new article</td>
<td>Review of “Article Summary” chart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of the features of articles</td>
<td>Review of the features of articles</td>
<td>Partner retelling of key sentences</td>
<td>Partner/individual work on summarizing an article</td>
<td>Independent preview of new article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared preview/reading of an article</td>
<td>Partner work on key words</td>
<td>Independent/ partner work on choosing key words</td>
<td>Small-group sharing of oral summaries</td>
<td>Partner/individual work on summarizing articles in rough written draft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner work on key words</td>
<td>Whole-class development of “Good Discussions” chart</td>
<td>Partner/small-group sharing of oral summaries</td>
<td>Whole-class reflection on process</td>
<td>Small-group sharing of written summaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-class development of “Good Discussions” chart</td>
<td>Partner work on sentence choice</td>
<td>Whole-class development of “Article Summary” chart</td>
<td></td>
<td>Whole-class reflection on process</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partner work on sentence choice</td>
<td>Whole-class sharing of sentence choice</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

LESSON FOCUS

What is the focus of the lesson? How will I teach it?

Students will read a grade-appropriate non-fiction science article and will learn a process for finding important information and summarizing it in their own words. They will practise this process in small groups and with partners before attempting it independently. Mini-lessons presented after observation of partner work will provide direct teaching of discussion skills.

Teaching Strategies

- Teacher modelling
- Demonstration
- Mini-lessons
- Read-aloud
- Review

Note: This lesson provides suggestions that teachers may adapt or change to respond to the needs of students. The number of days suggested is flexible and can be changed. The lesson is adaptable across the junior grades and may be changed to accommodate other grade expectations/resources/materials.
RATIONAL

Why am I teaching this lesson?

To develop, through the previewing and reading of informational articles, the students’ understanding of how to find and summarize important information in a given text. The lesson has been designed to engage students in partner work, so that each has to verbally justify his or her choices. The ability to communicate reasoning and logic will be key.

ASSESSMENT

How will I know when my students are successful?

- Pre-assess the students’ ability to summarize an article.
- Review observation notes taken during initial focused partner discussions and retellings/summaries of text following guided reading, looking at communication and summary skills.

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

What prior knowledge do my students need in order to be successful with the focus of this lesson?

Prior to this lesson, students need to:

- have opportunities to read articles and be familiar with that form of text;
- participate in teacher-directed lessons that focus on features of informational text, such as print features (font, bold print, coloured print, bullets, subheadings, labels, etc.) and organizational aids (table of contents, index, glossary, pronunciation guide, ect.)*
- participate in developing the “What I Know” and “What I Want to Learn” sections of a KWL chart on this topic.

CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

Which expectations will I address?

Students will:

Oral Communication

Overall

1. listen in order to understand and respond appropriately in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes;

2. use speaking skills and strategies appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

Specific (Grade 4)†

1.2 demonstrate an understanding of appropriate listening behaviour by adapting active listening strategies to suit a variety of situations, including work in groups;

1.6 extend understanding of oral texts by connecting the ideas in them to their own knowledge, experience, and insights, other texts (including print and visual texts), and the world around them.


† The lesson can be adapted to meet similar expectations in Grades 5 and 6.
2.2 demonstrate an understanding of appropriate speaking behaviour in a variety of situations, including paired sharing and small- and large-group discussions;
2.3 communicate in a clear, coherent manner, presenting ideas, opinions, and information in a readily understandable form.

Reading
Overall
1. read and demonstrate an understanding of a variety of literary, graphic, and informational texts, using a range of strategies to construct meaning;
2. recognize a variety of text forms, text features, and stylistic elements and demonstrate understanding of how they help communicate meaning.

Specific (Grade 4)*
1.3 identify a variety of reading comprehension strategies and use them appropriately before, during, and after reading to understand texts;
1.4 demonstrate understanding of a variety of texts by summarizing important ideas and citing supporting details;
2.1 explain how the particular characteristics of various text forms help communicate meaning, with a focus on literary texts (such as diaries or journals), graphic texts (such as brochures), and informational texts (such as encyclopedias);
2.3 identify a variety of text features and explain how they help readers understand texts.

MATERIALS/PREPARATION FOR TEACHING
What do I need to know, have, and be able to do before I can begin the lesson?
• A set of non-fiction articles at an age-appropriate reading level for the students to read independently (at least three different articles), including one overhead copy and a copy of each article for each pairing of students. (See www.timeforkids.com for good articles that align with the junior science curriculum.)
• Highlighters
• Class list/checklist to record observations of talk (Appendix 3.2A, p. 110)

DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION
How can I ensure that I am meeting the needs of all my students?
• Address any possible vocabulary concerns with the whole class before, during, and after reading aloud.
• Arrange partners to support the needs of each student (e.g., place a non-reader or weak reader with a stronger reader).
• Give students who require additional practice summarizing more time to work with a partner and new text, or have them work under more direct teacher guidance.
• Give students who require a simpler text a simpler version of the article (the Time For Kids website has two versions of all articles for students: regular and simplified).
• Extend the lesson over more than five days, using other non-fiction text, if more partner practice is deemed necessary.

*The lesson can be adapted to meet similar expectations in Grades 5 and 6.
INSTRUCTION

SAMPLE LESSON 3.2

DAY 1

Before Reading

• Prepare the class for an assessment activity that involves summarizing a short article.
  Tell students they will be reading a short article independently. They are to find the most
  important sentences that tell the reader what the article is about, and highlight them. They
  will then write the information from those sentences in their own words, retelling the main
  idea of the article.

During Reading

• Tell students that they may ask for clarification of any vocabulary or concepts that are
  unclear to them.

After Reading

• Have students use the highlighters provided to indicate the most important sentences and on
  the back of the article rewrite the information in their own words.
• Use the assignment to look for the following:
  - How many sentences are being highlighted? Too many? Too few?
  - Do the highlighted sentences contain important information about the main ideas in the
    article or do they provide extraneous information?
  - Are students including all the important information from their sentences in their retellings
    or are they leaving information out?
  - Are students using their own words/phrasing in retelling or is their retelling virtually
    identical to the sentences in the article?
  - Are students using the scientific terms appropriately, demonstrating an understanding
    of those terms?
• Use this information to identify the specific strategies this class needs to focus on during
  lessons that follow.

DAY 2

Before Reading

• Ask students to briefly share what they remember about the features of articles (e.g., headings,
  subheadings, and factual information).
• Select an article and read its title, but do not show the article yet. Ask students to predict
  the content of the article.
• Cover all the text of the article on the overhead except for the subtitles and again ask for
  predictions. This time, ask students to explain how the subtitles help (e.g., by providing key
  words, focusing on the main ideas, and “chunking” the information).

During Reading

• Have a shared read-aloud of the article with the class.
• Stop at each subtitle. Ask students to listen to the section as it is read aloud and choose
  three key words to share with their elbow partner.
• Have students work with a partner to discuss any differences between their chosen words.
• Circulate among student pairs and record observations of student talk (see Appendix 3.2A). Determine whether students are using accountable talk to:
  - make decisions ("I think this is important because . . .","I chose this sentence because . . .");
  - agree/disagree ("I see your point", "That can't be right because . . .","I can see that now");
  - provide evidence to support a point of view ("This is important for these reasons . . .");
  - respond to partner ideas ("I hadn't thought of that", "Are you saying that . . .?" [paraphrasing]);
  - build on partner ideas ("I agree with that and I also think that . . .", "Along with that, let's include . . .","I like your idea. Let's combine it with . . .").

After Reading
• Provide a mini-lesson on good discussions. Use examples from observations made during focused partner discussions or call on a student pair to role-play a discussion about the three key words in one of the article's sections.
• Guide students in developing an understanding of the strategies that promote effective discussion (listed below) and display them on a chart (Appendix 3.2B, p. 111).
  - Listen with an open mind.
  - Partners/group members are sources of information, not an audience for your views.
  - Be willing to rethink your point of view after hearing what others say (this may require some modelling).
  - Stay on task, stay focused.
  - Speak up: offer new ideas, challenge a comment, offer support.
  - Don't make it personal when you disagree.
  - Be willing to clarify and explain your point of view.
• Following the discussion mini-lesson, encourage students to ask questions about vocabulary or concepts within the article that are not clear.
• Have students form pairs and give each pair a copy of the article. Tell partners to highlight the four most important sentences. Partners must agree on the sentences to be highlighted.
• As students decide on their sentence choices, circulate among the pairs and continue to record observations of student talk (see Appendix 3.2A, p. 110).
• Gather the class together and ask partners to share the strategies they used in deciding which sentences to highlight.
• Mark all the highlighted sentences on the overhead copy of the article. Discuss their importance with students. Remove the highlighting from those considered less important, until there are about four sentences left highlighted. An anchor chart may facilitate this process.

**DAY 3**

Before Reading
• Introduce and model the strategy of choosing key words and phrases and then rewriting them in one's own words. As an example, use a sentence from the article that was not highlighted on Day 2. (For a detailed description, see “Teacher Talk” at the end of this lesson.)
During Reading
- Display the article from the previous day’s activity on the overhead and ask students to read aloud the sentences that were highlighted on Day 2.
- Take the article off the overhead. Ask students to turn to their elbow partner and retell the information they have just read.
- Ask students to share/review strategies they used the previous day to determine which sentences to highlight (e.g., looking for important words, avoiding repetition, and avoiding off-topic information).

After Reading
- Have students form pairs. Give each student a copy of just the highlighted sentences from the previous day’s activity.
- Tell students to highlight key words and phrases within the sentences independently. Then have them retell this information in their own words, orally summarizing the content of the article, to their partner.
- Tell partners to listen carefully to the oral summaries ensuring all important information is clearly communicated.
- Circulate during this time and record observations of student talk (see Appendix 3.2A, p. 110).
- Have each pair join another pair, forming groups of four, to share their oral summaries and discuss the clarity of each.
- Continue to circulate and record observations of student talk.
- Gather the whole class together. Guide students in developing a list of strategies for completing an oral summary of an article (see below) and display them on a chart (Appendix 3.2C, p. 112).
  - Read the title and subtitles.
  - Choose the most important sentences.
  - Choose the key words and phrases within those sentences.
  - Retell the important information in your own words.
- End the lesson with a focused discussion on what plagiarism is and its purpose. Ask:
  - “Why is it important to put information from other sources into our own words?” (It helps us to remember the information. Copyright laws protect the work of authors.)
  - “What sources might be copyrighted, requiring us to rephrase or cite our source?” (Sources include the Internet, TV, movies, books, magazines, and interviews.)

DAY 4

Before Reading
- Review the meaning of plagiarism.
- Review strategies for summarizing an article, referring to the Article Summary Chart (Appendix 3.2C, p. 112).
- Ask several students to provide oral summaries of the article from the previous day’s activity.
- Introduce another article and have students predict the content, using the same approach as in Day 2.
During Reading
- Read the article out loud to the class, encouraging students to ask questions about vocabulary or content.

After Reading
- Have students form pairs. Hand out a copy of the article to each pair.
- Tell partners to work together to highlight the four or five most important sentences in the article. Circulate among the pairs and record observations of student talk (see Appendix 3.2A, p. 110).
- Have students work individually as they take key words and phrases from the highlighted sentences and record them on lined paper. Still working individually, have students use these key words and phrases to write a rough summary of the article that they will share with their partners.
- Have students gather in groups of four to share their oral summaries. Circulate among the groups and record observations of student talk.
- Gather the class together and lead a focused discussion of how the group members' summaries were similar or different.

DAY 5

Before Reading
- Review with students the class Article Summary Chart (Appendix 3.2C, p. 112).
- Give students a new article to preview and summarize independently. Articles of various levels of difficulty can be handed out. Make sure however, that enough students have the same article to later gather in groups of four and share and discuss their independent oral summaries.
- Have students use the class Article Summary Chart as an anchor chart.

During Reading
- Encourage students to ask questions about any concepts/terms that are unclear.

After Reading
- Have students follow the process outlined on the Article Summary Chart to summarize information in a rough written draft.
- Gather students into groups of four to share their oral summaries, based on article selection.
- Circulate among the groups and record observations of student talk (see Appendix 3.2A, p. 110).
- Gather the whole class together to discuss any concerns or difficulties.

REFLECTION
Were my students successful? Did my instructional decisions meet the needs of all my students? What worked well? What will I do differently in the future? What are my next steps?

Students
- Did I listen to my partner? Was I willing to consider a compromise when a decision was difficult to reach?
- Did I focus only on the important information within the article, and not just the interesting information?


**Teacher**

- Was the article chosen challenging enough or too challenging?
- Did the pairings of students work? Would different pairings work better?
- Were the students choosing sentences focused on the main idea or were they sidetracked by the interesting/extra information contained in the article? Did they use key words and phrases to justify their selections?
- Were students working cooperatively in their pairings? Did they listen to their partners and were they willing to compromise?
- Do individuals or groups of students require more small-group/partner practice with this strategy?

**Possible Next Steps**

The written rough draft can be moved to a writing folder to be used as a rehearsal for written summaries. Students requiring more practice may benefit from guided reading sessions that emphasize oral, reading, writing, summarizing, and group skills.
TEACHER TALK

Day 3 – Detailed Description of Choosing Key Words and Phrases

Today we will be looking at finding key words and phrases and putting them into our own words to summarize the meaning of a piece of text. I’ll use one of the sentences we didn’t choose yesterday as an example.

"Uranus and Neptune also have dark, dusty rings and multiple moons, and scientists now say it’s a pretty safe bet that their rings are formed in the same way."

I have to decide what the most important information is in this sentence. What is it trying to tell me? It has information about two different planets, Uranus and Neptune; so I’m going to highlight those two words. It also has information about the planets’ rings; so I’ll highlight the word “rings” as well. The last part of the sentence explains that scientists are reasonably sure that these rings were formed in the same way as the rings of Jupiter, by moon dust, as stated in an earlier sentence. So I’m going to highlight the words “moons”, “safe bet” (because it didn’t say definitely), “rings”, “formed”, and “same way”. So here’s my list: Uranus, Neptune, rings, moons, safe bet, formed, same way. I’m going to use these words to retell this information in my own words: The rings of Uranus and Neptune are probably formed from moon dust, created by meteors hitting their many moons. The information is the same, but it’s in my own words. By looking at the keywords, I was able to create a new sentence that had the important information but wasn’t a copy of the sentence in the article. Since I’m looking to summarize the main idea, I didn’t feel it was important for my sentence to include descriptive words like “dark” and “dusty”, and so I left those out.
APPENDIX 3.2A – TEACHER OBSERVATION: SUMMARIZING CONTENT

Activity/Lesson: Summarizing Content – Non-Fiction  Date: __________________________

Look-fors:
• Alignment with Curriculum Expectations (See pg. 92-93)
• Explains decisions (“I chose this sentence because . . .”)
• Provides evidence to support point of view (“This is important for these reasons . . .”)
• Expresses agreement/disagreement (“I see your point”, “That can’t be right because . . .”)
• Listens to partner ideas (“I hadn’t thought of that”, “Are you saying . . .?” [paraphrasing])
• Builds on partner ideas (“I like your idea and I also think . . .”, “Along with that, let’s include . . .”)
• Focuses on key ideas (“This isn’t important because . . .”, “This is explained in a lot of detail”)

Student: ___________________________________  Student: ___________________________________

Student: ___________________________________  Student: ___________________________________

Student: ___________________________________  Student: ___________________________________

Student: ___________________________________  Student: ___________________________________
APPENDIX 3.2B – “GOOD DISCUSSION STRATEGIES” ANCHOR CHART

To Have a Good Discussion:

- Prepare to participate. Do your reading and write your response or jot notes before meeting with your group.
- Listen with an open mind.
- Consider partners/group members as sources of information.
- Ask questions.
- Don’t interrupt the speaker.
- Be willing to reconsider your point of view after hearing others speak.
- Focus on the topic.
- Offer new ideas and possibilities.
- Build on what others are saying and offer support.
- Don’t make it personal when you disagree with or challenge a comment.
- Be willing to clarify and explain your point of view.

(Adapted from Spiegel, 2005)
APPENDIX 3.2C – ARTICLE SUMMARY CHART

To Make an Oral Summary of an Article:

- Read the title and subtitles (get an idea of the topic of the article).

- Choose the most important sentences, not necessarily the most interesting (look for repeated ideas/concepts, those that link directly back to title and subtitles - be picky!).

- Choose the key words and phrases within those sentences (look for subject-specific vocabulary; leave out little words).

- Retell the important information in your own words.
4 FORMAL TALK

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SCRIPTED/REHEARSED TALK

Presenting information to an audience can be a daunting task and inspires fear and dread in many students. The specific skills and arts of “formal presentation” should be taught, learned, practised, and refined in a sensitive, purposeful classroom program that tutors and supports students through each step of the process.

Oral presentation may include oral reading, reports, speeches, storytelling, debate, and drama. All these oral language forms may be presented spontaneously or taken to a fully developed, polished presentation. Within the classroom program, the degree of formality used in presentations varies according to the amount of preparation required, as shown by the formality continuum below.

Classroom Presentations: Formality Continuum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spontaneous</th>
<th>Developed/Prepared</th>
<th>Polished</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• done “on the spot”</td>
<td>• not scripted</td>
<td>• fully developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• not scripted</td>
<td>• some rehearsal</td>
<td>• scripted and rehearsed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• no rehearsal</td>
<td>• jot notes used</td>
<td>• may involve use of props, media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• may involve use of props, media</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the junior grades, teachers work to ensure that, over time, students gain experience in making presentations that represent the full range of the formality continuum. Students must be given frequent opportunities to develop, practise, and apply presentation skills in informal settings in the classroom before moving on to more formal presentations. They may need months or even a year of preparation and development before they are ready to present a polished report, speech, or story to an audience, using all the skills developed in less formal classroom situations. If the annual “speech” or end-of-unit oral presentation is required, teachers should ensure that students are given the modelling, instruction, support, and time necessary to develop and refine all the skills they will need to complete the task successfully.

It is important for students to be involved in developing criteria for their presentations. By exploring, discussing, and analysing aspects of formal presentations, students acquire a deeper understanding of what is required to make their presentations successful. They also learn to assess their own oral skills in presentation. The sample learning experience “Developing Presentation Criteria”, on the following page, illustrates a simple process for establishing criteria and using them to respond to forms of presentation and performance.
Sample Learning Experience

Developing Presentation Criteria

- To develop criteria for what a good presentation looks, sounds, and feels like, ask students, in pairs, to write a one-paragraph review of a TV news show or documentary. Have each pair state three things that make the program a hit and three things that could make it better. Encourage students to provide justification for their opinions.

- List on a chart the key points from the students’ responses. Discuss comments that are vague or judgemental and remove them from the chart. Emphasize words or phrases that specifically identify elements of a successful presentation (e.g., “well-developed topic”, or “interesting storyline”).

- Model/demonstrate a critique of a TV show, oral book review, or other form of oral presentation.

- Ask students to revisit their review and develop words and phrases that precisely convey the qualities of the TV news show or documentary, providing supporting examples. Discuss these examples with students in order to develop their understanding of elements that make oral performances successful.

- Start a class list of elements that make oral performances successful. Add to the list as new experiences with presentations and expert demonstrations are encountered.

Note: The criteria students develop in this activity can also be used in responding to student presentations. To teach the language of critiquing and coaching the teacher will need to:

- draw a parallel from this activity to the students’ role in providing feedback to peers during the rehearsal stages of oral presentations;

- develop an anchor chart with students on how helpfully and sensitively to respond to, critique, and coach oral performances in the classroom. The anchor chart can be added to throughout the year.

Skills of Presentation

Skills developed by students in numerous low-risk classroom activities contribute to the repertoire of skills they will need for more formal presentations. This repertoire includes skills relating to the development, as well as the delivery, of presentations.

The process of developing a formal presentation parallels the writing process in that students:

- select a topic;

- determine the purpose of the presentation;

- plan how they will develop the presentation;

- develop the content;

- identify the intended audience;

If students are going to spend the time and energy needed to develop a polished performance, they must have a strong personal connection to the topic they will present. “Whether a student is choosing a topic to speak on or a story to tell, one key factor is needed – passion. Having an interest is not enough. Enthusiasm and a strong desire to share the material make the difference between a lukewarm presentation and one that sets the audience on fire.”

(Miyata, 2001, p. 130)
• select a voice appropriate for the intended audience;
• draft the content;
• select appropriate language;
• determine an appropriate form/format and organizational style;
• revise their drafts;
• edit/polish their final draft;
• “publish” their work through rehearsal and final presentation.

As in the writing process, the steps are recursive rather than linear. Students move back and forth within the process to achieve success in the final product.

Making an oral presentation involves additional demands related to:
• immediacy – the audience is present and responding;
• delivery – using voice, gesture, and props to enhance the experience for the audience;
• poise/composure;
• body language and eye contact;
• interaction with the audience;
• risk;
• remembering.

Students will need models, demonstrations, support, and guidance at every step of the process. The teacher’s role is intensely active: the skills and processes are learned at school rather than assigned to be completed at home (where equity of access to support and resources can become an issue). The chart opposite shows activities to support students in developing and performing their presentation.

The steps of the process outlined above apply to all forms of scripted, rehearsed oral presentations. However, each type of formal presentation has its particular requirements and calls for the use of particular skills. The sample learning experience “Teaching the Interview” (on pages 118–120), demonstrates an approach teachers can take in helping students develop an understanding of interviews and the skills involved.
Supporting Presentation Development and Delivery

Selecting a Topic

- Have students create lists of things they love to do and/or hate to do.
- Have students find a subtopic within a topic. Provide help if necessary. Some students will do this easily; others will need help.
- Have students brainstorm all possible aspects of a topic.
- Provide students with multiple print and media resources on a topic, from which they may select.
- Hold teacher–student conferences.
- Provide opportunities for book talks, peer conferences, and peer partner problem-solving.

Developing and Organizing Content

- Encourage students to gather unusual or amusing anecdotes or stories from text sources, interviews, or the media.
- Have students record information from these sources in lists and jot notes.
- Guide students in creating a focus for the presentation. Have them sort and select material from the information gathered (this may be the time for students to decide on the major purpose of the presentation – to inform, entertain, persuade, or inspire).
- Make sure that students understand the structure of the presentation they are preparing.
- Help students organize their information into the appropriate structure.
- Provide feedback through conferences during drafting.

Developing and Delivering the Final Performance

- Help students decide on the visual artefacts or technology to be used in the presentation.
- Teach students how to write cue cards to arrange content coherently.
- Provide opportunities for students to practise using cue cards, or other supports, as tools for remembering content (not memorization).
- Arrange for a practice audience (a group, not a whole class). Provide opportunities for students to perform their entire presentation to this audience so they can practise using techniques and maintaining composure.
- Have the practice audience provide feedback on the practice presentation(s). (The coaching and critiquing skills of the audience can be very helpful).
- Encourage students to practise, refine, and polish their presentation.
- Allow students the time and a place (e.g., an empty classroom) to practise and run through the presentation a number of times before going to their practice audience.
- Provide feedback and scaffolded support throughout the process before the final performance.
Sample Learning Experience

Teaching the Interview

**Teaching Goal:** Students will learn how interviews are used to gain information and will recognize interviews as a primary research source. Skills of interviewing include:

- developing questions;
- asking questions;
- using inquiry language (e.g., “I wonder . . .”);
- selecting either convergent or divergent questions to elicit the desired information.

**Materials Required:**

- Audio/video recordings of interviews from a variety of sources
- Interview Observation Record sheets
- Chart paper
- Interview Guide – list of guiding questions for interview

1. **Activate students’ prior knowledge**

- Ask students: “What do you know about interviews?”
- Talk about interviews you have seen, heard, or experienced.
- Lead a discussion with the students and write jot notes on a chart about what students already know.

2. **Immerse students in samples of real interviews**

- Provide samples of audio, video, and print interviews from a variety of sources (e.g., TV, music videos, documentaries, biographies, magazines, and newspapers). Tell students they will study these interviews to gather information about the “why”, “how”, and “what” of interviews.
- Provide time – one or two class periods – for students to explore the sample interviews and make their initial observations. (Give students a template to guide their observation/listening – see the Interview Observation Record on page 120.)
- Have students form small groups to discuss their findings. Then bring the whole class together to share observations. Record significant points on an anchor chart.

3. **Demonstrate an interview**

- Provide a demonstration by interviewing a colleague about a topic of personal interest/expertise. (Alternatively, arrange for another teacher and the principal, or a friend, to demonstrate an interview – each could interview the other.)
- Tell students about the process they are about to observe. Show them (on an overhead or photocopy) the Interview Guide you have developed. (An interview guide is a list of topics/questions that the interviewer may cover/ask. It is to be used as a guide, not as a script.) Explain how they will use the guide and suggest points that they should watch/listen for during the interview(s).
- Have students, throughout the demonstration, gather information about the procedure: the questions asked, inquiry language used, tone established, and conventions followed.
- Hold a class discussion about the interview. How successful was it? What was the outcome? What worked? Refer to the Interview Guide and ask students how it assisted the interview, how the interview varied from the guide, and why: Were there questions that were changed or not asked? Were additional questions/comments used? Why?
Sample Learning Experience – Continued

4. Provide shared practice

- Play an interview for the class (audio or video) and direct students to focus on the interviewer. Ask them to listen for/observe the following:
  - Introduction, setting, tone
  - Questions
  - Follow-up questions
  - Comments that elicit response
  - Evidence that the interviewer is listening
  - Closing
  - Thank you
- Have students make jot notes of their observations and share and compare them with a partner.

5. Replay the interview

- Replay the interview and this time direct students to focus on the interviewee. Ask them to listen for/observe the following:
  - Comfort level
  - Tone of voice
  - Types of response
  - Content – important ideas or information
  - Engagement with the interviewer

6. Provide mentor texts

- Provide opportunities for students to read, listen to, and observe interviews from the collection of samples gathered for the class. Have students use the Interview Observation Record to record their findings. As students gather information about effective interviews from the mentor texts, interact with individual students to support learning or to focus thinking.
- Before assigning the following homework, lead a class discussion and small-group problem-solving discussions to enable each student to identify several possible sources for the interview he or she will observe.

Homework: At some point over a period of a week and a half (to allow for weekend viewing), students watch/listen to an interview from television, radio, or a real-life situation and make observations using the Interview Observation Record. Over the course of the next week, students share their findings with the class.

7. Provide guided practice

- With the students, prepare a list of people (volunteers) to be interviewed. The list could include students in the classroom who volunteer as “experts” on the basis of their knowledge, interests, hobbies, or experiences. It could also include volunteers within and outside the school (e.g., the teacher’s aide, librarian, caretaker, nurse, guidance counsellor, and hockey coach). Ask volunteers for their name, their topic/area of expertise, and the time they are available to be interviewed.
- Have students (individually or in pairs) select a topic and a person they would like to interview. Guide students in developing an interview guide.
Interview Observation Record

Interviewee: ____________________________

Interviewer: ____________________________

Topic/Purpose: ____________________________

What I noticed and learned from the interviewer: ________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

What I noticed and learned from the interviewee: ________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

Other observations: ________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

You may look for:

- Purpose
- Openings
- Types of questions
- Changing the topic
- Voice, tone, and body language
- Flow of ideas and information
- Follow-up questions
AUDIENCE RESPONSE TO FORMAL PRESENTATIONS

The audience for each oral presentation in the classroom is usually the teacher and student peers. All students in the classroom are given the opportunity to learn how to respond to the presenter. Like audience skills of listening and concentration, the skills of responding to or critiquing a presentation are honed through practice and guidance.

It is especially important to help students learn to respond constructively and sensitively. The goal is to develop skills of critiquing that are helpful and informative to the speaker. Students are taught to act as coaches for each other. They should give feedback on aspects of the presentation that are successful, as well as offer “doable” suggestions that can be readily acted upon and incorporated into the speaker’s performance. The difference between critiquing and criticizing is crucial in all peer assessment situations, but never more so than in the high-risk activity of public performance. In public performance situations the speaker is completely vulnerable to peers, teachers, and possibly other students and/or adults.

ASSESSMENT OF PRESENTATIONS

Assessment of student presentations is one of the key factors in motivating students. This feedback provides students with the information they need socially, emotionally, and intellectually to develop their skills. Teachers focus on the presentation criteria established beforehand and record what they observed students doing in relation to those criteria. Important look-fors are shown in the sample observation checklist on page 122. Students may also use this checklist to self-assess their presentation. When they conference with the teacher, their own notes can be used to identify learning goals to add to their literacy profile.
# Student Presentation: Observation Checklist

**Student Name:** __________________________  **Date:** __________________________

**Task:** ____________________________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The student:</th>
<th>Limited</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Considerable</th>
<th>High Degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• selects interesting findings/information to incorporate into the presentation</td>
<td></td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• arranges ideas in an interesting and informative sequence</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• considers and uses appropriate places for visuals, props, or other supports</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• introduces and summarizes the topic</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• engages the interest of the audience</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• uses posture, tone of voice, and gestures to contribute to effectiveness</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• maintains a lively pace</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• selects precise words that convey meaning</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• answers questions about the presentation</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• evaluates his or her own presentation</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• provides feedback on presentations by peers</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Storytelling**

Prior to the printing press and the dissemination of written works, all stories were spoken. Every country and culture told and retold its stories, passing them down through the generations. These stories constitute the myths, legends, and folklore that are the basis for many well-loved stories that currently exist in various written and visual forms. Yet the art of storytelling remains a valued part of all cultures and retains its universal appeal. Storytellers relate directly to their audience, creating a sense of intimacy and immediacy that is not obstructed or mediated by a book or other medium.

**Why Teach Storytelling**

Storytelling is particularly suited to the junior grades for a number of reasons:

- Students have gained some familiarity with traditional stories. They are now able to use this knowledge to further their reading and thinking about stories – reading new or varied versions of tales, comparing stories and characters across cultures and versions, and discussing universal themes and issues. They realize that all stories share certain elements and that an understanding of these elements can aid in the comprehension of new learning material.

- Students bring their knowledge of the archetypes contained in oral stories to their encounters with written texts. This helps them deepen their comprehension of literature and non-fiction in Language program and across-curriculum reading.

- Stories provide a structure that facilitates the learning of new ideas, information, and processes. For example, facts in social studies or concepts in math and science are more readily grasped when presented in a specific context within a story framework.

- Knowledge of stories from the oral tradition enhances a student’s writing by increasing the ability to generate ideas and themes. It also aids students in the use of structures and language for a variety of purposes.

- Students struggling with reading and writing may find it easier to develop the oral skills necessary for storytelling. They can then use these skills to participate fully with their peers.

- Storytelling can be an effective means for students who are otherwise reticent or quiet in the classroom to communicate ideas and feelings.

- Encouraging students to share stories from their own cultural backgrounds will raise the students’ awareness of the diversity in their class.
What Students Learn From Storytelling

Storytelling helps students to:
• internalize the basic structures and elements of narrative – plot, character, problem, and resolution;
• understand how seemingly simple stories deliver powerful meanings and messages;
• understand how stories reflect the values and history of a culture;
• understand how stories make abstract issues concrete and explicit (e.g., the struggle between good and evil or the meaning of courage, honesty, or fear);
• understand the links between humans and natural phenomena (e.g., weather, wildlife, landscape, and water);
• consider universal philosophical themes (e.g., creation, the purpose of life, human relationships, environmental responsibility, peace, justice, and equity);
• recognize the language and conventions that make stories effective.

Teaching in a Storytelling Environment

Storytelling empowers students as learners. When teachers create a storytelling environment, students become familiar with the language and richness of stories and the practices of storytelling. This environment fosters the development of creativity and imagination. A storytelling environment is one where teachers:

• immerse students in oral stories by modelling storytelling themselves, using taped stories and inviting guest storytellers from the school, community, or professional storytelling groups;
• demonstrate numerous varieties of informal storytelling (e.g., anecdotes, experiences, and accounts from their own lives or from the books they are reading);
• surround students with texts of stories from the oral tradition (e.g., myths, fables, folk stories, legends, and tall tales);
• identify and compare character types in stories from various cultures (e.g., the witch, the wolf, the Cinderella character, the lowly servant, the courageous prince/princess, and the clever animal);
• invite students to participate in stories read aloud (e.g., join in refrains, repeat key phrases, and express feelings through gestures);
• model storytelling techniques as they read aloud, varying pitch, pace, and volume of voice to create effects;
• engage students in cumulative informal storytelling activities. (For example, after reading a story, the teacher closes the book and begins to retell it with student volunteers picking up the story when the teacher pauses. The teacher uses exaggerated facial expressions and gestures and asks students to do the same.)

The language and story conventions are different for spoken versus written stories. Students will need several storytelling experiences before they can write their own stories for oral storytelling.

As with any performance, a great deal of time is needed for rehearsal and fine-tuning. For those students who feel ready to perform more publicly, teachers may arrange for audiences from outside the classroom. Students will need teacher coaching to adjust for audiences of younger or older students. For example, props or sound effects may be considered for a performance given to Kindergarten students.

Ideas for teaching specific storytelling skills are presented in the chart on pages 126–127.
# Teaching Storytelling Skills

## Story Selection

- Guide students in their choice of stories. Students should consider the following in making their selection:
  - Stories from the oral tradition are usually the most effective.
  - The more direct versions of stories are often more suitable for oral presentation – and more entertaining. (Schools and public libraries offer numerous fables, myths, legends, and tales. Versions of the same story may also be found in anthologies and picture books.)
  - Length of story is an important factor. Shorter stories are usually better for oral presentation than longer ones.
  - Stories with a refrain or a tag line invite audience participation and assist in moving the story along.

## Voice

- Model and guide students in using vocal techniques that make oral stories more entertaining, suspenseful, emotional, or humorous. Tone, pitch, volume, pace, and use of pauses are the vocal elements of storytelling.
- Use a variety of games and activities to help students explore how these elements can be used to create a broad range of effects.

*Example: Give students a word or phrase (e.g., “Well”, “What are you doing?”, “Isn’t this great?”, “Hello”, or “What a great day I’ve had.”) and ask them to say it in as many ways as possible. Each time the word or phrase is spoken, the audience suggests possible scenarios and emotions that reflect the speaker’s rendition. Students may also add gestures and facial expressions to achieve different effects. Discuss how particular effects were achieved and how subtle changes in tone, volume, pitch, or pace affect the meaning.*

## Body Language and Gesture

- Help students explore the stance and gestures that contribute to good storytelling. They may study the performers who bring stories to the classroom or watch films of storytellers to observe the physical aspects of storytelling (e.g., leaning into the audience; standing very still; use of arm, hand, or head gestures and facial expressions). Mime or games, such as charades, can help students experience a variety of options they can use as storytellers.
- Use body language and gestures when modelling storytelling and invite students to discuss the effect they had on the story.

## Language

- In the classroom, immerse students in the sounds and language of oral stories to give them a feel for the directness of language, word choice, and techniques (such as using repetition to “paint a picture” in the listeners mind).
- Help students listen to, identify, discuss, and try out particularly effective language.

## Storyline Development

- Help students adapt stories from written sources to enhance retelling. For example, lengthy descriptions or use of adjectives, successful in the written text, may detract from the flow or imagery of spoken text. Similarly, stories in picture books may put important details in the illustrations and not in the text. These will need to be added to the story.
- Provide models, demonstrations, coaching, and support to help students develop and refine their stories. Conferences, small-group tutoring, and frequent one-on-one conversations are needed to assist students in solving problems of organization and story development.
Teaching Storytelling Skills – Continued

Rehearsal

• Since storytelling relies on remembering (not memorizing) the story, challenge students to develop and apply strategies for remembering (see pg. 134 for additional support in this area). Students will need to gain insight into the cognitive processes used by expert storytellers.

• Use think-alouds and discussions on strategies to contribute to the students’ insight into how to remember the story. Games and exercises that focus on remembering will help students discover and develop their own strategies.

Example: Tell a story while students listen. Immediately following the story, ask student pairs to retell the story to each other in alternating sequence, as follows: Partner A begins the story. After 20 seconds, on a STOP signal from the teacher, partner B picks up and tells the next part of the story. At a second STOP signal, partner A resumes the story. This pattern is repeated until the complete story has been told. (Note: The teacher gives partner A the first line of the story to help everyone get started). The follow-up discussion is focused on helping students recognize that they did remember most or all of the story. Students share with the rest of the group any strategies they used to help them remember.

• Set time aside each day for students to practise and coach each other until the stories have been well rehearsed and students are comfortable with the material.

Relating to the Audience

• Require students to develop a new awareness of how their oral communication will be received. They will need to discuss their own experience as members of a storytelling audience and think about the qualities of performance that engage their interest and involvement.

• Help students to consider all the elements of storytelling individually and then as a complete package. This will teach students how content, delivery, voice, tone, stance, and pace combine to make a successful performance.

• Group students in the classroom to provide different audiences at different stages of development. For example, a student may present his or her performance to group one and receive helpful feedback. A few days later the same student presents to group two, and so on. These groupings can be formed during whole-class discussions of audience skills and responsibilities.

Sample Lessons 4.1 to 4.4 present a range of storytelling forms that build on the students’ experiences in the primary grades. “Storytelling: Fables” (pp. 128–142) focuses on using voice, facial expression, and gesture in retelling a story to entertain an audience. “Fairytale/Myth Monologue” (pp. 143–155) and “Dramatic Dialogue: Character Conversations” (pp. 156–178) introduce the element of character development and the dramatic skills needed to portray a character. In “Exploring Poetry, Choral Speaking, and Readers’ Theatre” (pp. 179–190), students apply their storytelling and dramatic skills to group performances.
Sample Lesson 4.1 – Storytelling: Fables

LESSON PLAN AT A GLANCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAY 1</th>
<th>DAY 2</th>
<th>DAY 3</th>
<th>DAY 4</th>
<th>DAY 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Think-pair-share review of fable characteristics</td>
<td>Teacher retell of fable from previous day</td>
<td>Teacher presentation of new fable; individual note taking of oral vs written story</td>
<td>Review of “Storytelling Techniques” and “Preparing for Storytelling” anchor charts</td>
<td>Review of “Storytelling Techniques” and “Preparing for Storytelling” anchor charts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storytelling of new fable by teacher</td>
<td>Small-group brainstorming of presentation techniques</td>
<td>Small-group sharing of oral vs written story</td>
<td>Teacher book talk on fable resources available</td>
<td>Students begin preparing individual fables for presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner exploration of oral vs written stories, using teacher example</td>
<td>Whole-class creation of “Storytelling Techniques” anchor chart</td>
<td>Teacher think-aloud on preparing for storytelling</td>
<td>Students choose a fable to prepare for retelling in front of class</td>
<td>Teacher roving conferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner practice of retelling fable</td>
<td>Partner practice of retelling fable</td>
<td>Whole-class creation of “Preparing for Storytelling” anchor chart</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAY 6</th>
<th>DAY 7</th>
<th>DAY 8</th>
<th>DAY 9</th>
<th>DAY 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students complete work on oral composition</td>
<td>Storytelling of new fable OR retelling of previous fable by teacher</td>
<td>Student performances</td>
<td>Student performances</td>
<td>Student performances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner practice of retellings, with focus on techniques (e.g., gesture, and voice)</td>
<td>Whole-class creation of “Storytelling Audience” anchor chart</td>
<td>Audience coaching</td>
<td>Audience coaching</td>
<td>Audience coaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students work on polishing stories for performances</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: This lesson provides suggestions that teachers may adapt or change to respond to the needs of students. The number of days suggested is flexible and can be changed. The lesson is adaptable across the junior grades and may be changed to accommodate other grade expectations.
LESSON FOCUS
What is the focus of the lesson? How will I teach it?
Students will watch the teacher model storytelling and participate in activities designed to help them remember and prepare a story for retelling. Students will then choose a fable to retell in front of the class.

Teaching Strategies
• Teacher modelling/demonstration
• Mini-lessons
• Think-aloud
• Directed reading/thinking activities

RATIONALE
Why am I teaching this lesson?
To give students opportunities to acquire and develop storytelling skills. Students will learn how to use voice, facial expression, and gestures to enhance a storytelling experience and entertain an audience.

ASSESSMENT
How will I know when my students are successful?
• Review observation notes made during partner and group discussions (see Appendix 4.1B, p. 139).
• Complete and review performance assessment checklists (see Appendix 4.1E, p. 142).

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE
What prior knowledge do my students need in order to be successful with the focus of this lesson?
Prior to this lesson, students need to:
• listen to a variety of fables being read and told aloud;
• know the characteristics of fables (short tales that portray animal characters with human characteristics, convey folk wisdom, reveal insights into human nature, and contain moral messages);
• practise interpreting fables and providing moral statements for them;
• participate in various activities that require them to speak in front of groups and that teach skills such as voice projection, eye contact, and how to remember a story.

CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS
Which expectations will I address?
Students will:
Oral Communication
Overall
2. use speaking skills and strategies appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes;
3. reflect on and identify their strengths as listeners and speakers, areas for improvement, and the strategies they found most helpful in oral communication situations.
Specific

2.5 identify some vocal effects (including tone, pace, pitch, volume, and a range of sound effects) and use them appropriately and with sensitivity towards cultural differences to help communicate their meaning.

3.1 identify, in conversation with the teacher and peers, what strategies they found most helpful before, during, and after listening and speaking and what steps they can take to improve their oral communication skills.

Reading

Overall

1. read and demonstrate an understanding of a variety of literary, graphic, and informational texts, using a range of strategies to construct meaning.

Specific

2.4 identify various elements of style (including alliteration, descriptive adjectives and adverbs) and sentences of different types, lengths, and structures. Explain how they help communicate meaning*.

The Arts: Drama and Dance (Grade 4)†

Overall

• communicate, orally and in writing, their response to their own and others’ work in drama and dance (e.g., through discussions, interviews, and research projects).

Specific

• enact or create, rehearse, and present drama and dance works based on novels, stories, poems, and plays;
• demonstrate control of voice and movement by using appropriate techniques (e.g., projection and enunciation in choral speaking);
• demonstrate the ability to maintain concentration while in role (e.g., in small groups, create tableaux using different levels, a specific focus, facial expressions, and symbols to convey meaning).

MATERIALS/PREPARATION FOR TEACHING

What do I need to know, have, and be able to do before I can begin the lesson?

• A variety of fables of different lengths and at various reading levels
• Practice in retelling several of the fables, using appropriate expressions and gestures to model for the class
• Performance assessment checklist (Appendix 4.1E, p. 142)
• Teacher observation recording sheets (Appendix 4.1B, p. 139)

* The elements of style included in this expectation differ from grade to grade. Those shown here are from Grade 4.
† The lesson can be adapted to meet similar expectations in Grades 5 and 6.
DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION

How can I ensure that I am meeting the needs of all my students?

• Provide different versions of fables at a variety of reading levels.
• Use fables of different lengths and complexity to address challenges students may have in remembering text.
• During performances, provide additional support for students who have difficulty remembering their lines (e.g., the clothesline technique using pictures to represent story events, and cue cards with key words and phrases).
• Provide auditory support (e.g., taping and playback of student storytelling) to help with voice techniques.

It is important to note that this instructional sequence provides many opportunities for students to practice their skills. It also, over time, improves the students’ understanding through tasks that, incrementally, become more complex.

INSTRUCTION

DAY 1

Before Storytelling

• Think-pair-share: Ask students to share their knowledge of the characteristics of fables.
• Have students share this knowledge with the whole class and guide them in recalling the essential characteristics of a fable (a short tale that portrays animal characters with human characteristics, conveys folk wisdom, reveals insights into human nature, and contains a moral message).

During Storytelling

• Tell a fable that is new to the class. Use exaggerated facial expressions and gestures and appropriate vocal effects.

After Storytelling

• Place a written version of the fable on the overhead.
• Ask students quickly to list the differences between the written story and the oral version they just heard, under the heading “Oral vs Written”.
• Have students share their lists with their partners.
• Have students share their lists with the whole class. Guide students in identifying the following similarities and differences between the oral and written versions of the story:
  - Different phrasing, sentences (oral version not an exact retelling)
  - Expression and gestures added in oral version to make it more entertaining
  - Sequence of events the same
  - Characters the same

Remind students that fables originated as oral retellings. Their purpose was to entertain, as well as teach a moral lesson.
DAY 2

Before Storytelling
• Tell students that, as you retell the fable from the previous day, they are to watch and listen for techniques used to make the presentation more entertaining.

During Storytelling
• Retell the fable, using exaggerated facial expressions and gestures and appropriate vocal effects.

After Storytelling
• Have students, in groups of four, brainstorm the dramatic presentation techniques used in the fable retelling and list them on paper. Ask students to try and group similar techniques together.
• With the whole class, create a “Storytelling Techniques” anchor chart (Appendix 4.1A, p. 138). Have students compare their group lists with the anchor chart and note the following items in particular:
  - Loud, clear voice
  - Exaggerated facial expressions
  - Tone of voice to match character
  - Sound effects
  - Gestures to match elements in story (e.g., hands up to mouth to show fear)
• Ask students to work with a partner in retelling the fable, using some of the techniques charted.
• Circulate and observe student progress: Who is struggling? What is this student’s strength? What strategies will help this student? Would cue cards or props help this student? Make anecdotal notes on the strategies/techniques students are using and which ones need more emphasis in future lessons, class mini-lessons, or student mini-conferences (see Appendix 4.1B, p. 139).

DAY 3

Before Storytelling
• Give each student a written copy of the fable “The Crow and the Water Jug”. Instruct students to note on their copy, while the fable is being told, what is kept in and what is left out or modified. Ask them to also note the use of any other storytelling techniques from the “Storytelling Techniques” anchor chart.

Synopsis of “The Crow and the Water Jug”
This fable has a single character, the crow, attempting to resolve a problem. The crow has been flying a great distance and is hot and thirsty. She knows she will die if she doesn’t find water soon. She lands to search for water and finds an old jug that contains some, but it is so far down the jug that she cannot reach it with her beak. Frustrated but determined, she comes up with a plan. She patiently drops pebbles into the bottom of the jug until the water level rises high enough for her to be able to drink. The moral commonly used for this story is “Necessity is the mother of invention”.

During Storytelling
• Tell “The Crow and the Water Jug” from Aesop’s Fables to the class, using appropriate expressions, gestures, and vocal effects.
After Storytelling

• Have students form groups of four to share the observation notes they took during the oral presentation.
• Bring the class together and conduct a think-aloud about preparing for the storytelling, indicating the key points in the process. (For a detailed description, see “Teacher Talk” at the end of this lesson.)

• Have students return to their groups and prepare an outline of the steps they need to take in preparing for a storytelling.
• Lead the class in creating a "Preparing for Storytelling" anchor chart (Appendix 4.1C, p. 140) as the groups share their outlines. Encourage students to include the following steps: (1) read the story a number of times; (2) summarize key events; (3) choose powerful and interesting key words/Phrases; (4) interpret character feelings and decide on gestures/actions; (5) pick an interesting beginning; (6) practise retelling many times.

**DAY 4**

**Before Reading**

• Quickly review the two anchor charts, “Storytelling Techniques” (Appendix 4.1A, p. 138) and “Preparing for Storytelling” (Appendix 4.1C, p. 140).

• Tell students they will each be choosing a fable that they will be preparing for presentation to the class at a later date.

• Present a quick book talk on some of the fable resources available to students.

**During Reading**

• Give students plenty of time to browse the fable selection.

• Encourage students to choose three or four fables of interest. Ask them to try telling each of the fables out loud before making their final choice.

**After Reading**

• Students who have time can begin preparing their stories for telling.

**DAY 5**

**Before Reading**

• Tell another fable, using appropriate expressions, gestures, and vocal effects.

**During Reading**

• Have students review the anchor charts “Storytelling Techniques” (Appendix 4.1A, p. 138) and “Preparing for Storytelling” (Appendix 4.1C, p. 140).

• Have students read their fables, using the process modelled in Day 3 to prepare for their storytelling.

• Use this time to circulate among students, taking notes and conducting quick conferences (see Appendix 4.1B, p. 139). Make sure that students have chosen appropriate fables and are following the preparation process. Address any difficulties they are encountering.
After Reading
- After students have had time to prepare their fables, gather the class together. Ask students to share the strategies they are using to help them remember the story.
- List these "remembering" strategies on a chart. Review the list with the class and ensure that it includes the following:
  - Use of key words/phrases on cue cards
  - Use of partner prompts (partner listens and offers prompts from the written story)
  - Use of props to help remember events
  - Analysis of a tape recording of the storytelling to identify areas of difficulty
  - Use of picture prompts (a picture for each event is put on a cue card or a sheet of paper)
- Remind students to focus on remembering the story right now, not memorizing it word for word, as they continue to work on their fables.
- Circulate among students, continuing to conduct quick mini-conferences and offer assistance. During these mini-conferences, have students retell the moral of the fable they have chosen in their own words (as a means of assessing their understanding of the story).

**DAY 6**

Before Story Preparation
- Conduct a quick whole-class review of the story preparation process.

During Story Preparation
- Students complete their oral composition, deciding on what, if any, memory aids they will use (e.g., cue cards, jot notes, and picture prompts).

After Story Preparation
- Tell students that they can practice their retellings with a partner and begin considering storytelling techniques (e.g., gestures, and vocal effects).
- Continue to conduct mini-conferences during this time, listening to the retellings, offering suggestions, and noting the strategies being used.

**DAY 7**

Mini-lesson on audience

Before Storytelling
- Tell students they will be listening to a storytelling. Ask them to think during the presentation about what they are doing as audience members to contribute to or help the performance.

During Storytelling
- Tell a new fable (or retell the one from either Day 1 or Day 3), using appropriate expressions, gestures, and vocal effects.

After Storytelling
- Think-pair-share: Have students discuss the characteristics of a good audience member.
- With the whole class, create a "Storytelling Audience" anchor chart (Appendix 4.1E, p. 142), looking at the roles and responsibilities of audience members. Encourage students to include the following points:
A good audience member:
- encourages;
- listens;
- participates;
- supports;
- watches;

• Ask students to focus on the storyteller’s responsibilities to the audience. What can they do as performers to make storytelling an enjoyable experience for the audience? Take suggestions from the class. Encourage students to add the following points to the “Storytelling Audience” anchor chart:

A good storyteller:
- doesn’t ramble;
- doesn’t mumble;
- speaks loudly and clearly;
- stops for laughter;
- considers the age/experience of the audience when choosing stories

• Quickly review the “Storytelling Techniques” anchor chart (Appendix 4.1A, p. 138).
• Have students work on gestures and vocal effects and polish their stories for performance.
• Continue to conduct mini-conferences.

DAYS 8, 9, AND 10

Before Storytelling
• These are performance days. The presentations can be interspersed individually throughout the day or done in groups (of perhaps eight stories) in larger blocks of time.
• Review the “Storytelling Audience” anchor chart (Appendix 4.1D, p. 141) to prepare students for proper audience participation, and give the following directions:

“As a member of the audience today, you will be responsible for coaching your classmates. Review the charts we used to prepare for our presentations and be ready to share two stars (things that worked) and one suggestion for improvement after each performance. An example of a star might be that a student created really interesting sound effects for the story or used a loud, clear voice. A suggestion might be to speak more slowly so the audience can hear the exciting parts, or to pause for laughter so the audience doesn’t miss anything. Remember, there are no put-downs.”

During Storytelling
• Tell the audience to watch and listen carefully for stars and suggestions during each performance and make jot notes about them.
• Complete an assessment checklist for each performance (see Appendix 4.1E, p. 142).

After Storytelling
• Ask several students from the audience to share their stars and suggestions for each performance.

REFLECTION
Were my students successful? Did my instructional decisions meet the needs of all my students? What worked well? What will I do differently in the future? What are my next steps?
Sample Lesson 4.1

**Students**
- Did I choose a fable that was challenging/easy enough?
- Did I take time to prepare my story for an audience?
- Did I focus on remembering my story, not memorizing it word for word?
- Did I use my voice and gestures to make the storytelling more entertaining?
- Did I consider my audience while I was presenting, speaking clearly and pausing for reactions?

**Teacher**
- Did the fables I provide reflect the appropriate reading levels to suit the abilities of my students?
- Did students incorporate storytelling techniques into their performances? Were there some techniques that were absent from a number of the performances and need to be emphasized in further lessons?
- Were audience members able to recognize the performances that demonstrated good storytelling techniques and use proper terminology to describe them?
TEACHER TALK

Day 3 – Detailed Description of Teacher Think-Aloud: Preparing for Storytelling

The teacher conducts a think-aloud to model for students how a fable is prepared for storytelling to a group.

When I was preparing this story for telling it to the class, there were a number of things I did to help me get ready. The first thing I did was read the story through from beginning to end three times. (Teacher reads the story through in a regular voice once).

The next thing I did was mentally summarize the fable in a sentence or two: “Okay, so this is a fable about a very thirsty crow who needs to figure out a way to get at the water in the jug. She finally succeeds by dropping pebbles in to raise the water and she is able to drink.”

Next, I wanted to make sure I could remember the sequence of events. I don’t want to leave anything important out, so I wrote and numbered some short headings for each event: 1. Crow Looks for Water; 2. Crow Finds Old Water Jug; 3. Crow’s Beak Is Too Short; 4. Crow Finds a Way. (Teacher charts the headings on paper.)

While I was reading, I was taking note of which phrases or sentences I really wanted to keep. I wrote down the words that were really interesting and powerful, like “feeble wings”, “weakly she fluttered to the ground”, and “a croak of surprise”, so I wouldn’t forget them.* (Teacher writes these words/phrases on the chart paper beside the appropriate heading.)

When I looked over each of these events, I tried to think of how the Crow was feeling at each point, so I could make my voice match those feelings and maybe incorporate some gestures as well. For example, when the Crow can’t reach the water, she’s probably feeling frustrated, so I decided I’d ruffle my feathers in frustration and make my voice “huffy”.

I also wanted to make sure I had an interesting start to my storytelling, so I looked at the beginning of the fable and tried to think of a good opening sentence or action to catch the audience’s interest. I decided I would use gestures to show how hot and tired Crow was before I even began speaking. I flapped my arms like I was flying and panted and wiped my brow. Then I began moaning “I’m so tired and so hot. What I wouldn’t give for a drink of water!” Once I had the beginning figured out, I used my outline to practise retelling the story, making small changes until I was satisfied.

Now that you know how I prepared this story, let’s make a “Preparing for Storytelling” chart to help you as you prepare your fables. In groups of four, create a general outline for preparing a fable, following the steps I took.

* There are many online versions of “The Crow and the Jug” that teachers can access. The words quoted here are from Aesop’s Fables, by Graeme Kent (London: Brimax Books, 1991).
APPENDIX 4.1A – “STORYTELLING TECHNIQUES” ANCHOR CHART

What Good Storytellers Do

- Use a loud, clear voice
- Add sound effects
- Match their tone and pitch to the character
- Use exaggerated facial expressions
- Use gestures to match the story (e.g., hands up to mouth to show fear)
- Pause for effect

Note: These aspects require explicit instructions and modelling.
### APPENDIX 4.1B – TEACHER OBSERVATION: STORYTELLING PREPARATION AND TECHNIQUES

**Activity/Lesson:** ___________________________  **Date:** ___________________________

**Look-fors:**

- **Remembering techniques** (Is the student struggling to remember the story? What techniques or strategies would help?)
- **Story preparation** (Is the student following the process for preparing the story? Are important steps being left out?)
- **Storytelling techniques** (Is the student incorporating skills like gestures, facial expression, and vocal effects to make his or her story more entertaining?)
- **On-task behaviour** (Is the student practising with a partner and accepting feedback? Is she or he using class time to prepare and practise?)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student: ___________________________</th>
<th>Student: ___________________________</th>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 4.1C – “PREPARING FOR STORYTELLING” ANCHOR CHART

Preparing for Storytelling

1. Read the story to yourself several times.

2. Summarize and number key events in point form.

3. Choose powerful and interesting key words/phrases and record them under the related key events.

4. Interpret character feelings and decide on gestures/actions (this may require some drama coaching). Record them under the related key events.

5. Decide on an interesting beginning (action and/or sentence).

6. Retell the story.

7. Practise, practise, practise.
A Good Audience Member:
- Watches
- Listens
- Encourages
- Shows appreciation
- Is a coach, not a critic

A Good Storyteller:
- Tells the story in a planned sequence
- Speaks loudly and clearly
- Makes eye contact with the audience
- Stops for audience reactions (e.g., laughter or gasps)
- Considers the age and experience of the audience when choosing stories
**APPENDIX 4.1E – STORYTELLING SKILLS ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name: ____________________________</th>
<th>Date: ____________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fable: ____________________________</td>
<td>C = Consistently</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**VOICE**
- Spoke loudly and clearly
- Used good expression appropriate to character and story

**GESTURES**
- Body language and hand movements helped to tell the story
- Facial expressions communicated the character’s feelings

**FOCUS**
- Stayed focused for entire performance
- Presented a calm, confident image
- Remembered fable or recovered quickly/improvised if story was forgotten
- Demonstrated awareness of audience (through eye contact, pausing for effect)

**MESSAGE**
- All important events told in sequence
- Included sound effects, using voice and/or body, to improve story
- Used powerful/interesting language

**Comments**
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
# Sample Lesson 4.2 – Fairytale/Myth Monologue

## LESSON PLAN AT A GLANCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAY 1</th>
<th>DAY 2</th>
<th>DAY 3</th>
<th>DAY 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Review of development of character traits</td>
<td>Student analysis of monologue for use of tone of voice</td>
<td>Teacher modelling of monologue</td>
<td>Review of process for developing monologue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student analysis of monologue for evidence of character traits</td>
<td>Teacher modelling of tone of voice with gestures, facial expressions, and body language</td>
<td>Students work in pairs to create character T-chart</td>
<td>Students work on character T-charts and rough outlines for monologues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class development of character T-chart</td>
<td>Small-group practice in using facial expressions, gestures, and body language</td>
<td>Students choose character for independent monologue development</td>
<td>Teacher mini-conferences with individual students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Small-group brainstorming of facial expressions and gestures to match character traits on T-chart</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAY 5</th>
<th>DAY 6</th>
<th>DAY 7</th>
<th>DAY 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students complete monologue outlines and practise saying their monologues</td>
<td>Monologue performances</td>
<td>Monologue performances</td>
<td>Monologue performances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher continues mini-conferences</td>
<td>Audience completes “Character Traits” chart</td>
<td>Audience completes “Character Traits” chart</td>
<td>Audience completes “Character Traits” chart</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## LESSON FOCUS

**What is the focus of the lesson? How will I teach it?**

Students will explore a fairytale or mythological character monologue, looking for clues/details that reveal personality characteristics. They will then create a one-two minute monologue for a particular fairytale or mythological character to present to the class.

**Teaching Strategies**

- Guided exploration
- Directed reading/thinking activities
- Demonstration
- Read-aloud

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*Note: This lesson provides suggestions that teachers may adapt or change to respond to the needs of students. The number of days suggested is flexible and can be changed. The lesson is adaptable across the junior grades and may be changed to accommodate other grade expectations.*
RATIONALE

Why am I teaching this lesson?
To give students opportunities to analyse oral text for evidence of character traits and to interpret and present characters in a dramatic monologue. Students will learn and practise dramatic oral skills that will enhance the portrayal of their chosen characters. They will also have opportunities to develop and practise small-group/partner discussion skills.

ASSESSMENT

How will I know when my students are successful?
• Review observations of student talk made during the think-pair-share discussion of character traits (see Appendix 4.2B, p. 151).
• Review observation notes taken during mini-conferences with students as they prepared and practised their monologues (see Appendix 4.2D, p. 153).
• Complete and review performance assessment checklists (Appendix 4.2F, p. 155).
• Review anecdotal notes of the coaching comments made by audience members following performances and the "Audience Recording of Character Traits" sheets (Appendix 4.2E, p. 154). Focus on the students’ abilities to:
  - evaluate others' dramatic performances in a positive way;
  - interpret performances in terms of their character portrayals.

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

What prior knowledge do my students need in order to be successful with the focus of this lesson?
Prior to this lesson, students need to:
• explore character development in narrative fiction and identify ways in which authors reveal character;
• create character webs and T-charts and use Venn diagrams to compare characters;
• listen to monologues from tapes or CDs (one per day for approximately seven days);
• read and hear a variety of myths and fairytales, both traditional and "fractured" (traditional myths and fairytales that have some aspect of the original story twisted in an unusual way), as part of genre study (one per day over three weeks);
• compare fractured myths and fairytales with traditional versions and analyse the changes made;
• participate in a variety of role-playing activities, from readers' theatre to pantomime and improvisation.

CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

Which expectations will I address?
Students will:

Oral Communication

Overall

2. use speaking skills and strategies appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.
Specific (Grade 6)*
1.4 demonstrate an understanding of the information and ideas in increasingly complex oral texts in a variety of ways;
1.5 interpret oral texts by using stated and implied ideas from them;
1.7 analyse oral texts in order to evaluate how well they communicate ideas, opinions, themes, and information;
1.9 identify a variety of presentation strategies used in oral texts and analyse their effects on the audience;
2.2 demonstrate an increasingly sophisticated understanding of appropriate speaking behaviour in a variety of situations (including paired-sharing, dialogue, and small- and large-group discussions);
2.5 identify a range of vocal effects (including tone, pace, pitch, volume, and a variety of sound effects) and use them appropriately, with sensitivity towards cultural differences, to help communicate their meaning;
2.6 identify a variety of non-verbal cues (including facial expression, gestures, and eye contact) and use them in oral communications, appropriately and with sensitivity towards cultural differences, to help convey their meaning.

Reading
Overall
2. recognize a variety of text forms, text features, and stylistic elements and demonstrate understanding of how they help communicate meaning.

Specific (Grade 6)*
1.4 demonstrate an understanding of increasingly complex texts by summarizing and explaining important ideas and citing relevant supporting details;
1.5 develop interpretations about texts using stated and implied ideas from them to support their interpretations;
1.7 analyse increasingly complex texts and explain how the different elements in them contribute to meaning.

Drama and Dance (Grade 6)*
Overall
• evaluate, orally and in writing, students’ own and others’ work in drama and dance.

Specific
• demonstrate an understanding of the ways used to sustain the appropriate voice or character (e.g., through language, gestures and body movements) when speaking or writing in role for different purposes;
• recognize when it is necessary to sustain concentration in drama and dance;
• interpret and perform some types of dances and forms of drama.

* The lesson can be adapted to meet similar expectations in Grades 4 and 5.
MATERIALS/PREPARATION FOR TEACHING

What do I need to know, have, and be able to do before I can begin the lesson?

• An overhead copy of the monologue to be shared with the whole class
• Copies of a variety of fractured myths and fairytales, at various reading levels
• Teacher observation recording sheets (Appendices 4.2B and 4.2D, pp. 151 and 153)
• Character T-chart (Appendix 4.2C, p. 152)
• Performance assessment checklist (Appendix 4.2F, p. 155)
• Audience character trait recording sheets (Appendix 4.2E, p. 154)

DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION

How can I ensure that I am meeting the needs of all my students?

• Offer a variety of myth and fairytale books at different reading levels.
• Allow students struggling with this assignment to choose performance characters already explored in some depth in class for their monologue.
• Allow students who struggle with the retention of information to give shorter monologues.
• Provide strategies to help with remembering (e.g., partner practice, use of cue cards with key words/phrases, and use of props).

INSTRUCTION

DAY 1

Before Reading/Listening

• Review a chart listing the titles of fairytales, myths, movie clips, and song lyrics that have been explored in class so far.
• Review the anchor chart “Revealing Character Traits” (Appendix 4.2A, p. 150).
• Review the term “monologue” (see glossary definition in The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1-8: The Arts).
• Tell students that they will be listening to a tape or CD of a character monologue. Based on this monologue they will try to determine the personality traits the character possesses.

During Reading/Listening

• Have students listen to a monologue such as “Hannah Milner Primrose Red Brown” (better known as “Little Red Riding Hood”) and follow along on the overhead copy.
• Pause the tape or CD at a point in the monologue where the speaker has ad-libbed. Point out that she, while not following the text exactly, is still staying in character.

After Reading/Listening

• Think-pair-share: Have students consider which of Little Red Riding Hood’s personality traits are revealed in this monologue. Ask students to turn to the person beside them and discuss their ideas.
• Record observations of student talk (Appendix 4.2B, p. 151).

* from: The Starbright Foundation’s Once upon a fairytale (book and CD set). [see: Choral Reading and Reader’s Theatre Suggestions, p. 188]
• Share students’ discoveries with the whole class and record them on a T-chart (Appendix 4.2C, p. 152). On one side list the personality traits, and on the other provide supporting evidence from the monologue. (Refer to the overhead text as well.)

**DAY 2**

**Before Listening**
• Review the T-chart for Little Red Riding Hood developed on Day 1.
• Instruct the class to listen to the monologue again, focusing on how the tone of voice helps develop the character.

**During Listening**
• Students listen to the recording of the Little Red Riding Hood monologue again (this time without the overhead).

**After Listening**
• Have students share their ideas on how Little Red Riding Hood’s expression and tone helped reveal her personality.
• Discuss how facial expressions, body language, and gestures can change a message or communicate it more vividly.
• Model different ways of saying the line “I don’t think so” using a variety of facial expressions, gestures, and body language to convey different meanings. (For example, express confusion/uncertainty by tilting head to the side, clasping hands in front of the chest and speaking in a quiet, quizzical voice, or, convey displeasure/authority by putting hands on hips, arching eyebrows, heavily emphasizing the word “I”, and speaking in a loud, deep voice.)
• Divide the class into groups of four. Give the students in each group a line to say to one another (e.g., “Come over here”, “What do you think?”, or “Watch out”). Have them practise using the strategies just demonstrated to convey as many different messages as possible.
• Have each group share its favourites with the rest of the class.
• Provide each group with a copy of Little Red Riding Hood’s T-chart from Day 1. Have the groups brainstorm an appropriate gesture and/or facial expression for each characteristic and piece of evidence presented on the chart.
• Bring the class together and have each group share its top two gestures/facial expressions.

**DAY 3**

*Choosing a monologue character*

**Before Reading/Listening**
• Model a monologue with accompanying gestures and facial expressions.
• Have students work with a partner to create a character T-chart based on the monologue, including the gestures and expressions that were used to enhance and reveal character.
• Have partners share the character traits they discovered with the whole class. Record the students’ discoveries on a class T-chart.
Introduction the assignment: Students will create a character monologue from a story read previously in class and will present their monologue to the class. As part of the planning for the monologue, students will create T-charts listing the personality traits they wish their character to portray and the evidence that supports those traits. Tell students that they can embellish the character they are portraying and details from the story, but that the personality should stay true to that presented in the book. Remind students that a monologue is a snapshot taken from the story and not the whole story; in the monologue, the character may focus on only one event from the story.

Conduct quick teacher book talks on the texts from which students will be making their selection.

Have students choose their character. Help them with their choices where necessary.

During Reading/Listening

Students reread the story in which their chosen character appears, looking for clues of personality traits. Students list these traits and the supporting evidence on a T-chart.

The teacher confirms student choices, ensuring that they are at an appropriate level.

After Reading/Listening

Students begin developing a monologue, using jot notes (possibly on cue cards). They use the information gathered from the text as well as embellishing with their own imaginations.

DAYS 4 AND 5

Partner practice/rehearsal

Before Writing

Review the process for developing a monologue:

- Choose a character.
- Look in the text for evidence of personality traits.
- Fill in a T-chart with traits and evidence (from either the book or imagination)
- Determine appropriate tone of voice, gestures, and facial expressions.
- Prepare a rough outline of the monologue.
- Say the monologue.
- Practise, practise, practise.

During Writing

Students work on filling in the character T-chart and writing a rough outline of what they will say.

During this time, conference with each student to determine if he or she needs any help/guidance with specific aspects of the assignment (e.g., finding evidence of traits, or tips and strategies for remembering dialogue). Record observational notes of student progress (Appendix 4.2D, p. 153).

Note: Teachers will need to consider the needs of their students in determining available resources and how students will choose the text they will be working with. For some classes, it may be best to use only those stories already read and discussed in class. Other students may be able to handle the challenge of a never-before-read story. Be sure the choices available provide rich characters with enough detail for students to be able to create a monologue.

Note: Teachers may wish to provide a more structured outline for some students to complete, an outline that includes headings such as ‘Character Traits’, ‘Evidence’ (Actions, Thoughts, Words), ‘Setting’, and ‘Events from Story’.
After Reading/Listening
• Once their outlines are complete, have students work with a partner and practise saying their monologues.
• Continue with monologue mini-conferences.

DAYS 6, 7, AND 8
Performances will take place over three days, either in blocks of time or spread throughout the day.

Before Performance
• Tell students that as members of the audience they will be filling out a chart listing the character traits portrayed in the monologue (Appendix 4.2E, p. 154) and that they will share their lists with the class following the performance. The audience charts are to be handed in for use in assessment.
• Tell students that, before they perform, they should give a brief description of the story their character comes from. Their description should situate the character and provide enough background information for the audience to understand what the character is saying and why.

During Performance
• Students in the audience fill out their character trait charts.
• The teacher completes the Monologue Performance Assessment Checklist (Appendix 4.2F, p. 155).

After Performance
• Have students in the audience share the character traits they feel the monologue revealed and explain how they were revealed.

REFLECTION
Were my students successful? Did my instructional decisions meet the needs of all my students? What worked well? What will I do differently in the future? What are my next steps?

Students
• Did I use evidence from the text to support the character traits portrayed, including vocabulary, actions, and relationships with other characters?
• Did I use character-enhancing body language and tone of voice that helped bring the character I portrayed to life?
• Was I well rehearsed before presenting my monologue?
• Was I more focused on speaking the lines word for word, or in portraying the character and staying in role?

Teacher
• Did the students use all the ways discussed in class of revealing character to present their characters clearly (e.g., thoughts, words, tone of voice, actions, and interactions with others)?
• Do the students need more practice in analysing character development to understand the many ways authors “show” a character’s personality?
APPENDIX 4.2A – “REVEALING CHARACTER TRAITS” ANCHOR CHART

Authors reveal characters in a number of different ways:

1. Through what a character says and the way he or she says it
e.g., ..............................................................

2. Through what others say about him or her
e.g., ..............................................................

3. Through his or her actions
e.g., ..............................................................

4. Through what he or she thinks
e.g., ..............................................................

5. Through what he or she feels
e.g., ..............................................................
### APPENDIX 4.2B – TEACHER OBSERVATION: MONOLOGUE ANALYSIS

**Character:** __________________________  **Date:** __________________________

**Look-fors:**
- Explores all the ways character traits can be revealed (what a character says, does, thinks, and feels; what others say about the character; tone of voice)
- Provides evidence to support point of view (goes back into text/audio for specific examples)
- Listens and responds to partner ideas (e.g., “I hadn’t thought of that”, or “Are you saying...?” [paraphrasing])
- Builds on partner ideas (e.g., “Along with that, let’s include...”, or “I like your idea and I also think...”)

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APPENDIX 4.2C – CHARACTER T-CHART

Student Name: _____________________________

Character: _____________________________ Date: _____________________________

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<th>Character Trait</th>
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APPENDIX 4.2D – TEACHER OBSERVATION: MONOLOGUE MINI-CONFERENCE

Activity/Lesson: ____________________________ Date: ____________________________

Look-fors:

- Remembering techniques (Is the student struggling to remember the monologue? What techniques or strategies would help?)
- Monologue preparation (Is the student following the process for preparing a monologue? Is the T-chart filled in?)
- Dramatic techniques (Is the student incorporating skills such as gestures, facial expression, and voice techniques to make his or her monologue more entertaining?)
- On-task behaviour (Is the student practising with a partner and accepting feedback? Is he or she using class time to prepare and practise?)

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APPENDIX 4.2E – AUDIENCE RECORDING OF CHARACTER TRAITS

Story Monologue Performance

Character: ___________________________ Character: ___________________________

Performance: ________________________ Performance: _________________________

Traits Revealed ______________________ Traits Revealed _______________________

Character: ___________________________ Character: ___________________________

Performance: ________________________ Performance: _________________________

Traits Revealed ______________________ Traits Revealed _______________________

Character: ___________________________ Character: ___________________________

Performance: ________________________ Performance: _________________________

Traits Revealed ______________________ Traits Revealed _______________________

Character: ___________________________ Character: ___________________________

Performance: ________________________ Performance: _________________________

Traits Revealed ______________________ Traits Revealed _______________________
**APPENDIX 4.2F – MONOLOGUE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST**

Student Name: ____________________________ Date: ________________________

Character Portrayed: ____________________________

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<tr>
<td>Consistently</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
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**VOICE**
- ___ Spoke loudly and clearly
- ___ Used good expression appropriate to the character

**GESTURES**
- ___ Body language and hand movements communicated the message
- ___ Facial expressions communicated the character’s feelings

**FOCUS**
- ___ Stayed in role for the entire performance
- ___ Presented a calm, confident image
- ___ Remembered monologue or recovered quickly/improvised if monologue was forgotten

**MESSAGE**
- ___ Monologue fit with the character
- ___ Used a variety of traits from the character T-chart

**CREATIVITY**
- ___ Presentation was creative
- ___ Significant effort was made to entertain the audience

**Comments**

______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
Sample Lesson 4.3 – Dramatic Dialogue: Character Conversations

LESSON PLAN AT A GLANCE

**DAY 1**
Whole-class development of character chart for a selected character
Small-group development of character chart for a second character
Partner development of Venn diagram character comparison

**DAY 2**
Mini-lesson on discussion skills
Review of a description of a meeting between the two characters
Introduction of dramatic dialogue assignment

**DAY 3**
Teacher–student modelling of conversation
Whole-class creation of “Conversation Rules” anchor chart
Student partners begin work on dialogue

**DAY 4**
Whole-class development of “Dramatic Presentation Guidelines” anchor chart
Students complete work on dialogue
Student partners practise dialogue

**DAY 5**
Partner performances of dramatic dialogue
Audience completes “Character Trait” chart and provides feedback

LESSON FOCUS

*What is the focus of the lesson? How will I teach it?*

Students will recreate a short dialogue between two characters, from a teacher-selected novel, and present it to the class. Choose an instance in the novel where a conversation between the two characters is referred to but never actually revealed to the reader. Students will work in pairs and use their knowledge of the two characters (developed by exploring the text and creating character charts) to create and present their dialogue.

*Teaching Strategies*

*How will I teach this?*
- Demonstration/modelling
- Directed reading/thinking activities
- Read aloud
- Think-pair-share

RATIONALE

*Why am I teaching this lesson?*

To give students opportunities to analyse a text for clues on character development and interpret and present a dramatic dialogue between two characters from that text. Students will explore the rules of conversation in preparing the dialogue. They will also practise cooperative skills, including listening to and building upon partner ideas.

*Note:* This lesson provides suggestions that teachers may adapt or change to respond to the needs of students. Times suggested are flexible and can be changed. The lesson is adaptable across the junior grades and may be changed to accommodate other grade expectations.
ASSESSMENT

How will I know when my students are successful?

• Review observation notes taken during student discussions (Appendix 4.3B, p. 168).
• Assess the students’ character trait and evidence charts (Appendix 4.3A, p. 167).
• Assess the students’ character comparison Venn diagrams (Appendix 4.3C, p. 169).
• Complete and review performance assessment checklists (Appendix 4.3H, p. 174).
• Review the students’ performance self-assessment checklists and reflections (Appendix 4.3I, p. 175).

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

What prior knowledge do my students need in order to be successful with the focus of this lesson?

Prior to this lesson, students need to:

• participate in lessons that explore character in narrative fiction (examining character dialogue, thought, actions, and relationships as a way of revealing character traits);
• create character trait charts and use Venn diagrams to compare characters;
• participate in readers’ theatre activities, using teacher-created scripts as well as developing them independently from texts read in class;
• analyse, in class, an appropriate number of characters from the selected novel.

CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

Which expectations will I address?

Students will:

Oral Communication

Overall

2. use speaking skills and strategies appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes;
3. reflect on and identify their strengths as listeners and speakers, areas for improvement, and the strategies they found most helpful in oral communication situations.

Specific (Grade 4)*

1.2 demonstrate an understanding of appropriate listening behaviour by adapting active listening strategies to suit a variety of situations (including work in groups);
1.5 make inferences using stated and implied ideas in oral texts;
1.7 analyse oral texts and explain how specific elements in them contribute to meaning;
1.9 identify the presentation strategies used in oral texts and analyse their effect on the audience;
2.2 identify some vocal effects (including tone, pace, pitch, volume, and a range of sound effects) and use them appropriately, with sensitivity towards cultural differences, to help communicate their meaning;
2.6 identify some non-verbal cues (including facial expression, gestures, and eye contact) and use them in oral communications, appropriately and with sensitivity towards cultural differences, to help convey meaning;

*The lesson can be adapted to meet similar expectations in Grades 5 and 6.
3.1 identify, in conversation with the teacher and peers, what strategies they found most helpful before, during, and after listening and speaking and what steps they can take to improve their oral communication skills.

**Reading**

*Overall*

2. recognize a variety of text forms, text features, and stylistic elements and demonstrate an understanding of how they help communicate meaning.

**Specific (Grade 4)**

1.5 make inferences about texts using stated and implied ideas from them as evidence;

1.7 analyse texts and explain how specific elements in them contribute to meaning.

**Drama and Dance (Grade 4)**

*Overall*

• communicate, orally and in writing, their response to their own and others’ work in drama and dance.

**Specific**

• demonstrate an understanding of voice and audience by speaking and writing in role as characters in a story;

• enact or create, rehearse, and present drama and dance works based on novels, stories, poems, and plays.

**MATERIALS/PREPAREATION FOR TEACHING**

*What do I need to know, have, and be able to do before I can begin the lesson?*

• Copies of the selected novel (enough for each pair of students)

• Copies of a character trait and evidence chart (Appendix 4.3A, p. 167)

• Teacher observation recording sheets (Appendix 4.3B, p. 168)

• Copies of a character comparison Venn diagram (Appendix 4.3C, p. 169)

• Audience character trait recording sheets (Appendix 4.3G, p. 173)

• Performance assessment checklist (Appendix 4.3H, p. 174)

• Student self-assessment checklist (Appendix 4.3I, p. 175)

**DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION**

*How can I ensure that I am meeting the needs of all my students?*

• The dialogue is a maximum of one-two minutes, but there is no minimum requirement. This allows for very short presentations from students who may struggle creating longer, more complex dialogues.

• Pairings can be created to accommodate the needs of various students during partner work.

• Develop character trait and evidence charts as a group activity, to give support to students who find analysing the text difficult.

* The lesson can be adapted to meet similar expectations in Grades 5 and 6.
• A variety of memory aids (e.g., props, or cue cards) can be used during the performance by all
students, but may be particularly helpful to those who find recalling information difficult.

INSTRUCTION

DAY 1

Before Reading
• In preparation for developing a character trait and evidence chart for Character #1 (Appendix
4.3A, p. 167), ask students to review the ways in which a reader can learn about characters.
Ask students to discuss: “What makes a story character memorable?”.
• Chart responses, guiding students to recall that characters are revealed through their actions,
reactions, words, thoughts, feelings, and by what others say about them.
• With students, complete a character chart for Character #1. Look at details in the story and
determine what they reveal about this character.
• Display the chart in the classroom.

During Reading
• Have students work in small groups, jig-saw style, to develop a similar chart for Character
#2. Provide each group with strips of paper on which to record the character traits found.
• Circulate and record observation notes (Appendix 4.3B, p. 168) on the students’ ability to
gather character information and classify it, as well as noting group talk (whether students
listen to and build on their partners’ ideas).

After Reading
• Bring the class together and ask each group to share one character trait until all the traits
have been mentioned. Record the traits on a character chart and display it in the classroom.
• Have students pair up and, looking at the character charts, fill in a Venn diagram comparing
the two characters (Appendix 4.3C, p. 169).
• Circulate and continue recording observational notes.

DAY 2

Before Reading
• Using the observation notes of partner talk from Day 1, conduct a mini-lesson on an appropriate
topic (e.g., staying on topic, encouraging your partner to participate, disagreeing without
putdowns, or different ways to compromise). Model and/or brainstorm appropriate behaviour.
• Ask students to turn to their partner and retell what they remember about the initial meeting or
conversation between the two characters.

During Reading
• Read aloud a passage that describes a meeting between two characters in the novel, but does
not contain actual dialogue. Stop at appropriate places to ask questions such as:
  - How do you think this character feels about the meeting? How do you know?
  - What do you think this character feels about the other character? How do you know?
Sample passages:

And now the girl was standing, slinging her bag over one shoulder and marching among the tables, strumming and singing and strutting and twirling. Heads swung, eyes followed her mouths hung open. Disbelief. When she came by our table, I got my first good look at her face. She wasn’t gorgeous, wasn’t ugly. A sprinkle of freckles crossed the bridge of her nose. Mostly she looked like a hundred other girls in school except for two things. She wore no makeup, and her eyes were the biggest I had ever seen, like deer’s eyes caught in headlights. She twirled as she went past, her flaring skirt brushing my pant leg, and then marched out of the lunchroom.

[...]

She laughed when there was no joke. She danced when there was no music.

She had no friends, yet she was the friendliest person in the school.

In her answers in class, she often spoke of sea horses and stars, but she did not know what a football was.

She said there was no television in her house.

She was elusive. She was today.

She was tomorrow. She was the faintest scent of a cactus flower, the flitting shadow of an elf owl. We did not know what to make of her.

In our minds we tried to pin her to a corkboard like a butterfly, but the pin merely went through and away she flew.

(from Stargirl, by Jerry Spinelli, pp. 11 and 21)

After Reading

• Introduce the assignment:

  What if we had been able to overhear every word of the conversation that took place? What if we were a mouse, a bird, or some other small creature able to listen in? What would the two characters have said to each other? Think about their character traits. How would they have spoken to each other? How would they have been feeling? I’m going to ask you to work with a partner to imagine the conversation. (Note: This activity works best if the partners each choose to be one of the characters.)

• Remind students to look closely at the character charts.

• After students are assigned partners, have them begin brainstorming on how the conversation may have developed. Tell them to make some rough notes under the heading “Two Characters Meet”.

• Circulate among student pairs and record observation notes (Appendix 4.3B, p. 168) on the students’ use of character information and their ability to cooperate and communicate with their partners.

DAY 3

Mini-lesson on conversation rules

• Invite a student volunteer to help you model a conversation (Appendix 4.3D, p. 170).

• Tell students to listen for patterning and strategies used to keep the conversation going.

• At the end of the conversation, thank the student (who returns to his or her seat) and ask the class the following questions:

  - What are some of the skills you need to have a conversation?
- What do you need to say or do to keep a conversation going?
- What would you say is the relationship between [the student] and me based on what you just saw? Are we friendly? Are we hostile?

Guide the students to realize that conversations need the following:
- An introduction/invitation by one speaker
- A common topic
- Turn taking (unless you are being deliberately rude, as a bad character might be)
- Questions to help clarify and extend the discussion
- Good listening skills
- Each person to build on what the other says

Create an anchor chart under the heading "Conversation Practices" (Appendix 4.3E, p. 171) to display in the classroom.
- Use specifics from the modelled conversation to guide students in imagining and creating their own dialogue between Character #1 and Character #2.
- Have students work with their partner to create a dialogue of one-two minutes in length. (This task provides an opportunity to review the use of quotation marks.)

**DAY 4**

**Before Reading**
- Remind students of past activities that required them to perform in front of an audience. Ask them to consider, in a think-pair-share, the skills they needed in order to perform well.
- Have partners share their findings with the class. Guide students to consider the following aspects of dramatic presentation:
  - Voice (clarity, tone, expression)
  - Gestures (hands, facial expressions, body language)
  - Focus (memory, concentration, composure)
  - Message (content, format)

Make a chart of points to remember, to help students prepare for their dialogue presentations (see Appendix 4.3F, p. 172).
(Note: This activity will require some explicit teaching.)
- Review each aspect while modelling and giving students the opportunity to practise them. Provide feedback to support improvement.

**During Reading**
- Have students read through the dialogue they created on Day 3 and make additions and/or deletions.

**After Reading**
- Have students practise their dialogue, keeping in mind the points listed above.

**DAY 5**

**Before Performance**
- Prepare students for their role as audience members. Tell them to ask themselves the following questions during the performance: "Would Character #1 really say this?" "Would Character #2 really respond in this way?"
• Tell students that, as each pair presents their dialogue, they are to write down the traits revealed in each character on the chart provided (Appendix 4.3G, p. 173). They should also be prepared to explain how the dialogue supports those traits.

• Remind students of their responsibility to watch each performance, listen to what is being said, and show appreciation with applause at the end.

During Performance
• During each performance, the teacher fills in the checklist for both performers (Appendix 4.3H, p. 174), and the audience listens carefully to the dialogue.

After Performance
• Following each performance, ask three or four students from the audience to share the traits they think were revealed through the dialogue, along with an explanation of how each trait was revealed.
• Have the performers complete their self-evaluation forms (Appendix 4.3I, p. 175) while the next pair prepares for their presentation.

Next Steps
There are plenty of opportunities for follow-up lessons. Students can practise looking for evidence of character development by creating a character chart for a third character in the novel. If it seems the majority of the class has gained the necessary skills to complete a character chart independently (following the two done in this lesson), assign a third chart, to be done independently, which can be used for assessment purposes.

Other possible character conversation activities include: Readers’ Theatre, Scripting Conversations, Interviewing a Character, and Character Telephone Conversation. These activities are described briefly below.

Readers’ Theatre*
Students review a story or novel, looking for interesting conversations. They work with this conversation in one or more of the following ways:

• Students, working in groups, assign parts to group members. The students will then read their part of the conversation aloud and role-play the character. Students must also decide which member, or members, of the group will read narration in the passage. Once the parts have been assigned, students rehearse a dramatic reading of the text. The activity can be repeated with group members exchanging roles, so that each person has a chance to role-play characters and read narration.

• Once students are familiar with the material, introduce improvisation using modelling with guided and shared practice.

• Students devise an improvisation of the scene without reading directly from the text. They choose or assign roles and combine their own words with those of the author.

* Readers’ Theatre: Readers’ theatre is an oral presentation of prose or poetry by two or more readers (with characterization and narration, if desired).
Sample passage #1:
In the novel Safe as Houses, Lizzie Hardy babysits David McBridge and his younger sister Suzie on the October night of 1954 when Hurricane Hazel struck Ontario.

“Maybe you should do your homework instead of watching television,” I suggested.

“Why should I?” he asked. “I’ve got all weekend.”

“Isn’t it better to do your homework on Friday night so you have the rest of the weekend to just enjoy yourself?” I suggested.

“I think I’m going to wait and see what happens. The way it’s raining there’s a chance there won’t be any school on Monday.”

“What do you think is going to happen? Do you think the school is going to float away?” I asked.

“I can hope.”

“Better not hope too hard. Think about it. The school is up on the hill, and we’re down here by the river. If the school floated away, what do you think would happen to us?”

“Could something happen to us?” Suzie asked. She sounded anxious.

“Nothing will happen to us,” I said firmly, kicking myself for having spooked her. “We’re in a house. Houses don’t float away.” I turned to David. “Schools don’t float away. Even if the lights go out again, all that means is that we’ll be safe in the dark instead of safe in the light.”

“I don’t like the dark,” Suzie said.

“Neither do I. Let’s make sure it doesn’t get dark even if the lights go out again. Come.” I took Suzie’s hand and led her into the kitchen.

(from Safe as Houses, by Eric Walters, p. 31)

Sample passage #2:

Dr. Leftfield This is my laboratory! It has been your home since the accident!

Frankie The Accident?

Narrator Frankie had no memory of the accident… Or, any idea what the word “accident” meant.

Dr. Leftfield And in these jars are the parts that didn’t make it…

Frankie Didn’t make it?!? Then what’s….? [brings her hands to her chest]

Narrator Frankie suddenly realized that her heartbeat had been replaced by a sort of low, mechanical drone.

Dr. Leftfield Well, in layman’s terms, … little of this, a little of that…

Frankie I sound like a fridge!

Narrator Indeed, some of Frankie had come from the good doctor’s refrigerator. In fact, her new super-abilities included making ice at the touch of a button behind her ear.

Frankie [Touching behind her ear] Hey! What’s that!!!

Dr. Leftfield Perfect! [Pulls out a couple of glasses from his lab coat] You need to sit back with a cold drink and take this all in!

(from The Horribly Humorous Adventures of Miss. Frankie’s Fine [she’s just falling to pieces], A Children’s Play “in Parts”, by Athanasia Pallas, p. 1)
Scripted Conversations

- From a story or novel, have students choose a scene that contains conversation. Tell them they will be creating a script from the conversation, to be read aloud. Demonstrate how to transform conversation into scripted form. Explain that in a script:
  - the person speaking is always identified;
  - the words that are spoken do not appear between quotation marks;
  - there are sometimes suggestions for ways to read lines aloud.

- Have students, in small groups, write a script based on the chosen conversation. Encourage them to improvise their own dialogue if they feel that it is needed.

- Once groups have scripted the scene, ask them to assign parts to different group members who will then read the script aloud. Alternatively, have the students give the script to another group that will follow the directions and rehearse the scene. In this way, the students can determine how successful they were at writing a script and communicating ideas.

- Extension: If students have rehearsed and prepared the script, familiarizing themselves with the text, they can give a readers’ theatre presentation to the rest of the class. Some groups may be ready to treat the script as a scene in a play, by memorizing the lines.

Sample passage:
In this story, a monk approaches a servant girl to find out about a mysterious book that contains the secret of making gold and achieving immortality.

“You come from that house,” said Brother Wilfred, his voice weak and raspy. “Does a man called Thorston live there?

“Yes.”

“Is he in possession of a book that has no words?”

Sybil, taken by surprise said, “What can it matter to you?”

“Everything.”

“What do you want?”

“Your help,” said Wilfred.

(from The Book Without Words, by Avi, p. 45)

Sample script:

Brother Wilfred: You come from that house. (weak and raspy) Does a man called Thorston live there?

Sybil (nervous): Yes.

Wilfred: Is he in possession of a book that has no words?

Sybil (surprised): What can it matter to you?

Wilfred: Everything.

Sybil: What do you want?

Wilfred: Your help.
Interviewing a Character

In this activity, students have an opportunity to step into the shoes of a novel’s character and, while in role, hold a conversation about the character’s life. In this way, students get to tell the stories from the character’s point of view, describing events that have happened in the character’s life, discussing the character’s relationships with other characters, and reflecting upon the problems and challenges the character faces. Working in role, students retell story events, while also improvising and inventing information.

Teacher Demonstration

• Explain to students that they will be working in role as media reporters who have been asked to cover a story about interesting people and their lives.
• Brainstorm a list of questions that interviewers might ask someone about his or her life.
• Assume the role of a character from a story you are familiar with and tell students that they are going to be interviewing this character in role.

(Note: This stage requires lots of previous dramatic experience and practice by students.)
• As students ask you questions, answer using information and key ideas from the story or improvise answers that you think this character might give.
• Following the activity, ask students to reflect on the things you said to make the interview “believable”. Were you able to answer every question?

Activity

• Place students in pairs or small groups.
• Assign one student in each pair (or group) to role-play a character from the novel, while the partner (or other group members) each take on the role of a reporter from a newspaper or magazine.
• Ask the reporters to prepare for this activity by drawing up a list of questions they might want to ask the character. Ask them to think about why they are interviewing this character and what it is they want to find out. They might consider asking Who, What, Where, When, and Why questions about the character’s life, or using and expanding on the questions in Appendix 4.3J, p. 176: “Interviewing a Character in a Story”.

After the interview, have students exchange roles so that everyone has a chance to role-play a character. (Note: Interviews can be conducted before an audience. Students can then discuss how successfully each pair role-played their characters.)
• Circulate and record observational notes (Appendix 4.3K, p. 177) about the students’ abilities to speak in role.
• As a follow up, ask the reporters to write an article on the interview for their newspaper or magazine. Some students may wish to write a transcript of the interview.

Character Telephone Conversation

• Invite students to imagine they have a chance to talk on the phone with the main character from a story or novel, and that the character is a friend they have not spoken to for several months. What would their conversation be like?
• Beforehand, have students brainstorm a list of questions they would like to ask the character. They may also consider what advice they would offer the character. What stories from their own lives would they share with this character?
SAMPLE LESSON 4.3

Have students work in pairs, preferably with a partner who has read the same story or novel.
Ask each pair to conduct the phone conversation, with one partner playing the character and the other himself or herself.
Partners can then switch roles so that each student has a chance to role-play a story character.
Circulate and record observational notes (Appendix 4.3L, p. 178) on the students' conversational abilities.
Extension: Partners can present their phone conversation to another pair. Ask those listening to the conversation to focus on the following questions:
- Did the conversation flow smoothly without interruption or silence?
- How successful was each person in listening and responding to his or her partner?
- Did each person understand his or her role and stay in role during the conversation?
- What do we learn about the characters from this phone conversation?
- What advice might you give for improving the conversation?

REFLECTION

Teacher
- Were my students successful?
- Did my instructional decisions meet the needs of all my students?
- What worked well?
- What will I do differently in the future?
- What are my next steps?
- Did the students use all the details discussed in class to present the two characters clearly (i.e., character actions, thoughts, and feelings, dialogue, interactions, and comparisons)?
- Do the students need more practice in analysing character development to understand the many ways authors "show" a character's personality?
- Did the students work cooperatively with their partners, using skills discussed to problem-solve and make progress in the assignment, or do I need to provide more direct lessons on group-work skills?
- Did the students demonstrate an understanding of the conventions of conversations?

Students
- Did I use the characteristics from my character chart and those discovered in my reading to guide the dialogue?
- Did I maintain focus during the presentation, speaking clearly and using my voice and actions to bring my characters to life and make them interesting?
- Did I work cooperatively with my partner, encouraging him or her to contribute, and did I compromise when necessary?
APPENDIX 4.3A – TEACHER OBSERVATION: MONOLOGUE MINI-CONFERENCE

Student Name:

Character Trait and Evidence Chart

What the Character Thinks

Character's Name

What the Character Says

What Others Say

What the Character Feels

What the Character Does
### APPENDIX 4.3B – TEACHER OBSERVATION: DRAMATIC DIALOGUE

**Activity/Lesson:** Character dialogue from the novel ____________________ **Date:** ________

**Look-fors:**
- Explores all the ways character traits can be revealed (what a character says, does, thinks, and feels and what others say about the character)
- Provides evidence to support view (goes back into text for specific examples)
- Listens to partner ideas (e.g., “I hadn’t thought of that”, or “Are you saying . . .?” [paraphrasing])
- Builds on partner ideas (e.g., “Along with that, let’s include . . .”, or “I like your idea and I also think . . .”)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student: ________________________________</th>
<th>Student: ________________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student: ________________________________</td>
<td>Student: ________________________________</td>
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<td>Student: ________________________________</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student: ________________________________</td>
<td>Student: ________________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 4.3C – “CHARACTER COMPARISON” VENN DIAGRAM

Character Comparison Venn Diagram

Character #1

Character #2
APPENDIX 4.3D – TEACHER-STUDENT MODELLING OF A CONVERSATION

T - Hi, Sam, how are you?
S - I'm fine. How are you?
T - I'm great thanks. Did you do anything interesting this weekend?
S - I went to see a show with my friends.
T - Which show did you see?
S - It was “Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire”.
T - I saw that show, too! What did you think?
S - I liked it, but they left out lots of stuff from the book.
T - That's what I thought, too. I thought they should have included more details about the contest. They seemed to really rush through those parts, and I thought they left out some important details in other spots as well.
S - Like what?
T - Like in the graveyard scene, when Harry sees his parents and Cedric and they help him hold off Voldemort. It was supposed to be all the souls of all the people Voldemort had killed that came to help Harry. I think it was important to show how evil Voldemort is and how powerful the side of good can be.
S - I never thought of it like that. I'd forgotten that part of the book. They also left out all that stuff about Hermione’s ‘Save the House Elf’ organization. I thought they should have kept that in because it was so funny.
T - You’re right! The movie could have used a little more humour; it was pretty dark. Did you notice that even the colours were darker and the picture seemed kind of grainy?
S - No, I didn't. I really liked the dragon fight, though. It was cool.
T - I loved that part too. I think they added to that part of the contest in the movie. I don’t remember a chase scene around the Hogwarts buildings.
S - Me neither. I'll have to look back in my book.

(The conversation continues for another minute or two before the teacher thanks the student, who then returns to his or her seat.)
APPENDIX 4.3E – “CONVERSATION RULES” ANCHOR CHART

Conversations need the following:

- An introduction or invitation by one speaker (“Hi Sam... Did you do anything interesting this weekend?”)
- A common topic (“I saw that show, too!”)
- Turn taking (“What did you think of the show?”)
- Questions to help clarify and extend the discussion (“What details did you think they left out?”)
- Good listening skills (“That’s what I thought, too.”, “I never thought of it like that.”)
- Building on what the other person says (“They also left out all that stuff about Hermione’s ‘Save the House Elf’ organization.”)
**APPENDIX 4.3F – DRAMATIC PRESENTATION GUIDELINES**

What I need to remember when I perform in front of the class:

**VOICE**
- Am I speaking loudly and clearly?
- Am I using good expression and tone and pitch that suit the character I am playing?

**GESTURES**
- Do my hand movements and body language help communicate my message?
- Do my facial expressions help communicate how my character is feeling?

**FOCUS**
- Am I staying in character during the entire performance?
- Am I presenting a calm, confident image?
- Do I remember all of my dialogue?
- If I forget some of my lines, can I improvise or recover quickly?

**MESSAGE**
- Am I following the rules of conversation?
- Does my dialogue fit with the character?
- Am I using a variety of traits from the character chart?
APPENDIX 4.3G – AUDIENCE RECORDING OF CHARACTER TRAITS

Dramatic Dialogue Performance

Character: ________________________  Character: ________________________

Performer: ________________________  Performer: ________________________

Traits Revealed ____________________  Traits Revealed ____________________
1. 1. 
2. 2. 
3. 3. 

Character: ________________________  Character: ________________________

Performer: ________________________  Performer: ________________________

Traits Revealed ____________________  Traits Revealed ____________________
1. 1. 
2. 2. 
3. 3. 

Character: ________________________  Character: ________________________

Performer: ________________________  Performer: ________________________

Traits Revealed ____________________  Traits Revealed ____________________
1. 1. 
2. 2. 
3. 3.
## APPENDIX 4.3H – DIALOGUE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name: ___________________________</th>
<th>Date: ___________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Character Portrayed: ______________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C = Consistently</td>
<td>S = Sometimes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### VOICE
- [ ] Spoke loudly and clearly
- [ ] Used good expression appropriate to the character

### GESTURES
- [ ] Body language and hand movements communicated message
- [ ] Facial expressions communicated the character’s feelings

### FOCUS
- [ ] Stayed in role for the entire performance
- [ ] Presented a calm, confident image
- [ ] Remembered dialogue or recovered quickly/improvised if dialogue was forgotten

### MESSAGE
- [ ] Followed rules of conversation
- [ ] Dialogue fit with the character
- [ ] Used a variety of traits from the character chart

### Comments

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APPENDIX 4.3I – STUDENT DIALOGUE PERFORMANCE SELF-ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

Character Dialogue Performance: ____________________________________________

Teacher Assessment

Student Name: __________________________________ Date: ___________________

Character Portrayed: _____________________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>C = Consistently</th>
<th>S = Sometimes</th>
<th>R = Rarely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VOICE</td>
<td>Did I speak loudly and clearly?</td>
<td>Did I use good expression, appropriate to the character I was playing?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GESTURES</td>
<td>Did my body language and hand movements help communicate my message?</td>
<td>Did my facial expressions help communicate the character's feelings?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOCUS</td>
<td>Did I stay in character for the entire performance?</td>
<td>Did I present a calm, confident image?</td>
<td>Did I remember all my dialogue?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MESSAGE</td>
<td>Did I follow the rules of conversation?</td>
<td>Did my dialogue fit with my character?</td>
<td>Did I use a variety of traits from the character chart?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reflection

I really enjoyed __________________________________________________________

Next time I would _______________________________________________________
APPENDIX 4.3J – INTERVIEWING A CHARACTER FROM A STORY

Student being interviewed: _____________________________________________________________

Student interviewing: ______________________________________________________________

Name of character: ___________________________ from the story ________________________

Possible interview questions:

1. Do you have any brothers and sisters? What are their names?
2. Who is your best friend? How would you describe him or her?
3. What is your favourite subject at school?
4. What is your favourite weekend activity?
5. What is your proudest accomplishment?
6. Is there something you own that is very important to you? Why?
7. Who do you admire the most? Why?
8. Can you tell me about something unforgettable in your life?
9. What is your biggest challenge/problem in life?
10. If you were an animal, what animal would you be? Why?
11. If you were a colour, what colour would you be? Why?
12. What do you wish for?
13. What do you think your life will be like in twenty years?
14. What are three words your friends would use to describe you?
15. What is the best word you would use to describe yourself? Why?

Other questions:
## APPENDIX 4.3K – TEACHER OBSERVATION: SPEAKING IN ROLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Does the student...</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- recognize the difference between working in role and working as self?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- use language and gestures appropriate to the role?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- understand and identify with the attitudes of the character in role?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- recognize and accept the roles of others?</td>
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<td>- retell stories or explain in role?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- reveal ideas and feelings in role through talk?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- listen and respond to the partner’s ideas to make the conversation flow?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- work effectively to revise and rehearse work that will be presented to others?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- consider the audience when presenting dramatic conversations?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- seem to enjoy working in role?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Comments:**
## APPENDIX 4.3L – TEACHER OBSERVATION: STUDENT CONVERSATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does the student...</th>
<th>1 Not yet</th>
<th>2 Sometimes</th>
<th>3 Often</th>
<th>4 Consistently</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- focus attention on the task at hand?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- follow instructions effectively?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- reveal thoughts about characters willingly?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- explain and describe ideas clearly?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>- take turns during conversations?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- listen and respond to the partner’s ideas?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- ask questions to clarify information?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- use gesture and voice appropriately?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- demonstrate an understanding of character (e.g., by retelling story events, describing the character’s feelings, and discussing problems and relationships?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- appear to enjoy talking with others?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Comments:
Sample Lesson 4.4 – Exploring Poetry, Choral Speaking, and Readers’ Theatre

LESSON PLAN AT A GLANCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAY 1</th>
<th>DAY 2</th>
<th>DAY 3</th>
<th>DAY 4</th>
<th>DAY 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocal warm-ups</td>
<td>Whole-class creation of anchor chart “Steps to Prepare for Choral Reading”</td>
<td>Whole-class review of anchor chart “Tips for Readers’ Theatre”</td>
<td>Vocal warm-ups</td>
<td>Vocal warm-ups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-class choral reading</td>
<td>Group preparation and rehearsal for choral reading</td>
<td>Small-group preparation for readers’ theatre presentation</td>
<td>Mini-lesson on staging</td>
<td>Group performances of readers’ theatre scripts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small-group selection of choral reading text</td>
<td>Group presentations of choral reading</td>
<td>Student reflection in learning logs</td>
<td>Small-group rehearsal for readers’ theatre presentation</td>
<td>Group and student reflection on performances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student reflection in learning logs</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

LESSON FOCUS

*What is the focus of the lesson? How will I teach it?*

Students will present, in small groups, a choral reading of a poem and a readers’ theatre performance. They will make entries in their learning logs concerning these activities. They will also complete a group and individual reflection on the experience, describing what they have learned about poetry and dramatic representation, their contribution to the process and product, and themselves.

*Teaching Strategies*

- Questioning
- Directed reading/thinking activities
- Use of graphic organizers
- Brainstorming

Note: This lesson provides suggestions that teachers may adapt or change to respond to the needs of students. The number of days suggested is flexible and can be changed. The lesson is adaptable across the junior grades and may be changed to accommodate other grade expectations.

*Choral speaking:* Choral speaking is simply reciting in unison under the direction of a leader. It can be used successfully regardless of space or class size. It helps students improve their pitch, volume, rate, and tone in the interpretation of material and provides opportunities for social cooperation.

*Readers’ theatre:* Readers’ theatre is an oral presentation of prose or poetry by two or more readers (with characterization and narration, if desired).
RATIONALE

Why am I teaching this lesson?
To give students opportunities (through choral speaking of poetry and readers’ theatre presentations) to engage imaginatively with texts, increase their comprehension of texts, improve their fluency and confidence in speaking, and interact positively with their peers. Through these experiences, students will learn the joys of language and language play and discover the gift of creating something new to think about, talk about, and share.

ASSESSMENT

How will I know when my students are successful?
• Review teacher observations and anecdotal notes made during group work and rehearsals.
• Review student learning log reflections on process and presentations.
• Apply the criteria of the Readers’ Theatre Rubric in observing student performances (see Appendix 4.4B, p. 190).

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

What prior knowledge do my students need in order to be successful with the focus of this lesson?
Prior to this lesson, students need to:
• have had experiences with cooperative group learning and know how to function effectively in a group (i.e., take turns, encourage each other, clarify, probe, and build on others’ ideas to resolve problems and promote progress);
• experience direct lessons in listening and responding constructively to peers;
• have experience reading and talking about poetry;
• know different ways of reading poetry (e.g., unison, antiphonal [two groups reading alternate lines], cumulative, solo, and line-around);
• have experience performing readers’ theatre pieces, after direct teaching of the skills involved;
• have experience writing in learning logs, while reflecting on their learning experiences in a variety of subject areas.

CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

Which expectations will I address?
Students will:

Oral Communication
Overall
2. use speaking skills and strategies appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes;
3. reflect on and identify their strengths as listeners and speakers, areas for improvement, and the strategies they found most helpful in oral communication situations.
Specific

2.5 identify some vocal effects (including tone, pace, pitch, volume, and a range of sound effects) and use them appropriately, with sensitivity towards cultural differences, to help communicate their meaning:

3.1 identify, in conversation with the teacher and peers, what strategies they found most helpful before, during, and after listening and speaking and what steps they can take to improve their oral communication skills.

Reading

Overall

1. read and demonstrate an understanding of a variety of literary, graphic, and informational texts, using a range of strategies to construct meaning.

Specific (Grade 4)†

2.4 identify various elements of style (including alliteration, descriptive adjectives and adverbs, and sentences of different types, lengths, and structures) and explain how they help communicate meaning:

3.3 read appropriate texts at a sufficient rate and with sufficient expression to convey the sense of the text readily to the reader and an audience.

MATERIALS/PREPARATION FOR TEACHING†

What do I need to know, have, and be able to do before I can begin the lesson?

• A variety of poems for reading and browsing (poems for choral speaking should have pronounced rhymes, repetition of words or phrases, and several verses, if possible)
• Instructions for choral reading and readers’ theatre on charts
• Anchor chart “Tips for Readers’ Theatre” (Appendix 4.4A, p. 189)
• Rubric for the readers’ theatre presentation (Appendix 4.4B, p. 190)
• Digital camera
• Audiocassette recorder
• Several readers’ theatre scripts (enough to accommodate the size of the class)
• Highlighters or coloured sticky notes (for students to mark lines in script)

DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION

How can I ensure that I am meeting the needs of all my students?

• Provide poems at a variety of reading levels and lengths to accommodate the needs of all students.
• Provide readers’ theatre scripts with parts to accommodate students at a variety of reading levels.
• Do choral reading/readers’ theatre in small groups to facilitate peer support for students.
• Create pairings to accommodate the needs of various students during group/partner work.

† The lesson can be adapted to meet similar expectations in Grades 5 and 6.

† Note: The materials chosen by the teacher for this lesson can be taken from a variety of subject areas. For example, selections can be science or social studies based, or readers’ theatre pieces can be pulled from historical texts. See the sampling of resources at the end of the lesson for some suggested titles that link with specific subject areas.
INSTRUCTION

DAY 1

Before Reading
• Lead students in vocal warm-up exercises, as follows:
  - Have students recite a group of numbers slowly and distinctly. Then have them recite the
    numbers in various ways in turn (e.g., happily, sadly, angrily, impatiently, and enviously).
  - Repeat the process for a full statement (e.g., “Mrs. Glass has a surprise for you!”).
  - Use tongue twisters to limber up the lips, tongue, and teeth (e.g., “A hot cup of coffee from
    a proper copper coffee pot”).
  - Check the students’ general reaction and their abilities to speak, listen, and enjoy the exercise.
• Introduce the poem that students will be working with.

During Reading
• Introduce the subject of the poem to the students. Read it aloud, while they listen to the
  rhythm, rhyme, and tone.
• Distribute copies of the poem (or display it on chart paper or an overhead).
• Discuss the meaning of the poem until everyone understands it, focusing on vocabulary, images,
  rhythms, sounds (alliteration, onomatopoeia), and any background on the physical setting of
  the poem.
• Use word webs to probe the students’ thoughts on ideas contained in the poem and connections
  between these ideas and other contexts/experiences.
• Read the poem slowly, a section at a time, and invite students to join in.
• Read the poem several more times with the students. Gradually increase the speed each time.
  Continue, until students are able to recite the entire poem together.
• Invite students to suggest different ways to recite the lines (e.g., say which lines should be
  spoken faster or slower, which words should be stressed to give the poem a beat, or which
  words should be spoken in a loud or soft tone).
• Review the punctuation - the pausing or stopping at the end of a phrase or thought - and note
  how this affects the meaning and interpretation of the poem.
• Recite the poem a number of times varying the readings (e.g., read by the whole group, with
  different groups of students [boys and girls, left side and right side of room] taking turns,
  or with each student saying only one line).
• Ask students to decide, as a class, which of all the various ways they explored was the most
  effective overall. Ask them for suggestions on how to improve the performance.
• Have students rehearse the reading before they present it as a finale.
• Orchestrate the presentation of the class’s choral speaking and tape-record if possible.
  (A tape recording will assist students when they reflect on their performance and can be
  used for assessment.)
After Reading

- Use anecdotal notes to record observations of each student’s engagement and interest in the activity and speaking and learning skills (cooperation and initiative).
- Using a tape recording if available, assess the presentation - the quality of the students’ communication (meaning and emphasis), clarity (pronunciation and enunciation), building of excitement (appropriate volume, tone, and pace), and use of precise vocabulary.
- Gather together a number of poetry books or a selection of individual poems suitable for chanting or choral reading. Have students, working in small groups, browse the collection and find a poem to work on together and present to the class the next day.
- Observe and assess the cooperative attitudes of the students as they encounter agreement or disagreement on the choice of poem.

**DAY 2**

Before Reading

- With the class, review the process modelled in Day 1:
  - Determine the meaning of the poem.
  - Brainstorm ideas about words and connections.
  - Decide on how to present the poem.
  - Review various ways of reading poetry in order to bring out the meaning of the poem.

Write these points on an anchor chart under the heading "Steps to Prepare for Choral Reading".

- Suggest that each person in the group read a line so that members can label each voice as high, medium, or low. This additional vocal characteristic can be used in their orchestration to decide which lines would best be spoken by a subgroup of voices. Provide adequate time for practice and give feedback.
- Emphasize that each student in the group is to have a part in planning and organizing the presentation of the selected poem.
- Coach students in marking the directions for the various speakers on their copy.

During Reading

- Have students form their groups from Day 1.
- Observe student progress as they prepare for their choral reading presentations, providing prompts as needed. For example:
  - "Read through the entire poem."
  - "Talk about how to arrange your chosen text."
  - "Make decisions about how the lines will be read."
  - "Make changes to the speakers or to their delivery, if needed, to emphasize important parts."
  - "If the delivery is monotone, list the most important words and phrases and read them aloud in quick succession, changing voice and facial expression rapidly."
  - "If reading at the same volume, read through the complete text again using a different volume level for each different idea; then decide which volume and pitch is best for each part."
  - "Read the whole poem again, trying out various kinds of phrasing, intonation, and other vocal expression."
  - "Experiment with pace; decide which lines should be spoken more slowly and which more rapidly."
• Assess the process by watching and observing the groups at work and making anecdotal notes. Are the students working on the task? Do the students pose questions, give reasons for their ideas, and recognize relationships between ideas? Are the students respectful of other points of view by listening to and referencing others’ ideas? Are there any indications that the students are interested, involved, bored, unhappy, or frustrated? Have they explored all the ways of presenting the poem orally? Have they made appropriate choices for their vocal delivery in order to convey and reinforce the meaning?

• Before the presentations begin, have the groups take turns doing a quick report for the rest of the class on the poem they have chosen and how they will perform it. This shared information may provide scaffolding that will help the efforts of other students.

• Before the performances, introduce a mini-lesson on vocal techniques. Suggest that each group try some relaxation exercises and vocal warm-ups. For example:
  - Relax the head and neck by dropping the head forward towards the chest and rotating the head slowly to the left, to the back, to the right, and then back to the front.
  - Repeat, rotating the head in the opposite direction.
  - Lift the head slowly, face forward, and stretch the body, standing as tall as possible.
  - Hum a familiar song, keeping the lips closed and feeling the vibration in the lips, nose, and throat.

Each group then performs its choral speaking selection in front of the rest of the class.

After Reading
• Have students complete a reflection in their learning logs, noting what they learned about their own selected poem, poetry in general, and choral speaking. They should include what they most enjoyed, or had difficulty with, during this learning experience.

DAY 3

Students will now be preparing for a readers’ theatre presentation. The experiences of the past two days with poetry and choral speaking build skills for this kind of oral interpretation. Group size for a readers’ theatre presentation varies depending on the nature of the material used. Smaller groups are better for beginners.

Before Reading
• Review the anchor chart “Tips for Readers’ Theatre” (Appendix 4.4A, p. 189) with the whole class.
• Put students into groups and hand out prepared scripts, along with highlighters or coloured sticky notes.
• Remind students that they will not be memorizing their parts and that they, although presenting as a group, will do some preparation independently.

During Reading
• Have each group read through its entire script and then discuss the following:
  - The speakers - What they are like? How they are feeling? How can this be shown? How should each reader enter? Or, should all the readers remain on stage all the time?
  - The setting - Where and when events or speeches take place
- **The action** - Noting the succession of events and their causes, making sure everyone sees how the story unfolds and why
- **Aspects of style that the reader has to communicate** - Strong images, the rhythms of the sentences, the long flowing lines, the short staccato stabs, and the diction
- **The theme** - The central idea that the readers must convey

• After providing instruction and modelling, have students rehearse in their groups. They should coach each other and make decisions about role assignments and script revisions.
• Circulate and make observational notes on group work and knowledge of readers’ theatre skills.

### After Reading

• Have students finalize their drafts and role assignments.
• Make copies of the script for each group member.
• Have students write reflections in their learning logs on their work to date, answering the following questions:
  - What is the appeal of this poem/script for you?
  - What is its main meaning? Is there anything puzzling or confusing to you?
  - What must you remember about your role in this readers' theatre presentation?
• The teacher may collect these reflections to review the students' abilities to identify key elements in a literary text and make judgements about its content. The reflections will also reveal the students' understanding of the process they have experienced.

### DAY 4

#### Before Reading

• Have students perform some vocal warm-ups, as follows:
  - Relax by yawning at the back of the throat.
  - Enunciate pairs of sentences: "They made an ice statue." "They made a nice statue."
  - Exercise the lips and cheeks by flexing the lips and chewing like a rabbit.
• Review the staging of each presentation with students, focusing on the following points:
  - Remember to use an off-stage focus. When speaking, the readers should generally look somewhere over the heads of the audience to a spot on the back wall. They talk to one another even though they are not looking directly at each other, as if there is a mirror along the back wall and all of them are reflected there.
  - When students are rehearsing a piece to perform in off-stage eye focus, they may wish to rehearse several times looking at and talking to each other. This way it’s easier for them to picture one another’s reactions.
  - Decide whether the focus will be entirely off-stage or if the players want to use an on-stage focus for certain lines, to provide emphasis. For example, the readers may step closer to the audience and/or face each other to deliver their lines.
  - Performers can be grouped in interesting ways (e.g., in a straight line, a semi-circle, or a configured setting with various levels using stools, risers, crates, ladders, etc.).
• Have each group experiment with the physical arrangement of its readers.
During Reading
- Teach and model dramatic use of voice, volume, and pitch.
- As the groups rehearse their script, encourage students to practise changing voice pitch and varying their volume, pace, and tone several times. Remind students to use pauses for emphasis.
- Circulate and record observation notes on group work and knowledge of readers’ theatre skills.

After Reading
- Give the groups informal feedback on the overall clarity and effectiveness of their presentation, portrayal of character, eye focus, staging, and the quality of their vocal delivery (volume, pace, pitch, and tone).

DAY 5

Before Reading
- Have groups conduct their own vocal warm-ups using familiar techniques.
- Have groups review their characterizations, any interactions between readers, and their placements on stage. Groups should practise their presentation once more, with a focus on spontaneity and energy.

During Reading
- Have each group perform for the rest of the class.
- Use the rubric to record observations on group and individual skills (see Appendix 4.4B, p. 190).

After Reading
- Have the students in each group complete a reflection in their learning logs on their own presentation. The reflections should focus on the students’ level of success in meeting the criteria of the rubric and how well they worked together. They should also note any problems and how they were solved.
- Have each student complete an individual reflection, using the following guidelines:
  - “The part I most enjoyed was . . .”
  - “I really worked hard on . . .”
  - “I really learned that readers’ theatre . . .”
  - “I helped by . . .”
  - “The most important part I played in this presentation was . . .”
  - “If I did this again I would . . .”
- Collect student reflections for assessment.

RELECTION
Were my students successful? Did my instructional decisions meet the needs of all my students? What worked well? What will I do differently in the future? What are my next steps?
Students
• Did I explore a variety of ways to present my lines in the choral speaking presentations? Did I understand the meaning of the poem?
• Did I maintain focus during the readers’ theatre presentation, speaking clearly and using my voice to bring my character to life and make him or her interesting?
• Did I work cooperatively in my group, encouraging everyone to contribute, and compromise when necessary?

Teacher
• Were the students able to access the text provided to them? Was there enough variety in reading levels and content?
• Do the students need more practice developing their skills in using their voices effectively during dramatic presentations?
• Did the students work cooperatively with their partners, using skills discussed to problem-solve and make progress in the assignment, or do I need to provide more direct lessons on group-work skills?
• Did the students demonstrate an understanding of choral reading and readers’ theatre skills?

Possible Extensions
In preparing for subsequent performances, students may be encouraged to work with scripts in different ways. Some students may wish to begin with a theme and collect different types of text (e.g., literature, documents, letters, and environmental print) in order to elaborate on their theme and convey a message. Others may wish to adapt a story into a script. In this case, the teacher may wish to pre-select a few story texts for them to convert. Stories that appeal to the imagination, offering exciting action and interesting characters, are good choices. To prepare the material: eliminate tag lines, condense long scenes, use one narrator, type up the “scripts”, and put them in folders.

If students are going to build their own scripts, they need time to read extensively in order to gather the necessary material. They will also need more than one day for interpretation, discussion and rehearsal.
### CHORAL READING AND READER’S THEATRE SUGGESTIONS


*Juxtaposed with Tony Ross’s version:


* These poems can also be found in numerous poetry anthologies and in individual collections of the poets’ works.
APPENDIX 4.4A – TIPS FOR READERS’ THEATRE

Prepare your script

- Highlight your lines of speech clearly, using a highlighter or sticky notes.
- Make sure you understand the meaning of all your words and sentences. Use a dictionary if necessary.
- Underline or circle words that you might want to emphasize, maybe by changing the tone, pitch, or volume of your voice.
- Don’t forget to indicate where you need pauses.

Prepare yourself

- Think about your role as you read through your lines. What kind of character are you? How would this character sound? Would their voice be quiet, loud, harsh, or soft? How does the character feel about what’s happening? How can you show that with your voice?
- If you are the narrator, how can you make the part more interesting? Would a funny voice work? Experiment with different voices.

Rehearsing

- Hold your script still and don’t cover your face with it. You should be able to see your audience over your script.
- Speak slowly and clearly.
- Speak loud enough for someone at the back of the room to hear you.
- Do not fidget. It is very distracting to the audience.

Performing

- Face the audience.
- When the audience laughs (or gasps, or cries out), wait until it is quiet again to continue.
- If there are distractions (e.g., someone walks into the room), ignore them.
- If you make a mistake, pretend it’s what you meant to do – remember, the audience doesn’t have your script.
- If a group member forgets to read a line, don’t whisper to him or her; try to fill in or improvise, or if possible, just skip it.
## APPENDIX 4.4B – READERS’ THEATRE RUBRIC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL 1</th>
<th>LEVEL 2</th>
<th>LEVEL 3</th>
<th>LEVEL 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students experienced significant difficulty working cooperatively within the group to prepare and present the script</td>
<td>Students experienced some difficulty working cooperatively within the group to prepare and present the script</td>
<td>Students worked cooperatively within the group to prepare and present the script</td>
<td>Students worked cooperatively, creatively, and efficiently within the group to prepare and present the script</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students presented characters that were unclear and inconsistent</td>
<td>Students presented characters that were somewhat clear and consistent</td>
<td>Students presented characters that were clear and consistent</td>
<td>Students presented interesting characters that were clear and consistent throughout the performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students experienced significant difficulty remaining focused during the performance</td>
<td>Students remained focused during some of the performance</td>
<td>Students remained focused during most of the performance</td>
<td>Students remained focused during the entire performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staging was not appropriate or effective</td>
<td>Staging could have been improved</td>
<td>Staging was appropriate and effective</td>
<td>Staging was appropriate and very effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volume, pacing, tone, pitch, and pronunciation were not clear and/or effective throughout the performance</td>
<td>Volume, pacing, tone, pitch, and pronunciation were somewhat clear and at times effective throughout the performance</td>
<td>Volume, pacing, tone, pitch, and pronunciation were clear and effective throughout the performance</td>
<td>Volume, pacing, tone, pitch, and pronunciation were very clear, effective, and creative throughout the performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students demonstrated a lack of awareness of audience during the performance, making few attempts to adapt as needed (pausing for laughter, ignoring distractions)</td>
<td>Students demonstrated some awareness of audience during the performance and made some attempt to adapt as needed (pausing for laughter, ignoring distractions)</td>
<td>Students demonstrated an awareness of audience during performance and tried to adapt as needed (pausing for laughter, ignoring distractions)</td>
<td>Students demonstrated an excellent awareness of audience during the performance and adapted easily as needed (pausing for laughter, ignoring distractions)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


